

# Snapshots

**Fast Fact:** Thirty to 50 percent of high-



## REPORT DIGEST

### School Communications Preferences

The 43,410 respondents preferred to have information delivered electronically—via email, e-newsletters, websites, and online parent portals.

“That doesn’t mean a timely letter from the superintendent or principal isn’t effective, nor does it eliminate the need for multiple sources of information to reinforce the message,” said Koehler. “[P]arents and non-parents alike turn to the web when they need information, and they want it now.”

But don’t start tweeting those test scores yet—social media and blogs were in the bottom tier of preferred communication methods, perhaps seen as lacking in credibility, speculates NSPRA.

In the e-communication they receive from school leaders, parents are most concerned with descriptions and updates of school curriculum and programs. They are interested in events calendars, school performance data, and student safety incidents and precautions. Parents’ least-requested updates? Building construction or renovation updates.

The surveyed schools—especially elementary schools—appear to be successfully engaging and informing parents. Over 80 percent of elementary-level respondents say they feel “very well” or “pretty well” informed about school matters. Elementary parents also report being more involved at school than their secondary school counterparts.

But at the district and state levels, parents are out of the loop: Almost

**S**ending a parent newsletter home with your students? You might as well send it by carrier pigeon. Backpack mail is out, but email is in.

“Consumer needs are changing. The backpack folder is no longer the primary source of information for parents,” says Ron Koehler, president of the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA), which polled parents and residents in 50 school districts on their preferences for school communications content, delivery, and frequency. The survey also explored parent involvement with schools, and how informed parents feel on education issues.

## MYTWOCENTS

**What other measures—besides standardized student assessment scores—should be used to provide a full picture of student achievement. Why?**

**In our school, we not only used state assessment data, but we also use local and other standardized assessments (like DIBELS) for benchmarking and progress monitoring data, which helps to give us a picture not only of their achievement, but areas that need remediation in a timely manner. These assessments also inform instruction immediately, so our teachers can reach out and help every student learn.**

**SUZETTE WORDELL, Principal, Fort Barton School, Tiverton, Rhode Island**

two-thirds say they have somewhat to little knowledge of education issues impacting their state.

Notably, survey respondents were part of school districts that are members of NSPRA with full communication strategies. Schools and districts without a concerted effort may be engaging less consistently with parents.

Read the entire report online at [www.nspr.org/2011capsurvey](http://www.nspr.org/2011capsurvey).

## Promising Practices

**WHEN WE REALIZED** that we were throwing away more than 50,000 plastic spoons and forks a school year, we decided to “go green.” The Waukesha County Recycling Center came to talk about the amount of garbage being thrown away and the impact that recycling has on our environment. We decided to switch

to silverware and had student volunteers stand by the trash cans at lunch dismissal time to eliminate the chance of utensils accidentally being thrown away. Fourth and fifth graders became “recycle helpers” after we purchased paper and bottle recycle bins with grant funds. Students go room to room at lunch to collect recyclable items. This program is so successful that now our recycle dumpsters have to be picked up twice as often. Students have become more responsible, and staff members even can be seen using cloth napkins and reusable containers.

**Jeanne A. Siegenthaler**

PRINCIPAL, DIXON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
BROOKFIELD, WISCONSIN

**USING A BALDRIGE** framework, our K-5 students use data notebooks to set personal and academic goals and monitor their progress throughout the year. In the fall of 2010, 97 percent of second-grade students led

their own conferences using their data along with comments from their teachers. At least one teacher at each grade level piloted the student-led conferences. Second-grade students also hosted a Data Notebook Day in the spring of 2011 to share their accomplishments and pending goals for the year. Given positive feedback from teachers and parents, I expect the number of student-led conferences to increase in 2012. The data notebook program also has prompted teachers to set and post classroom goals as well as use student teamwork and peer tutoring to achieve the goals as a class. During school-hosted Leadership Days, students share their success with visitors, mentors, and community members.

**Suzanne Hahn**

PRINCIPAL, EAST RICHLAND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
OLNEY, ILLINOIS

Learn more promising practices at [www.naesp.org/promising-practices](http://www.naesp.org/promising-practices).

## Member in the Spotlight

**CONGRATULATIONS TO GERAD CARRIER**, principal at Christ the King Catholic School in Tampa, Florida. The school is one of 305 K-12 schools named as 2011 National Blue Ribbon Schools. “Being named a National Blue Ribbon School is a wonderful and welcome honor,” Carrier wrote on his school’s blog. “We thankfully accept it as a validation of who we are and what we must continue to do—help children develop spiritually, physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially...” The annual award honors public and private elementary, middle, and high schools where students achieve at high levels or where the achievement gap is narrowing. Since 1982, more than 6,500 of America’s schools have received this high profile award.

**I want a full picture. In addition to student achievement status, we also need to consider student growth. Attendance is a factor—if the student has poor attendance, then what did the teacher do to encourage the student to attend or the parent to be sure the student attended. In regards to achievement—standardized assessments in addition to local common assessments.**

**MELISSA STONE (VIA LINKEDIN)**, Administrator, Crawford AuSable Schools, Grayling, Michigan

✦ Read more responses—and submit your own—by visiting the Principals’ Office at [www.naesp.org/blog](http://www.naesp.org/blog). Click on My Two Cents.

## Letter to the Editor

**I JUST WANTED** to drop you a few lines to share with you how I enjoyed the September/October *Principal* issue. There were some great strategies and tools in the new features and inspiring articles that I plan to incorporate as I plan a successful school year.

As I begin the new year in a newly constructed school, it’s very important to set the tone and foster a climate of support for the teachers so that student achievement is attainable through effective teaching and collaboration. I especially enjoyed the article “Help Teachers Feel Less Stressed.” I plan to use many of the specific suggestions given by the contributing writer.

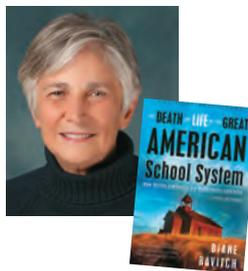
**LaVette Ford, Principal**

LAKEFOREST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
GREENVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

Do you have a letter to the editor? Send it to [publications@naesp.org](mailto:publications@naesp.org).



**D**iane Ravitch, a research professor of education at New York University and a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, will be the opening Keynote Speaker at the NAESP 2012 Annual Conference, March 22-24, in Seattle. An outspoken advocate for public schools and author of the recently published book, *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education* (2010), Ravitch's presentation will address the quandary: "Will School Reform Improve the Schools?"



The following Q and A previews some of the ideas that she will address.

**Q. You've written that schools need stability and consistency in how they are managed and organized. Could you elaborate on that concept?**

**A.** Stability is very important for schools, just as it is for children, families, and communities. Constant churn makes it difficult for students and teachers to exert their best efforts and to build a community of learners. These days, the "reform" movement seems to believe that American education is so terrible that it must be torn apart and reorganized, something that is called "creative destruction." Turmoil is harmful to the process of teaching and learning. It is hard for me to understand why anyone thinks this is "creative." Usually it is just destruction and upheaval by poorly informed noneducators, leading to demoralization of teachers and principals.

**Q. How should principals be evaluated?**

**A.** Principals should be evaluated by wise and experienced superintendents who regularly oversee the physical and academic climate of their schools. They should be evaluated by attention to the graduation rate and the retention rate of their school. They should be evaluated by their ability to recruit and retain good teachers. If there is high teacher turnover, that's a trouble sign. Principals should help and support their staff, making sure that teachers have the mentoring they need and opportunities to recharge their intellectual passions. They should be responsible for maintaining a full and balanced curriculum of studies, providing opportunities for all students to engage in the arts, sciences, foreign languages, and other subjects. Their schools should be

spotlessly clean, cheerful, and welcoming, while exuding a seriousness of purpose about learning.

**Q. What should principals do as catalysts for school reform or improvement?**

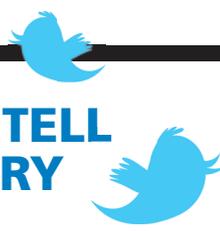
**A.** I would prefer to use the term "improvement" rather than "reform." These days, reform has become synonymous with competition, charters, performance pay, and other schemes imported unthinkingly from the business world. Education thrives on collaboration, mutual support, and inspiration.

The role of the principal is to guide, protect, lead, and inspire his or her staff, and in turn to make sure that the students have the resources, curriculum, and programs they need. It is a very demanding and difficult job that requires a leader who can simultaneously work harmoniously with parents, teachers, other staff, and children. The idea that a noneducator can be trained in a year or two to step into this demanding job is one

**Being an elementary school principal is one of the most demanding tasks in our society; it is not a job for amateurs.**

of the misguided innovations of our time. Principals should have a history as an excellent teacher so they can help their teachers and evaluate them appropriately by observation and regular engagement.

**TWEETS TELL THE STORY**  
See why you should be in Seattle, March 22-24, 2012



Twitter was abuzz about the 2011 Annual Convention in Tampa, Florida. Here's a teaser for what's in store for 2012.

**#NAESP11** Top quality speakers, up-to-date research. *Rhonda Carrier*

Awesome! Still have my T-shirt from past confs! :) **RT @NAESP:** Standing room only at **#naesp11** first General Session. *Lisa Dabbs*

**@tenprincipal:** I'd kill to get a copy of your notes from naesp. Sounds like you are getting awesome info! *Scott MacKintosh*

## 2012 Plenary Sessions



- **A New Era for Accountability, Leadership, Teaching, and Learning**  
**Douglas Reeves**, founder of The Leadership and Learning Center and published expert on leadership and organizational effectiveness, will share the latest research, insights, and practices that contribute to reaching 90/90/90 status. Hear about these schools' accomplishments and challenges, how they overcame "insurmountable" barriers, and much more.
- **The Future of Educational Change**  
**Andrew Hargreaves**, Thomas More Brennan Chair of Education in the Lynch School of Education at Boston College, will draw on the most successful examples of educational policy and practice worldwide outlining an alternative model of educational change founded on innovation, inspiration, and sustainability.
- **Building the Collaborative Culture of a Professional Learning Community (PLC)**  
**Richard and Rebecca DuFour** will share the big ideas that drive the work of a PLC, examine some of the necessary cultural shifts, identify the parameters that lead to effective intervention and enrichment, and review the results

### SESSION IN THE SPOTLIGHT—Boost Your Productivity “Going Digital: Using Apple’s iPad™ in High-Performance School Leadership”

**Justin Baeder**, author of *The Essential iPad Guide for Principals* and a Seattle elementary school principal, will help you increase your productivity as a leader by using the iPad to manage your time and work. You’ll learn how principals use the iPad for walkthroughs, email, documentation, and more. Learn how to fully make the leap into digital organization in this high-impact session. Bring your iPad and learn about specific apps that will make a difference in your daily work.

from U.S. schools serving diverse student populations.

**Richard DuFour**, an authority on PLCs in schools, draws upon 34 years as a public school teacher, principal, and superintendent. As an elementary principal, **Rebecca DuFour** helped her school earn recognition as a model PLC and a Blue Ribbon School.

- **Practical Strategies Linking Brain Research to Student Achievement**

**Eric Jensen** will provide specific, practical, brain-compatible strategies and show you how teaching changes the brain. Discover what it takes for students to acquire complex learning and achieve their best. Take away practical, smart classroom strategies to implement immediately. Jensen, a former middle school English teacher, co-founded the first international brain-compatible learning program.

- **Catching Up or Leading the Way: American Education in the Age of Globalization**

**Yong Zhao**, of the University of Oregon, will share his firsthand experience as a student in China and as a parent of children attending school in the United States. He believes that “American education is at a crossroads” and “we need to change course” to maintain leadership in a rapidly changing world.

The only national conference you’ll need in 2012!



Join Us  
March 22-24, 2012  
in Seattle  
[www.naesp.org/2012](http://www.naesp.org/2012)

I love learning. Glad I’m listening to some of the best in the field. #naesp11  
*Rachel Walters*

This is my third #naesp11 and the best yet for quality and relevance of info.  
*Jennifer Malone*

Thanks, @NAESP, for another great conference. Plenary sessions and opening keynote were especially powerful for me. *Jason Bednar*

Make sure you’re there to join the excitement at #naesp12 for the National Conference of the Year! Register at [www.naesp.org/2012](http://www.naesp.org/2012) today.