

My Two Cents

With the presidential election just around the corner, we thought this would be the perfect time to hear your responses to this question:

If you could ask the presidential candidates one question about their stance on U.S. education, what would it be and why?

Do you value the role and importance of creativity in learning and, if so, how does the current federal legislation support your position?

My question is aimed at a fundamental limitation of the test-prep hysteria underlying No Child Left Behind. In conditioning a generation of children to pursue “one right answer” in the battery of questions used in high-stakes testing, in effect we devalue the alternative thinking that is eliminated in multiple-guess assessments.

*Olaf Jorgenson
Head of Schools
Almaden Country School
San Jose, California*

How will you address the many issues of literacy that we have documented across the country since mandated testing under NCLB?

We have seen that Reading First has not been proven to be an effective communication to families and teachers are increasingly frustrated with curriculum discrepancies and NCLB. If standardized testing is a first step, what comes next?

*Jeanette Gilliland
Interim Personnel Director
School District of the Chathams
Chatham, New Jersey*

New to *Principal*. This new section gives our readers an opportunity to voice their thoughts and experiences with us and fellow NAESP members.

This page will feature your letters to the editor (e-mail your letter to publications@naesp.org); a Legislative Dispatch, which will offer first-hand accounts from Federal Relations Coordinators about their interactions with their local legislators; and responses to My Two Cents, in which principals offer their thoughts on a particular question.



What ideas or plans do you have for highlighting and celebrating the accomplishments and successes of public education?

We have spent countless dollars, time, and energy telling the American public what is wrong with our schools. We have instituted legislation that focuses on weaknesses rather than strengths. This has negatively impacted the perception of public education. If it is true that “success breeds success,” we must create opportunities for our schools to build upon successes and have our communities celebrate and recognize these successes.

*Teresa Tulipana
Principal
Hawthorn Elementary
Kansas City, Missouri*


Read more responses and submit your own by visiting NAESP’s blog, the Principals’ Office, at <http://naesp.typepad.com>.

Legislative Dispatch

My U.S. representative is Tom Udall, and I talk often with the congressman and his staff. I suggest ways to improve the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, currently No Child Left Behind). My mantra is “Don’t nix the program; fix the program.” I think it’s good that the law puts a report card in your face as an educator, but it needs to be changed.

Standardized tests have cultural biases. When you say “subway” in New Mexico, children think of a sandwich, and even “elevator” is not a common concept. We take children to the hospital so they can see an elevator. The two most common words in the Southwest are “red” and “green.” When we say them, we’re talking about chilies.

We need to improve the ways we measure success among students with disabilities and those who are struggling to learn English. For example, I hope Congress will look into breaking the special education subgroup down according to disability categories. In my small town, we could learn a lot by looking at the progress of our district’s students with autism or learning disabilities as separate small groups.

Educators must keep the momentum on the ESEA update. We principals have important stories to tell, and Congress needs to hear them. 

*Raul Sanchez
NAESP Federal Relations Coordinator and
Principal
Ruth Bond Elementary School
Kirtland, New Mexico*

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