

# Q&A With NAESP's Newest Executive Staff Member



**T**his past summer, NAESP created a new position, chief advocacy and membership officer, designed to help advance

the mission and vision of the Association and provide operational leadership and direction for outreach and engagement with NAESP constituencies and a wide variety of organizations. Veteran principal Michael Schooley was appointed to this executive-level position, joining the headquarters staff in Alexandria, Virginia, in June.

Schooley, a 24-year elementary school principal and recent member of the NAESP Board of Directors, was most recently principal of Derby Ridge Elementary School in Columbia, Missouri. He will work closely with NAESP's executive director and president in a shared-leadership role. Schooley's appointment is in line with NAESP's dedication to supporting principals as a principal-led, member-driven, and business-focused organization.

## ***What brought you to the education field?***

I became interested in the field of education because of the adventures of working with kids. My initial experiences working with children in my early education courses were very rewarding and I realized that it allowed me to pursue many of my interests, which include everything from sports to music to drama to learning. I didn't have to pick just one! Teaching touches so many different facets of life and when you intersect any one of them with kids

it becomes a dynamic and fulfilling experience.

## ***What first made you want to join NAESP?***

I first joined NAESP because of the relationship potential to meet other colleagues that walk my walk every day. A colleague invited me to a State Affiliate convention and I was hooked immediately. The small price of membership has not disappointed. The principal job can be very lonely and I think it is imperative to have trusted colleagues that know what you do every day to visit with, get feedback about an idea, discuss new learning, learn from, laugh and cry with, and sometimes just vent about the stress of the job! NAESP has offered me all of that. I know principals all across the nation in schools just like mine, and those relationships are a direct result of my membership in NAESP.

## ***What is your role as NAESP chief advocacy and membership officer?***

I have been given an awesome opportunity to be a leader in an organization I absolutely love—NAESP. My job includes key responsibility for supporting members, influencing policy at all levels, and building relationships and coalitions to work for kids and principals across this nation. As an elementary principal for 24 years, I am excited and proud to bring the perspective of a practicing principal to an important leadership position for my colleagues. In my current job I hope to bring that voice to the national arena of policy development, inspire more principals to join my walk of leadership, and generate a new enthusiasm for one of the most important roles in educating our future citizenship.

## ***What aspect of leading a school do you think would most attract aspiring principals to the profession?***

Certainly, one increases the sphere of influence moving from the classroom to the school level. Most educators I know want to have an influence on the students and families they serve in a very positive and enduring way. Those that are encouraged to enter the principalship are usually masters of at least one aspect of teaching: developing relationships, delivering content, managing hard-to-handle students, communicating with the various public school constituents, and being a terrific team player, just to mention a few. However, even with one or more of these elements of expertise, they almost always have a desire to make a bigger difference for kids.

## ***What was the most rewarding aspect of your principalship?***

Touching the lives of so many kids in 24 years as an elementary principal has to be the No. 1 reward! I have had the privilege of impacting the lives of two or three generations of families as they walked their journey from childhood to young adults, parents, and grandparents. However, a close second would be having an important role in the development of young teachers. Watching young professionals grow in their expertise and being in a position to influence their learning, their approach with youngsters, and the job they do in the classroom every day is a very humbling experience. The principal is in a very unique position to influence not only students and teachers, but parents, central office personnel, and policymakers. ■