

President's Perspective

We're Making a Difference

By Nancy M. Davenport, NAESP President



Do you believe that principals are important in schools today? Well, I do! Principals can and do make a significant difference in the quality education children receive in the schools we lead. The role of principal has become more complex and challenging than ever before. Principals must have the vision, courage, knowledge, and skills necessary to be effective leaders in their respective learning communities. The importance of school climate and building relationships cannot be overstated because of how we can positively influence a student, teacher, or staff member to excel. We can help those who learn and teach in our schools to believe in themselves to be their best. Here are just two examples:

While watching the Summer Olympics, I was excited to hear that Michael Phelps' mother, Debbie, is a middle school principal and how she had been such a strong advocate for her son in school and swim-

ming. Afterward in an interview, Debbie Phelps said she was eager to get back to school to welcome her middle-level students to their new school year. Even in the excitement of her son's awesome performances as an Olympic swimmer, it was clear that she remembered how much she loved being a principal and all the students in her extended family.

Also this summer, one of my favorite Washington Redskins players, Art Monk, was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame. He, like the other inductees, thanked many people who had influenced his life and football career. However, it was only Monk who included school administrators among the important people who were influential in his life.

We may never truly recognize or be told about the influence we have on students and their future, but I can assure you that we, as principals, can and do make a difference! NAESP supports you and your efforts to help children be successful students, confident, cared for, and valued.

You Can Depend on NAESP

In doing so, the Association is working to ensure that all stakeholders and policymakers know the "Power of the Principal" with our words and actions. For one thing, we have joined with the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards in its efforts to develop a voluntary national certification program for school principals. With the development

of this program, the professional growth of principals is highly valued, as it would recognize the skills, knowledge, and achievements of highly qualified principals.

And this fall you will receive the second edition of our landmark publication, *Leading Learning Communities: What Principals Should Know and Be Able To Do*, as one of your membership benefits. It outlines the necessary skills, information, and principal narratives that support the standards important to being a highly effective school leader.

Our Collective Voice

Now is the time to use our power as principals, both individually and collectively, to influence the future of education. We definitely have the knowledge, experiences, and stories to influence the policymakers and legislators who guide what is expected of students as they learn, teachers as they teach, and principals as they lead schools in the upcoming years. For one thing, we must make sure all legislation includes professional development for principals, assistant principals, and aspiring principals. I encourage all of you to share your important ideas and stories with legislators and let them know what you believe is best for education and for children.

It is up to each of us to work collaboratively to support education, children, and one another. We can best do this when we use our collective voice to effectively represent the important role we have as school principals. ■

My Best Regards,

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