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The Monthly Newsletter of the National Association of Elementary School Principals

Welcome to the New *Communicator*!

Welcome to the second issue of the new *Communicator*—which NAESP has reformatted and redesigned to serve you better! Here's how we've improved:

1. *Communicator*—one of NAESP's long-standing, most valuable member benefits—will be distributed monthly, an increase from the previous frequency of nine times a year. The increased frequency enables the Association to report on breaking news and education-related issues that have a direct impact on elementary and middle-level principals.
2. Ten issues of the newsletter will be distributed electronically, and two will remain print editions. The remaining print editions are the December issue, which features proposed changes to the NAESP resolutions, and the March issue, which publishes statements from candidates in the NAESP election.
3. NAESP's four content-specific electronic newsletters—*Middle Matters*, *Research Roundup*, *Leadership Compass*, and *Diverse Learning Communities Today*—will be featured in the electronic version of *Communicator* as links instead of being distributed as individual stand-alone e-newsletters. This change will ensure that all members continue to receive these high-quality newsletters, but it will significantly reduce the number of publications-related e-mails members currently receive.

NAESP instituted the changes based on an overwhelmingly positive response from members, who were surveyed about their receptivity to receiving *Communicator* electronically and to receiving other e-newsletters as links in *Communicator*.

Contact publications@naesp.org for questions or more information. 

Duncan Pays Tribute to NAESP's Distinguished Principals

In a speech to the 2009 class of [National Distinguished Principals](#) (NDPs), Secretary of Education Arne Duncan referred to principals as the CEOs of the education world and lauded the attendees for the important roles they play. "For all the resources, for all the ideas, for all the sense of the hope—none of that matters, none of that works if we

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don't have great principals in schools," he said. "It's absolutely cliché, but you guys know it's true: We have no good schools in this country where there's not a good principal."



The education secretary described in great detail the policy initiatives he wants to pursue during the next three years, painting a picture of an administration dedicated to giving principals and other education leaders the tools they need to dramatically improve the country's school system. He praised a "bipartisan Congress" for providing \$100 billion in new money for education, saying this money has essentially doubled the budget available to the U.S. Department of Education.

When addressing the specifics of reform, Duncan expressed concern over what he called an "opportunity gap" that currently prevents disadvantaged students from having access to good teachers and can lead to an "achievement gap" between disadvantaged students and students from more affluent school districts. "I'm convinced if our poorest children, if our most disadvantaged children, had the best principals, had the best teachers with them every single day, there would be a dramatic reduction in that achievement gap," he said.

Duncan also said that internal reform at the Education Department was needed to eliminate the bureaucratic red tape that can often prevent the implementation of real reform. "We're trying to move from being a big, compliance-driven bureaucracy to an engine of innovation."

But Duncan's address chiefly paid tribute to the [63 NDPs](#) from across the country and abroad who came to Washington, D.C., for two days to receive recognition from NAESP for their work, and learn about the practices and policies being implemented by their peers. Duncan pointed out that working in education requires just as much heart and dedication as talent. "There are many issues that folks deal with that are sort of intellectual. This one really comes from their heart as it comes from all of your hearts. And when you have that kind of compassion and commitment, it makes a huge difference."

[Listen](#) to Duncan's speech and view [photos](#) from the 2009 NDP program. 

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House Passes National Principals Month Resolution

The U.S. House of Representatives [unanimously passed](#) a bipartisan resolution recognizing October 2009 as National Principals Month. [House Resolution 811](#) was introduced by Reps. Susan Davis, D-California, and Todd Platts, R-Pennsylvania on Oct. 21.

"Elementary, middle, and high school principals provide the vision, the dedication, and the mobilizing power for successful schools," Davis stated on the House floor. "Behind every one of their efforts is the genuine intent to improve student achievement ... So this month, let's honor this important role which they dedicate themselves to all year round."

Reps. Phil Roe, R-Tennessee, and Silvestre Reyes, D-Texas, also offered remarks in support of the resolution. "Principals are among the hardest working, yet often the least recognized, individuals in education," Roe said. "These unsung heroes deserve to be recognized for the essential role they play in preparing today's students for the challenges of tomorrow, and I ask my colleagues to support this resolution."

Each of the representatives who spoke in favor of passing the resolution offered brief anecdotes acknowledging the principals in their congressional districts as encouragement for their colleagues to join them in support of designating October 2009 as National Principals Month. "Principals are our educational system's ultimate multitaskers and, along with teachers, deserve to be recognized for their work, dedication, and passion on behalf of our children," said Reyes, whose daughter is a school principal. "National Principals Month is a great opportunity to acknowledge the importance of principals and promote educational success and leadership in our schools, and I am proud to voice my support for this resolution."

NAESP and the National Association of Secondary School Principals worked together with Davis' office to craft the resolution's text. View the [proceeding](#) (beginning at 59:33) on the C-SPAN Web site. 

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Professional Development Abounds at NAESP Convention



Come a day early to NAESP's Convention and Exposition in Houston to participate in a full day of intensive team training that focuses on hot topics in education. Participants in [Pre-Convention Workshops](#) on April 8 will receive six professional development units or continuing education units (PDUs/CEUs)


based upon six hours of engaged learning. You can also earn valuable PDUs/CEUs by participating in any of our [Three-Hour Workshops](#), which begin on April 9. Each Three-Hour Workshop participant will be granted three PDUs/CEUs.

Choose from any of the following Pre-Convention Workshops:

- BrainSMART Leading for Learning: The Principal's Guide to Increasing Student Achievement
- Developing Communities of Professional Practice: Willing to be Disturbed!
- Improving Outcomes for All Students through Shared Leadership
- Low-Prep, High-Impact Intervention Strategies that Support Differentiated Instruction and Response to Intervention

Our Three-Hour Workshops offer engaged learning on topics most important to K-8 principals. Choose from one of six sessions ranging from teacher supervision to response to intervention:

- My Soul Looks Back in Wonder: Empowering African-American Males for Success
- Debunking the Myths About Change
- Wiring the Brain to Read: The Principal's Guide to Increasing Reading Achievement
- Teacher Leadership: A Collaborative Model to Enhance Student Achievement
- Bullying Prevention Strategies that Work: Principals, Teachers, Parents, and All Staff Working Together to Create Safer Schools
- All Systems GO! Launching a Sensational Year and Transforming Your Staff: Team Building from the Heart

Visit the NAESP [convention Web site](#) for more details, including schedules and how to register. Make sure to take advantage of all the professional development opportunities NAESP has made available to you! 

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NAESP Radio Program Tackles H1N1



In the most recent installment on NAESP Radio, Executive Director Gail Connelly leads a panel discussion on "[How Principals Can Stay Ahead of H1N1](#)." Panelists include Bill Modzeleski, associate assistant deputy secretary at the U.S. Department of Education and the department's point person for safe schools; Stacy Serna, principal of Widerstein Elementary School in Cibolo, Texas; and Linda Davis-Aldritt, president-elect of the National Association of School Nurses.

Modzeleski offers six key Education Department recommendations for helping school leaders plan for a school outbreak, as well as suggestions from the department on how principals can continue to ensure that sick kids continue to learn while they're at home. "This is not a case of 'what if,'" Modzeleski said. "All schools really need to sit down and begin to plan as if the flu is going to become a part of their life."

Serna, whose school was closed last spring due to an H1N1 outbreak, shares with listeners how her school and district handled the closing. She offers lessons learned and emphasizes a solid communications plan to keep the school community informed.

Finally, Davis-Aldritt discusses how principals and school nurses can work together to protect kids and staff. "A real take-home message is that by keeping all children healthy and in school, we're going to see children having an increased amount of time in classrooms and in their seats and learning," she said.

Listen to the entire 12-minute program on [NAESP Radio](#). 

Never Miss a Beat; Join Online Principal Networks

Students have theirs, parents have theirs, and teachers have theirs, too. Make sure that you are connected to other principals and education administrators through NAESP-sponsored online social networks. They are a great way to ensure that you know what is going on at NAESP, in the education policy world, and on the ground in your colleagues' schools.

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Start with NAESP's award-winning blog, the [Principals' Office](#), which addresses timely issues that concern principals and other K-12 educators. In addition to keeping you abreast of what's happening at NAESP and in the education arena, the blog features the [Where's Diane?](#) series, which includes entries from NAESP President Diane Cargile during her travels throughout her term; the [Mentor Center](#) series, in which a novice principal seeks advice from veteran principals about the issues she faces at her school; and, most recently, a series chronicling the [National Distinguished Principal program](#).

Make sure that you never miss a post by signing up for [RSS, or news feed](#), which will keep track of when the blog is updated. After you [sign up](#), new posts from the Principals' Office, and any other RSS feeds you subscribe to, will appear in your [feed reader](#).

You can also follow NAESP on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [YouTube](#). 

Shared Leadership: A Crucial Component in Student Success

By Richard Barbacane, NAESP Consultant

Developing a culture of shared leadership has its challenges, but the benefits of doing so are significant. Shared leadership can increase student outcomes when all adults work together. This article shares some perspectives of key stakeholders on the benefits of shared leadership and notes some valuable resources for additional information.

A General Education Teacher's Perspective. Within the confines of the classroom, a general educator makes hundreds, if not thousands, of decisions a day on behalf of his or her students. While the routine "busy-ness" of the classroom typically allows little time to address important issues, we must find the time to participate in shared leadership opportunities. A culture of shared leadership provides the encouragement for teachers to reflect on and contribute to schoolwide curricular decisions—both academic and behavioral—that lead to positive, proactive change.

Sharing leadership responsibility and accountability brings everyone into the process and challenge of improving on the science, art, and craft of teaching. The practice

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benefits students in a specific classroom—and the school as a community. Resources for further reading and research:

- Cangelosi, B. (2009). [Shared leadership: Lessons learned](#). *Principal*.
- Appalachia Educational Laboratory. (2005). [Research brief: Shared leadership and student achievement](#). *Student Achievement*. Appalachia Educational Laboratory.

A Special Education Teacher's Perspective. Today, special education teachers are much more present within the general education classroom because of inclusionary practices. It is vital that a collaborative environment is fostered to ensure the success of this working partnership for educators, but most important, for students. Each individual must be given the opportunity to share his or her unique knowledge of curricula content and strategies because each is expert in his or her own way.

As we strive to teach acceptance and responsibility to our students, it is our duty as educators and service personnel to ensure we are modeling these appropriate characteristics. The collaborative efforts that can be achieved while fostering acceptance will have numerous benefits beyond the building doors. Students tend to do what they see versus what they hear. Using shared leadership within the building can ensure students see what it means to be truly collaborative. Resources for further reading and research:

- DiPaola, M., & Walther-Thomas, C. (2003). [Principals and special education: The critical role of school leaders](#). Center on Personnel Studies in Special Education.
- Kuhns, D., & Chapman, P. (2005-2006). [How does shared decision making impact inclusion](#). West Virginia University. 

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ED's Perspective: Less Heat, More Light

By Gail Connelly, NAESP Executive Director



The late [Sam Sava](#), executive director emeritus of NAESP, once described Washington, D.C., as “the 50-yard line of the world.” As the political debate heats up this fall, I’ve often been reminded of just how insightful and accurate Sava’s long-ago observation was. In politics—like hard-fought football games—gains are measured in inches, the players emerge bruised and battered, trash talk drowns out respectful sideline chatter, and the middle ground gets muddy.

NAESP has had a seat at this 50-yard line for nearly three decades, and over that time, I’ve grown increasingly concerned that education leaders of all stripes and from all types of organizations have their eye on the wrong game plan, namely, which team is winning and which one is losing. Consequently, the teams become more polarized, the debate more shrill, and the rhetoric more heated. Our national conversation about education needs less heat and more light.

Let’s shine a light on our most important shared goal: Improve all schools, focusing first on those that are under-performing. Who would argue with such a sensible approach? Beginning where the need is greatest sets the right priorities and tone. This course of action goes adrift, however, when federal policymakers propose so-called reform guidelines that assume all under-performing schools are beset by the same flaws—ineffective leadership and teaching—and so require the same remedy: replace all principals and most teachers.

This “ready, fire, aim” approach wrongly assumes that a replacement principal alone will transform a struggling school and cultivate a new culture for learning—all with the same resources. Plucking the existing principal from this environment and plopping in a new one can no more transform an under-performing school than assuming that swapping the captain of a ship that’s navigating choppy water with a new skipper will somehow calm the waves. The seas will still be turbulent.

The better solution is to afford existing principals at under-performing schools the time, talent, and tools they need to succeed. They should have the same presumption of expertise and be given the same opportunity to succeed as replacement principals. Only then can we truly determine if these principals have the

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skills, ability, and will to turn around schools and improve academic performance. Anything less damages—not strengthens—our collective effort to shape a new vision for struggling schools.

Let's remember that we all care about measuring what's important—but we must recommit to measuring *everything* that's important. Applying a single measure (standardized test scores) to a complicated enterprise (educating children) paints a one-dimensional picture.

Children succeed in a hundred important ways; we must measure all their achievements: emotional and social behavior, language fluency and comprehension, creativity, adaptability, and critical thinking and problem-solving, just to cite a few examples. Measuring these factors—and the many others—helps draw a complete, multifaceted picture for which a standardized test score can only provide a rough sketch. It's no surprise that when we assess academic performance using a single metric, we get a flat, shallow view of the child, the teacher, the principal, and the school. We can and should do better. NAESP's gold standard for what principals should know, [*Leading Learning Communities*](#), provides a ready blueprint for educating the whole child.

Let's act on our shared mission to put children first. By profession and by nature, elementary and middle-level principals put the needs of others first. NAESP's most recent 10-year study reveals that you and your colleagues invest a growing number of personal hours to your job, you arrive at school early and leave late, and you work on the weekends. Despite the time pressures, an ever-increasing workload, the stress, and the lack of an assistant principal (for most principals), nine out of 10 of you say you'd make the same career choice again. For you and your colleagues, the principalship is more of a calling than a job.


Principals are optimistic problem-solvers, practical collaborators, more interested in what works than theoretical doctrine, and committed to serving kids and teachers, not themselves. You are champions for kids, often those who have few other champions in their lives. As such, you protect every child's best chance for personal success, and you are front-line guardians of our nation's best hope for continued prosperity. Principals are everyday heroes and heroines.

And so as the political debate pushes too many educators onto one sideline or the other—often leaving children in a kind of no-man's land—NAESP will continue to

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serve the needs and interests of principals because they serve the needs and interests of children. As we move this vital mission forward, we will strive to engage in enlightened discourse, not heated rhetoric. 

Federal Report: Measuring Success

By Abigail Evans, NAESP Government Relations Specialist

What exactly do educators mean when they say “multiple measures” must be used to determine the success of students, educators, and schools? This is an issue NAESP and other national education groups continue to grapple with. Multiple measures covers a whole host of ideas, concepts, and practices, and may be contributing to some of the tough questions the Obama administration and legislators in Congress are asking about how to fairly measure academic success. What exactly does multiple measures mean?

The simple answer, of course, is that multiple measures means different things to different people. I would venture a guess, for instance, that your superintendent has a slightly different idea of what effective measures should be quantified in determining your students’ success because he or she is responsible for an entire district’s success. What about the measures that should be used to determine *your* success? Do you and your superintendent agree on that? Everyone has a different idea of what measures academic success fairly: the PTA/PTO, the school board, the teachers in your building, and the think tanks in Washington, D.C., that are advising the U.S. Department of Education.

Education Reform

We can question who is right and who is wrong, but this is a distraction from the real issue. What NAESP wants to know is, what do principals mean when they say multiple measures? The K-12 education policy conversations happening in Washington these days are focused almost solely on education reform: How do we fix the nation’s poorest-performing schools? Education Secretary Arne Duncan spent much of the summer making his recommendations and soliciting feedback from the broader education community on how to do just that. The U.S. Department of Education is looking at many ways to improve the academic success of children in these struggling schools, and seems to favor a carrot-and-stick approach to incentivize states, schools, and individual educators to “do better.”

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Two major proposals were released in July and August by the Department of Education: the proposed rules for participating in the Race to the Top fund (part of the nearly \$100 billion education funding in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) and proposed changes to the School Improvement Grants fund that provides monies to the lowest-performing schools via formula.

NAESP submitted [comments](#) on [each](#) of these proposals, sharing our areas of agreement and concerns. We reiterated our fundamental support for multiple measures in determining student, school, or educator success in our comments on both of the proposals. We expressed our concern that these proposals stick to the underlying federal education law's (No Child Left Behind) over-reliance on standardized assessments as the sole or primary measure of success. This echoes what is listed in our recommendations for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA; currently known as NCLB), where we emphasize the importance of measuring the myriad factors that impact student learning. Additionally, we reiterate our strong belief that nonacademic factors like student health and nutrition, as well as the social, emotional, and cognitive health of students, must be met to foster academic success.

Duncan has announced his strong support for reauthorizing ESEA sooner rather than later. Although some in Congress estimated the reauthorization would begin in earnest as early as this fall, others, particularly those in the U.S. Senate, believe reauthorization won't begin until 2011, well after the 2010 midterm elections have ended. Duncan, however, has indicated that the Department of Education will be releasing its recommendations for reauthorization to Congress early in the new year.

NAESP would like to hear from principals about what you believe should be measured to gain a full and accurate evaluation of your school and students success. We also want to know what you believe is a fair and accurate measure of teacher and principal success. Like it or not, momentum has shifted to tying student achievement scores to their educators. NAESP regularly cites the Wallace Foundation's finding that principals are second only to classroom instruction in influencing student achievement. We can't very well tout that as an example of the role of the principal in schools today while brushing aside the calls from Washington for greater accountability. Help us define what principals mean when they say "multiple measures." To submit your ideas, go to NAESP's blog, the [Principals' Office](#). 