

# communicator

The Monthly Newsletter of the National Association of Elementary School Principals

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## Flurry of Activity Surrounds National Elementary Honor Society

It's been less than 12 months since the National Elementary Honor Society (NEHS) first launched, and word has spread like wildfire. As of Feb. 1, more than 650 chapters in 46 states and the District of Columbia have been established, illustrating a void that has been filled for nationally recognizing the achievements of students at the elementary level.

NEHS is a program administered by the National Association of Secondary School Principals in cooperation with the National Association of Elementary School Principals. It is designed to recognize the accomplishments and academic achievements of the whole child—including the ability to be a responsible student at school, at home, and in the community. The program is

also designed to foster leadership development and to encourage the participation of elementary-aged students in service activities.

Many principals have chosen to start an NEHS chapter at their school because of the success of



One by one, students in grades 4-6 are being inducted into the National Elementary Honor Society, the nation's newest student recognition program.  
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the secondary school levels of the program—the National Junior Honor Society and National Honor Society, both also administered by NASSP—in their school and/or district. “We have seen the importance, and

usefulness, of the National Honor Society on the secondary level, so we thought it would be a great opportunity to involve our students who are on the elementary level, whether it be academics or service-oriented,” said Brad Davies, principal of Orem Elementary School in Utah.

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## New Beginnings

The NEHS program was first introduced last April, with Shepardson Elementary School in Colorado having the unique distinction of becoming the first chartered member. A dozen more schools from across the country followed suit by month's end. "I believe that academic success needs to be celebrated early and often to keep children motivated," said principal Jackie Daniilidis. Her school, Estelle Elementary in Louisiana, is among the first 13 charter members of NEHS. "Our school has always had honor roll ceremonies and awards for perfect attendance and most improved student," Daniilidis added. "An elementary chapter seems to further add credence to the pursuit of excellence and being a lifelong learner."

NEHS was specifically designed to help schools give students in grades 4-6 national recognition for their accomplishments. Currently, students in grade 6 can become members of the National Junior Honor Society in the second semester of a school year, but NEHS expands their ability to participate in an Honor Society program for an entire school year. Any school with students in grades 4, 5, and/or 6 can establish an NEHS chapter.

## Criteria

Student candidates must meet or exceed the national minimum standard for scholarship (i.e., academic performance), which is a cumulative scholastic average of at least 85 percent, B, or 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale), or the equivalent standard of excellence. Each chapter designates criteria regarding personal responsibility. For example, Daniilidis explains: "Aside from academics, we are looking at a student's community involve-

ment ... Another aspect is students as peacemakers and peer mediators to help keep our school climate one that makes all students comfortable in their learning environment."

Sharon Elementary School in Georgia started a chapter in May and recently held its first induction ceremony for 23 of its fifth-grade students. During the ceremony, which was an evening event with family members and all fifth-grade teachers in attendance, principal Bill George said he told the students, "Your résumé begins on this day." He explained to the inductees that colleges not only consider academics but also the service students have provided throughout their academic career, and that becoming

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members of NEHS was an important first step.

In addition to determining candidate criteria, chapters are also responsible for writing their own bylaws, which clarify operating procedures, and determining the quarterly projects in which members must participate. At least one of these projects must be designated as a service project for the school or community. Members of the Sharon Elementary chapter have established their first service project: collecting toiletries for local homeless shelters and nursing homes.

While Sharon Elementary appears to have hit the ground running once it received charter status, other schools are using their first year as a planning phase. Davies, for example, "hope[s] to get everything organized and ready to begin, fully, in the 2009-2010 school year." Similarly, Daniilidis says, "Our school is using the first year to review guidelines and to develop some school

traditions that will be an integral part of our National Elementary Honor Society chapter."

## What Lies Ahead

April will mark the one-year anniversary of the NEHS program, during which time principals and teachers in 657 schools have been busy forming chapters, establishing traditions, holding induction ceremonies, and, perhaps most notably, reinforcing the importance of academics and service to their students.

"It sets these students apart and recognizes the sacrifices that they and their parents make as they strive for academic excellence and in being a lifelong learner," said Daniilidis.

Added George: "I believe it's brought to our school a way to showcase excellence."

NEHS chapter applications are accepted on an ongoing basis, and chapters that are established by June 30 will be designated as "Founding Chapters of NEHS."

The NEHS Web site ([www.nehs.org](http://www.nehs.org)) provides numerous resources for schools interested in starting a chapter as well as for those that have already established one, such as a guide to help principals prepare their school to host a chapter of NEHS, a sample press release to distribute once the chapter is established, and information on all aspects of planning and implementing an induction ceremony.

"Being a nationally recognized program, it is great for our students to have this opportunity, gain the recognition, and realize the importance of school academics and service within the educational community," said Davies.

—Vanessa St. Gerard