

President's Perspective Reflections on My Journey as NAESP President

Nancy Davenport, NAESP President



Throughout my tenure as NAESP president, I have worked with the NAESP Board of Directors to stress the importance of the power of the principal. We sincerely believe that the role of principals is second only to the importance of quality instruction in the classroom. As a result, NAESP has diligently worked to elevate the importance of principals as instructional leaders and lead change agents in current school reform efforts.

We have purposefully focused on being sure principals are at the table when policy decisions about education are being made, ensuring that policy and legislation are pragmatic, fully funded, and focused on the student. Now that President Barack Obama and our legislators have provided an unprecedented \$100 billion to improve schools, principals welcome the opportunity to help decide how this money is to be spent and accept the accountability that goes with it.

The work, however, does not end there. NAESP will continue to speak

out on behalf of principals to assure that all stakeholders—policymakers, legislators, parents, central office administrators, and community leaders—realize the significant difference principals make in the effectiveness and quality of the schools they lead. As a principal-led and member-driven organization, NAESP is focused on strongly advocating for the principalship and helping principals lead quality schools by offering members excellent professional development opportunities, an informative Web site, increased opportunities to network, and valuable member services.

The Road to Effective Leadership

During my travels as NAESP president, I have developed an increased respect for one particular skill principals need to be successful in schools, communities, and within professional associations: the ability to relate positively and constructively with all types of education stakeholders. Thus, it is clear that principals must develop the skills necessary to effectively build productive and collaborative relationships with many groups of people in order to achieve the main goal of providing a high-quality education for all students.

Furthermore, we need to recognize the importance of marketing our schools in an increasingly competitive school environment. With the national emphasis on school improvement reform, school choice, charter schools, and innovation, we must stand up and speak out about the excellent programs offered in our public schools. More than ever, principals must share success stories

to assure all stakeholders that our schools offer the creative, innovative, and dynamic learning environments necessary to prepare our students for the 21st century.

Final Thoughts

Since my tenure as NAESP president ends June 30, this will be my final opportunity to share my thoughts with you in this space. I anticipate that day will be filled with a bitter sweetness. The sweetness is in knowing you have a very strong and committed Board of Directors and NAESP leadership team, who are keenly aware of their important responsibilities to guide the future of NAESP as the premier professional association for elementary and middle-level principals. However, there is no doubt I will miss attending the many state affiliate conferences where I have met so many dedicated principals, leaders, and executive directors. It has been so rewarding to observe, listen, and learn from you. Attending your conferences, visiting schools, and seeing your work in action, in addition to representing NAESP, will forever remain highlights of my term. Serving as NAESP president has been a phenomenal opportunity in my professional career and I respectfully thank you for the privilege and honor.

Thank you for your continued NAESP membership and your passionate commitment to the principalship. Your hard work each day on behalf of all children is incredibly important. I urge you to never forget the power you have as a principal to make a real difference in the lives of children and their education. ■

Best regards always,

NAESP BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: Nancy M. Davenport (VA); President-elect: Diane Cargile (IN); Past President: Mary Kay Sommers (CO); Zone 1: David Cobb (VT); Zone 2: Louis Della Barca (NJ); Zone 3: Linda J. Chamberlin (MD); Zone 4: Joseph Edward Pollard (GA); Zone 5: Mark Kern (IN); Zone 6: Juli Kwikkel (IA); Zone 7: Robert Lewis Monson (SD); Zone 8: Deborah Ayers-Geist (KS); Zone 9: Barbara A. Chester (OR); Foundation: Mark O. Terry (TX), Deborah Harvest (NJ)

NAESP STAFF

Executive Director: Gail Connelly; NAESP Foundation CEO: Ernest J. Mannino; Chief Advocacy and Membership Officer: Michael L. Schooley; *Communicator* Editor: Vanessa St. Gerard; Design: Jennifer Apperson

Communicator (ISSN 0745-2233) is published monthly September through May by the National Association of Elementary School Principals, 1615 Duke St., Alexandria, VA 22314-3483; 703-684-3345. Subscriptions are available only as part of membership. Annual active membership dues in the association are \$215, institutional/subscriber membership for libraries and other organizations is \$140. Single copies of *Communicator* are \$2.50 (10 or more copies, \$2 each). Third-class postage paid in No. Virginia, and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Please send address changes to Member Services Center, 1615 Duke St., Alexandria, VA 22314-3483.

