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New faces, priorities, and politics in Washington require new, more assertive actions from NAESP in our advocacy efforts on Capitol Hill and before the Obama administration. And that's just what we've started here—a new, proactive advocacy agenda that has already proved beneficial and promises ongoing, passionate representation of the principalship in Washington, D.C.

New Advocacy Strategy

In recent months, NAESP's advocacy team has met with key legislators as we've begun a three-step strategy to reintroduce NAESP on Capitol Hill. In the first round of visits, NAESP's deputy executive director, Michael Schooley, detailed his experiences as a 25-year principal, bringing a veteran practitioner's voice to current policy discussions.

During these initial meetings, we emphasized that in partnership with teachers, principals provide the school-based leadership to improve student achievement, close the achievement gap, and ensure every student is provided a pathway to success. NAESP was invited to craft legislative language for principal professional development; in it, we emphasized elementary principals' expertise in early childhood education and early literacy efforts.

ESEA Reauthorization

The most popular bet in Washington education policy circles surrounds exactly when the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) will begin. Many congressional aides in the House of Representatives insist reauthorization efforts will begin in September, while their Senate counterparts seem more confident the work will not begin until late 2010. We are currently reviewing NAESP's ESEA reauthorization recommendations that were established by a

A New Approach to Advocacy

committee of members in 2006. We will make suggestions to the NAESP Board of Directors about necessary changes before the reauthorization process moves forward. As always, send your advice and guidance to governmentrelations@naesp.org.

Race to the Top

In July, President Barack Obama and Education Secretary Arne Duncan released proposed rules and priorities for the Race to the Top (RTTT) fund, a grant program established as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The purpose of this grant program is to incentivize states and schools to make necessary changes to secure education reform that benefits students' academic achievement. These incentives are based on four "assurance" areas that are the foundation of Obama's education reform agenda:

- Implementing standards and assessments;
- Improving teacher effectiveness and achieving equity in teacher distribution;
- Improving collection and use of data; and
- Supporting struggling schools.

The significance of the RTTT lies in these four assurance areas. Simply put, we will see these reflected in the next ESEA. NAESP paid particular attention to new definitions for "effective principal" and "highly effective principal" in the proposed guidance for this reason. We recommended changes to the definitions to more accurately measure true principal effectiveness based in part on NAESP's own *Leading Learning Communities* standards book. However, we also noted our concerns about these definitions being transplanted into the ESEA and applied to a broader purpose than the currently proposed and narrowly focused RTTT grant program.

NAESP Executive Director Gail Connelly stated: "NAESP is pleased

to be part of the dialogue regarding the Race to the Top fund because we know the vital role principals play in school reform efforts. We are doing all we can to ensure that the voices of elementary and middle-level principals are heard. But more importantly, we're doing all we can to ensure that the voices of elementary and middle-level principals are heeded. We may not always get our way, but our voice 'at the table,' whether on Capitol Hill or at the Department of Education, will be strong and persistent."

Go to NAESP's Web site (www.naesp.org) to review the Association's comments to the RTTT proposed guidance. The final guidelines from the U.S. Department of Education will be released this fall.

Core Common Standards

This summer, NAESP joined dozens of national education groups and nearly all states in an initiative established by the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) to establish common core academic standards. NAESP was pleased that the thrust of this initiative requires that the common standards be research- and evidence-based and state-led, thus ensuring that the voices of local educators are heard.

NGA and CCSSO, along with their coalition partners, have already released proposed academic standards for college- and career-readiness in high school, and have pledged to release elementary-level standards later this fall. NAESP will be given the opportunity to review and respond to the draft standards for the elementary grades when they are available. The Association's statement on this initiative is on the NAESP Web site.

As NAESP continues to expand our advocacy efforts on behalf of the principalship, we will continue to solicit your feedback. We encourage you to e-mail governmentrelations@naesp.org with your comments, questions, or concerns related to our work on your behalf. ■