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The Monthly Newsletter of the National Association of Elementary School Principals

How to Foster Change When Change Is Hard


That's the topic addressed in the latest segment of [NAESP Radio](#). Host Gail Connelly interviews best-selling author Chip Heath, whose latest book, *Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard*, examines the intrinsic conflict between what he labels the rational mind and the emotional mind and how this conflict acts as the primary obstacle to change. "We're all a little schizophrenic about change," Heath says. "We may know intellectually and analytically that we need to change, but there's a big part of our brains that responds emotionally and responds emotionally to liking the comfort of the existing routine."

In the interview, Heath discusses how principals are in an optimal position to change the culture of the schools they lead and to encourage their staff members to treat change as a gradual process that is not without ups and downs. "Cultures that embrace change as a process are more effective, and part of change is that there are going to be setbacks, there are going to be hard times," he explains.

Heath also says that in order to break patterns of ineffective behavior, individuals must stop focusing on problems and how to solve them and instead focus on successes and how to replicate them.

"In a school setting, even in times of struggle, there are places where things are going right," he says. "The lesson for all of us is: By breaking down what's succeeding, we're going to find insights that allow us to succeed more often."

The point of this approach, Heath explains, is that focusing on successes appeals to individuals' emotions and inspires them to work harder to foster and maintain change. "Don't speak to people just analytically when there's a change that needs to be made. You have to reach their emotion."

[Listen](#) to the full interview as Heath discusses why change is achievable for everyone and gives concrete examples of how teachers have used innovative methods to bring change into their classrooms. 

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Principals' Buyers Guide: A Hidden Gem of Membership

It's a virtual exhibit hall all year long, plus a lot more. It's also more than just a list of companies.



The NAESP [Principals' Buyers Guide](#) is your one-stop place online to find the products and companies that can supply your school's needs. You can follow up on and learn more about a company you saw in the exhibit hall at NAESP's 2010 convention in Houston and also learn about others that weren't able to attend this year.

The Principals' Buyers Guide organizes 500 companies into 11 categories of service need, ranging from audiovisual to school equipment and supplies. You can search by company name or obtain a list of suppliers for a particular need. If you need to dig deeper, links go directly to company Web sites, and full contact information is provided, including a quick way to send an e-mail query to each company.

Be sure to explore this hidden gem of membership. It's a benefit you will use again and again. 

Free Mentoring Program for RTI Leaders

The RTI Action Network is offering NAESP members a chance to participate in a free year of its [Leadership Network](#), which was created to support district and building leaders in the effective implementation of response to intervention. Designed to accommodate busy educators with full schedules, the Leadership Network will provide important guidance on how to proceed to get results for improved student achievement.

The Leadership Network will support school leaders at any stage of RTI implementation. Members of the network receive mentoring from an experienced RTI implementer, free resources such as monthly tips and a subscription to a monthly newsletter, involvement in an online community, and much more.


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During the 2010-2011 school year, the RTI Action Network will be offering this opportunity to 250 building and district leaders, **free of charge**. Membership is limited and the application process closes **July 30, 2010**, so [sign up](#) today! 

What's Your Story? The Nation Needs to Know

Looking During the past year, NAESP's advocacy efforts on behalf of elementary and middle-level principals have intensified, keeping pace with the current high-stakes "reform" era in education characterized by measures that often seem draconian.

Last month, we invited members to tell us how they have been affected by the overall school improvement debate, the four turnaround models that result in the dismissal of principals, the movement to adopt common standards, the proposal to connect Title I funds to the adoption of Common Core State Standards, and so on.

The [responses we received](#) provided insight into how federal policies and discussions in Washington affect principals in the field, and they provided our advocacy team with valuable information. "Common core standards are positive, as long as there is flexibility in how they are taught," said a principal from Sioux Falls, South Dakota. "We need to teach deeper, not wider, so the standards need to be narrowed so that teaching is not just skimming the surface but going deep so students can learn the processes and skills which can be transferred to other areas of learning."

Respondents expressed their views on a variety of topics and shared anecdotes from their own buildings. "The turnaround models have done nothing to improve teaching and learning other than contribute to the stress levels in schools," said a principal from Carrington, North Dakota. "The added stress has been an unhealthy thing for staff and students as well as parents."

As talks for reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act heat up in the coming months, we want to hear more so that we can continue to share principals' stories in meetings with Education Secretary Arne Duncan, in the halls of Congress, in coalitions of national associations, and on the pages of NAESP's publications. Our goal

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is very simple: to make sure the voices of K-8 principals are heard loud and clear in school improvement debates.

Visit "[What's Your Story?](#)" and tell us how you have been affected by the school improvement debate. 


See Your Name and Story in Print

If you've ever thought "I could write a book," now is the time to write it!

The [NAESP Foundation](#), in cooperation with Charlesbridge Publishing, invites you to participate in its [Children's Book of the Year Contest](#).



This is a perfect opportunity to put your manuscript into the hands of a nationally known publisher. Picture and chapter books written for children from 3 to 16 years of age will be considered. Five picture-book finalists and five chapter-book finalists will be chosen, and one winner's book from each category will be published. Manuscripts will be selected for creativity, storyline, and originality.

The deadline for submitting manuscripts is Feb. 15, 2011, so you have plenty of time this summer to get your manuscript together and submit it in the fall. Learn more about the [contest](#) and download an [entry form](#). 

Success Starts With Reading

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is focusing attention on the critical importance of achieving grade-level reading proficiency for all children by the end of third grade, and its special KIDS COUNT report, [Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters](#), introduces the Casey Foundation's call for a renewed emphasis on reading success.

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“Until third grade, children are learning to read. After third grade, they also are reading to learn. When kids are not reading by fourth grade, they almost certainly get on a glide path to poverty,” said Ralph Smith, executive vice president of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. “Poor reading test scores are profoundly disappointing to all of us who see school success and high school graduation as beacons in the battle against intergenerational poverty.”

Two out of every three fourth graders are not proficient in reading according to the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress. Worse, four of five fourth graders from low-income families are also not proficient in reading. The failure to help children from low-income families reach this milestone cements educational failure and poverty into the next generation. The ability to read is central to a child’s success in school, lifelong earning potential, and the ability to contribute to the nation’s economy and its security.

Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters has identified four steps to close the gap and raise the bar:

1. **Develop a coherent system of early care and education** that aligns, integrates, and coordinates what happens from birth through third grade so children are ready to take on the learning tasks associated with fourth grade and beyond.
2. **Encourage and enable parents**, families, and caregivers to play their indispensable roles as co-producers of good outcomes for their children.
3. **Prioritize, support, and invest in results-driven initiatives to transform low-performing schools** into high-quality teaching and learning environments in which all children, including those from low-income families and high-poverty neighborhoods, are present, engaged, and educated to high standards.
4. **Develop and use solutions** to two of the most significant contributors to the under-achievement of children from low-income families—chronic absence from school and summer learning loss.

NAESP is an outreach partner of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. [Read more details](#) about the KIDS COUNT report. 

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President's Perspective: Your Stories, Your Messages, Your Impact

By Diane Cargile, NAESP President



NAESP Since becoming your president in July 2009, I have been proud to take your charge to lead in the advocacy of advancing NAESP's agenda to support principals as strong instructional leaders who promote and ensure excellence in their schools. It's been an exhilarating year, chock full of opportunities to tell *your* stories. Never before in the history of our country have educators had an opportunity to make a difference in leveraging their influence in their communities. This is a new day in America, a new day for educators, and an unprecedented opportunity for NAESP to advance the "Power of the Principal."

As your president, you have given me the authority and autonomy to represent you at the federal, state, and local levels. It's been my privilege to do so and to share your stories at all levels of policymaking. During the past 12 months, I have greatly appreciated your openness, passion, and commitment to your schools, and I have attempted to take on your enthusiasm and dedication as my own so I could better convey your stories with policymakers at all levels. Your stories have made a profound and positive difference in NAESP's efforts to influence legislation, regulations, and proposals on your behalf and on behalf of your students and schools.

In addition to being your spokesperson, I've also had many opportunities to represent you in person, which has been a very powerful experience. Whenever I visit Capitol Hill, I visit the offices of my community's elected representatives to share NAESP's position on a wide range of issues, from the importance of the principal's role as instructional leader to the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act—relationship-building that each of you has with congressional leaders from your states. You know them through your churches, clubs, and social outings; you educate their children and interact with their families; you share hometown roots, values, friends, and colleagues.

It's exactly these interactions and connections that make such a difference, lead to greater understanding, and result in shared goals and mutual respect. Through your

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outreach, elected leaders can become our friends and advocates at the national level. They need to know you, your challenges, and your thoughts so they can make the best decisions about education. They simply can't do that without input from us, the educators who are in schools and interacting with children, day in and day out. Here are some ways to get started:

- Advance the positive image of school principals through the news media.
- Share your voice through your own blog; contribute to NAESP's blog, "[The Principals' Office](#)"; use NAESP's social media ([Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [LinkedIn](#)); or visit [What's Your Story?](#), a new feature on NAESP's Web site.
- Invite elected leaders to visit your schools and see first-hand how effective schools—and strong principals—operate.
- Establish partnerships with community leaders who have resources that can improve teaching and learning in your school.
- Make sure your superintendent supports professional development for principals.
- Establish a mentor program by drawing on the talents and experiences of valued leaders who have retired from the principalship.

In the past 12 months, I've also had the opportunity to convey the power of the principalship and the importance of your stories in conversations with members of the media on issues as wide-ranging as corporal punishment, multigrade groupings, recess coaches, school supplies, and a myriad of other topics.

As my year as president comes to an end, our journey together as colleagues continues—and our collective story-telling must continue as well. Woven together, our stories create a blueprint for action and advocacy that strengthens the profession and supports us all. I look forward to continuing our journey together as we advance the Power of the Principal! Thank you for the support you've shown me, for all you do for the principalship, for NAESP and your state organization, and most important, for children. 

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Federal Report: NAESP Members Testify Before Congress About ESEA

By Abigail C. Evans, NAESP Government Relations Specialist

Timing of when the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) will happen is the burning question in education circles these days. [President Obama](#) and Education Secretary [Arne Duncan](#) are calling on Congress to move swiftly to update the massive education law and some legislators seem inclined to agree: Both the House and Senate education chairs have indicated they plan to release their respective reauthorization proposals this summer. However, the congressional calendar is already full—and short, given the midterm elections approaching in November—therefore, the ESEA reauthorization might slip into 2011.

Nevertheless, much has been done recently that gives some credence to reauthorization moving forward. Since April, the congressional education committees have been holding hearings on various topics surrounding ESEA. NAESP was pleased that two of its members were invited to testify on different panels to discuss the role of the principal in reform and instructional leadership.

In April, Wyoming elementary school principal Layne Parmenter [testified](#) before the Senate's Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee during a hearing on teachers and leaders regarding the Education Department's [Blueprint for Reform](#) proposal.

During his testimony, Parmenter told senators, "Next to good teachers in the classroom, principals are the driving force behind improved student achievement and learning outcomes." Parmenter was invited to testify to represent the perspective of America's rural schools and educators. "As you consider the many options and reforms to ESEA, I respectfully urge you to remember the complex and important job of the principal and the unique challenges of those serving in rural areas," he added. Parmenter pointed to the importance of ongoing professional development and mentoring for principals to stay current in best practices and to lead schools to sustainable achievement.

In May, Virginia elementary school principal Susan Bridges [testified](#) before the House Education and Labor Committee to discuss the skills needed to lead change in schools.

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Citing concerns with school reform proposals that would enable the federal government to replace principals and teachers in persistently low-performing schools, Bridges told the committee, "Principals understand that local decisions—staffing, resource priorities, infrastructure needs, etc.—must continue to reside at the local school and district level where community and school needs can be adequately weighed and addressed."

During a robust question-and-answer session, Bridges and her fellow witnesses agreed that four items are necessary to lead and sustain change in schools: flexibility, time, local decision-making, and professional development for teachers and principals. Now that the education committees have completed their hearings on ESEA, they will begin work on drafting their respective reauthorization proposals. Regardless of how soon we see the details of these proposals, NAESP has been working closely with Congress and the administration on [our own proposals](#) for ESEA. NAESP is committed to ensuring all principals receive the authority and autonomy they require to lead their schools to success. We know principals—just like teachers—require access to ongoing professional development and [opportunities for mentoring](#) with principals in similar school situations. And we're forging ground with a proposal to ensure principals who seek it have access to quality [professional development](#) in the area of early childhood education.

As the reauthorization process moves forward, NAESP continues to solicit feedback from our members. Visit our [Advocacy page](#) to find out how to get involved. 

Mentor Center: Seeking Tips for the Hiring Process

As the school year comes to an end, so does the tenure of NAESP's [Mentor Center principal](#). Here's her final entry:

With retirements, resignations, and staff moving into different positions in the district, I needed to hire seven new staff members. Most school districts around us are on the opposite end of the spectrum; they are laying off staff. Because of this I have had to screen hundreds of applications for the hiring process. Something that you don't learn in college is how to efficiently screen applications to narrow down the amount of candidates for interviews.

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Our district uses a committee process to hire additional staff, so I formed seven different committees and seek their input on interview questions that addressed what qualities we were seeking for each position. I found it very important to have dialogue among the committee members after interviewing each applicant, and by the time we completed interviews each day we were able to come to consensus on our top choice for each position.

I then had the additional time-consuming task of calling all references (which usually turns into multiple games of phone tag) before offering the candidate the position. I've learned from a previous experience to always wait for the candidate to accept the position before calling the others to inform that they were not chosen for the position. In addition, I've found it very helpful to use a script on an index card when I call each candidate because, otherwise, I fumble with my words when giving him or her the bad news.

What have others found to be helpful in the hiring process to ensure that you hire the best candidate and save time when flooded with hundreds to choose from? Offer your feedback [online](#). 