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The Monthly Newsletter of the National Association of Elementary School Principals


Convention Coverage Begins Thursday

If you can't make it to NAESP's convention this year, we've got you covered. Don't miss a beat by reading [Convention News Online \(CNO\)](#), which will feature stories about the convention's major events, updates from the NAESP convention blogger, tweets from various attendees, and a photo gallery.

Starting Thursday, April 8, updated news coverage will be available on *CNO*, where you'll also find links to NAESP's blog, Twitter account, and photo albums—which will all be dedicated to the Association's 89th [Annual Convention and Exposition](#) through Sunday, April 11.

Our 2010 convention blogger, principal Melissa Patschke, will chronicle her convention experience by posting updates daily on the [Principals' Office](#). And NAESP's official convention photographer, Lifetouch, will bring the convention to you via pictures of each day's events.

We're bringing the convention to you, so access *CNO* from the [NAESP home page](#) or make the [CNO site](#) one of your favorite pages in your Web browser.

And if you plan on being at convention and would like to take part in the convention coverage using social networking sites (e.g., Twitter, Picasa, Flickr) use the [tag #naesp2010](#) with each message you write or photo you upload to social networking sites. That way, others can easily find your convention-related items online. 

Is American Education Better Than We Think?

That's the question addressed in the latest segment of [NAESP Radio](#). Host Gail Connelly interviews Yong Zhao, university distinguished professor at Michigan State University, who argues that the weakness of American education might be greatly overstated. "The majority of our education force should be congratulated and thanked and entrusted," he says.

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In the interview, Zhao discusses what he believes is a misconception of U.S. education and the disadvantages of comparing U.S. test scores to those of students in other countries.

“The current misunderstanding that the U.S. education is worse than the education in other countries—measured by test scores—that’s definitely going to send us down the wrong path unless we correct that perception and rethink seriously about what globalization requires,” he says. “The test scores of a limited number of subjects do not reflect whether a student is valuable in the future, whether that’s the quality of education in a school or a teacher.”

Zhao also addresses the downside of adopting national standards: “With the current reform, it’s very likely we’re going to further narrow our curriculum ... to what’s going to be tested by the common core standards.”

The repercussion of this, Zhao explains, is that subjects that will be tested are the subjects that will become valued in schools. “Especially at the elementary school level, we lose opportunities for our children to truly acquire and develop the other elements, skills, abilities to be able to succeed in the age of globalization.”

[Listen to the full interview](#) as Zhao discusses why American schools are fundamentally well positioned to produce children with the skills needed in a new world transformed by technology. 

Win Supplies for Your School!

Woman’s Day magazine, in collaboration with NAESP, is sponsoring a contest for one lucky school to win more than \$1,000 worth of art supplies, offices supplies, and other resources that will help students achieve at high levels.

Anyone can nominate a school—parents, teachers, even students. To enter, write an essay of 250 words or fewer explaining why your school needs supplies. Be sure to include your name, address, daytime phone number, and e-mail address, as well as

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the name and address of the school, the principal's name and his or her phone number.

More information is available [online](#). All entries must be received by **April 26, 2010**.

Mail your essay to:

Angela Ebron

Woman's Day School Giveaway

1633 Broadway, 42nd floor

New York, NY 10019 


Time to Grow, Time to Give

The NAESP Foundation Annual Giving Campaign has kicked off! The [NAESP Foundation](#) advances excellence, innovation, and equity in schools by endowing leadership and learning for principals for the benefit of all children.



All campaign donations go toward scholarships and grants for pre-K-8 schools. Visit www.naesp.org/NAESP_Foundation.aspx and click on "Give Now" to donate to the foundation. One-hundred percent of your contribution goes toward the NAESP endowment.

Also, if you plan on attending [NAESP's convention](#), you can contribute to the foundation's efforts by participating in its [silent auction](#). Items up for bid include various trip packages and hotel stays, NFL memorabilia, principal resources, and free membership to NAESP. Come stop by to bid on these incredible items!

All proceeds will go toward the NAESP Foundation to provide funding for education initiatives and support services and resources for elementary and middle-level principals. 

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Make Your Voice Heard!

NAESP's 2010 election is less than one week away. So if you haven't already, review our [election page](#), which contains all the information you need to make sure your voice is heard in this year's election.

All NAESP members eligible to vote (active, institutional active, emeritus, and life members) will receive an election notification message from vote@naesp.org on Tuesday, April 13. The message will contain a password and a link to the eBallot site where you can participate in the election of the president-elect and directors of Zones 3, 4, and 6. You may vote any time between April 13 and May 12. For more information, visit www.naesp.org/2010_Elections.aspx.



If you do not receive an election notification message, call 800-386-2377 and ask for Barbara Wilmer or Nancy Sharbel.

Clarification: The headline for the statement from Robert L. Monson, candidate for NAESP president-elect, in the March *Communicator* included a typographic error. It should have read as follows: "Do What Is Best for the Children First, Do Everything Else Next." 

Summer Learning

The summer is a great time to fit in some much-needed professional development, and NAESP's [Summer Institute](#) is an ideal opportunity to do just that. From July 6 to 9, principals will descend upon San Diego for three days of learning targeted just for them.

Who Should Attend. This program is specifically designed for education leaders—principals, teacher leaders, and curriculum developers who must gain awareness and understanding of



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teaching and learning in diverse communities and the role that current brain research plays in that enhanced understanding.

About the Presenters. Donna Wilson and Marcus Conyers are the founders of BrainSMART and co-developers of graduate programs focused on brain-based leading, teaching, and reading with Nova Southeastern University. Their BrainSMART strategies draw from 30 years of international research in psychology and brain science; leadership studies from the military, corporations, and education institutions; and first-hand experience in leading state and districtwide initiatives with tens of thousands of educators.

Learn more by visiting NAESP's [Leadership Academy](#). 

ED's Perspective: Finding Our Voice

By Gail Connelly, NAESP Executive Director

Here's some "hot off the press" information I'm thrilled to share with you:

According to very preliminary information from NAESP's new market research survey that just crossed my desk, more than 75 percent of NAESP members—you and your colleagues across the nation—rate "advocacy on federal legislation and policy" as an extremely important/very important member benefit.

This reaffirms what we've been hearing from you in informal and formal conversations, in e-mails and phone calls, and during meetings. You want—you need—your voice to be heard on Capitol Hill and in the U.S. Department of Education. But none of us can be heard when we're speaking alone. One voice quickly gets drowned out in the din of discourse. When the voices of thousands of principals join together as a national community of peers, amplified by NAESP's megaphone, you gain power and resonance in a chorus that no governance body or Cabinet-level department can tune out or ignore.

We hear you loud and clear, too, and we've taken strong action by assembling an expert policy staff at NAESP who are advancing a proactive advocacy agenda. Our investment in advocacy on your behalf is already paying big dividends.

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Our message to Congress and the U.S. Department of Education is clear, strong, and consistent: Principals provide essential leadership in improving student achievement and school performance. Your voice must be heard and heeded in the national discussion about school improvement. Here's a summary of our action on your behalf.

On the Hill

This spring, NAESP launched a multifaceted, comprehensive advocacy campaign on the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)—still known formally as No Child Left Behind—to ensure that federal policies are aimed at building the capacity of elementary and middle-level principals to lead learning communities. NAESP is working to advance the entire bill (which includes several separate sections), but is specifically focusing on two significant provisions that directly impact principals:

- Professional development—NAESP is working collaboratively with other associations to redefine “professional development” in ESEA so it is standards-based. We're also working with members of Congress to identify a sponsor for our proposal to provide professional development for principals to strengthen their knowledge and skills related to early childhood education. Our proposal is grounded in our research-based standards, which are outlined in [Leading Early Childhood Learning Communities](#).
- High-quality mentoring—NAESP proposed language that would establish and fund high-quality leadership mentoring programs modeled on our [National Mentor Certification Program](#).

On a separate initiative, NAESP helped create the Literacy Education for All, Results for the Nation, or the LEARN Act, which is a new, comprehensive measure that addresses literacy education from early childhood through adolescence. LEARN was introduced in the House and Senate in November; it will be folded into other legislation in the coming months.

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With the U.S. Department of Education

NAESP continues to be proactively engaged with the department on several issues, some of which the Association supports on behalf of principals and some of which the Association respectfully opposes.

- Race to the Top, part of the stimulus package, is designed to provide states with incentives to implement reform across four “assurance” areas: standards and assessments, teacher effectiveness and equity in teacher distribution, collecting and using data, and support for struggling schools. NAESP generally supports these guidelines and the allocation of funds to state governors.
- The Obama administration revised the long-standing School Improvement Grants program to require low-performing schools to follow one of four “reform models” in order to receive funding. All four models result in the dismissal of principals and other educators.
NAESP continues to vigorously oppose these models and strenuously object to the automatic dismissal of the principal without first granting such individuals the necessary authority, autonomy, time, and resources to implement sustainable improvements.
- NAESP’s advocacy team has positioned the organization as a valued partner of the Department of Education, especially in its early childhood education initiatives. We’ve been called on to testify on ways to create and sustain aligned systems and seamless transitions for children from pre-K to grade 3. We’ll be calling on some of you to help inform our testimony.

We’ll keep you posted on the status of these and other initiatives, and we’ll continue to make advocacy a priority. No organization—not a national association and not a school district—can cut its way to prosperity. We must invest in the things that matter. Advocacy for elementary and middle-level principals in their commitment to all children matters. 

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Federal Report: Advocacy on Your Behalf

By Abigail C. Evans, Government Relations Specialist

In recent years, the term “school principal” has made the occasional appearance in the education policy vernacular, but not consistently, and not earnestly. That is until now.

No one can deny the sincere acknowledgement President Barack Obama and Education Secretary Arne Duncan have given the critical role principals play in school, student, and educator success. During the past year, the U.S. Department of Education has made a number of bold proposals targeted at turning around the nation’s lowest performing schools, with principals playing a key role in that effort—and NAESP has attempted to implement positive changes in these proposals wherever possible.

Breakdown of the ESEA Blueprint

We have supported some of the department’s proposals and respectfully disagreed with others. The most recent proposal to surface from Washington is Obama and Duncan’s blueprint for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The blueprint includes several provisions of direct importance to school principals.

For instance, the proposal would require all states to develop definitions of “effective” and “highly effective” principals that “are based in significant part on student growth” and other measures for evaluation purposes. The blueprint would also insert the four models of reform established in the recently updated School Improvement Grant program.

The nation’s poorest performing schools would be required to implement one of the four models, all of which result in the replacement of the school’s principal. And, finally, the blueprint proposes a shift away from formula funding as the primary means of driving federal dollars to states and schools, to competitive funding for everything from professional development to after-school programming.

We have made known NAESP’s strong concerns about these proposals and will work with Congress to institute common sense reforms that focus on supporting

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educators' capacity and ensure necessary funding is driven to all schools that need it.

On Your Side

In advance of Education Department's blueprint release, NAESP developed two ESEA policy proposals that were first unveiled in February during the Association's [Federal Relations Conference](#). The proposals would provide funding for principals' access to quality professional development, offer standards-based mentoring to support their efforts in the early years of their careers, and establish professional development in the area of early childhood education to increase principals' capacity in ensuring a seamless continuum of learning between pre-kindergarten and third grade.

We believe these proactive proposals will help grow the principalship and enable principals and other school leaders to develop the skills necessary to build strong school cultures built on continuous learning and improvement.

Keeping You Informed

As the reauthorization process proceeds, NAESP will continue to provide you with the latest information about federal policies and proposals that may impact your work and school. We are currently in the process of developing a new [Advocacy Web page](#) that will enable principals to communicate with their federal elected officials and to track bills and votes on Capitol Hill.

Until this new Web page is completed, we will be posting federal updates on the [Principals' Office blog](#)—check it regularly for the latest news and updates, and offer your feedback and reactions in the comment section. 