Arne Duncan Talks Leadership With NAESP

On Friday, April 23, NAESP Executive Director Gail Connelly spent the day at the U.S. Department of Education representing the interests of all K-8 principals across the country. Her day began with a meeting with Education Secretary Arne Duncan and ended with a robust panel discussion about the need to bridge the gap between pre-kindergarten and elementary schools to establish a continuum of developmentally appropriate practices between pre-K and grade 3.

During the meeting with Duncan, Connelly and Detroit elementary principal Theresa Mattison emphasized the critical need for all principals to have the authority and autonomy in their schools to make staffing, curriculum, and resource decisions appropriate to the school’s needs.

Connelly also shared NAESP’s objection to the department’s current School Improvement Grant models, which result in the automatic replacement of principals in the nation’s lowest performing schools without first evaluating their capacity. However, Connelly emphasized the Association’s interest in working collaboratively with the department to make necessary and pragmatic changes that ensure that, before risking dismissal, these principals receive a fair peer-reviewed assessment to determine their ability to turn around a school.

As a result, Duncan expressed interest in working with NAESP on this recommendation and agreed to draft a clarification memo about the details included in the reform models. The Education Department asserts that the memo will make clear the details of the reform models such as how long principals will be given to turn around a school or what flexibility districts will have on staffing changes.

Following the meeting with Duncan, Connelly testified on the department’s Early Childhood Listening and Learning tour kick-off panel. In her testimony, she discussed the importance of the principal’s role in creating a seamless continuum of learning between pre-kindergarten and third grade.
This critical message is expressed in [NAESP’s policy proposal](#) to provide professional development for elementary principals to increase their knowledge about developmentally appropriate practices for early childhood education, and how best to bridge the gap between early childhood settings and kindergarten.

NAESP is committed to working with the U.S. Department of Education to further the interests of all principals. We will continue to share issues of concern with the department, and look forward to the opportunity to work collaboratively to amend policy, regulations, and proposals to best represent the needs of the nation’s schools, students, and educators.

**Thinking of Making a Career Move? Come to the NAESP Career Center**

Make the NAESP [Career Center](#) your hub for job opportunities and career growth. It’s free to jobseekers and now even more accessible to job posters of all sizes of school systems and budgets.*

If you are a principal thinking of changing schools, an assistant principal or teacher leader ready to move up the ladder, or if you want to prepare yourself for a future job change, then you need to check out the new features at the NAESP Career Center.

Here’s what you get with your free online registration at the NAESP [Career Center](#):

- Instant access to job postings from the U.S. and Canada;
- The ability to apply online and track your applications;
- Free resume posting—you can keep your resume private or open it up for employer searches;
- The option to keep your resume anonymous; and
- Job alerts to receive e-mail notices of new listings.

Here’s what’s new:

- Articles offering practical advice for jobseekers; and
- Links to resources such as the latest salary survey for principals.
Also, now you can look for new job updates on NAESP’s Facebook page. Then, link back to the Career Center for the full details and to apply.

*We have expanded employers’ options while also reducing the rates in order to make it easier on today’s cash-strapped school systems. Please share this information with your school system’s hiring office and remind them that NAESP’s Career Center is dedicated to connecting elementary and middle school education leaders with career opportunities.

Creativity Mini-Grant Program Launched; Proposals Sought

Crayola, in collaboration with NAESP’s National Principals Resource Center, has announced the launch of a mini-grant program to help educators explore new ways to “Champion Creatively-Alive Children.” Up to 20 elementary schools will be selected to receive a mini-grant to implement and document results of an innovative project. Each selected project will be funded by a $2,500 monetary grant and $500 worth of Crayola products.

Upcoming challenges of the 21st century require today’s students to develop skills in critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. In order to reach their full potential and grow into self-motivated learners, children’s natural curiosity and explorative spirits must be nurtured. The program aims to help educators find and develop promising practices that will reach these goals.

What if...

- Arts-infused learning thrived every day in schools?
- Schools relied more on project-based authentic assessment rather than standardized tests?
- Parents and administrators valued the power of creative experiences to enhance learning?
- Schools found new ways to document and articulate the value of creative experiences?
Preference will be given to proposals that emphasize: collaboration and innovation—new ideas that aren’t currently common practice; and sustainability—ability to implement the project beyond mini-grant funding. Long-term projects are preferred over an event.

Grant recipients will share outcomes and inspire other schools to implement these innovative practices via NAESP’s National Principals Resource Center Web site and Principal magazine.

Deadline: **Aug. 15, 2010**. For more information, FAQs, and application, go to www.naesp.org/crayola.aspx.

NAESP Research Gateway—A New Service for Members

Looking for best practices or the latest data and research results? Now you have a quick way to access the best and most recent articles and reports—more than 1,000 documents identified by experienced researchers—on the topics most important to you as a K-8 principal through the NAESP Research Gateway. We have partnered with the Educational Research Service (ERS) to make this new service available directly from our home page. (NAESP is a founding member of ERS.)

Stay updated on the latest and emerging topics by visiting the NAESP Research Gateway often. Many of the articles you’ll find are free to use, and for others, NAESP members enjoy significant discounts. The information is from trusted sources, including NAESP, and targeted, saving you the trouble of sorting through the thousands—even millions—of hits you get from major search engines.

You can use one of the 10 prepared searches on topics such as assistant principalship, assessing America’s schools, best practice in middle-level education, or pay for performance, or you can do your own search using the advanced search function.

Look for the NAESP Research Gateway icon on the left side of the NAESP home page, and get started today.
Focus on Diversity at NAESP’s Summer Institute

The summer is a great time to fit in some much-needed professional development, and NAESP’s Summer Institute, “BrainSMART Leading for Learning in Culturally Diverse Environments: Putting Cognitive Research into Practice,” is an ideal opportunity to do just that. From July 6 to 9, principals will meet in San Diego for three days of learning intended to help them make diversity a powerful catalyst for higher achievement in their schools.

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

In Search of Aspiring Children’s Book Authors

Here’s an opportunity for you to become a published children’s book author. The NAESP Foundation, in cooperation with Charlesbridge Publishing, has launched the National Children’s Book of the Year Contest for aspiring children’s book authors. This is your chance to get your work endorsed by the NAESP Foundation and published by a nationally known publisher with a proven track record and extensive outreach across the nation.
Prospective authors may submit a picture or chapter book written for children ages 3-16. Judging will be based on content, originality, and age-appropriateness. Five finalists from each category will be selected, and two winners—one from each category—will be announced at NAESP’s 2011 convention in Tampa, Florida. Each winner will receive a contract to publish his or her book.

The deadline for submissions is Feb. 15, 2011. Manuscripts must be sent with an entry form and a $45 entry fee (additional entries are $25 each). For more information, contact Ann Henley at ahenley@naesp.org or 703-518-6279.