The True Purpose of Membership
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Why belong to a group? From the earliest times, humans have joined in groups of all kinds for protection, support, and a sense of community that makes their existence easier. If we look around at our profession today, it would appear that we can learn a lesson from history.

The task of leading a school can be overwhelming, even for the most experienced and accomplished principal. It is especially difficult for the newest in our profession, those colleagues who are entering our schools with little or no practical experience.

Support systems between principals are needed now more than at any time in the past. Membership in NAESP is a huge benefit to new and experienced principals alike, if they take advantage of all the professional support and networking opportunities that membership makes available to them.

- The annual convention allows principals to focus on their professional development needs and to network with thousands of their colleagues.
- The NAESP Leadership Academy provides professional development opportunities specifically for principals.
- The Principal Advisory Leadership Services allows veteran principals to actively support their profession by becoming certified mentors.
- The Principals Help Line, NAESP’s newest benefit, offers members an opportunity to pose questions online at www.naesp.org and receive responses from experienced principals that offer an array of possibilities to reflect upon before making decisions. (If you would like to participate as a volunteer on the Principals Help Line, contact NAESP at naesp@naesp.org.)

The principal’s job is often a solitary one. But with NAESP membership, you don’t feel so isolated. Steven Covey observes that highly effective people are not independent, but rather interdependent, demonstrating both the need and ability to help and be helped when necessary. It is this capacity that is strengthened through the continued growth and development opportunities that NAESP membership provides.

Calling on the Help Line

Help is only an e-mail away, thanks to NAESP’s new Principals Help Line!

Now NAESP members can access expertise and advice from veteran principals right from the NAESP Web site, www.naesp.org. Simply click on “Principals Help Line” on NAESP’s home page and follow the prompts. A cadre of mentor principals will reply to your question and send answers via e-mail within 48 hours.

Whether your question is about discipline issues or how to handle teacher unions, there is a principal on hand who can answer your question. Perhaps you’re getting ready to start testing your students and have some questions about testing procedures, qualifying special needs students for assistance, or how to motivate your staff during testing. Simply go to the Help Line and ask away!

While you are on the NAESP site, check out what you can do online to ensure that your voice is heard by your legislators on Capitol Hill. The start of the new congressional session is a great time to talk to your senators and representatives about their goals concerning education. Consider joining NAESP’s Key Contact program, which pairs NAESP members with their legislators in Washington. NAESP also provides numerous resources, an e-newsletter, and periodic conference calls to help you in your grassroots lobbying efforts. For more information, go to www.naesp.org, click on LEAD, and go to Advocacy/Legislation.

Another way NAESP enables members to voice their legislative priorities is through the Federal Legislative Action Center. Members can sign up for alerts and updates on education legislation and contact their elected officials through the Center. For more information, go to http://capwiz.com/naesp/home/.