Google No More

Like many of you, I often turn to Google for information on just about anything. It is an awesome network of computers that can produce an incredible amount of data in a matter of seconds. But how much of that information can you use? For example, ask Google what it can find on “effective schools” and you will receive about 126 million hits. While it attempts to post each Web site in the order of relevancy, it has no way of judging their validity. And validity is the key to good educational research.

You’ll find out a lot you may not have known about good and bad research in this issue. Patricia Lauer has provided an authoritative guide for principals on the various types of research and what each is designed to accomplish. Other articles address scientifically based research, where to find it, and how it is linked to innovative leadership. A cautionary note is provided by Gerald Bracey, who exposes some of the ways in which critics of public education use, misuse, slant, and distort statistics to suit their purposes.

When all is said and done, the best source of information about useful educational research may be your fellow principals, particularly those in schools whose size and demographics are similar to yours. They can tell you from experience what works for them and might work for you.

NAESP can help you reach some of these principals. Click on to “Networking” at www.naesp.org to access the interactive Education Network and the Principals Hot Line, where veteran principals are prepared to answer your questions.

Soon to come is the E-Knowledge Portal, a dynamic new Web-based research and information service developed by the Educational Research Service in collaboration with NAESP and several state affiliates. As a professional alternative to Google, it will provide access to various levels of valid and reliable research and resources. A pilot version will be demonstrated at the NAESP Convention in San Antonio, with a full launch planned for the beginning of the 2006–2007 school year.

With this issue, we close out our publication year and begin planning the theme issues for next year, listed below. Becky, Vanessa, and Jennifer join me in wishing all of you an enjoyable and refreshing summer.