Soaring to New Heights

The coffee will not disappoint in Seattle, and neither will this year’s outstanding program.

Vanessa St. Gerard

What better place to learn, grow, and network with your colleagues than “the nation’s best gathering place”? For the first time, NAESP is descending on Seattle, the host city of the Association’s 86th Annual Convention and Exposition—the largest professional development conference designed specifically for K–8 principals and assistant principals.
There’s plenty to do in and around this wonderful city. With the exciting program NAESP has in store for you, you’ll leave Seattle with wonderful memories, having learned new strategies and concepts, met new colleagues, and savored all that the city has to offer.

Start off your convention experience by attending one of the many available pre-convention workshops on Thursday, March 29. Choose from such topics as “Leadership Matters: Navigating Beyond Barriers and Roadblocks” with Clifton Taulbert, president and founder of The Building Community Institute, and “Making Sure Schools Are Pre-K Ready” with Paula Dowker, elementary specialist at High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. These workshops can provide attendees with valuable professional development units (PDUs) and continuing education units (CEUs).

In addition, more than 100 concurrent program sessions are scheduled, with program strands ranging from leadership and community engagement to student learning and data and decision-making. This year, the Technology Learning Center presentations include a how-to on creating your own blog, as well as creating professional development through technology.

But there’s more! Our stellar lineup of keynote speakers, distinguished lecturers, and authors should not go unnoticed. Marian Wright Edelman, founder and president of the Children’s Defense Fund (CDF), has been an advocate for disadvantaged Americans for her entire professional life. Under her leadership, CDF has become the nation’s strongest voice for children and families. Edelman will share her message during the Third General Session on Sunday, April 1.

Stephen Lundin, Taylor Mali, and Rick Rigsby are this year’s distinguished lecturers. Lundin is a writer, filmmaker, and author of the best-selling book *FISH!,* which has continuously been a *Wall Street Journal* and *Business Week* best seller for more than four years.

A poet, teacher, and playwright, Mali is a four-time National Poetry Slam champion and president of Poetry Slam Inc. (the governing organization for the National Poetry Slam), all while teaching math to sixth graders at a private school in Manhattan.

Rigsby is president and CEO of Rick Rigsby Communications and founder of Rick Rigsby Ministries. He speaks to corporations, service organizations, and school groups on issues such as character, teamwork, and excellence.

Convention Speakers

Award-winning author and educator Jonathan Kozol will keynote the Opening General Session on Friday, March 30. His newest book, *The Shame of the Nation: The Restoration of Apartheid Schooling in America,* displays Kozol’s overview of the public school system by delivering a comprehensive analysis of the inequities along race and class lines.

Erin Gruwell’s commitment to her students—a group from a racially divided urban community—resulted in these 150 students moving from a label of “unteachable” to becoming college-bound high school graduates. Paramount Pictures has turned Gruwell’s inspiring story into the feature film *Freedom Writers,* starring Hilary Swank, now in theaters. Learn about Gruwell’s success on Saturday, March 31, during the Second General Session.

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past, the exhibit hall will be full of booths showcasing the latest in educational products and services (see Convention Exhibitors). Also, stop by the Cyber Café to check your e-mail and make sure you don’t miss a beat with what’s going on at your school back home. There also will be school site tours, which you should not miss if you want to see firsthand the best practices in effect at some of Seattle’s K–8 schools.

Let’s not forget the social activities. On the schedule is the Welcome Reception and Dance, as well as numerous state-sponsored events—all opportunities for you to meet new people, catch up with colleagues, and network with your peers.

Remain updated about all that will occur during the convention by visiting http://web.naesp.org/conv2007. Access the e-planner there and start creating your personalized convention schedule.

We’ll see you in Seattle!

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