I tried not to smile my first day of teaching. I’d been advised in some of my undergraduate classes that new teachers should avoid smiling too much until they have established authority in the classroom. It seemed a simple task and a wise best practice to follow. But as you know, children—whether they are in elementary, middle, or high school—say the darnedest things and will make you laugh whether you like it or not. I didn’t last through first period without cracking a smile.

I’m certain that my professors had the best intentions in mind when they advised me to refrain from smiling, but recommended best practices are not always “best.” My understanding of what worked well in my classroom came from observing veteran teachers, through informal and formal feedback from my principal, and by monitoring how students responded to certain lessons. With all of these elements working together—even the children and their “aha” moments—it was like unlocking a treasure-trove of best practices that guided me in my classroom. Although there is no universal way to educate all students, there are many outstanding examples of instructional and administrative practices that help students learn and teachers and administrators grow professionally.

We had an overwhelming response to this issue’s theme because many of your colleagues were thrilled to share their best practices. Sandra Harris interviewed principals who have been honored as National Distinguished Principals or whose schools have won National Blue Ribbon School distinction and compiles a list of best practices that these award-winning principals employ. Franzy Fleck examines how important it is for veteran principals to share their best practices with young principals. Several of our editorial advisors also weigh in on their best practices on a variety of topics. And Vincent Ferrandino, former NAESP executive director, and Hanif Hassan, the minister of education for the United Arab Emirates, discuss the need to share best practices globally.

As we look to the future, we’d like to hear your thoughts on Principal magazine and our newsletters. Please visit www.naesp.org to take our readership survey. I’d also like to take this opportunity to introduce you to the editorial and production team for Principal magazine.

Managing Editor: Vanessa St. Gerard, a cum laude graduate of Wake Forest University, also serves as editor of Communicator and supervises NAESP’s electronic newsletters.

Associate Editor: Kaylen Tucker has bachelor’s and master’s degrees in English and will receive a doctorate this year. She is also editor of four electronic newsletters.

Production Assistant: Jennifer Apperson is the liaison with our design firm, printer, and advertising agency. In addition to processing manuscripts and handling author correspondence, Jennifer also assists with layouts and graphics for Communicator and other NAESP publications.

We hope that you enjoy this issue and those that follow as we strive to continue the rich tradition that Lee Greene and his predecessors have created and maintained through the years. And, along the way, we hope to create some new best practices.
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