Transitions and Transformations

Transitions in work and life often stimulate innovative ways of thinking and each new school year offers opportunities for many principals to transform teaching and learning by exchanging ideas and sharing best practices.

At NAESP, we are in the midst of a leadership transition that is proving to be an impetus for positive transformation. As NAESP’s executive director during the coming year, I will be working hard with our board of directors and staff to keep our association focused on shared values, while moving the organization forward in its ability to serve and connect its members now and in the future.

In looking beyond what we already know, NAESP is currently engaged with the Institute for Alternative Futures in a process we’re calling Vision 2021. This process of engagement with our members, leaders, and other stakeholders is designed to help us understand how the future is changing for pre-K-8 principals, and to project strategies, models, structures, and relationships that will enable NAESP and our affiliated state associations to stay relevant in serving principals in years to come.

While we continue to seek insights and expertise from external strategic partners, the foundation of my leadership will be to help staff and NAESP members communicate with and learn from one another by creating opportunities for critical inquiry, networking, collaboration, cross-pollination of ideas, and sharing of knowledge. One example of this is our new E-Knowledge Portal for Principals. Developed in collaboration with Educational Research Service, it provides users with the most advanced tools to nurture and support online communities of practice.

Transitioning into the Future

NAESP’s Board of Directors and staff are excited about new ways that we can incorporate emerging insights and ideas into current plans and strategies focused on key areas:

A stronger emphasis on the whole child. Principals must play a leading role in the physical, social, and emotional development of all children even while keeping academics on a front burner. In today’s heightened atmosphere of accountability, many principals and educators are concerned about what is being sacrificed in favor of a tunnel vision that values only test scores. The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, currently known as No Child Left Behind, is one of our highest priorities. You’ll also see a whole child emphasis in everything from a redevelopment of our landmark Leading Learning Communities standards for principals to our continued involvement in advocating for quality early childhood and after-school programs in partnership with Collaborative Communications Group.

A broader understanding of the role of school leaders. We will dig deeper into the best practices of effective leadership as we turn up the volume to ensure that people inside and outside of the education field understand the critical role of principals. Our rapidly changing and complex world demands new definitions to more accurately reflect the realities of today’s principals (e.g., chief learning officer). We’re targeting 2008 as a year in which to take a major look at the principalship—both in what has transpired in school leadership during the past 10 years and what we can expect in the decade ahead.

We are fortunate in being able to share what my predecessor, Vincent Ferrandino, is learning as he examines education practices in nations across the globe in his current role as director of policy and planning for the Ministry of Education of the United Arab Emirates. We expect to be a major beneficiary of the best practices he has gleaned from his experiences in working to build a modern, cutting-edge education system in that nation.

Listening and Learning

One of my primary goals for the year ahead is to help NAESP become a true learning organization, where members’ knowledge and needs are at the center of everything we do. To accomplish this, NAESP will engage in a complete overhaul of its technology infrastructure in order to provide better services to our members and our affiliated state associations. We hope to build better connections and facilitate communication among our zone directors, state affiliates, and individual principals. Throughout this leadership transition, I hope that all of you will see—and grasp—the opportunities to engage in providing the solutions, services, and support that can transform and solidify the relationship of the Association to its membership.

It is our sincere hope during this transition period that we can help you create beneficial transformations in your schools and communities. As the leading voice for pre-K-8 principals, we plan to tell the nation what is happening—and what needs to happen—in schools and for children.”

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