My Two Cents

What's the best piece of professional advice you've received from a peer or mentor, and how have you applied it in your career?

A veteran principal told me to attend everything; when students are present, the principal should be there as well. I've come to see the wisdom in this advice. The students, staff, parents, and community understand the commitment of the administration and the priorities of the school by the consistent presence of the principal at events and activities. Nothing can replace the message that something is valued sent by the presence of the principal.

Kathleen Vail
Assistant Principal
Pittsville Elementary and Middle School
Wicomico County, Maryland

As a young leader, I wanted very much to do everything right. I then had a colleague who reminded me that it was more important to do the right thing than to do things right. Following that inner moral compass helped me get off to the right start because I could sleep at night knowing that when push came to shove, I had to be loyal to that principle. People may not always agree with the decisions you make, but if they know you are doing it for the right reasons, it can lead to more discussions instead of disagreements.

Trent Lyon
Principal
Western Valley Middle School
Phoenix, Arizona

The best advice I received was to think of myself as a coach and servant. If your team isn’t being successful, strategically plan and coach them to victory. Establish clear expectations and goals, provide ongoing support, and give consistent and specific feedback so the team knows how they’re doing in reaching the goals. Serve the staff by putting their needs at the forefront. It’s in their success that goals are achieved and students excel.

Vicki K. Chavez
Principal
Torres Elementary School
Deming, New Mexico

Read more responses and submit your own by visiting NAESP’s blog, the Principals’ Office, at http://naesp.typepad.com.

Legislative Dispatch

Principal, teachers, parents, and community members gathered together to discuss the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act with Congressman John Yarmuth, D-3rd District, at a local elementary school on Sept. 2, 2008. Yarmuth called the town hall meeting in order to discuss issues and concerns about NCLB.

Among the issues raised by those in attendance were the inordinate amount of time involved in testing and the overemphasis in schools on testing. Often, the fun and enjoyment of learning does not happen because of the stressful nature of high-stakes testing and the work involved in avoiding NCLB sanctions. Yarmuth believes that we must be a nation of learners and not a nation of test-takers.

The congressman supported the basic tenet of NCLB in that all students must have access to high-quality instruction. However, he noted that he was originally sent to Congress with a clear message that NCLB had serious flaws and needed to be fixed. He shared with us his belief that the law will be reauthorized with a new name and new emphasis. In addition, the growth plan model holds promise for a better assessment system and additional funding must be provided to schools.

The message was loud and clear: NCLB’s goal of a strong educational system for all children is commendable and justified. However, there is much to be done to restore a positive approach in supporting schools and providing educators with the tools and resources to meet the needs of every child. Yarmuth stood firm in championing the education system and working with educators and the community to achieve these goals. It was uplifting to see the community united around the issues of NCLB and the call for whole-child development in the educational system.

Rosemarie Young
Principal
Watson Lane Elementary School
Louisville, KY

Executive Director
Kentucky Association of Elementary School Principals

Learn more about NAESP’s advocacy program and how you can participate at http://capwiz.com/naesp.