

## 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

**New to *Principal*.** This new section gives our readers an opportunity to voice their thoughts and experiences with us and fellow NAESP members.

This page will feature your letters to the editor (e-mail your letter to [publications@naesp.org](mailto:publications@naesp.org)); a Legislative Dispatch, which will offer first-hand accounts from Federal Relations Coordinators about their interactions with their local legislators; and responses to My Two Cents, in which principals offer their thoughts on a particular question.



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

**P**rin cipals, 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 over-emphasis 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  
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Watson Lane Elementary School  
Louisville, KY  
Executive Director  
Kentucky Association of Elementary School Principals*

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