Finding the Value in Difference

In 2010, the next census year, the U.S. government will calculate the number of residents in the country and, among other data, the race, ethnicity, age, and makeup of each U.S. household. The results of the 2010 census are anticipated to reveal another round of increases in the number of racially and ethnically diverse people living in the nation—numbers that are bound to be reflected in the student populations of your schools. But, as this issue of Principal explains, diversity is not only based on a person’s race or ethnicity.

NAESP’s standards book, Leading Learning Communities: Standards for What Principals Should Know and Be Able To Do, states: “In addition to defining diversity by class, gender, ethnicity or race, effective leaders also look for diversity in how people learn and how age, beliefs, perspectives and experiences influence learning.” Diversity has become a dynamic term, encompassing characteristics both seen and unseen. Where and how a student has been raised, and by whom, are among those components that go unseen when looking into a child’s eyes.

School administrators, faculty, and staff must not only recognize these differences among their students, but also embrace them. One way to do this is by becoming culturally proficient, as author Anthony Moyer details in his article. The additional theme articles included in this issue are intended to further expand your knowledge on the topic of diversity and provide insight about bringing out the best in all your students.

NAESP’s efforts to offer resources to principals about diversity do not end with this issue of the magazine, however. Looking ahead to future Association events and initiatives, you’ll find a variety of ways that you and your staff can further engage in professional development built around the theme of diversity. First up is the second installment of NAESP’s six-part webinar series. Titled “Principals Leading Diverse Learning Communities,” the online professional development opportunity on Nov. 5 will focus on building consensus on a vision that reflects the core of the school community, valuing and using diversity to enhance learning, and developing a learning culture that is adaptive, collaborative, innovative, and supportive. For more information about this webinar, as well as the others that are part of the series, go to www.naesp.org/webinars.aspx.

In April, NAESP’s 89th Annual Convention and Exposition in Houston will feature a session strand titled “Cultural Diversity: Transforming Learning Communities.” Concurrent sessions falling under this category will address such topics as best practices for communicating and working with diverse parents and communities; how to get started thinking about inclusion for gifted, special needs, and English-language learners; defining cultural competencies for educators and applying it in schools; and coordinating services to meet the instructional needs of diverse student populations. Information about these concurrent sessions, and others, can be found at www.naesp.org/2010.

Finally, our annual Summer Institute, which will take place July 6-9, 2010, in San Diego, will have a central theme of “Diverse Learning Communities.” Stay tuned for details about the Summer Institute in the next few months.

We hope that this issue of Principal will lay the groundwork you need to begin instituting best practices for teaching diverse populations, and that you take advantage of the additional professional development opportunities NAESP is planning in the coming school year.

If you are interested in submitting an article for possible publication in Principal, our submission guidelines are available at www.naesp.org/writing. Letters to the editor or general inquiries may be sent to publications@naesp.org.

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