



My Two Cents

What work-related issue keeps you up at night?

There are basically four work-related issues that keep me up at night: thinking of ways to boost academic achievement; finding interventions that teachers will use to close the achievement gap; making sure all teachers create a positive, caring school community that promotes thinking skills; and finally (probably most often!) did every single child feel wanted and nurtured today?

*Janice Barton, Principal
Oak Grove Central Elementary School
Hernando, Mississippi*

Mind-reeling, playing out scenarios, reflecting, researching, revising—I am all too familiar with the routine. I practice triangular breathing, count backward from 100, and so on. Still, I find myself thinking about school. It is the *ethic of care* that keeps me up at night. I care deeply about my students, staff, and community. As the principal of Sleepy Hollow Elementary, I would qualify the school's name, "Sleepy," as a misnomer since the principle of care typically keeps me wide awake—day or night!

*Anastasia Epstein, Principal
Sleepy Hollow Elementary School
Sleepy Hollow, Illinois*

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

Research Digest

NAEP Scores Improve; Black/White Achievement Gap Narrows

In 2007, math scores for both black and white public school students in grades 4 and 8 nationwide, as measured by results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), were higher than in any previous assessment, dating back to 1990. This was also true for black and white fourth graders on the NAEP 2007 Reading Assessment, according to a report from the National Center for Education Statistics. For grade 8, reading scores for both black and white students were higher in 2007 than the most recent previous assessment year, 2005.

White students, however, had higher scores than black students, on average, on all assessments. While the nationwide gaps in 2007 were narrower than in previous assessments at both grades 4 and 8 in math and at grade 4 in reading, white students had average scores at least 26 points higher than black students in each subject.

At the state level, gaps in grade 4 mathematics existed in 2007 in the 46 states for which results were available. In 15 states, the 2007 gaps were narrower than in 1992, as black students demonstrated a greater gain in average scores than white students. At grade 8, math gaps were narrower in 2007 than in 1990 in four states: Arkansas, Colorado, Oklahoma, and Texas. In all four, scores for both black and white students increased, but scores for black students increased more.

Gaps in grade 4 reading existed in 2007 in the 44 states for which results were available. Gaps narrowed from 1992 to 2007 in Delaware, Florida, and New Jersey due to larger increases in black students' scores. Grade 8 reading gaps existed in 2007 in 41 of the 42 states for which results were available; there was no gap in Hawaii.

Read the report at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pubs/studies/2009455.asp>.

Feds Give Fewer Dollars Than States

Of the \$556.9 billion in government funding received by U.S. public elementary and secondary schools in 2006-2007, the federal government only contributed 8.3 percent, with state and local governments supplying the remaining 91.7 percent (about \$510 billion) of funding, according to U.S. Census figures. Approximately \$11.3 billion of federal money went toward funding Title I and about \$9.8 billion went toward special education nationwide.

As for expenditures, public elementary and secondary schools collectively spent about \$288.4 billion on instruction and about \$165.5 billion on support services. The average per-pupil spending in U.S. public schools in 2006-2007 was \$9,666. New York and New Jersey had the highest per-pupil spending rates at \$15,981 and \$15,691, respectively. At \$5,683 and \$6,625, Utah and Idaho, respectively, had the lowest per-pupil spending rates.

For more details, read the report at www.census.gov/govs/school/index.html.



10 Actions Principals Can Take To Stop School Violence

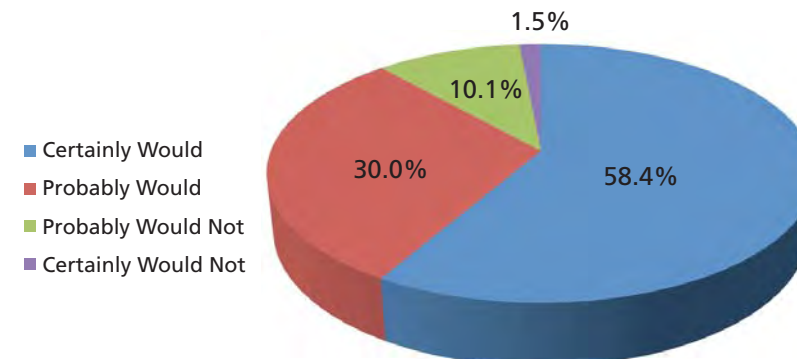
- Reward good behavior.
- Insist that your faculty and staff treat each other and students with respect, courtesy, and thoughtfulness. Be the chief role model.
- Offer training in anger management, stress relief, mediation, and related violence prevention skills to staff and teachers, and help them identify ways to pass these skills along to students.
- Work with community groups and law enforcement to create safe corridors for travel to and from school.
- Involve every group within the school community—faculty, professional staff, custodial staff, students, and others—in setting up solutions to violence.
- Establish zero tolerance policies for weapons and violence.
- Develop a memorandum of understanding with law enforcement on access to the school building, reporting of crimes, arrests, and other key issues.
- Develop ways to make it easier for parents to be involved in the lives of their children.
- Develop and sustain a network with health care, mental health, counseling, and social work resources in your community.
- Ensure that students learn violence prevention techniques throughout their school experience.

Source: National Crime Prevention Council

The Principalship at a Glance

When asked the question "If you were starting out all over again, would you want to be an elementary school principal?" 58.4 percent of principals responding to NAESP's 2008 survey replied "certainly would" and another 30 percent replied "probably would." High levels of willingness to "re-enlist" exist among novice and veteran principals and with both male and female respondents.

Willingness to Again Become a Principal



Source: *The K-8 Principal in 2008: A 10-Year Study* (NAESP, 2009)

Promising Practices

The experiences of our children and families began to vary widely as we became a culturally diverse school. We realized the need to connect on a much deeper level with parents. In a program we call Together for Children, we meet regularly in classrooms with parents, teachers, interpreters, and children to share what it is we know about learning, culture, and the individual needs of our children and their families.

*Jerry A. Bergstrom, Principal
Pershing Elementary School
Lexington, Nebraska*

Our school has a high number of Spanish-speaking students, but Spanish-speaking parents never attended the meetings of our Parent Teacher Organization. We presented the idea of a parent group conducted solely in Spanish and had an overwhelmingly positive response. Meetings do not center on fundraisers, but focus on parent questions about school culture and protocol. Now, all parents have an avenue for school involvement.

*Nancy Hayes Gardner, Principal
West Elementary School
West Liberty, Iowa*

We have a formal partnership with a sister school in Puebla, Mexico. Our teachers communicate regularly to plan collaborative lessons and activities. Our students conference over the Web with their friends from Mexico on a variety of topics. Borders between countries dissolve with the click of a mouse and children flourish as they learn firsthand the similarities and differences among cultures.

*Lori D. Howard, Principal
Clyde Erwin Elementary School
Jacksonville, North Carolina*