



My Two Cents

What do you wish you had known about leading schools when you were a new principal?

What I learned, and wish I had known before I started, is to create balance in my life. I sacrificed my family and my health for my career and, if I had it do over again, would have done things quite differently. I gave 100% of myself and more to my school, the staff, and the students in the past 12 years. I wish I had maintained a balance in my life and had invested the most energy in what I valued the most—my family.

*Julie Ellison, Principal
McKinley Elementary School
Farmington, New Mexico*

Relationships matter more than anything else! As a new principal, I wish I'd been able to discern the complexity of the political, social, cultural, and organizational relationships which both positively and negatively affect the principal's work and image in the school and community. I soon recognized that a successful principal must earn his or her wings with all entities of the school and community.

*Janice M. Marston, Former Principal
Appomattox Elementary School
Appomattox, Virginia*

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

Research Digest

Recess Earns High Grades From Principals

Reading, writing, arithmetic ... and recess? Students' recreational time may not receive as much attention as the three R's, but a new Gallup poll indicates that principals believe recess is essential to improving students' academic achievement, social skills, and overall well-being.

Sponsored by the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and Playworks, this first-of-its-kind survey of nearly 2,000 principals reveals that recess provides educators with an unexpected opportunity to boost learning. According to the study, four out of five principals report that recess has a positive impact on students' academic achievement; two-thirds of principals report that students listen better and are more focused in class after recess; and 97 percent of principals believe that recess positively impacts students' social development.

The survey comes on the heels of several studies that also indicate providing a student with an ample amount of daily recess fosters better concentration and behavior in the classroom, and this inevitably leads to increased learning. A study published in the January 2009 issue of *Pediatrics* shows that third graders who have more than 15 minutes of recess each day learn more than third graders who have little or no daily recess.

"This research sends a clear message to anyone interested in improving education or the overall well-being of America's children: it's time to take recess seriously," said Jane Lowe, team director for the Vulnerable Populations Portfolio at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Despite these findings, the amount of time schools dedicate to daily recess has declined in recent years, as school districts have come under increased pressure to meet state and federal testing requirements. Close to 40 percent of U.S. school districts have reduced or eliminated recess altogether, and according to the Gallup poll, one in five principals has been forced to cut recess minutes so that students can spend more time studying core academics.

NAESP believes that elementary education should focus on the needs of the whole child, and the results of this survey compel education leaders and policymakers to re-examine the role that recess plays in the learning day. "As primary catalysts for creating lasting foundations for learning, principals are key in determining and nurturing what works for children in schools—in both the classroom and on the playground," said NAESP Executive Director Gail Connelly.

The recent launch of First Lady Michelle Obama's "Let's Move" campaign, a nationwide effort dedicated to combating America's current epidemic of childhood obesity, underscores the importance of ensuring that elementary students have sufficient time to exercise their bodies as well as to enrich their minds. This Gallup poll is compelling evidence that recess is an irreplaceable part of the school day, and NAESP believes that recess deserves to be recognized as such by teachers, school administrators, and policymakers. Download the full report, *The State of Play*, at www.playworks.org/state-of-play.



Convention News Online Archive

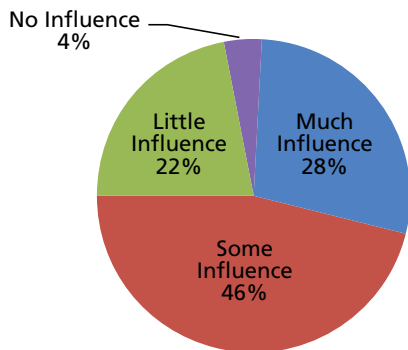
Didn't make it to NAESP's convention in April? We have the solution—the *Convention News Online* (CNO) archive. During NAESP's 89th Annual Convention and Exposition April 8-11, attendees reported on the major events that took place during the nation's only professional development conference designed specifically for K-8 principals.

Read summaries of all the keynote events, NAESP's Community Service Day, and the Transformational Leadership panel, as well as tweets and blog entries written by principals who experienced the convention first hand. You can also take a look at the numerous pictures taken each day. Access the CNO archive at www.naesp.org/Convention_News_Online.aspx.

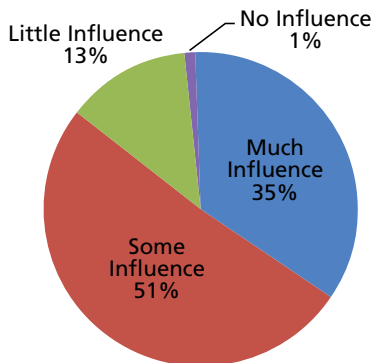
The Principalship at a Glance

When asked the question "How much influence do you think you have on school district decisions that affect elementary schools and elementary education?" three of every four respondents to NAESP's most recent survey of K-8 principals say they have "much" or "some" influence over decisions affecting elementary education. This represents a decrease from 1998.

Principals' Perceived Influence, 2008



Principals' Perceived Influence, 1998



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

Promising Practices

Our school successfully integrates a Head Start program in our district-funded pre-kindergarten program. All of our 3- and 4-year-old students attend pre-kindergarten together in the same classrooms, building community right from the start and combining the resources of Head Start and the public schools to create a high-quality program with a seamless transition to kindergarten.

*Marcia S. Elliott, Principal
West Stafford School
Stafford Springs, Connecticut*

Each year, we focus one of our monthly staff breakfast events on celebrating and thanking our dedicated substitute teachers. We contact these individuals well in advance so that they can plan to join us. Following our expressions of appreciation, each of our substitutes receives a carnation flower as a special recognition. We can measure the success of this event by reflecting on the limited difficulty we have in securing substitute teachers in our building throughout the school year.

*Brian M. Hull
Colin L. Powell Elementary School
Centreville, Virginia*

Just before state testing, we present gold medals to students who received proficient and advanced on the previous year's California Standards Test. We conduct assemblies for each grade level, and each class takes a picture with the principal and teacher. We display the photographs prominently around the school. We also encourage students to wear their gold medals to school during the test.

*Angel J. Barrett
Plummer Elementary School
North Hills, California*

Learn more promising practices at www.naesp.org/promisingpractices.aspx.