

# A New Paradigm for Comprehensive Learning

How NAESP can help you create opportunities for all students

By L. Earl Franks, Ed.D., CAE



**A**s a pre-K–12 school principal, I saw firsthand the importance of the continuum of learning from the earliest grades to high school graduation. That’s why my goal as executive director of NAESP is to ensure that every principal can optimize conditions for teaching and learning.

Access to assets is certainly critically important, but successful schools and programs are made possible only through effective teaching and leadership. In fact, effective school leadership is second only to teaching in improving student outcomes, and strong leadership has the greatest impact in schools with the most needs.

Good principals know the importance of providing opportunities for students to reach greater levels of learning, or “deeper learning”—an umbrella term for the skills and knowledge that students must have to succeed in 21st century jobs and civic life. In deeper learning, students master competencies in order to develop a keen understanding of academic content and apply their knowledge to problems in the classroom and on the job. We know that this is what every parent wants for their children, and what every principal and teacher must provide.

## NAESP Helps You Connect Policy to Action

To achieve these goals, all education stakeholders should work together to address both practice and policy. I am cautiously optimistic about the pivotal moment we are currently in as states and districts implement the

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Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which provides, as a foundational element, an unprecedented opportunity for all students to receive a well-rounded and complete education. While certainly not a means to the end, ESSA is an important lever for dialogue and action. Given the narrowing that occurred under the No Child Left Behind Act, schools now need help expanding their curricular tunnel. That’s why NAESP released a theory of action for principals around ESSA. Our *Principals Action Plan* provides research-based strategies around programs and practices, as well as a blueprint for action.

NAESP also has released an updated principal competency guide: *Leading Pre-K–3 Learning Communities: Competencies for Effective Principal Practice*. Developed by a panel of leading practitioners, this standards document defines new competencies and outlines a practical approach to high-quality early childhood education that is critical to laying a strong foundation for learning for young children from age 3 to grade 3, or pre-K–3.

Finally, NAESP continues to reinforce the need for all schools to create positive learning experiences as a way to increase student and teacher engagement, and as a way to give every student a voice in their learning. Where these opportunities do not exist, NAESP will encourage principals to advocate and influence their peers and system decision-makers. I look forward to working with all of you, in partnership, as we work to fulfill our mission to advocate and support principals to the benefit of all children. **P**

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