

Thriving in an Ever-Changing World



It was 1898. Automobiles were replacing horse-drawn carriages. Great empires were building and unbuilding. Humans were

even experimenting with flight, seeming to challenge the immutable laws of nature.

“I think that you will all agree that *we are living in most interesting times*,” orated British statesman Joseph Chamberlain. “I never remember myself a time in which our history was so full, in which day by day brought us new objects of interest, and, let me say also, *new objects for anxiety*.”

Chamberlain’s words seem as apropos today as they were in the age of hand-cranked automobiles. “Interesting times,” he knew, are not synonymous with “comfortable” or “easy.” Our own age of dizzying change presents unsettling implications. Education is both impacted by and a driver of change, and that’s why NAESP is utilizing technologies, developing partnerships, and providing resources to help principals build capacity for leading change that results in a well-rounded and complete education for every student.

We may marvel at today’s technological wonders, but every innovation means lives upended. We see the results in political tidal waves crashing all around us. As Matt Gandal, president and founder of the Education Strategy Group, noted in an *Education Week* post-election roundup, “If this presidential election revealed one thing, it’s that many Americans don’t feel secure about their economic future. That should place education at the top of the agenda in states and communities, because it is America’s

economic engine.” I would add that in fact, public education undergirds our entire democracy.

Our students have a right to expect an education that equips them to master this world of continuous change and attain what Thomas Friedman calls “dynamic stability”—the rapid adaptability that, like riding a bicycle, keeps us balanced amid upheaval.

Now, into this whirlwind comes the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). As more education policymaking devolves to states, principals are empowered with crafting learning atmospheres that meet the needs of all students. The responsibilities are enormous, but as the Center for Creative Leadership’s Bill Pasmore writes in *Leading Continuous Change: Navigating Churn in the Real World*, it’s time to replace single-change management with a comprehensive, cyclical approach.

With that in mind, NAESP is developing resources and initiatives to help principals lead change and maintain their own dynamic stability, even as we impart those same abilities to our students:

- Through a strategic partnership with the Center for Creative Leadership, a national Executive Leadership Institute will sustain and promote high professional standards among principals as the lead catalyst for driving school and student performance.
- A strategic partnership with Participate, leading provider of global educator development, is helping principals apply technology to their professional development while they prepare students for global citizenship and engagement.
- The NAESP Pre-K-3 Leadership Academy, which will feature a

blended-learning curriculum and training program, will launch next spring. This professional learning opportunity, funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, is aligned to the NAESP publication *Leading Pre-K-3 Learning Communities: Competencies for Effective Principal Practice*.

- The “Principals as Leaders for High-Quality Afterschool and Summer Learning Opportunities” initiative, funded through a strategic partnership with the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, will build the capacity of principals and afterschool leaders toward providing enriched learning opportunities that are aligned with and mutually reinforce in-school activities.

In addition to these strategic partnerships that support high-priority focus areas, our interactive toolkit, “Principals Action Plan for the Every Student Succeeds Act,” offers resources on engaging with state and district leaders to create effective ESSA consolidated plans that promise a well-rounded education for every child. Developed in partnership with the Center on Great Teachers & Leaders at American Institutes for Research, the tool can help principals advocate for the learning opportunities—like pre-K, afterschool learning, and global education—that they know students need and deserve, not to mention building in plans for principals’ own professional development as the key change leaders for our nation’s schools.

These “interesting times” and their confluence with ESSA give principals new opportunities for influence and impact. Working together, we can meet this challenge and prepare our students to contribute and thrive in a vibrant, ever-changing world. **P**