

# The Difference Mentoring Makes

Principals need continuous, job-embedded professional learning opportunities

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



Every student deserves to attend a high-functioning school. That means we must do more to ensure that each school is led by an effective principal, with the appropriate professional supports for continuous development.


In what areas do principals need the most support? We can

turn to NAESP's recently released report, *The Pre-K–8 School Leader in 2018: A 10-Year Study*, for perspective. Principals describe multiple areas of professional development need, including improving staff performance, understanding and applying technology, managing time, using social media effectively, and planning school improvement. Principals also identified a number of student-related issues as being of high concern, including mental health issues, managing behavior, and poverty.

NAESP bolsters principal leadership by addressing these focus areas and providing research and best practices through various professional development activities and resources. But it is essential that states and districts also focus on what principals identify as their learning needs and use that information, along with the growing awareness of new models, to support principal learning throughout their career span and to develop authentic, relevant, and high-impact professional learning opportunities.

Mentoring programs, for example, have gained prominence in the ecosystem of professional learning opportunities. NAESP has long touted the benefits of principal mentoring in overall school

success. New or newly assigned principals require the critical support that a highly trained mentor can offer in an atmosphere of trust and professional assistance. The opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge to on-the-job implementation with the guidance of an experienced administrator helps ensure a successful career trajectory. And responses from *The Pre-K–8 School Leader in 2018* indicate that 75 percent of responding principals found mentorship programs very or somewhat valuable to success as an elementary principal.

Since its inception in 2003, NAESP's National Mentor Training and Certification Program has empowered school districts from around the country to develop outstanding programs that enhance their leadership succession plans for the recruitment and retention of highly qualified principals and other school leaders. Mentor training is a win-win situation for mentors and their protégés: Mentors give back to the profession while the protégé receives on-the-job training from an experienced principal. 

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## WHAT I'M READING

*Make Your Bed: Little Things That Can Change Your Life ... And Maybe the World* by Admiral William H. McRaven



## FIND OUT MORE

Visit [www.naesp.org](http://www.naesp.org) for more information about *The Pre-K–8 School Leader in 2018: A 10-Year Study* and NAESP's National Mentor Training and Certification Program.