

Why Principals Need Networks

Other principals can give you the leadership support you've been seeking

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



Do you believe that the focal point of a school is the child, and do you think that an educational program should help all children achieve their potential as contributing members of society? Do you believe that in providing the foundation for young Americans' formal education, our ele-

mentary and middle schools must pursue excellence?

Do you accept the findings that the primary responsibility for the development of an effective educational program in each school is vested in the principal, as well as the associated challenges? Is your mission to serve as an advocate for children while striving to enhance your effectiveness in the supervision and administration of elementary and middle schools?

If you answered yes to these questions, the networks you gain through NAESP membership can help you elevate your leadership. Principals throughout the country rely on their connection with NAESP to grow their leadership. Here's what some of your colleagues had to say about the professional networks they have been able to build through their participation:


- John Quinn, principal of Clara Barton Elementary School in Oxford, Massachusetts, says that sometimes you need to be able to pick up the phone and call on a fellow principal and friend. "I'm going to the national conference [NAESP Pre-K-8 Principals Conference] this year in Spokane, Washington, to meet people and connect with friends that I have met over the past several years. The energy you get from the conference is electric. [I've] been a member for 17 years, and it's amazing to hear the people I've connected with [tell] their stories, because we're all going through the same things—we're all dealing with children and their needs."
- Janel Scurlock, assistant principal of Pinedale Elementary in Pinedale, Wyoming, says that as the



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only female principal in a rural school district, one of the bonuses of going to an NAESP conference is that "connecting with other women is really powerful. We all know [that leading a school] can be a little bit lonely; it helps me realize that I'm not alone to find other women who have the same struggles and the same successes. It provides you with resources beyond what you think about."

- Chad Frazier, principal of Eustis Heights Elementary School in Eustis, Florida, says he values the opportunity to collaborate with professionals from a variety of areas and situations. "I am a strong proponent of practicing what I preach, so being able to attend conference sessions and collaborate with people from different states who are in similar situations as my school—and very different ones, as well—is eye-opening and helps to hone and build my leadership skills. Building leaders encourages teachers to get outside their classrooms and connect with other colleagues."

It's difficult to successfully serve your school community without the aid of a support network. Your relationships with other school leaders are vital to your well-being and success as a principal. Through NAESP membership, you will develop authentic, relevant, and high-impact professional relationships that can help you elevate your leadership. 

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