

Principals as Advocates

Use National Principals Month to spread the message that great schools have great principals

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



Every day as a school leader, you advocate on behalf of your students and staff with the decisions you make. As a practitioner on the front lines, you have a front-row seat to the impact that decisions about education policy have on your school and students. Whether it's in the halls of Congress, at the state house, or at

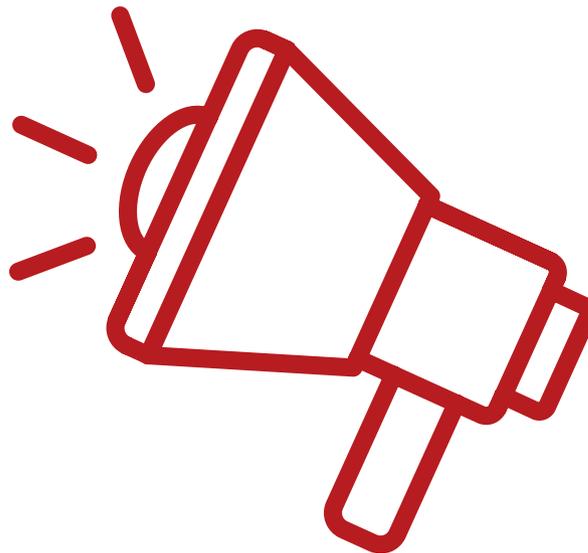
your local school board meeting, your voice—speaking on behalf of students, schools, and the profession—is absolutely critical. That is why sharing your perspective and having a seat at the table is essential.

When I visit legislators' offices I'm often told, "We haven't had any calls from our constituents voicing their concern on this topic!" Although school administrators have demanding schedules, we are asking you to find a few minutes in your day to reach out to those who represent you in your state capital and in Washington, D.C.

Your NAESP staff is committed to providing you with the most up-to-date information on legislation and funding that impact your job as a principal. Our goal is to educate our members on the issues, amplify their voice in policy discussions, and ensure they have a seat at the table on the issues that impact them.

How can you be a more effective advocate for public education? What's the best way to get involved? Consider the following strategies to effectively share your story and make your voice heard:

- **Educate yourself on the issues.** First, you must know who represents you in Congress and your state legislature. Visit NAESP's Legislative Action Center and other state and national school leader organizations to learn more about the issues and how you can impact the debate.



- **Decide your "why."** Define for yourself why you care about this issue. Then, determine how you are going to get the right people to care about your "why."
- **Make it personal.** Use personal stories to illustrate the importance of your message and explain how the issue affects your students, school, and district.
- **Invite lawmakers to visit your school.** Use October—National Principals Month—to invite your legislator or member of Congress to shadow you and experience firsthand what it's like to lead a school.
- **Leverage social media.** Research shows that Congressional offices are using social media to help gauge public opinion. Social media platforms can break down traditional barriers, enabling you to amplify your story and get the right people to hear it.

Whether the location is Capitol Hill or your capital city, our students and schools need you to carry the message! 

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RECOGNITION FOR PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP

October is National Principals Month, a time to shine a light on principal leadership. How can you participate? Plan a shadow visit, send a fellow principal a free e-card, or use NAESP's Legislative Action Center to send lawmakers an alert about issues affecting schools and principals. Find more information, sample language, and templates at www.principalsmonth.org.