

NAESP: A Community of Practice

As the principalship shifts to address new demands, NAESP expands to help you meet them

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Three school years into the “new normal” suddenly forced upon us by COVID-19, we have learned a lot about the shifting needs of students and educators alike—from unfinished learning to the high level of stress that’s fueling a teacher shortage. And thanks in part to the *Leaders We Need Now* (LWNN) research series NAESP and the NAESP Foundation commissioned at the start of the pandemic, we also know a lot more about what principals need. Among those needs is increased support for roles not adequately accounted for in PSEL standards—crisis management and innovative communications—in addition to models for sustained self-care and distributed leadership.

A silver lining during this period has been strengthened connections and collaboration—both among principals in the NAESP network and back at home with school-based teams. Principals report that one key strategy they use to cope with increased responsibilities is avoiding isolation by reaching out to other principals. Many also report that their school teams have been invaluable in getting through this difficult time.

“Taking a team approach to more challenges has allowed me to more effectively manage the increased responsibilities that the pandemic has brought with it,” says Judy Castrogiovanni, principal of Jefferson Elementary School in Pennsylvania and a 2021 NAESP National Distinguished Principal. “Roles expand and contract depending on the needs of each day, but we are there for one another to ensure that our school family has all needs met.”

Principals who took part in the LWNN study echoed this concept in the second brief, “Evolution of the Principalship,” identifying a critical need for principals to distribute leadership to assistant principals and teacher leaders. They also recommended reconfiguring the principal’s role and responsibilities to meet evolving needs—for example, asking district-level administrators to take

on school-level administrative duties to free up time for principals to engage in the leadership practices that matter most to students and communities.

Grow Your Support Network

NAESP has heard your call for collaboration, and in response, we have expanded our communities of practice to accommodate all members. Whether you are seeking out other educators who are at a similar career stage or want to join one of our Centers for Advancing Leadership focusing on innovation, middle-level leadership, diversity, and women in leadership, we have a community for you!

Join one of the communities of practice for connection and support on a national level. You’ll gain a strong professional network that understands the issues you face and stands ready to help you meet challenges head-on as the education landscape evolves. Together, principals in these communities of practice learn practical strategies for problem-solving that they can apply to their school teams. But most of all, engaging with NAESP communities of practice positions you to take advantage of your most vital assets—each other. ●

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Learn more about NAESP’s Communities of Practice at naesp.org/COP.