



NAESP Platform | 2025

The National Association of Elementary School Principals' Platform serves as the statement of beliefs for the Association and its members, elementary and middle-level principals. The Platform is reviewed and updated annually and approved by the NAESP Board of Directors at the Spring Board Meeting.

Approved by
the Board of
Directors
March 2025

INTRODUCTION

The NAESP landmark publications, *Leading Learning Communities: Pillars, Practices, and Priorities for Effective Principals*, Third Edition (NAESP, 2019), *A Principal's Guide to Early Learning and the Early Grades* (NAESP, 2021), *Elementary School Principals' Professional Learning: Current Status and Future Needs* (2020), *Early Career Resources for Principals e-book* (2023), *Adapt and Advance: Resources and Support for Assistant Principals e-book* (2023), *Responsive & Resourceful: A School Leader's Guide to Advancing Equity e-book* (2023), *The Principal's Guide to Building Culturally Responsive Schools* (NAESP, 2018), *Leaders We Need Now* research study (NAESP, 2021), and *The 10-Year Pre-K-8 School Leadership Study* (NAESP, 2018) provide a comprehensive framework outlining the major responsibilities of the school principal.

Principal preparation and mentoring are integral to the success of the principal and their leadership of the school. Principal preparation programs should be grounded in the *Professional Standards for Educational Leaders* (2015) to help build the capacity of effective school leaders.

NAESP maintains that the instructional leadership role of the principal and assistant principal is vital to sound educational programs in each elementary and middle school. Responsibilities created by state and federal mandates place tremendous demands on the principal; the principal must have sufficient time to plan, coordinate, and provide instructional leadership.

Principals are the primary instructional leaders in the schools and communities in which they serve. Due to the magnitude of this responsibility, it is imperative that principals have authority over the myriad of responsibilities associated with the job including decisions for personnel assignment, staff evaluation, expenditure of funds, discipline, curriculum design, and program/staff development, to mention just a few. Because of the complexity of their work, principals are expected to be lifelong learners and must be provided funding and professional growth opportunities to improve instructional leadership and actively participate in professional organizations.

The recruitment, selection, and retention of staff is an integral component in quality schools. Principals are encouraged to include current school staff when selecting new personnel, but the final recommendation must be the responsibility of the principal. In addition, the principal is responsible for the formative and summative evaluation of staff, and observations should utilize established procedures and instruments directed toward improved professional performance with the ultimate goal being improved student learning and academic achievement.

NAESP strongly recommends the employment of a full-time, certified principal for each elementary and middle school and the employment of full-time assistant principals in every school when enrollment exceeds 250 students.

With district support, principals and assistant principals are encouraged to be active in national, state, and local associations and exert leadership by collaborating with other professional organizations, soliciting the support of businesses and other community groups, and enlisting legislative support for public education.

Principals play a critical role in communicating and implementing the decisions of policy-makers. Therefore, all federal or state-funded agencies, committees, and other groups must include practicing principals in the development of education policies, guidelines, rules, and regulations.
('14, '17, '19, '20, '21, '22, '23, '24, '25)

Table of Contents

LEADING

Principal Leadership	4
Principal Preparation.....	4
Well-Rounded and Complete Education.....	5
Educational Equity.....	6
Positive School Climate and Culture	6
School Safety	7
Selection and Use of Instructional Materials	8
Principal Retirement	8
Discriminatory Practices.....	8
Contributions of Non-Private Schools.....	9
Public Schools and Media	9
School Construction and Renovation	9
Employment Rights of the Principal.....	9
Principal Performance and Evaluation	10
Principal Health and Wellness.....	11
United States Department of Education	11
Religion/Prayer in Public Schools.....	12
Charter Schools	12
Virtual and Distance Learning	12
Homeschooling.....	13
Privatization and Outsourcing	14
Programs of Choice	14
Tuition Tax Credits and Vouchers	14
Legal Protection for School Personnel	15
Government Support and Accountability for Education.....	15
Elementary and Secondary Education Act	16

LEARNING

Curriculum Content and Standards.....	16
Arts in Education	17
Student Disabilities.....	17
Principal Professional Growth and Learning	18
Early Childhood Education	18
School and Class Size	19
Drug and Substance Abuse	19
Student Health and Wellness	19
Retention and Social Promotion	20
Assessment	20

COMMUNITY

American and Global Citizenship	21
Relationships with Other Educational Groups	22
Changing Demographics—Impact on Educational Programming	22
Community Involvement in Schools.....	22
Culturally Responsive and Relevant Teaching.....	22
Parent/Guardian and Community Engagement	23

LEADING

Principal Leadership

NAESP believes that principals are the primary instructional leaders in the schools and communities they serve. It is imperative that principals have the authority and autonomy for building-level decision making with district level support, including but not limited to personnel assignment, staff evaluation, budget and resource allocation, discipline, curriculum design and implementation, student assessment, program and staff development, and other areas of responsibility.

NAESP believes the recruitment, selection, evaluation, and retention of staff are integral components of quality schools. The final recommendation regarding staff selection must remain with the principal.

NAESP believes the principal is responsible for formative and summative evaluation of staff. Observations and evaluations should use instruments and procedures based on best practices for improved professional performance leading to improved student learning and academic achievement. Principals must have adequate training, resources, and time to effectively implement the evaluation process. The evaluation process must be achievable, realistic, and lead to high quality teaching and learning.

NAESP believes school principals should be active in local, state, and national associations for access to resources, best practices, advocacy, networking, and professional development.

NAESP believes principals have a critical role in communicating and implementing the decisions of policy-makers. All federal- or state-funded agencies, committees, and other groups should include practicing principals in the development of education policies, guidelines, rules, and regulations.

NAESP believes that principals should be quality instructional leaders, educated on the most current best practices and policies affecting student learning.

NAESP believes elementary and middle schools should have a full-time certified principal. When enrollment exceeds 250 students a full-time assistant principal is needed. Based on the growing complexity of the role of principals, including increased responsibilities for accountability, teacher evaluation, addressing diverse student needs, student and staff safety, and mental health, additional school building personnel should be employed.

('02, '07, '10, '11, '12, '14, '15, '16, '17, '20, '21, '22, '23, '24)

Principal Preparation

NAESP believes that the role of the principal demands a high level of professional preparation and continuing growth.

NAESP believes all states should require principals to be licensed or certified according to the recognized Professional Standards for Education Leaders, or a set of state generated standards that align with research on effective school leadership.

NAESP recommends that beginning principals should have at least five years of successful teaching experience and an advanced degree and certification in educational leadership that includes a residency/internship and study of effective school leadership.

Alternate pathways to certification must include a one-year school-based residency/internship under the guidance of an effective mentor principal and study of effective school leadership.

The competencies of effective school leadership include:

1. Mission, Vision, and Core Values
2. Ethics and Professional Norms
3. Equity and Cultural Responsiveness
4. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
5. Community of Care and Support for Students
6. Professional Community for Teachers and Staff
7. Professional Capacity of School Personnel
8. Meaningful Engagement of Families and Communities
9. Operations and Management
10. School Improvement

NAESP believes standards for the preparation, certification, selection, and professional learning of principals should result from cooperative efforts among state and local principals' associations, state departments of education, higher education institutions, and local school districts. Criteria to assess aspiring principal candidates should be developed collaboratively based on multiple indicators to determine an individual's strengths and areas needed for growth.

NAESP believes it is the professional responsibility of every principal to identify, encourage, recruit, and nurture educators with outstanding talent, leadership, knowledge, and interpersonal skills to consider the principalship as a career.

NAESP believes that school districts and preparation programs should provide opportunities for additional internships, peer coaching, job shadowing, networking, and mentorships for aspiring principals. Early career principals, administrators changing levels (e.g., high school to elementary), and assistant principals should receive mentoring and professional learning opportunities.

NAESP recommends new principals participate in an induction program provided by the district, state, or professional organization for a minimum of three years.

NAESP believes that all principals, regardless of years of experience, should receive mentoring/coaching, professional learning opportunities, and be active members in professional associations.

NAESP supports legislation and national reciprocal agreements among states for certification, full benefits, and retirement benefits for administrators.
('86, '96, '01, '06, '10, '11, '12, '13, '14, '15, '16, '17, '18, '19, '20, '23)

Well-Rounded and Complete Education

NAESP believes that children must be the nation's number one priority and the focal point of education.

NAESP believes in a well-rounded and complete education for the whole child including standards and research based best instructional practices. As educators, we consistently address the physical and mental health, safety, social, emotional, and educational needs that are components of every child's success.

NAESP urges principals to eagerly partner with all agencies both private and public (local, state, and federal) to develop transition plans among preschool, elementary, middle, high schools, and colleges.

NAESP believes in the continual professional learning of all school employees, which would include content, in addition to understanding and responding to the social, emotional, and mental health needs of children.

NAESP believes that quality before and after-school programs can have a positive impact on student achievement, social interaction, and safety.

NAESP believes federal, state, and local leaders, including principals, should provide vision and support for effective extended-day learning that includes a variety of enrichment opportunities.

NAESP recognizes the individual accountability and collective responsibility of all school staff, parents, and other community members for the education of the child. NAESP supports the use of public schools as community centers to bring together many partners offering a range of support and opportunities to children, youth, families, and communities.

NAESP will continue to collaborate and work in partnership with local, state, and national organizations for the total development of the whole child.

('71, '72, '86, '94, '95, '00, '05, '06 '09, '10 '12, '13, '14, '15, '16, '17, '18, '19, '22, '23, '24)

Educational Equity

NAESP supports the right of each and every student regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, family income, homelessness, language, disability, sexual orientation, gender identification, immigration status, and other demographics to access fair and equitable educational opportunities.

NAESP believes that the rights of all students, especially those who are marginalized and in underserved communities, should be protected.

NAESP believes school culture, climate and social-emotional development should support equity and diversity for all students.

NAESP believes educational opportunities should recognize and respect all stakeholders within our local, state, national, and global communities. ('82, '92, '00, '10, '13, '16, '18, '21, '22)

Positive School Climate and Culture

NAESP believes that principals must establish a positive school climate and culture that nurtures the overall well-being, emotional, mental, social, and physical safety of each member of the school community. Principals must be inherently involved in the design of developmentally and educationally appropriate code of conduct policies.

NAESP believes that positive school climate and culture are shared responsibilities of principals, students, parents/guardians, educators, and the community. NAESP supports federal and state funding of social emotional learning (including trauma informed practices) and other elements of positive school culture.

NAESP believes each child has the right to learn in school without interference from unacceptable behaviors such as, but not limited to, fighting, physical violence, bullying, cyber bullying, harassment, intimidation, and hazing. Principals should ensure that each child has the necessary tools to be successful during both in-person and virtual learning, to provide an equitable education for all. Resources should include, but are not limited to, technology, nutrition, transportation, and social emotional learning supports.

NAESP believes all disciplinary measures for students who engage in a pattern of unacceptable behavior should be developmentally appropriate and focused on learning and growth opportunities with a focus on restoring relationships with the school community. Alternative options, within the scope of state and local regulations, must be available for students who exhibit unacceptable behavior.

NAESP supports legislation that would prohibit all forms of corporal punishment in schools. ('73, '75, '77, '90*, '00*, '05, '10 '12, '13, '14, '15, '17, '18, '19, '20, '21, '22, '23)

School Safety

NAESP believes that schools must be safe and secure and that all stakeholders and agencies must be vigilant in the development, implementation, training and refinement of policies, procedures, facilities infrastructure, and plans that foster a safe, secure, and orderly environment, both physical and emotional.

NAESP recognizes that situations may threaten student and staff safety and welfare during natural, environmental, or man-made disasters. NAESP advocates for the development and dissemination of routine safety practices along with specific emergency and contingency plans that are coordinated with district and local authorities.

NAESP also believes each child has the right to learn and feel physically and emotionally safe in school without interference from violence, including gun violence, verbal and nonverbal threats to well-being, harassment, intimidation, and bullying. NAESP endorses that school safety needs to be adequately funded by federal and state governments.

NAESP believes no policy should be enacted allowing educators to carry firearms in schools. NAESP believes arming educators would produce more harm than good. NAESP believes School Resource Officers who work in collaboration with educators should be trained in current culturally responsive and trauma informed practices and be fully trained in accordance with National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) and similar standards.

NAESP believes efforts to improve school climate, safety, and learning must be collaborative endeavors. They must be designed, funded, and implemented as part of a comprehensive school-wide approach.

NAESP believes safe schools offer school-based mental health support and ensure adequate funding and resources including staffing. We support the appropriate number of school counselors and mental health professionals based on the number of students ratio. We believe school counselors and mental health professionals should infuse prevention and intervention services into the learning process and integrate services provided through school-community partnerships. ('86, '89, '90, '94, '95, '01, '06, '10, '13, '14, '15, '16, '18, '19, '21, '22, '23. '25)

Selection and Use of Instructional Materials

NAESP believes principals must uphold the rights of freedom of responsible expression and free access to information. Principals must affirm the right of students and teachers to the availability of a variety of curricular materials to explore divergent points of view.

NAESP believes each student must have appropriate and equitable access to resources and technology.

NAESP supports funding for a full-time certified media/technology specialist in every elementary and middle school.

NAESP believes we must teach the ethical, responsible, and safe use of technology, including Artificial Intelligence, and other media resources, especially as they relate to copyright law, the internet, and other social media. NAESP supports fair procedures for selecting educational materials, including protocols for challenge and review.

NAESP believes the selection of instructional materials and curriculum programs should be locally controlled. Principals should provide leadership in the selection and adoption of instructional materials, including digital resources.

NAESP supports funding for a full-time instructional coach in every elementary and middle school. The coaching model will help teachers' pedagogical understanding and increase student learning.

NAESP believes the full funding of instructional materials including current and accessible technology along with professional development is the shared responsibility of federal, state, and local governments.

('82, '92*, '02*, '10, '17, '19, '20, '21, '22, '24)

Principal Retirement

NAESP believes principals and their spouses should receive full benefits from all retirement systems into which contributions are made on their behalf and supports legislation that protects full benefits for principals and their spouses.

NAESP believes all retirement plans should be portable from state to state and include cost-of-living increases. As a minimum, retirement benefits without penalty should be provided after completion of 25 years of service.

NAESP believes retired principals should be encouraged to continue participation in professional activities of principals' associations, and that local, state, and national education organizations should utilize the expertise and talents of retired principals to further their goals.

('80, '86, '89, '99*, '04, '09, '10, '13, '14, '16, '18, '19)

Discriminatory Practices

NAESP values and respects diversity in our culture and believes discrimination including but not limited to age, disability, gender, religion, race, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, immigration status, gender identity, and biases must be countered, addressed, and corrected until they are eliminated.

('70, '71, '72, '73, '75, '90*, '00*, '05, '10, '16, '21, '22, '23)

Contribution of Non-profit Private Schools

NAESP recognizes the contributions of non-profit private schools and believes that all personnel must be held to the same levels of accountability and licensure required for public schools. Curriculum must be current and rigorous as required for public schools.

('72, '75, '85, '95, '05, '10, 14, '22)

Public Schools and Media

NAESP believes all media, including social media coverage should celebrate school successes, build public understanding, and strengthen confidence in public education. NAESP encourages principals and their school communities to establish positive relationships with the media and to promote the value of public education.

NAESP believes all principals should be assertive and active in publicizing and advocating for the interests, activities, and successes of public schools across America. ('82, '88, '97, '03, '08, '10, '13, '15, '18, '23)

School Construction and Renovation

NAESP believes federal and state legislators must provide adequate funding to assist local communities in the construction and modernization of school facilities.

NAESP believes that charter schools or any school receiving public funding for construction and/or renovation should be required to meet all regulatory and statutory requirements that public schools are required to meet.

NAESP believes construction and/or renovation of school buildings is necessary to ensure safe environments, maintain appropriate school and class sizes, and provide appropriate and functional space with current technology and ventilation to support instruction.

NAESP believes principals, teachers, students, parents, and community members must be involved in the design process of school buildings. ('00, '05, '10, '13, '15, '17, '18, '22, '23)

Employment Rights of the Principal

NAESP believes job security, protection of rights and personal welfare are essential for a principal to carry out professional responsibilities without reprisal. Workload and expectations should be able to be completed in a forty-hour work week.

NAESP believes all employees have the right to engage in contract negotiations and advocate for all matters affecting the conditions of their employment.

NAESP fully supports the right of principals on the local school district level to organize and negotiate.

NAESP believes all public-school administrators should be employed under written contracts and a defined hold-harmless clause. Salary and benefits, methods used in determining salary, due process, and length of contract should be included as conditions of employment.

NAESP believes principals have a right to resources and support. Compensation should be based upon multiple indicators including but not limited to size of school, educational experience, complexity of job requirements, and length of contract year.

NAESP supports incentive pay for principals who commit to working in hard-to-staff schools.

NAESP believes that professional negotiation laws and procedures should protect the due process rights of all employees.

NAESP advocates that impasses in contract negotiations must be resolved through fair mediation and arbitration. NAESP does not support strikes or other work stoppages.

NAESP recognizes that reductions or reassignment of administrative personnel may occur. Clear criteria and procedures must be used. Fair and objective criteria must be non-discriminatory and consider job performance and evaluation, seniority, professional preparation, and certification. Procedures must include timely notification, access to all pertinent records and materials, and adequate time and opportunity for the employee to respond to the proposed reduction or reassignment. Reassignment should include the option of moving to a comparable administrative assignment.

Legislation, regulations, and policies must provide reasonable job security for school principals and must prevent transfer or removal without just cause and due process.
(’72, ’74, ’90*, ’96, ’01, ’06, ’11, ’12, ’16, ’17, ’19, ’22, ’23)

Principal Performance and Evaluation

NAESP believes that principal evaluation should develop the professional capacity of principals, be used as a collaborative school improvement tool, be part of a comprehensive system of support and consider the context of the learning community, the resources available, and the authority and autonomy given to the principal.

The following six key areas of principal influence should be considered in any fair evaluation system informed by research, retaining the flexibility to focus on one area, or as many as all six.

1. Professional learning and growth
2. Student growth and achievement
3. School planning and progress
4. School culture
5. Professional qualities and instructional leadership
6. Stakeholder support and engagement

NAESP believes rating and ranking based on student test scores should not be the sole or primary criterion in the evaluation, dismissal, reassignment, or compensation of principals. No more than 25% of a principal’s evaluation should be based on student standardized test scores since test scores reflect a narrow definition of student success.

NAESP advocates for a principal evaluation process that:

1. Involves principals significantly in its creation
2. Emphasizes professional learning
3. Offers flexibility to accommodate varying levels of experience
4. Utilizes multiple measures to gather accurate, valid, and reliable information

5. Ensures fairness by prioritizing outcomes within principal's control
6. Provides actionable feedback to inform learning and progress through mentoring and coaching

NAESP believes this approach aims to create a balanced, supportive system that helps principals improve their leadership skills while maintaining accountability. ('12, '13, '14, '15, '16, '17, '18, '19, '21, '22, '23, '25)

Principal Health and Wellness

NAESP believes the health and well-being of the principal is vital to a school's success.

NAESP recognizes the duties and responsibilities of the school principal are increasingly complex and demanding. Therefore, NAESP recognizes the importance of overall wellness including fitness, nutrition, use of leisure time, and stress management for all principals.

NAESP believes principals must take care of themselves to take care of the intricacies of the school community. NAESP recognizes the amount of time allocated for the demands of the job must be balanced with stress-reducing activities.

NAESP believes the state and local school district must provide principals with the time, support, and resources to effectively meet professional responsibilities. NAESP further believes such support can foster a balance between work, personal life, and other responsibilities. This will allow principals to build resiliency, refresh, and rejuvenate themselves to perform their duties effectively.

NAESP believes when health, wellness, and job satisfaction are aligned, principal retention increases. This directly impacts the success of all stakeholders involved with the school. ('15, '16, '22, '24)

United State Department of Education

NAESP believes in the importance of the U.S. Department of Education as a Cabinet-level agency.

NAESP believes that the United States Department of Education should strongly support and promote public education as the cornerstone of American democracy.

NAESP believes educators with experience and training in elementary and middle school administration should hold sufficient positions to advise the decision-making processes within the U.S. Department of Education.

NAESP believes the U.S. Department of Education should maintain formal opportunities for current principals to share their experiences and knowledge to inform national policy.

NAESP is committed to a reciprocal relationship with the U.S. Department of Education. NAESP supports the ongoing focus on research and development to collaboratively meet the educational needs of our nation's children and address the concerns of school principals. ('80, '84, '94*, '04, '09, '13, '14, '15, '17, '18, '22, '24, '25)

Religion/Prayer in Public School

NAESP believes that public schools must respect the rights and beliefs of all students, staff, and stakeholders. In accordance with the law, schools must not initiate or organize religious practices rituals, ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their faith or worldview, are treated with respect and that their personal beliefs are honored.

('84, '94*, '04*, '16, '25)

Charter Schools

NAESP believes that in order for a charter school to receive state and/or federal funds, it must:

1. be led by a certified principal with at least 5 years of successful teaching experience and a degree in educational leadership;
2. employ highly qualified and appropriately certified staff;
3. be nonprofit and tuition free;
4. be supported by a funding source that does not divert funds from other public schools;
5. be governed by an elected board;
6. meet the same accountability standards as other public schools which include health and safety, fiscal responsibility, curriculum content, academic achievement, state-mandated testing, and disclosure;
7. adhere to the same accreditation standards as other public schools;
8. be non-discriminatory in enrolling or dismissing students and hiring or dismissing staff;
9. be required to serve students with disabilities and English Language Learners to the same extent as other public schools;
10. provide the same level of support services required of other public schools; and
11. provide its employees the same benefits as other public schools.

NAESP believes charter schools should not supplant a comprehensive school reform program.

('00, '05, '14, '15, '17, '18, '21, '23)

Virtual and Distance Learning

NAESP recognizes that technological advances are expanding educational opportunities for students.

Virtual Schools

NAESP believes that while definitions of the term “virtual schools” vary, NAESP supports online education programs that maintain strong teacher/student relationships and a high level of accountability without diverting funds from traditional public schools. Schools receiving state and federal funds must maintain proven elements of quality education. These elements include, but are not limited to:

1. Certified principals, certified instructors, and certified counselors who support and guide the learning process;
2. Educator-developed curricula based on current evidence-based research and best practice;
3. A focus on developing students’ interpersonal, social, collaborative, problem-solving, and communication skills, as well as global citizenship; and
4. Assessment that is valid, reliable, and appropriate to the curricula.

Distance Learning

NAESP is committed to promoting educational systems that support every child's wellbeing and strengths. Decisions regarding distance learning should keep in mind marginalized and underserved communities. Distance learning should provide students with equitable access to learning devices, platforms, hotspots, other schools and classrooms, and Wi-Fi to access instruction. In situations such as a pandemic and natural/manmade disasters, NAESP encourages:

Ensuring safety and wellness: The decision to return to school settings must be driven by health and safety considerations. In planning, prioritize basic needs such as food, shelter, and wellness and support the mental, social, and emotional health of students and staff.

Cultivating connection and relationship: Quality learning experiences require deep interpersonal relationships and a learning environment where people feel safe, seen, and valued. Especially in the midst of returning to school settings from an extended school closure, supporting students and families should begin with connection and relationship.

Centering on equity: Recognize the disproportionate challenges that distance/remote learning poses for Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Latino/a/x, Pacific Islander communities; students experiencing disabilities; rural living students, and students and families navigating poverty. Apply an equity-informed, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive lens to promote culturally sustaining and revitalizing educational systems that support every child.

Innovating: The complex circumstances in which learning is currently situated requires ongoing reflection and iteration to assure deep learning for every student as well as sustained, intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-informed, and classroom focused professional development. ('02, '07, '12, '13, '14, '15, '16, '17, '18, '20, '21, '22, '25)

HomeSchooling

NAESP acknowledges the right of parents to choose homeschooling. NAESP opposes the diversion of public funds to support homeschooling, as such funds are used to strengthen the public education system.

NAESP believes the following safeguards should be in place for each child:

1. learning in a healthy and safe environment;
2. participation in appropriate social experiences;
3. interaction with students from other social/racial/ethnic groups;
4. aligning the full range of rigorous curricular experiences and materials with state standards;
5. guaranteeing instruction by certified and highly qualified persons;
6. participation in state-mandated assessments. The results of these assessments should not be included in the local public-school scores; and
7. compliance with state and federal laws addressing children with special needs.

('93, '03, '04, '09, '13, '22, '25)

Privatization and Outsourcing

NAESP acknowledges that private, for-profit corporations may be contracted to provide educational programs and school services for children attending public schools. When privatization or outsourcing occurs, local, state, and federal laws and guidelines must be followed.
(’95, ’05, ’06, ’13, ’18)

Programs of Choice

NAESP believes public schools are the cornerstone of American democracy.

NAESP believes that students learn most effectively in a school setting that reflects American society and culture.

NAESP believes that programs of choice should not be federally mandated nor draw resources and funding away from public education funding.

Programs of choice should:

1. be locally developed, locally controlled, and carefully constructed;
2. have a clear statement of guidelines, procedures, and academic goals;
3. be held to the same accountability measures as all public schools in the state;
4. include parent/guardian involvement in the planning and development of local programs;
5. be an opportunity for local schools, given sufficient and equitable funding, to provide unique programs;
6. take into account “equal access” for all students such as gifted, special education, English Language Learners, students with social emotional or behavioral challenges;
7. not exceed state and local determinations of class size;
8. not negatively impact racial or socioeconomic balance;
9. not divert money from public schools to private schools;
10. have as their foundation the approval of the state and local boards of education and be staffed by certified teachers and principals who are highly qualified; and
11. be subject to the same laws and regulations as are all public schools in the state.

(’93, ’97, ’02, ’07, ’14, 15, ’17, ’23, ’25)

Tuition Tax Credits and Vouchers

NAESP believes that the welfare of this nation’s future is dependent on a strong public education system. While recognizing the contribution and value of private schools, vouchers and tuition tax credits adversely affect financial support for public education.

NAESP strongly opposes tuition tax credits, portability and education voucher plans that divert public money to private institutions, entities, intermediaries, or individuals, including private or for-profit schools, programs of choice, scholarship granting organizations, and homeschooling.

NAESP rejects all proposals that reduce financial support to public education.
(’82, ’92*, ’94, ’04*, ’14, ’17, ’18, ’20, ’23, ’25)

Legal Protection for School Personnel

NAESP acknowledges that lawsuits are filed against school personnel as they carry out their assigned responsibilities as agents of the state or school district in interpreting and implementing policies and regulations.

NAESP believes school districts must provide adequate liability protection, financial support, and legal representation for school personnel.

NAESP supports legislation to penalize those who file frivolous lawsuits.
(’79, ’90*, ’96, ’06, ’12, ’15)

Government Support and Accountability for Education

NAESP believes that each child must receive a free and appropriate public education.

NAESP believes federal, state, and local governments must assume accountability and take aggressive action to address social and economic issues arising from such factors as race, ethnicity, health, unemployment, immigration, poverty, drugs and alcohol, incarceration and other challenges facing the American family.

NAESP believes sufficient and equitable funding for public education is necessary to support an educated, skilled workforce that can compete in a global economy. NAESP opposes referenda, initiatives, and other governing actions that reduce funding for public education. Federal funding should be dispersed through targeted formula grants, not competitive grants. Formula grants ensure that federal funds are spent on disadvantaged students and districts in need and constitute a reliable source of funds for schools.

NAESP believes principals, national, state, and local leaders, and other interested groups must promote public awareness of the detrimental effects of reducing public education funding.

NAESP believes any federal or state legislation requiring schools to provide programs, services, and/or facilities must provide full funding for those mandates and guarantee funding at the school level.

NAESP believes a system of coordinated services, in which health and human services agencies work to support schools, students, and parents should be established in every state and funded by state and federal resources.

NAESP believes legislative bodies should work with local, state, and national associations to regularly update and provide information regarding requisite funding.

NAESP believes financial support for public education must be shared by local, state, and federal governments and all barriers should be removed to access funds more easily.

NAESP recommends increasing financial support that is predictable and continuous with greater building-level authority in the initial allocation, distribution, and use of funds at the school level. District administration must meaningfully consult principals in the determination of how state and federal funds will be allocated.

NAESP believes local, state, and federal governments should reexamine tax structures and revise allotment formulas to equalize and increase financial support for education among school districts. ('82, '92, '94, '96, '01, '06, '12, '13, '14, '15, '16, '17, '20, '21, '22, '23, '25)

Elementary and Secondary Education Act

NAESP recognizes that the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) and its current iteration, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), is the primary means of providing federal support to K-12 schools.

NAESP supports principal leadership in the state and local development of ESSA plans to ensure all students are college and career ready. Parents and local leaders must be at the forefront of ESSA implementation and NAESP supports principals as they fulfill the requirements of ESSA for a well-rounded and complete education for every student.

NAESP recognizes that, more broadly, federal policy must comprehensively support school leaders through strategies which include:

- Differentiating and supporting the role of principals, with a particular emphasis on recruiting, preparing, and retaining school leaders. Bolster the pipeline for principals, assistant principals, teachers, and support staff and provide them with ongoing, job embedded professional development. Support a state set-aside of 3% of Title II Part A allocations to support professional learning opportunities for school leaders.
- Accountability systems that include multiple measures of student growth and achievement, climate, safety, engagement, and how schools are meeting the on-academic factors that contribute to student success. State interventions based on accountability results should consider external factors that influence student achievement, prioritize the schools most in-need, and provide such schools with the resources and evidence-based improvement strategies necessary to help all students.
- Support for early childhood education, educators, and a Pre-K-3 continuum of aligned standards, curriculum, and instruction to help improve student outcomes.

Fully funding K-12 formula grant programs to address equity and provide schools with adequate resources to improve student outcomes, comprehensive curriculum and well-rounded education, a positive school climate, learning opportunities outside the school day, and student well-being and social-emotional development. ('17, '18, '19, '20, '22, '23, '25)

LEARNING

Curriculum Content and Standards

NAESP believes that elementary and middle school curricula, standards and instruction must be aligned with current research-based best practices.

NAESP believes principals must be involved in the planning, development, implementation, and evaluation of curriculum content and standards. ('10, '13, '17, '21)

Arts in Education

NAESP believes that a well-rounded, complete education must include a strong focus on arts integration across a Pre-K-8 curriculum. The arts engage teachers and students in shared learning goals, and foster creativity, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking skills that are the foundation of student academic success.

NAESP believes principals must promote the inclusion of arts integration and the use of effective instructional strategies. The arts provide students with multiple opportunities of learning and understanding.

NAESP believes arts integration intensifies academic rigor as students engage problem-solving skills to draw connections across disciplines and demonstrate competency through creative endeavors.

NAESP believes afterschool and summer learning programs should embrace arts-enhanced learning activities that are aligned with the school curriculum.

('16, '17, '19, '21)

Student Disabilities

NAESP supports the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Our emphasis is on the early identification beginning at birth, guaranteeing that all students, irrespective of disabilities and/or other health impairments, are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment.

NAESP believes IDEA must be fully funded to meet the needs of all students with disabilities. IDEA authorizes the federal contribution at 40% of the excess cost of educating students with disabilities.

NAESP believes that the rights of students with disabilities to an appropriate education are commensurate to those of other students. When appropriate, NAESP supports inclusion of students with disabilities in classrooms with their peers in their neighborhood schools. To facilitate the successful inclusion of students with disabilities, NAESP believes that appropriate financial resources, professional learning, and support services must follow the student with disabilities.

NAESP supports ongoing professional development in understanding and addressing bias, multilingual learners, and culturally responsive practices to mitigate possible overidentification of traditionally underrepresented or marginalized groups/students.

NAESP supports the continuation and expansion of related services to local districts by appropriate state and community service agencies. Full and expedient funding from the state and federal levels is imperative for local school districts to be able to comply with the provisions of these laws.

('76, '77, '79, '90, '91, '93, '94, '99, '01, '02, '07, '10, '13, '15, '16, '17, '18, '19, '23)

Principal Professional Growth and Learning

NAESP believes all principals, first-year, or veterans of the profession, need ongoing support to build capacity for a job that is constantly changing.

NAESP believes all principals must have access to and the autonomy to choose from a wide range of relevant, high-quality, and capacity building professional learning opportunities to include trauma-informed care. Professional learning experiences must be aligned with the necessary core competencies of school leadership and based on research-supported standards of practice to effectively lead schools.

NAESP advocates for programs and funding that provide high-quality professional learning opportunities for principals. NAESP believes districts must provide sufficient time and resources for principals to participate in professional learning opportunities.

NAESP believes federal and state governments as well as school districts must allocate funds and resources specifically for principal professional learning opportunities. These may include but are not limited to job-embedded learning, utilization of technology, access to mentoring and coaching, and professionally delivered content outside their schools.

NAESP supports sustained, intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-informed, and classroom-focused professional development.

NAESP believes school districts must provide principals with the time, support, funding, resources, and discretion needed for collaboration, networking, and participation in professional organizations. ('02, '07, '10, '11, '12, '13, '14, '15, '16, '17, '18, '20, '22, 25)

Early Childhood Education

NAESP believes quality early childhood, Pre-K-3rd grade experiences provide a strong foundation for future academic and personal achievement.

NAESP believes that early childhood programs and experiences should be available for all children within the elementary setting.

NAESP recommends, supports, and encourages schools to implement developmentally appropriate practice that includes social, physical, emotional, and academic experiences for Pre-K-3rd grade.

NAESP supports a continuum of learning from Pre-K-3rd grade. NAESP believes early childhood curriculum should include robust standards and instruction, purposeful play, and age-appropriate assessment that create a consistent framework for learning from Pre-K-3rd grade. Principals must be provided individualized professional learning to strengthen their knowledge of early childhood education.

NAESP believes full-day kindergarten programs are essential and should be mandatory.

NAESP believes that federal and state funding for school-connected early childhood programs must be a legislative priority and supports collaboration between entities to promote a seamless continuum of services from Pre-K-3rd grade without impinging on current funding for public education. ('60, '62, '67, '68, '84 '85, '88, '90, '93, '98, '01, '05, '08, '09, '10, '11, '12, '13, '14, '15, '17, '19, '20, '22)

School and Class Size

NAESP recognizes research that indicates small schools are more likely to foster a sense of nurturing, belonging, and school community. NAESP endorses elementary school populations of not more than 400. If an elementary/middle school is larger than 250, or if the school community warrants more support, NAESP recommends that an assistant principal be added to the school.

NAESP advocates that appropriate state agencies and school districts develop plans to facilitate the implementation of a class-size ratio of not more than 20:1 in the elementary grades.
(’90, ’98, ’01, ’06, ’18, ’20, ’22, ’23)

Drug and Substance Abuse

NAESP recognizes the serious effects of substance abuse on the school community.

NAESP recommends increased efforts to improve existing drug and substance abuse education and prevention in schools to provide information about the harmful effects of the improper use of drugs. These elements include, but are not limited to tobacco, alcohol, electronic nicotine delivery devices, marijuana, and illegal substances.

NAESP supports the elimination of smoking, vaping, edibles, and all e-cigarettes in schools, on school properties, at school-sponsored events, and all educational facilities.

NAESP recommends cooperative action by appropriate groups to prevent access to and use of these substances in the school community.

NAESP recommends the availability of lifesaving emergency resources for drug overdoses.

NAESP strongly encourages all media platforms, tobacco companies, and the entertainment industry to eliminate any glorification of substance use and abuse portrayed in programming and advertising.
(’78, ’86, ’88, ’93, ’98, ’03, ’08, ’15, ’16, ’18, ’19, ’20, ’22, ’23, ’25)

Student Health and Wellness

NAESP believes that health and wellness are lifelong pursuits that contribute to overall well-being.

NAESP recognizes the importance of instruction and support in the areas of fitness, nutrition, use of leisure time, social-emotional wellness, mental health, and stress management.

NAESP believes in supplying schools with lifesaving resources and training for personnel.

NAESP believes that parents, educators, social agencies, community groups, and health professionals should address students’ physical and mental health and wellness issues to minimize disruptions to their education.

NAESP supports the elimination of smoking, vaping and all e-cigarettes in schools and all educational facilities.

NAESP recognizes the importance of good nutrition. The school meal program should provide nutritious, well-balanced breakfasts and lunches in accordance with federal and state regulations.

NAESP believes that sufficient federal and state monies must be provided for school meal programs.

NAESP believes that students should participate in supervised structured and unstructured physical activities. Daily physical education provided by a certified P.E. teacher and recess is an important component of a child's physical and social development.

NAESP believes every school should have a full-time certified school counselor, social worker, mental health practitioner, board certified behavior analyst, or other qualified personnel to ensure guidance for students' emotional, mental, and social needs. Every school should have a certified school nurse to attend to students' medical, health and wellness needs.

NAESP recognizes that social media can be beneficial to some youth, but online activities are not necessarily benign and that a growing body of research suggests it can be harmful to young people and lead to anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, cyberbullying, online harassment, poor sleep, eating disorders, and other mental health issues. Technology and social media companies have a responsibility to protect youths' privacy and exposure to harmful and inappropriate content. Educators should be mindful of social media's risks, limit its use, and support parents and students in protecting themselves. ('93, '97, '02, '07, '08, '09, '13, 14, '17, '19, 20, '22, '23, '24)

Retention and Social Promotion

NAESP believes that retention and promotion should be based on individual student needs.

NAESP believes that the decision to promote or retain students should be based on multiple measures and opposes the use of standardized test scores as the sole criterion. Multiple criteria must take into consideration the social, emotional, behavioral, and physical needs, as well as the academic progress of the child.

NAESP recommends a collaborative approach that includes families and school personnel when making a retention decision.
('91, '92, '00, '01, '06, '11, '15, '20)

Assessment

NAESP recognizes children have diverse abilities, learning potential, and language proficiency that should be identified and developed. To determine the individualized needs of students, multiple measures, including fair, valid, and reliable formative and summative assessments must be utilized. Global language learners should not be required to take state assessments until they are assessed to be proficient in English.

NAESP believes before assessment procedures are developed, and for assessment information to be valid and useful, educational standards specifying what students are expected to know and be able to do must be clearly defined.

NAESP believes it is necessary to reduce the number of annual assessments required by the federal and state accountability systems. States and local systems should have the flexibility to determine the number of assessments and ensure they are developmentally appropriate.

NAESP believes educators should be involved in state and local assessment audits as well as the design and implementation of assessments and assessment plans. Data must be reported in a usable format and prior to the end of the school year in which the assessment was administered for both formative and summative assessments. Assessment data should inform instruction, be fair, flexible, authentic, and reflect students' academic growth over time.

NAESP supports flexibilities of state assessments as an accountability measure in extenuating circumstances, such as natural disasters, manmade disasters, and pandemics.

NAESP believes that prior to the implementation of any technology-based assessments, students must be able to effectively use the technology to ensure that content knowledge rather than proficiency with technology tools is assessed. Adequate and equitable support and resources, including infrastructure, must be provided to staff and students before and during the administration of any assessment.

NAESP opposes the use of standardized assessments as the sole or primary criterion to measure student performance; to rate, grade or rank principals, teachers, students, or school effectiveness; to allocate funds; or to take punitive measures against schools and/or school personnel.
('72, '76, '85, '89, '97, '01, '02, '07, '11, '12, '14, '15, '16, '17, '18, '21, '23)

COMMUNITY

American and Global Citizenship

NAESP believes public schools are the cornerstone of American democracy.

NAESP believes public schools must work to assure that every child demonstrates critical-thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity, and compassion as well as an understanding of democracy, citizenship, and the significance of living in a global society.

NAESP encourages principals to foster an environment that honors and respects equity and diversity.

NAESP believes schools play a key role in encouraging students to participate in programs that foster positive citizenship and develop a sense of responsibility to the community. NAESP endorses the principles of democracy found in strong and active elementary or middle school student leadership opportunities.

NAESP recommends strong home/school partnership programs be developed that encourage positive citizenship and character.

NAESP believes all schools should embrace service-learning opportunities and character education including social-emotional learning to promote academic achievement, character development, and global citizenship.

NAESP encourages building a strong American and global identity by broadening children's understanding of our nation's shared culture and appropriate interactions throughout the world.
('02, '03, '08, '10, '13, '14, '16, '17, '20, '21, '22, '23)

Relationships with Other Educational Groups

NAESP is a leader in the advocacy and support for elementary and middle-level principals and other national and international education leaders in their commitment to all children.

NAESP believes it is essential to enlist support from, and to work consistently with, other education groups. NAESP encourages the development of processes and structures that will ensure continued collaboration among professional organizations.

NAESP believes the autonomy of each association must be preserved.
(’73, ’74, ’90*, ’00*, ’05, ’10, ’14, ’17)

Changing Demographics-Impact on Educational Programming

NAESP recognizes that changing demographics have a critical impact on the delivery of educational programs and the ability of schools to meet state and federal standards.

NAESP believes the federal government must provide adequate financial assistance for programs and services to meet the changing demographics of schools and the needs of each student. Special consideration should be given to those districts and schools with the highest density of disadvantaged and high need students. This increased federal funding is needed, with flexibility and accessibility for individual districts and schools to design appropriate programs.

NAESP believes that principals should be involved in careful planning with boards of education, staff, parents/guardians, and members of the community to meet the challenges of changing enrollments and the resulting budget implications. Principals should exercise a leadership role in devising alternative ways of utilizing staff and maintaining local school programs to meet the needs of students.
(’74, ’75, ’84, ’94*, ’04, ’09, ’10, ’13, ’14, ’15, ’17, ’18, ’22)

Community Involvement in Schools

NAESP believes principals should actively support coordinated local efforts for community involvement to strengthen educational opportunities for students.

NAESP believes schools can be utilized for instructional, childcare, civic, social, and recreational programs as deemed acceptable by individual school district policies and procedures with adequate additional resources.

NAESP believes that schools should promote the use of quality volunteers who have been properly screened according to state laws and regulations to support school programs.
(’85, ’95, ’02, ’07, ’12, ’14, ’15, ’16, ’17, ’20, ’22)

Culturally Responsive and Relevant Teaching

NAESP believes that a well-rounded elementary and middle school curriculum is one that embeds diverse, equitable, and inclusive representation.

NAESP respects values and celebrates the unique characteristics and perspectives of the diverse populations within our schools.

We believe that effective ongoing collaboration of all stakeholder groups and intentionally seeking the perspectives of underrepresented and/or marginalized groups, provides the necessary and unique voices that bring cultural responsiveness and inclusivity needed for student success.

('78, '84, '94*, '02, '07, '13, '16, '21, '23)

Parent/Guardian and Community Engagement

NAESP believes schools should reach out to the parents/guardians and the broader community for partnerships in education. Parents/guardians bear the primary responsibility to assist children in developing their full potential.

NAESP believes that the broader school community has a responsibility to positively assist children in developing their full potential and actively engage with schools by promoting and assisting student achievement and learning.

NAESP maintains that principals should take an active role in assisting parents/guardians in accessing the resources that support the development of the child's intellectual reasoning, personal, physical, social, emotional, and mental health.

NAESP advocates that parents/guardians be active participants in the education of their children at home and at school. Parents/guardians and school personnel must work cooperatively in fostering a deep respect for achievement and learning.

NAESP commends the efforts of volunteers and parent/teacher groups and alliances within schools. These individuals and groups serve as child advocates and provide valuable support to the success of all learners.

('84, '92, '95, '05, '08, '16, '17, '18, '20)