North Dakota Principals Help Build Playground for Students at Nashville’s Inglewood Elementary

Alexandria, VA—July 9, 2014—Elementary Principals came together on Wed., July 9, to build a new playground at a Nashville elementary school during the National Association of Elementary School Principals’ (NAESP) sixth annual Community Service Day. The project was part of the NAESP National Convention which was held July 10-12 at the Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center. The project is sponsored by NAESP and playground equipment supplier and corporate partner Landscape Structures. North Dakota had the largest number of principals from one state working on the project. (ND Proud!)
On behalf of the North Dakota Association of Elementary School Principals, I am happy to wish you a terrific 2014-15 school year! As always, the summer flew by. However, I hope that you were able to spend quality time with family and friends and soak up a bit of sunshine! I anticipate we’ll all have an extremely busy year due to population growth in our state, a new statewide accreditation, the 64th Legislative Session, new evaluation systems, and so on. I know that we all have many of the same goals such as encouraging children to become lifelong learners, building relationships, and fostering positive school cultures and safe learning environments.

However, I also know that each of us have personal goals. I began to think of mine when my son recently asked me what the favorite part of my job was. Of course I laughed and said, “Anytime that I don’t have to be taking care of discipline!” Seriously, though, I must admit it was difficult to provide an “on the spot” answer. After all, there have been many changes in education, and it seems as though the schools are being asked to do more and more each year. When I compare my job now to what it was when I first became a principal, it is apparent the job has grown in many and varied ways. There are many more administrative tasks and much more paperwork than I ever dreamed possible. However, after giving it more thought, I realized the one thing that has always remained a constant is my care and concern for children.

So, in a nutshell, the best part of my job occurs when I am out and about in the building and not in my office or in meetings! The favorite part of my job is time spent with children and seeing what is happening in classrooms, the hallways, on the playground and in the lunchroom.

It seemed so much easier to get away from my office in years gone by, so I have realized that I’ve allowed managerial “roadblocks” to get in my way of doing more of what I love best – interacting with students and my staff! The conversation with my son generated an idea for a major goal that I’d like to achieve in this year. That goal is to get out of my office and into the classrooms and hallways more. You see, I’ve determined that is what keeps me connected to what’s happening in the lives of my students and teachers. Although, I feel that I participate in all events, I want to be more visible throughout the day.

I suspect that maintaining this goal will keep me more reenergized so that each day is a great day, filled with student greetings, high fives, hugs, laughter and smiles. Seeing children who enjoy school, are helping other kids, teachers taking pride in their accomplishments, and visitors and parents saying nice things about our school is what I hope for.

Knowing the students and forming personal relationships with them is very important to me. Hands down, being with and around kids is the very best part of my day…every day!! It helps me remember why I’m doing what I’m doing!

So I challenge each of you to take time to reflect on a personal goal, a goal that will be fulfilling to your professional ideals and clarify what you ultimately want to happen throughout the school year. What activities or behaviors will help you achieve your goal? Goals drive us forward so that we can be motivated to achieve our greatest potential!

I feel extremely lucky to be part of an organization in which we can share and learn from one another. I will look forward to hearing about successful goal achievement!

For those of you who are new to our association, we welcome you with open arms and want to assure you that we are all in this together and will be there for you as you enter a new and rewarding career as a school administrator!
I hope these first few weeks of school have gone well for all of you. It is always nice to see the students and staff again.

**NAESP/ZONE 7**
As you are aware the election of NAESP officers and Zone 7 Directors has changed. I would like for you take a moment to read through the current NAESP Bylaws pertaining to the voting changes for NAESP officers which is located in pages 4-11. The Zone 7 State Representatives are currently participating in numerous conference calls in developing a system that is fair and productive for the Zone 7 Director election. It is hopeful that this process will be finalized by the end of October. If you have some strong feelings or suggestions on how this voting process should work, please feel free to share them with me. I will then share those with the Zone 7 State Representatives.

NAESP is currently reorganizing a Membership Committee that will meet throughout the year to discuss various ways to increase NAESP Membership. Committee members will participate in monthly conference calls to discuss and stay abreast of membership needs.

**NAESP NATIONAL CONVENTION**
The 2015 NAESP National Convention will take place in Long Beach, California on June 30-July 2, 2015. Registration information will be coming out in late December or Early January.

**MEMBERSHIP**
I have also included a NAESP Membership application. If you are not a NAESP member, please consider becoming one as the new membership changes provide many great resources for new and current principals.

Have a great 2014-15 school year!

LINK TO NEW NAESP BY-LAWS (NDAESP Website- Front Page/ Announcements)

LINK TO NAESP MEMBERSHIP FORM (NDAESP Website- Front Page/ Announcements)
More Challenges- More Rewards

As I begin my 30th year as an elementary principal I am faced as all of you are with new challenges. We all wear more hats than we should and have had to juggle our time between school responsibilities without forgetting about those at home. There isn’t any doubt that I am going to have to work smarter this year.

The North Dakota Common Core Standards and the upcoming SmarterBalanced Assessment might have been enough of a challenge but the move to AdvancedED and a new Staff Evaluation plan have pushed the envelope that much farther.

Ok so you are wondering where the rewards part is.... I believe that the ND Common Core Standards in the long run will be a good thing for our students. That’s not to say there might not need some tweaking along the way but I like the emphasis on applying knowledge to solve problems. The Smarter Balanced on-line assessment will likely have some bugs to work out but the idea of an on-line assessment will hopefully equate to a quicker turn around on receiving results. I am convinced that the new teacher evaluation plan will lead to more meaningful discussion, growth and improved instruction.

The other outcome of all these changes is that we (NDAESP MEMBERS) are going to need each other even more. I can think of no other group that I would rather face these challenges with. Remember our list-serve is an excellent avenue to throw something out there to see what others think and to get ideas from those that might already traveled down that road.

I so look forward to serve you as the NDAESP State Editor again this year. I hope you will consider sharing news and pictures from your school in upcoming publications. Have a great school year!
It’s September and it’s good to be back in school! Each summer, after our summer school program ends, it gets quiet and lonely in the building. It’s good to have the students and staff members back in the building to liven up the place.

Labor Day has come and gone, it that means the political season will (is) heating up. The Congress and the President have been on vacation and out of Washington. I don’t think it matters much, as not much has been accomplished during the current session of congress. Well, maybe next year. With only the single house seat up for election in ND this year, it may be less acrimonious then when there is a full slate of candidates – although the “soft” commercials have started. I’m sure there will be record amounts of money spent on this election.

We are truly fortunate in North Dakota our congressional delegation works hard at their job and makes every effort to do the best job for the entire state. Our senators and representative work together for the good of the state even though they are from different parties.

There are some state issues that should be interesting to watch. The measure educators should be interested in this year is the measure relating to the start date of school. An initiated measure with approximately 16,500 signatures has been filed with the ND secretary of state’s office. This measure would require public schools to start after Labor Day. Bismarck is one of a few (maybe the only?) public school that started after Labor Day. After working on a committee to develop the calendar for the year, we found it impossible to get the required number of days in and maintain the professional development days, holidays, and mandated non-school days in prior to Memorial Day. Bismarck’s final day of school this school year will be June 4th. For as long as I can remember, the school calendar has been set by the local school board. It’s my belief it should remain that way. The school board in each district is in the best position to develop a calendar based on the local needs of a community.

Two other measures that will affect educators are the measure to eliminate the state Board of Higher Education and the measure dealing with parental rights and responsibilities. I have not personally studied either of these measures, but will do so prior to Election Day.

At the national level, NAESP’s legislative priorities include: provisions to support principals in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and other major education legislation; increasing funding for principal professional development, Title I, IDEA and education technology; and supporting early childhood education, school safety and student mental health.

On August 21, NAESP applauded US Education Secretary Duncan’s decision to allow states to request a one-year delay in using assessment results in educator evaluations. This will give principals, teachers and students time to transition to new assessment systems.

Well, the really good thing about this time of year is the kids are back! Have good year!
Hot Topics for the 2014-2015 School Year

As the summer winds down, big changes for the 2014-2015 school year are heating up. Gear up by reviewing these latest developments on Common Core, nutrition, and more.

Online Assessments
Many students will take new assessments this year—but those tests vary from state to state, as more states retool their standards and strategies. Twenty-six states and the District of Columbia are using assessments from Smarter Balanced or the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) this school year. The rest are either undecided or are using their own standards. This map presents the outlook on the testing landscape.

Regardless of the test being used, educators are worried about students’ readiness. Just a quarter of teachers say their students were prepared for the new Common Core assessments, according to an Education Week Research Center study conducted in October 2013, and released this month. This same study indicates that many teachers are not familiar with test resources: four in 10 say they haven’t reviewed practice tests or scoring rubrics.

Resources:

- This [pilot study](#) suggests that young learners might struggle with certain aspects of the online assessments.
- This [communication guide](#) from Phi Delta Kappa can help principals discuss Common Core assessments and shifts.
- Linda Darling-Hammond, in [this article](#) for Principal, explores how the new assessments can support deeper teaching and learning.

—Dateline NAESP
Hot Topics for the 2014-2015 School Year

Common Core Professional Development
Schools and districts will continue to grapple this year with helping teachers prepare to teach to new standards. What training do teachers need most? According to a recent Education Week Research Center study (mentioned above), most teachers say they have received some Common Core professional development but want more. The professional development they receive typically covers the reading and math standards, and alignment between new and old standards—but trainings are less likely to explore teaching the standards to specific groups (such as ELLs), online assessments, and developing classroom-based assessments.

Resources:
- Revisit these archived NAESP webinars on Common Core.
- Combat Common Core time crunches with the four strategies in this Communicator article.

New Snack Standards
The USDA’s Smart Snacks in School standards went into effect July 1. These mandate that any food sold during the school day—including vending machine or snack bar items—be whole-grain rich and fall within specific calorie, fat, and sugar limits.

Resources:
- This flyer explains the new nutrition requirements.
- What about fundraisers? Events outside of school hours are exempt. Plus, states can give schools a certain number of exemptions for fundraisers. This handout clarifies these exceptions.

Discipline Policies
In January 2014, the U.S. Department of Education released the first set of national guidelines on discipline policies. These guiding principles aim to help educators administer student discipline without discriminating or enacting overly harsh punishments.

Resources:
- These are the three key principles and action steps from the Department of Education.
- These 60 recommendations from the Council of State Governments Justice Center were released in June

—Dateline NAESP
Hot Topics for the 2014-2015 School Year

**Educator Evaluations**
Teacher and principal evaluation will continue to be hot topics, especially as states grapple with implementing new evaluation systems and the Common Core simultaneously.

**Resources**
- [This Principal article](#) examines the tools to strengthen instruction through teacher evaluation with multiple measures.
- Review NAESP’s [Rethinking Principal Evaluation report](#) to guide discussions with your supervisor on evaluation measures.

**E-Rate and Technology**
An FCC order on July 11 authorized changes for the E-Rate program, a federal program that funds technology infrastructure for schools and libraries. If the order works as planned, the application for applying for funding will be smoother. This *Education Week* article [explores the changes](#).

Beyond E-Rate, this year’s top tech issues include student data privacy, online safety, and mobile devices (including BYOD).

**Resources:**
- Explore these [online safety tips](#) from NAESP’s #digisafety chat.
- This [eSchool News article](#) outlines 5 data protection policies for the new year.
- In [this Principal article](#), a tech-savvy principal shares how he transformed his school’s digital learning strategy.

—Dateline NAESP
School Culture Check

Research proves that shaping school culture—though it can seem hard to quantify—is one of the most important tools in a principal’s toolbox. That’s because it is an element that touches every aspect of students’ learning. As you start the school year, assess your school’s culture using these four focus areas recommended by the National School Climate Council:

1. **SAFETY**: There needs to be a clear set of rules concerning physical violence, verbal abuse, harassment, and teasing. Successfully communicating and enforcing these will create a sense of physical and social-emotional security.

2. **RELATIONSHIPS**: Relationships, between and among staff and students, should be supportive and caring. Respecting diversity and understanding individual differences are also key.

3. **TEACHING AND LEARNING**: Teaching should be supportive and include constructive feedback and individual attention. Social and civic learning should help students understand and regulate their emotions and promote ethical decision-making.

4. **ENVIRONMENT**: School surroundings should be clean, appealing, and provide resources to meet students’ needs.

In addition to these elements, consider the multiple perspectives—parents, students, staff, and community—that a school climate assessment could gather. This will help you determine the most useful assessment tool for your school. For example, you might want to use an online survey for parents and staff and a more informal approach for students.

Last, make sure that you develop a plan to use the collected data. This can be helpful in providing feedback to staff, planning events or professional development, and in developing a school improvement plan.

For more resources on school culture and climate, revisit the *Principal* magazine special issue on *Positive School Culture*. It includes articles on:

- Improving school culture with a social and emotional learning program;
- Maximizing a school psychologist to provide multi-tiered systems of support;
- Promoting safe, digital citizenship through ongoing learning for staff and parents;
- Being proactive about school safety.

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