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The Monthly Newsletter of the National Association of Elementary School Principals

The Common Core and You

By Katey McGettrick, staff associate in the Standards, Assessment, and Accountability Department at the Council of Chief State School Officers

Two years ago a majority of states agreed to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), a common baseline for academic knowledge and college and career readiness skills. Most states expect to have the standards in place by the 2014-2015 school year. As states and local school districts begin to decide how the CCSS will be met, you can prepare for your role in supporting the shift in instruction to ensure all students meet the new standards.

What Are the Common Core State Standards?

The CCSS are a set of high-quality academic expectations in English-language arts (ELA) and mathematics that define the knowledge and skills all students should master by the end of each grade level in order to be on track for success in college and career. A diverse team of teachers, parents, administrators, researchers, and content experts developed the CCSS to be academically rigorous, attainable for students, and practical for teachers and districts. The standards initiative was a state-led effort spearheaded by governors and school chiefs. To date, 46 states and the District of Columbia have adopted the CCSS.

The CCSS require a shift in focus from high school completion to college and career readiness for all students. The standards are relevant to the real world, focusing on the knowledge and skills students will need to succeed in life after high school, in both postsecondary education and a globally competitive workforce. While implementing the standards represents a change for schools, it presents new opportunities for collaboration and to have an impact on student achievement. First, because the CCSS establishes a clear roadmap of academic expectations, students, parents, principals, and teachers can work together toward shared goals. Second, the consistent learning goals established in the CCSS ensure that all students—regardless of where they live—will stay on track in school when moving from one state to another. Third, schools and districts can share resources more readily as implementation moves forward because the standards are uniform across states. When the standards are fully implemented, teachers will cover fewer topics in each grade, but the content will be taught in much greater depth.

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New Standards, New Assessments

The adoption of the new standards means new assessments will be needed to test student performance on them. Two state-led consortia—the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)—are currently developing the assessments that will test students on the new standards beginning in the 2014-2015 school year. By collaborating on assessment development through these consortia, states conserve both money and resources and can attract top talent from across the country to assist in the creation of the highest quality products. The consortia are focused on developing richer, more authentic measures of student learning. The assessments will also provide more precise, timely, and actionable information for teachers to use to improve learning and for parents to understand their child’s academic progress. Students will be tested using a series of computer-based summative and formative assessments and performance tasks. In states that belong to either consortium, the new assessments SBAC and PARCC develop will replace existing summative assessments in ELA and math.

Leading the Transition in Your School

Transitioning from existing state standards to the CCSS will dramatically impact curriculum and instruction in schools across the United States. Principals will play a vital role in providing the right context and support for teachers to shift instruction to ensure all students meet the new standards. Over the coming years, principals and district administrators will work to draft transition plans; develop strategies for professional development; adopt curricula, assessments, and instructional materials aligned to the new standards; and communicate about the standards with a range of stakeholders, from teachers to parents to the public at large. To lay the groundwork for a smooth transition to the new standards, principals can:

- Inform teachers and parents that there will be new standards in ELA and math;
- In English language arts, start to incorporate more nonfiction, informational texts into classroom instruction as well as ensure that writing instruction substantially includes writing to inform and structure an argument, not only writing stories;
- In mathematics, emphasize problem-solving and real-world application; and

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- Connect with faculty at local community colleges or universities regarding the expectations for entry-level college courses to see if your school's expectations align with what students need after graduation.

[Register](#) for one of NAESP's free webinars on Common Core State Standards.

Visit NAESP's Common Core State Standards [Resources Page](#). 

Resources for National Autism Awareness Month

April is National Autism Awareness Month, and according to the latest data from the Centers for Disease Control, autism diagnoses are up 78 percent since 2002. With one in 88 children having autism, it's more important than ever for school leaders to understand how to educate students on the autism spectrum. Over the past year, *Principal* magazine's five-part Unlocking Autism series has aimed to arm principals with the tools they need to support learners on the autism spectrum. Learn more about autism through these articles, and others from the *Principal* archives:

- [What Parents Want Principals to Know About Autism](#) by Melanie Bloom
A parent-teacher explains why students with autism must be treated as individuals.
- [Positive Behavior Supports for Students With Autism](#) by Janet Fisher
Find out the needs of students with autism to keep them in class and out of the principal's office.
- [A Guide to Making the Autism Puzzle Fit](#) by Sheila Wagner
Students with autism spectrum disorder can succeed in schools when principals set the standard for training, tolerance, and support.
- [Ten to Teen: Open Doors for Autism](#) by Betty Berger
Successful inclusion relies on preparing *before* the child arrives at school.
- [Finding a Voice](#) by Shannon Stuart
Inexpensive mobile technology is helping students with autism spectrum disorder to communicate and learn.

Visit the [Autism Society](#) for more on National Autism Awareness Month. 

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The Learning Continues: Conference Recap

The professional development event of a lifetime, NAESP's Best Practices for Better Schools National Conference, has concluded; but luckily the learning continues. Insightful, inspiring, and innovative resources were captured and are available on the NAESP website.

Visit [Conference New Online](#) to access day-by-day summaries of the top presenters and events, view photos, and read first-person accounts of the conference experience by our conference bloggers.

Promote your learning by [ordering books by major speakers](#) that attendees buzzed about at conference:

- *Essentials for Principals: The School Leader's Guide to Professional Learning Communities at Work*, by Richard DuFour and Rebecca DuFour
- *What Principals Need to Know About Teaching and Learning Mathematics*, by Timothy D. Kanold, Diane J. Briars, and Francis (Skip) Fennell
- *What Great Principals Do Differently: 18 Things That Matter Most*, second edition, by Todd Whitaker
- *Different Brains, Different Learners: How to Reach the Hard to Reach*, second edition, by Eric Jensen

And just for conference attendees: Enjoy the [E-Conference Learning Center](#) for a full year, which includes access to over 35 hours of recorded sessions, MP3 files, and online handouts. 

Get Prepared to Talk About Bullying




Eighteen million kids will be bullied in the U.S. this year and three million kids miss school every month because they feel unsafe. Because of the high number of instances, it is imperative that principals continuously address the issue in their schools. Bullying is poised to become an even hotter topic with the release of the controversial documentary, "Bully," which depicts an unflattering impression of a principal who lacks the necessary skills to effectively handle the intense bullying occurring on her campus.

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“Elementary principals are profoundly aware of the impact name-calling, bullying, and physical violence have not only on an individual student’s development, but also in disrupting a positive school culture,” NAESP Executive Director Gail Connelly says. “We must examine and replicate best practices that prevent bullying in our schools and give all educators the knowledge and skills they need to create a school culture that supports every child’s well-being, safety, and self-confidence.”

Get resources, answers, and insight on how to respond to bullying that might be occurring under your radar; and be prepared to talk with your school community about this provocative film. NAESP’s [Bullying Prevention Resource Page](#) offers tools and information to help you combat bullying in your school, including resources distributed at [NAESP’s Bullying Town Hall Meeting](#) that was held in conjunction with [Education.com](#) at the annual conference in Seattle. 

ED’s Perspective: Valuing Evaluation—A Straight Path to Improvement

By Gail Connelly, NAESP Executive Director

Far too often, the national discussion about school improvement lurches from one extreme to the other: greater funding, less funding; more government control, little or no government control; a “return” to the basics, a focus on advanced skills. And all the while, principals and other educators are ping-ponged between these polar opposites.

At NAESP, our vision for school improvement is—and always has been—straightforward and clear: Every school in need of improvement needs a great principal at the helm. To achieve this important national priority, we must strengthen the capacity of principals. NAESP is pursuing a multi-pronged approach to this vitally important priority. I’m happy to report our progress on two of them.

First, NAESP’s advocacy team is working diligently to correct the lop-sided allocation of federal funds to support the professional development of educators. Currently, ESEA’s Title II, which provides these federal funds, allocates a paltry 3 percent for principals. As our team has said time and again on Capitol Hill, inside the Department of Education, and in policy discussions with education policymakers at all levels, a great teacher can create a great classroom, but only a principal can create and sustain a

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great school. If we want great schools, we need to invest in professional development that supports and nurtures great principals.

Another component of our school improvement strategy is taking final shape after nearly 10 months of intensive, forward-looking work by a team of researchers and practicing principals to assess and strengthen principal evaluation on a national scale, an effort that is long overdue. NAESP launched this initiative in July 2011, and our colleagues at the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) quickly joined us to co-sponsor this work to ensure that the voice of the principal—at all levels—was our guiding touchstone.

As a result, the Principal Evaluation Committee is preparing its final guidelines aimed at designing research-rich principal evaluation systems that are fair, systematically implemented, and focused on strengthening principals' instructional leadership. Their report is scheduled to be released this spring. In general, the final report will propose a new framework for principal evaluation—one that is grounded in practical, research-based guidelines for state and districts to measure principal practice, student educational outcomes, and school quality.

Just as important, the researchers and principals on the taskforce hope to spur a different conversation at national, state, and district levels—a conversation that shifts from positioning evaluation processes as sticks designed to reprimand recalcitrant individuals, to carrots in the form of a capacity-building approach aimed at bolstering improvement, recognizing accomplishment, sparking greater levels of personal reflection and learning, and measuring the things that matter most to teaching and learning. 

NAESP Focuses on Research and Development

NAESP is placing greater emphasis on research and development as the Association strives to increase its involvement in important education initiatives and the breadth and depth of its impact on the field as well as elevate the voice of the principal on national issues. Among the goals of the R&D program are to:


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- Develop, promote, and expand initiatives that will inform principals and educational leaders about school leadership as well as help shape NAESP policies;
- Provide support to members and affiliates for implementation of leadership initiatives at the state and local levels; and
- Advance knowledge, research, and understanding of promising leadership practices.

“Our efforts will help to identify and support best practices through research, knowledge, and dissemination,” says Christine Mason, associate executive director, research and development. These initiatives will also guide NAESP as it defines and refines its vision for '[New Generation Partnership Schools](#)'—an umbrella term for a larger NAESP program for “schools of the future.”

Current initiatives focus on supports for early career principals, principal evaluation, implementation of and assessment under the Common Core State Standards, school improvement, response to intervention, and the principalship. Watch for more information on New Generation Partnership Schools and other initiatives in the coming months. 

Vote by April 24

The 2012 NAESP Board of Directors election is open through Tuesday, April 24. Links to candidate information are provided on the [election Web page](#), including video of speeches by NAESP president-elect candidates Dwight Liddiard and Nancy Flatt Meador. E-ballots are also available on the NAESP website.

[Click here to vote now.](#)

Members in zones 5, 7, and 9 vote for zone directors; all eligible NAESP members vote for president-elect. Eligible voters include active, institutional active, emeritus, and lifetime members.


You must log in to access the e-ballot. Click here for [log-in tips](#). If you are unable to log in, call 800-386-2377 and ask for Membership, or send an email to membership@naesp.org and ask for log-in help.

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Members may request a paper ballot. Call 800-386-2377 and ask for Barbara Wilmer.

Thank you for helping to elect our leaders! 

Get Professional Development on Common Core from Your Desk This Month

As principals prepare to implement the Common Core State Standards at their schools, NAESP is presenting a series of free, hour-long webinars this month to provide information and insight. In addition, through NAESP's relationship with PD 360, members can access six video segments on Common Core in April.

On Thursday, April 19 from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. EST, Doug Sovde, a member of the Common Core writing team, will follow up his session on Common Core assessments at the 2012 NAESP Annual Conference by providing an update on PARCC and information on tools and resources to assist principals. Sovde is director of PARCC Instructional Supports and Educator Engagement for Achieve, an independent nonprofit education reform organization. NAESP is partnering with PARCC to prepare principals for Common Core assessments.

A national expert and a principal will team up on Monday, April 23 from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. EST to examine how Common Core implementation affects you in your school. Lucille Davy, senior advisor at the James B. Hunt Institute for Educational Leadership and Policy, will offer national- and state-level perspectives, and Kenny Jones, principal of Parkside Elementary School in Powell, Wyoming, and Zone 7 representative on the NAESP Board of Directors, will share how he is preparing his school for implementation. This webinar will be repeated on Monday, May 14 from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. EST.

[Click here](#) to register and to learn more about these webinars and others that will be offered in the coming months.


This month you also have access to several high-quality online professional development videos on Common Core—**at no cost**—thanks to NAESP's partnership with School Improvement Network, maker of the award-winning PD 360, the world's largest and the most respected source of on-demand learning for educators.

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Access to each segment extends to the entire month—so you can return to key areas for additional learning. Simply click on the segment title below:

- [Vision of the Common Core](#)
- [Achieving the Vision of the Common Core](#)
- [Introduction to the Common Core Standards Framework](#)
- [Walk through the CCSSO Website](#)
- [State and District Implementation](#)
- [Content Leaders Network](#) 

Expanding Inclusivity from the Classroom to the Playground



The playground is a child's classroom. That's why it is important to provide an inclusive play environment for all children—typically developing, those using mobility and auditory devices, and the 1 in 88 children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders. Play provides a vital benefit to children; it helps them develop physically, mentally, and socially.

In addition to developing physical and mental strength, playgrounds help children develop their character. While they play, kids learn to share and take turns, respect each other, show compassion, and be accountable. And with the implementation of integrated play programming, schools can promote the understanding of each child's unique abilities, eliminate bias, and reduce instances of bullying.

Landscape Structures is committed to providing inclusive playground equipment that engages children of all abilities. The company's inclusive play design solution promotes true inclusivity by addressing accessibility, age and developmental appropriateness, and sensory-stimulating activities.

In an effort to expand inclusivity from the classroom to the playground, Landscape Structures and the National Association of Elementary School Principals Foundation have introduced an essay contest, *School Grounds. Playgrounds. Common Ground.*™ The contest, which runs through June 30, 2012, asks applicants to describe their vision for creating an inclusive school playground.

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One grand prize of \$50,000 in inclusive playground equipment will be awarded to a school in North America, while five runners up will each receive inclusive playground equipment from Landscape Structures valued at \$15,000. The contest is open to practicing elementary and middle school principals, assistant principals and related educators that are legal residents of the U.S., District of Columbia or Canada (excluding Quebec).

For complete contest rules and the official entry form, visit <http://playlsi.com/school-playground-contest>.

NAESP Foundation Celebrates Contest Winners at Annual Conference

The NAESP Foundation announced the winners of several contests during the Association's Best Practices for Better Schools conference in Seattle. The two winners of NAESP's second annual Children's Book of the Year Award Contest are Nicole Groeneweg of Lorton, Virginia, for her picture book, "One Word Pearl," and Kristin Bowe of Woodbury, New Jersey, for her chapter book, "Seers."

In addition to announcing these two book awards, the Foundation began selling the winning books from the 2011 National Children's Book Award Contest, "Excuse Me, I'm Trying to Read" by Mary Jo Amani and "The Young Healer" by Frank McMillan, which were among the top sellers in Seattle! Order your copies today by contacting NAESP Foundation at 800-386-2377 or foundation@naesp.org

The lucky winner of the [Virco Inc.](#) classroom makeover contest is Ayesha Farag-Davis from Whittier Middle School in Poland, Maine! The makeover will consist of Virco furniture and equipment for one classroom (approximate retail value \$10,000).

Federal Update: Why Policy Matters

By Kelly Pollitt, NAESP Director of Advocacy, Policy, and Special Projects

With the installation of a new Congress next year, education policy is likely to be back on the agenda, no matter which party is in the majority. This means changes to federal education policy and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), otherwise

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known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), could come to fruition. While the legislative process continues to be mired down in election year politics, why should principals care about federal policy, especially when nearly half the states have agreed to take on massive reforms in exchange for regulatory relief from NCLB and educators face more important issues, such as state adoption of Common Core State Standards?

Consider the following list that represents key areas and the number of times each word appears in NCLB:

- Student: 537
- Teacher: 299
- Research: 266
- Assessment: 237
- Test: 39
- *Principal*: 23

Principals have a unique opportunity over the coming months to refocus and reprioritize reforms known to work within schools. As the nation's instructional leaders, principals must ensure that their voice is inserted in policy debates with focused recommendations on top issues. Principals need a stronger foothold in any coming federal education policies, especially those that will have a sweeping impact on the ability of principals to do their jobs.

NAESP is working to build and coordinate advocacy structures and programs that will give principals greater opportunities to come together for focused discussion on "hot topics" in policy and education reform, reflect on current practice, and provide policy recommendations that will produce effective outcomes. The advocacy team will be able to harness principals' knowledge of effective practice and successful school improvement in order to develop corresponding policy positions and carefully designed advocacy efforts. We will empower principals to be stronger and more influential advocates than ever by inserting relevant and compelling policy recommendations based on the latest policy and reform trends.


Going forward, NAESP's 2012 Advocacy Campaign will seek to:

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- Develop and advance targeted efforts to empower and support principals by increasing their capacity to be effective school leaders; and
- Move swiftly and substantively in response to proposals pushed by the Obama Administration and Congress that impact principals as the reauthorization of ESEA moves forward.


NAESP has created a new two-part program to foster greater communication, discussion, collaboration and strategic advocacy among NAESP members. Our strategy has centered on making sure that the full range of the principals' voice is heard through each stage of the legislative process—from inception, design, and drafting—our role is to influence each and every decision legislators and policymakers consider so that principals are fully represented. Stay tuned as the program is launched and in the meantime, check NAESP's [advocacy website](#) for the latest information and news on Congress. 

NAESP President Talks Reading and Dream Schools on Lifetime TV



This year, NAESP President Rob Monson has been a regular guest on Lifetime TV's "The Balancing Act," and he'll be appearing in two upcoming segments of The Parent Teacher Corner, discussing the Dream School Challenge and new approaches to literacy.

[Tune in Tuesday, April 24](#) from 7 to 8 a.m. EST for a special segment of the show about the [Dream School Challenge](#), a national contest that will reward one school and district with \$300,000 in educational prizes, including tablets, software, and digital arts programs. Then, catch Monson on [Wednesday, April 25](#) from 7 to 8 a.m., where he'll be joining forces with Jeffrey Flam of Infinite Mind to explore innovative classroom techniques to teaching reading.

The Balancing Act TV show airs daily on Lifetime Television at 7 a.m. and features content on families, education, health, and more. [Watch previous segments](#) featuring NAESP leaders, which address combating bullying, improving reading skills, and engaging parents in their children's learning. 

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Grants, Opportunities, & Free Resources

Dream School Challenge

The Balancing Act and the Learning First Alliance announce The Parent Teacher Corner: Dream School Challenge, a national contest that will reward one school and district with \$300,000 in educational prizes, including tablets, software, and digital arts programs. **Deadline: June 8**

<http://empower.thebalancingact.com/parent-teacher-corner/dream-school-challenge>

Arts Education Grants

Sponsored by Crayola and NAESP, the Champion Creatively Alive Children grant program seeks to help educators integrate the arts across the curriculum to build students' 21st century skills in critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. Up to 20 elementary schools will receive grants to implement, document, and share results of an innovative arts-infused project. Each grant includes \$2,500 and \$500 worth of Crayola products. **Deadline: June 15**

www.naesp.org/champion-creatively-alive-children

School Playground Contest

Landscape Structures, in partnership with NAESP Foundation, has introduced the *School Grounds. Playgrounds. Common Ground.*™ essay contest in an effort to bring inclusive playgrounds to schools throughout North America. Enter for your chance to win the grand prize, \$50,000 in inclusive playground equipment, or be one of five runners-up for \$15,000 in inclusive playground equipment. The contest is open to practicing elementary and middle school principals and related educators in the U.S. and Canada (except Quebec). **Deadline: June 30**

<http://playlsi.com/school-playground-contest>

Grant for Salad Bars in Schools

Seeking to increase children's consumption of fruits and vegetables, the Let's Move Salad Bars to Schools program plans to fund and grant 6,000 salad bars to schools across the nation by 2013. Any K-12 school or district participating in the National School Lunch Program is eligible to apply. **Deadline: Rolling**

<http://saladbars2schools.org/>

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Books for Children in Need

First Book donates 35,000 books per day to programs and schools serving children from low-income families throughout the United States and Canada. Educators or program administrators at schools where at least 70 percent of the children come from low-income families are eligible to apply for the nonprofit's book distribution programs. www.firstbook.org/receive-books

Powerful Free Tool for Data, Tutoring

School leaders know that every minute spent testing is a minute taken away from teaching. ASSISTments, a new, free web-based platform developed by Worcester Polytechnic Institute, aims to change that, offering teachers the ability to blend assessment questions and tutoring. Students receive real-time guidance, while teachers see instant reports on student progress. Plus schools and districts can build benchmarks right into the system. Contact NAESP@wpi.edu for training and more information.

<http://teacherwiki.assistment.org/wiki/About>

Webinar Series on Implementing Common Core Standards in Math

This free webinar series and online professional learning community, sponsored by ETA/Cuisenaire, provides advice and support regarding the national math curriculum. The program provides free webinars, live chats, lesson plans and online discussions to assist teachers in connecting and collaborating with others in the same grade level.

http://www.edweb.net/inv_math

Webcast on RTI in Early Childhood Settings

"Implementing Response to Intervention in Early Childhood Settings: National, State, and Program Perspectives," an 80-minute webcast from the RTI Action Network, features a panel of nationally recognized researchers and dynamic RTI implementers on RTI's role in early childhood. This unique blend of multiple perspectives targets matching high-quality instruction and interventions to meet learning needs during the early childhood years.

<http://www.rtinetwork.org/professional/forums/rti-national-online-forum-implementing-response-to-intervention-in-early-childhood-settings>

Free Fitness Curriculum

The ACE Operation FitKids curriculum from the American Council on Exercise is designed for educators looking to integrate health and fitness into classroom learning.

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The 7-lesson curricula for grades 3 to 8 and teach students the dangers of being overweight and the importance of a healthy and active lifestyle.

<http://www.acefitness.org/ofk/curriculum.aspx>

Free Pen Pal Club Subscription

Pen Pal Kids Club, a global social network for kids, is offering free classroom subscriptions to K-8 teachers across the United States. The website promotes cross-curricular collaboration by integrating nonfiction writing, geography, social studies, and technology while offering students a chance to discover different cultures and meet new friends from across the globe.

<http://www.PenPalKidsClub.com>

Free Classroom Supplies

Teachers can use a helping hand when it comes to stocking up on school supplies. That is why The Clorox Company is launching the *Canisters for Classrooms* program to help teachers get Clorox® Disinfecting Wipes for their classrooms and get parents involved in donating, too! When teachers put Clorox Disinfecting Wipes on their back-to-school list, Clorox will automatically donate two canisters to their classroom (while supplies last)! Visit [Clorox Classrooms](http://www.clorox.com/classrooms) to upload your back-to-school supply list or create your back-to-school supply list online.

<http://www.clorox.com/classrooms/canisters/> 