



**PRESS RELEASE
For Immediate Release**

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Honoring the Legacy of Columbine

Leading Education Associations Weigh in on Media Coverage

Reston, Virginia – (April 2, 2009) - With the pending 10th Anniversary of the Columbine High School tragedy fast approaching on April 20, 2009, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) would like to encourage the media to cover the progress and improvements in school safety and student personalization U.S. schools have made over the past 10 years.

NASSP has reached out to the leading education associations across the country for a united voice on this issue. Please consider this letter, found below, and endorsed by all signatories, when planning your coverage of this anniversary.

We welcome the opportunity to speak directly to the media on this very important issue. Please contact Dr. Gerald Tirozzi, NASSP's Executive Director at 703-860-7205 or tirozzig@principals.org

About NASSP

In existence since 1916, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) is the preeminent organization of and national voice for middle level and high school principals, assistant principals, and aspiring school leaders from across the

United States and more than 45 countries around the world. NASSP's mission is to promote excellence in school leadership. The National Honor Society®, National Junior Honor Society®, National Elementary Honor Society®, and National Association of Student Councils® are all NASSP programs.

For more information about NASSP, located in Reston, Virginia, visit www.principals.org or call 703-860-0200.

Honoring the Legacy of Columbine

April 20, 2009, marks the 10-year anniversary of the tragedy at Columbine High School. Although the school shouldered the brunt of public scrutiny, we can't ignore that the Columbine tragedy was a failure of the collective community to connect with every child. The events of that day may have been captured on film, but they are cemented in the hearts and minds of school and community leaders across the country as reminders that the culture they foster truly matters.

Therefore, the legacy of the Columbine tragedy should not be the endless montage of film that sensationalizes the building evacuation, but the mosaic of positive changes that schools are making to connect with all students and their families. **The leading education organizations endorsing this letter request that you honor the legacy of Columbine by refraining from running images and footage of the event's aftermath and by casting a spotlight on those schools that strive tirelessly to connect with every student.**

Rigor, relevance, and relationships—the modern three Rs of education—provide a guiding mantra for all educators as they craft structures and programs for schools. Relationship building results in schools that are safe havens that welcome and embrace every student. Every student should feel accepted and encouraged at school. The weakest among us must feel physically and psychologically protected in our schools at all times. And schools should be warm and inviting places for students and adults alike. Walk into such a school and you will see:

- Students who have a sense of belonging and who feel they have a voice in the school. Such students do not engage in negative and destructive behavior directed at the school or their peers.
- A significant adult advocate for each student—a teacher, counselor, coach, or adviser with whom the student has a connection. Adult advocates assist students in developing a projected view of their future. By providing choices and options, advocates help students see a future that they could not have otherwise imagined.
- Educators who take students seriously. In personalized schools, adults do not ignore cries for help or assume that someone else has the responsibility for solving the problem. For some students, school is the only safe, clean, orderly, and inviting place in their lives.
- No incidence of students floundering academically, socially, or psychologically without the intervention of a school staff member. Every student has a plan that provides for their academic and social success.

The compelling stories generated by successful schools in the urban, suburban, and rural United States provide shining examples of the work of dedicated principals, assistant principals, teacher leaders, and other educators and demonstrate the results of implementing those personalization practices. **It is our hope that the press will use the Columbine anniversary to shine the light of inquiry directly on the communities, schools, and educators that have created oases of optimism for their students rather than open old wounds by revisiting a tragic past.**

Remembering those heartbreaking days in April 1999 allows all of us to recollect the failure of past practices but—more important—it encourages us to reflect on the promise and vision that communities, schools, and educators can create warm, inviting, and successful learning environments for every student. The story is less sensational by far, but indeed, far more compelling.

Thank you for your consideration.

Signed and endorsed by:

American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
American Dance Therapy Association
American School Counselor Association
ASCD
Association of School Business Officials International
Council of Administrators of Special Education
International Reading Association
Knowledge Alliance
Learning Disabilities Association of America
National Alliance of Black School Educators
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of Pupil Services Administrators
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Association of State Boards of Education
National Association of State Directors of Special Education
National Association of State Title I Directors
National Education Association
National Middle School Association
School Social Work Association of America

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