



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

*Serving All Elementary and Middle Level Principals*



## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Funded by  
**MetLife Foundation**



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### **BACKGROUND**

Public schools are by definition public institutions; they embody the values, hopes, dreams, and expectations of the community in which they operate. When a school actively involves its surrounding community, making best use of all of the resources that community provides and engaging all of that community's stakeholders in the school's planning process and activities, students thrive, and achievement improves.

Recent research from a number of sources has brought to light a stark and disconcerting disconnect between the way principals perceive various aspects of their schools' culture and the way both the public and those within the schools (parents, teachers, students, non-parents, and community and business leaders) perceive school climate, student safety, the ease and openness of information sharing, and other elements that make up a school's overriding culture, its feel, its ambiance.

The principal is constantly being buffeted by external and internal demands requiring an abundance of time, energy and focus. Clearly, the principal sets the tone for a school, and just as clearly, the principal is the leader who is directly responsible for his or her school's status in the community. However, the principal must also strive to change lives by creating a culture within the school that not only promotes learning but also helps students realize their own dreams and aspirations. The principal is then charged with creating and articulating a vision to help constituents both inside and outside of the school understand, believe in, and share the mission of that school. The principal must be equipped with the appropriate skills and support necessary to engage productively his or her various constituents to achieve these worthy but often overwhelming goals.

*Sharing the Dream* will enable principals to test ideas on how to involve and engage their communities to build greater ownership for the work of the school by sharing leadership and decision making, by keeping all stakeholders informed about all school news — good and bad — and by creating a school climate that fosters open communication, safety and security, respect for every individual, and the idea that the school is the center of the community and welcomes all of its members. In short, *Sharing the Dream* will give principals a small grant to implement a project designed to further engage their communities towards the goal of improving achievement for all students.



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### LEADING LEARNING COMMUNITIES

In 2001, the National Association of Elementary School Principals released the groundbreaking document: *Leading Learning Communities: Standards for What Principals Should Know and Be Able To Do*. The document sets forth six standards for professional practice defined by principals themselves. Inextricably intertwined, the standards outline the comprehensive responsibilities of school leaders from developing vision, to setting expectations, to professional development, to using data. The sixth standard focuses on building community beyond the school walls:

*Effective principals actively engage the community to create shared responsibility for student and school success.*

What would it look like if a school were effectively engaging families and the community? We'd see principals who:

- Engage the community to build greater ownership for the work of the school
- Share leadership and decision-making
- Encourage parents to become meaningfully involved in the school and their own children's learning
- Ensure that students and families are connected to the health, human and social services they need to stay focused on learning

The *Sharing the Dream* project will help principals bring their ideas to fruition in order to engaging communities for student and school success.

### SURVEY DATA

Each year, MetLife significantly contributes to the education field by examining the attitudes and opinions of teachers, principals, parents and students. In 2003, the survey focused on school leadership. *The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: An Examination of School Leadership* found that principals, teachers and parents agree that the primary goal of school leadership is motivating students and teachers to achieve. The survey also revealed a disconnect between this goal and reality. Principals have a more positive view of school atmosphere and relationships than do parents, teachers and students. The survey examines these differences in perception.



## NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

*Serving All Elementary and Middle Level Principals*

### **Key findings include:**

- Nine in ten principals (89%) say their school is welcoming to parents. But only six in ten parents (61%) describe their school in this way.
- Nearly all principals (97%) believe that their school shows concern for students. This view is less commonly held by teachers (83%) and parents (66%).
- Nine in ten principals (91%) say their school has open communication, yet only six in ten teachers (58%) and parents (58%) say this about their school.
- Nine in ten principals (93%) are satisfied with their relationship with students' parents, but only 64% of parents report this level of satisfaction. Teachers' and parents' assessments are similar. Seventy-eight percent of parents and seventy-three percent of teachers are satisfied with their relationship with each other.
- Of all the members of the school community, students are the least likely to describe their school as safe. While most principals (89%), teachers (67%) and parents (57%) say their school is safe, less than half of students (46%) describe their school this way.

The full survey report may be found on the Web at <http://www.metlife.com/> (search: "Survey of the American Teacher")

The MetLife Foundation and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) are committed to addressing the disconnect among teachers, principals, students and parents regarding the effectiveness of our nation's school leaders. The survey data provides a baseline for understand different perspectives and engaging families and communities in schools. The *Sharing the Dream* projects will help narrow the gap in perceptions.

### **THE PROJECTS**

NAESP invites principals from around the country to submit proposals for projects that will engage communities.

Each proposed project should:

- align with one of the strategies in standard six of *Leading Learning Communities*;
- address a data gap in their school community; and,
- have measurable results.



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*Serving All Elementary and Middle Level Principals*

**Align with the strategies:** Each proposal should indicate which strategy it will address.

<i>Standard Six Strategies</i>	<i>Potential projects may:</i>
Engage the community to build greater ownership for the work of the school	Engage a diverse group of the school community in a specific project to increase communications. Document how many and in what ways parents and community members are involved in school activities
Share leadership and decision-making	Develop systems or structures that will ensure input from parents and the community on school management and instructional issues.
Encourage parents to become meaningfully involved in the school and their own children’s learning	Provide learning opportunities for parents to become more meaningfully involved in their children’s education and school activities.
Ensure that students and families are connected to the health, human and social services they need to stay focused on learning	Create connections and referrals with community agencies. Formalize relationships and develop ongoing means of communications. Foster strategies to integrate afterschool programs and early childhood programs with the school community.

**Data gaps:** Using the MetLife Survey data as a baseline, each project should determine a measurable data source and define what success might look like in terms of narrowing the data gaps. For example:

<i>MetLife Data Finding</i>	<i>School Assessment Project</i>	<i>Anticipated Success/Results</i>
Nine in ten principals (89%) say their school is welcoming to parents. But only six in ten parents (61%) describe their school in this way.	At a back-to-school open house, the principal might conduct a brief survey asking families if they find the school welcoming. The same question could be asked at end-of-the-year programs.	School-based survey data will show improvement.



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Nine in ten principals (91%) say their school has open communication, yet only six in ten teachers (58%) and parents (58%) say this about their school.	A principal might ask parents to conduct a communications audit, assessing both the tools by which schools communicate with families and ways in which families can communicate their ideas and concerns back to the school.	Communications tools will increase in numbers and quality. More structures for feedback will be established, including parent advisory committees.
Of all the members of the school community, students are the least likely to describe their school as safe. While most principals (89%), teachers (67%) and parents (57%) say their school is safe, less than half of students (46%) describe their school this way.	A school might analyze safety data and benchmark it against other schools in the district. Parents might be trained to facilitate discussions with students about their fears and concerns for safety in their schools and communities.	Violent or disruptive incidents would decrease in numbers and severity. School climate would be measured through surveys.

**SUPPORT FROM NAESP**

Once selected, principals will receive:

- a grant for \$3000
- a toolkit of resources focused on engaging families and communities
- inclusion in the “spotlight” publication at the end of the project that will describe the *Sharing the Dream* projects and provide ideas for other principals.

In addition to the proposal application, *Sharing the Dream* principals will be required to submit a brief end of project report. Principals may be asked to participate in an interview or survey about project results.

**TIMELINE**

Applications are due to NAESP by 5:00 pm Eastern time, July 12, 2004.

Grants will be awarded by August 1, 2004.



**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS**

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## APPLICATION FORM

Applications should be sent to Margaret Evans  
at [mevans@naesp.org](mailto:mevans@naesp.org) or fax to (703) 518- 6281.

**Applications will be accepted until 5:00 pm Eastern time,  
July 12, 2004.**

*Nominations and Applications may be sent separately, but both  
are due on July 12.*

Grants will be announced by August 1, 2004.

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***Sharing the Dream:***  
**Helping Principals Create Cultures**  
**of Engagement and Involvement in Their Schools**

Name of Principal: (Dr., Mrs., Ms., Miss., Sr., Br.) \_\_\_\_\_

Please Check: NAESP Member      NAESP State Affiliate Member      Other (name) \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School: \_\_\_\_\_

School Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

School Telephone: (    ) \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: (    ) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

The *Sharing the Dream* project intends to help creative principals in schools with demonstrated needs. Please share the following information to provide a picture of your school and community.

School Enrollment: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade Levels (e.g., K-6) \_\_\_\_\_

Is your school (circle one): Urban      Rural      Suburban      Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Student population demographics: \_\_\_\_\_

Percentage of students who are eligible for free and reduced priced lunch: \_\_\_\_\_

Does your school receive Title I or Schoolwide Title I funds? \_\_\_\_\_

Is your school on a state watch list or in any type of corrective action status for failing to meet adequate yearly progress measures?

If so, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe any other measures that would indicate your school is in need: \_\_\_\_\_





**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS**

*Serving All Elementary and Middle Level Principals*

Selected principals in the *Sharing the Dream* project will receive a \$3000 grant to initiate a project designed to actively engage their communities.

Each proposed project must:

- align with one of the strategies in standard six of *Leading Learning Communities*; and,
- address a data gap in their school community and have measurable results. *[Refer to the attached context document for details on these requirements.]*

**In a separate narrative document – not to exceed five pages – describe your proposed project.** The narrative should also:

- describe how the project aligns with the strategies of standard six
- determine a measurable data source and define what success might look like in terms of solving a problem revealed in the data
- explain the school and the community context
- demonstrate the needs of the students or community that will be met through this project
- indicate that the applying principal intends to be an active principal during the 2004-2005 school year

*Be descriptive and creative.*

Once selected, principals will receive:

- a grant for \$3000
- a toolkit of resources focused on engaging families and communities
- inclusion in the “spotlight” publication at the end of the project that will describe the *Sharing the Dream* projects and provide ideas for other principals.

As a part of the *Sharing the Dream* project, principals are required to:

- implement the proposed project during the 2004-2005 school year
- submit an end of project report that includes an analysis of data collected
- participate in interviews with NAESP staff about successes and challenges of the project



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## NOMINATION FORM

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**Nominations will be accepted until 5:00 pm Eastern time,  
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## **Nomination Form**

The National Association of Elementary School Principals is conducting a national search to identify principals with innovative ideas to actively engage their communities. Each NAESP Board member is invited to nominate five principals (three elementary school leaders and two middle school leaders.)

As a member of the Board of Directors, please fill out and submit this nomination form. The nominated principal should fill out the application form. Only applications that have also been nominated by a NAESP Board member will be considered.

NAESP and the MetLife Foundation are committed to helping schools with demonstrated needs. Please keep in mind that final award decisions will factor in measures of need, including if schools are struggling to meet AYP requirements. We appreciate your help in identifying those schools with notable needs where a grant like this will have significant impact.

The forms may be submitted separately, but both **forms must arrive at NAESP by July 12, 2004 at 5:00pm Eastern.** Email to Margaret Evans at [mevans@naesp.org](mailto:mevans@naesp.org) or fax to (703) 518- 6281.



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**NOMINATION FOR SHARING THE DREAM PROJECT**

Name of Principal: (Dr., Mrs., Ms. , Miss., Sr., Br.)

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Name of School:

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City:

State:

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School Telephone: (    )

Fax: (    )

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E-mail address:

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Please Check: NAESP Member

NAESP State Affiliate Member

Other (name)

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Evidence of School’s Need (high-poverty, failure to meet AYP, Title I school, etc.):

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Reasons for nominating (one to three reasons in bullet format; i.e. capacity of principal; track record of success; community requesting afterschool programs, etc.)

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<b>NOMINATOR NAME:</b> _____
<b>PHONE:</b> _____
<b>EMAIL:</b> _____