

Curriculum Leadership Institute E-Hint

Following the Trends: A Job for your Curriculum Coordinating Council

In a recent E-hint titled "Now is the Time to Keep Our Eyes on the Educational Gold Standard" we suggested that a new era of Federal involvement with schools may move us away from NCLB as structured during the Bush Administration. While we cannot predict the future, there are signs that point to possible changes in how our national government will rewrite the Elementary and Secondary Education (ESEA) Act of 1965: the legal structure on which NCLB and all previous school improvement initiatives were created by the U.S. Congress.

Districts wanting to keep up with current issues should spend time tracking recent debates about where the ESEA Act is likely to go when the Bush Administration exits Washington. One way to do this is to have your curriculum coordinating council schedule 15 minutes or more each meeting to hear a designated council member report on the most recent proposals and actions, and to lead a discussion on what they could mean for your academic program. There are numerous resources for obtaining such updates, but here are some recommended ones to look at first:

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS: This organization is typically the one to which your superintendent belongs, and it is very interested in providing guidance in the development of state and national education policy. It has already developed the *All Children Will Learn Resolution*, and is supporting state affiliates in the development and use of their own resolutions. The association's web page is [aasa.org](http://www.aasa.org), but we suggest that you access <http://www.aasa.org/policy/content.cfm?ItemNumber=2021> to learn what state affiliates are doing, especially if your state has already created its own resolution.

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS: The AFT has helpful publications including the *American Teacher*, *American Educator*, and various topical pamphlets. It has very strong opinions about NCLB, along with solid arguments as to why and how it should be overhauled. Its web page is <http://www.aft.org>.

ASSOCIATION FOR SUPERVISION AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT: Probably the biggest and most active association for supporting quality academic programs is ASCD. A subscription to *Educational Leadership* is a must, and using the association's comprehensive membership package will provide you with many other outstanding resources such as *Education Update*, *Curriculum Update*, *Curriculum/Technology Quarterly*, *Classroom Leadership*, *Infobrief*, *Research Brief*, *ASCD Smart Brief*, *EDPolicy Update*, The *International Journal of Education Policy and Leadership*, *Curriculum Handbook*, and *ASCD Topic Packs*. ASCD can be contacted at 800-933-2723 and at <http://shop.ascd.org/membership/subscription.cfm>.

EDUCATION WEEK: This publication is an excellent way to keep up-to-date on many educational issues. Subscriptions can be initiated by calling 800-445-8250 or accessing the web page at edweek.org. We recommend a comprehensive subscription that includes both the print and online versions, as well as special publications like *Edweek Update*, *Teacher Magazine Update*, *Digital Directions*, *NCLB Alert*, *Curriculum Matters*, *Accountability*, and *Research Connections*.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS: The NAESP is also a very good organization with many helpful initiatives. Most of those are reported in the *Principal Magazine* and the *Communicator*. There are many aspects of elementary school programs that need improving, but they tend to be more incremental than the systemic high school problems discussed by NASSP (see below). There are already many school improvement models that focus on grades K through 6, particularly those designed to upgrade math and reading programs, so there isn't a need for NAESP to concentrate on those issues. NAESP's web page is simply naesp.org; its phone number is 800-386-2377.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS: Every CCC should spend time discussing the various proposals to modify the curriculum and organizational structure of high schools, since that topic has been moved to the front burner almost everywhere. The NASSP has taken up the challenge and has issued two valuable publications: *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution*, and *Breaking Ranks II: Strategies for Leading High School Reform*. It also has gotten into an examination of middle schools with its *Breaking Ranks in the Middle: Strategies for Leading Middle Level Reform*. To look at an example of the contents of their publications here is the web address for the information on middle level reform: http://www.principals.org/s_nassp/sec.asp?CID=935&DID=53492. While you're at it, don't overlook the *NASSP Bulletin*, which is a top-rated journal that publishes excellent articles on projects to improve high schools. The web page address for NASSP is http://nassp.org/s_nassp/index.asp?CID=1138&DID=54609. The phone number is 703-860-0200.

NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION INFORMATION: This nonprofit organization was founded by Dr. C. Emily Feistritzer and provides good information about general concerns in education, specifically on the preparation of teachers. How teachers are prepared is clearly a significant issue considering the growth of alternative teacher education programs in the United States today. The NCEI gives good information on how existing and new preparation programs will influence the quality of academic programs in public schools. NCEI's web page is <http://www.ncei.com/overview.html>; the phone number is 202-362-3444.

NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION: The NEA is always active in working with government at national and state levels, and can be a good source for locating information about upcoming issues and proposals. The association's web page is <http://www.nea.org/index.html>; its phone number is (202) 833-4000.

NATIONAL MIDDLE SCHOOL ASSOCIATION: The middle school movement, once quite dynamic, has taken a beating in recent years. Part of the reason for that has to do with the need to better articulate curriculum grades K through 12. The origins of the middle school movement stressed the uniqueness of that program for students in physical and emotional transition, and the strategies for meeting those needs included a modified set of instructional processes. For example, middle level theory suggested that students in seventh and eighth grades reached a kind of cognitive plateau in which previously taught content needed to be reinforced through application...a good concept that is difficult to manage in this era of continuous acquisition of knowledge and skill areas. Nevertheless, the concepts advocated by middle school educators are excellent, and best expressed in the *Middle School Journal* and *Middle Ground*. The association's web page is nmsa.org and the phone number is 800-528-NMSA.

NATIONAL SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION: This organization speaks for all local boards of education around the nation and, in that capacity, has concerns about NCLB. Its web page address is [nsba.org](http://www.nsba.org) and the positions it takes can be found on this web page: <http://vocusgr.vocus.com/grspace2/WebPublish/Controller.aspx?SiteName=NSBA&Definition=ViewIssue&IssueID=4401>

Obviously, there are dozens of other associations and agencies that can be used to give your CCC greater insight into important trends. However, it's important that your CCC focus on the "macro" issues associated with organizational structure instead of the "micro" issues reviewed in many other publications on instructional improvement. Not to diminish the importance of those issues, the myriad of subject-focused associations can be helpful to your subject area committees, which can share perspectives with the CCC when appropriate.