



National Association of
Elementary School
Principals

March 23, 2012

Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Harkin:

On behalf of 23,000 of our nation's elementary and middle level principals, the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) is writing to support the provisions of the Rebuilding America Act that will provide professional development for educators on college and career ready standards.

NAESP supports the ambitious agenda outlined in the bill to invest in our nation's infrastructure, modernize schools, and train our workforce for the 21st century to reinvigorate America's manufacturing prowess. Our nation is facing a critical period in education policy and practice. In a time where Federal, State, and local budgets are tight and resources are scarce, investments in education are economically sensible to enable a workforce that will remain competitive in a global economy – but the decisions about how and where to invest dwindling education dollars must be wise, precise and shown to be effective. Principals applaud the comprehensive strategy and the investment in professional development on college and career ready standards to build the capacity of teachers, principals and other school staff so that they may help every student reach their full learning potential.

The state of our nation in education and the economic impact is glaring: every year, approximately 1.3 million students drop out of our nation's high schools, where both the individual and the nation suffer economic consequences in personal income, loss of tax revenue and purchasing power. Considering *only* the students who dropped out of the class of 2011, nearly \$154 billion will be lost to the nation's economy over their lifetimes. A proliferation of major education reform policies have been proposed to address these concerns across the nation, from significantly raising academic standards to overhauling teacher and principal evaluations. Professional development is a necessary and critical investment with the recognition that we must do more to ensure all students graduate high school ready to succeed in college, or begin a career and participate as active, capable citizens in our 21st century economy.

As instructional leaders in schools, principals play a unique role unlike any other educator in a school building, and research has demonstrated that principals influence a variety of school outcomes, including student achievement, through their instructional leadership, recruitment and motivation of excellent teachers, effective allocation of resources, and development of organizational structures to support the optimum conditions for effective instruction and student learning.

Honorable Tom Harkin
March 23, 2012
Page 2

Teachers and principals have a responsibility to meet the diverse learning needs of students, especially in schools facing tremendous challenges with high poverty and mobility. To help educators meet the highest standards of practice that expectations for students to be college and career-ready demand, it is a federal and state responsibility to invest in high-quality professional development programs.

As States begin to implement higher academic standards, teachers and principals will need to work together to effectively implement whole school reforms. Together, they will make key decisions to develop and implement rigorous curricula designed to meet college- and career-readiness standards. As instructional leaders, principals must identify the learning needs of not only the students, but where the teachers must be afforded professional development opportunity to help transition to higher standards, and developing effective engagement strategies to involve families and communities.

In this era of high-stakes testing, Federal and State accountability programs, and intense interest among taxpayers and government leaders in school-level performance, the demands for accountability among principals has never been greater. Consequently, their jobs have never been more challenging. Dedicated principals are stepping up to meet this challenge in their commitment to provide all students with a rich well-rounded education that fully prepares them for college, careers, and successful life outcomes. We applaud your efforts to support teachers, principals and other school leaders in their efforts to rebuild America's future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gail Connelly". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "G" and a long, sweeping tail on the "y".

Gail Connelly
Executive Director