

To: PA Principals Association (Elementary) Members
From: Robert Palazzo
NDP Selection Committee Chair
Re: Nominations for PA's 2026 NAESP National Distinguished Principal Award

The search for Pennsylvania's 2026 NAESP National Distinguished Principal has officially begun. On behalf of the Pennsylvania Principals Association, I invite you to participate in the nomination of the 2026 NAESP National Distinguished Principal representing Pennsylvania. Nomination forms must be **received no later than Friday, December 24, 2025.**

Nominating a principal for this prestigious award provides you with an opportunity to recognize the accomplishments and dedication of an outstanding elementary, middle, public or private school principal who provides outstanding leadership for students, staff, community, and peers. The following criteria represent key elements of the varied criteria which already exist in state principal recognition programs. Each criterion is to be used as a significant requirement in the selection of the NDP who will represent your state or organization. The NDP program is designed to recognize the outstanding leadership of active, on-line principals. It is not recognition of service at retirement or a program to reward current state or national association leaders.

The nominated principal:

- **Must be nominated by someone other than himself/herself;**
- **Has been a member of PA Principals Association AND NAESP for at least three (3) full consecutive years at the time of their nomination and maintains membership through the end of the NAESP Awards Ceremony;**
- Is an active principal of a school in which a commitment to excellence is clearly evident through programs designed to meet the academic and social needs of all students, and through firmly established community ties with parents and local business organizations;
- Has been an active principal for at least **five (5) years** (NOTE: Only those years served as a ***building principal*** may count toward the necessary five);
- **Will remain an active service in a position of school leadership during the school year in which he/she will serve as NDP;**
- Shows a strong commitment to the principalship through active membership in professional associations;
- Is respected by students, colleagues, parents and the community at large;
- Assumes an active role in his/her community, distinguishing himself/herself as a leader in civic, religious or humanitarian activities;
- Shows strong educational leadership by setting high expectations for school staff and students;
- Maintains an orderly, purposeful learning environment.

Evidence of outstanding contributions to the well-being of the educational community will include:

- ways in which the principal's leadership has benefitted curriculum, staff morale, community support, student interest and the learning environment;
- increasing or consistently high levels of student achievement as demonstrated on the statewide assessment instrument;
- ways in which the principal provides creative leadership to inspire teachers and others to achieve and contribute to the school environment;
- examples of service or achievements above and beyond what is expected in the usual school program; and
- ways in which others have acknowledged the principal as a force for positive change.

IMPORTANT: If selected, the individual must be permitted and agree to serve on state NDP selection committees in the future when requested. This would include site visits to candidates' schools and would require release time from your district (superintendent's permission required).

NOTE: Any individual who holds the office of PA Principals Association or NAESP President, President-Elect, Immediate Past President, NAESP Zone Director or NAESP State Representative during the officially designated nomination time-period of October 20 to May 13 during the year prior to receiving the NDP award is ineligible for nomination. Members of the PA Principals Association Executive Committee are also ineligible. For more information, please visit www.naesp.org.

If you are interested in nominating a principal for this award, please complete the brief linked nomination form attached in this letter. All nomination forms should be emailed to Julie Sunday at sunday@papprincipals.org **no later than December 24, 2025**. Upon receipt of your nomination form, the nominee's membership will be verified and if appropriate, a STATE Application will be immediately sent via email to him/her for completion. The Application must be returned to: Julie Sunday at sunday@papprincipals.org and **received no later than Friday, February 27, 2026. Therefore, you are strongly encouraged to make your nomination as early as possible.**

[Click here](#) for the nomination form.

It would be greatly appreciated if you would share this information with other persons or groups whom you feel might be interested in making nominations.

If you have any questions, please contact the Pennsylvania Principals Association office at 717-732-4999.