

CANDIDATE'S PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT:

Robert L. Monson - Parkston Elementary School, Parkston South Dakota

Do what is best for the children first....do everything else next. I wrote that down on a piece of paper 13 years ago and stuck it to my office wall. When we moved from our old building to our new building, it was one of the first items I put up on the wall. I use it to guide my decisions on a daily basis. It really helps to keep me focused on why we do what we do, and who we do it for.

I have always been a person who has had a desire to take on leadership roles with the anticipation and thought that I will have a greater opportunity to make a difference. That is exactly what drove me to work my way out of the classroom and into an administrative role. I wanted to make a greater difference in the education of the children I was charged with. It was the same desire that lead me to work my way up through our state organization, and it is certainly what pushed me to run for President-elect of the National Association of Elementary School Principals.

We are all busy in our own schools, but I look for ways to serve the greater cause. I know how important servant leadership is to all organizations, and have always tried to do my part. I was the treasurer for our state organization for at least three years. I have been through the ranks of President Elect, President, and Past President for the South Dakota Association of Elementary School Principals. I saw the vacancy in the Zone 7 Director position as an opportunity to serve my fellow principals. I was selected by the Board of Directors and filled that position from 2007 to 2009. I have also served on numerous committees and panels throughout South Dakota, as well as at the national level.

I look at the opportunity to serve as President-elect of NAESP as a growth opportunity for myself, but more so for my staff and students. I believe I will be able to take many learning opportunities with me from the experience, but I also feel I will bring a lot to the organization. I come from a small rural PreK-6 school in Parkston South Dakota that faces many different challenges than the larger schools face. My community population is about 1,500, and my school population is around 320. I also have two Hutterite colony schools under my charge. I wear many hats and am involved in numerous daily functions of the school. I believe that gives me a great perspective on where we are it in education today. I shared with my students that it doesn't matter what size school you come from, you only have to have the desire to do big things to achieve your dreams. Having been selected as a candidate for this position embodies that statement!

I do feel that we need to work on strengthening the leadership role of the elementary principal, and we also need to work on slowing the exodus of our veteran principals from the profession. The two of these issues tend to go hand in hand as our veteran principals are saying "enough is enough", we are losing the leadership in our schools. The mandates and expectations that are

being placed on the elementary principal in many cases are just too much for any one person to handle. Far too many administrators are considering leaving the leadership roles in their buildings. I will work with NAESP and its members to find the professional development and resources to help with these challenging situations.

I would appreciate and be ever so humbled to have your support in my candidacy for President-elect. If I am elected, I will work as hard as I can to make sure that NAESP remains the guiding force in education that it has become over the last 89 years!