



NASS

News

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A Word from the Executive Director



Dear NASS Members: We are excited to begin introducing you to Whole Child education. Sometimes referred to as Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), Whole Child

education is SEL in action! Go to [WholeChild](https://www.wholechild.org) to learn more.

In this issue of NASS News, you'll learn more about the powerful work Wings for Kids is doing to advance Whole Child education. We expose you to some new approaches to leadership (see my piece on **Finding Another Way**) that have inspired us to begin designing a new leadership institute for NASS members. And we continue promoting professional learning with our partners at the DA Leadership Institute and the power of peer-to-peer learning through the new NASS Members Mentoring Members (MMM) program.

Stay tuned for information on how to nominate a colleague for NASS Superintendent of the Year. And coming March 1, we launch our thought leadership series of podcasts, audios and videos all available on [NASS](https://www.nass.org).

Finally, because we all have a unique story and as humans we are intuitive storytellers, I'm pleased to introduce you to my book *Wildflowers: A School Superintendent's Challenge to America*. I hope it too will inspire you to share your story. While it is a story about my journey in public education, it is also a manifesto on the power of Whole Child. I urge you to order a copy here on [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com) and please let me know if you'd like me to come and speak to your teams and communities about the power of story and how to advance this critical work.

So much of our work begins with questions. What's your story?

In service,

Jonathan Raymond

Thoughts From the Executive Director

Finding Another Way

A few years ago in Stowe, Vermont, I took part in a leadership training — the Executive Champions Workshop — hosted by the Society for Organizational Learning. Honestly, at first I wasn't sure why I was returning to this workshop. I had attended the year before, and had been profoundly inspired after hearing Apollo 8 astronaut William Anders recount what led to the famous “Earth Rising” photo. Seeing Earth from that distant perspective, he explained, “turning the camera around” on our planet, enabled people to view the world with more open hearts, and begin to act from a sense of greater connection to all of mankind. I realized then that “turning the camera around” was a deeply meaningful act for organizations and individuals, myself included. Could this session possibly affect me in an equally meaningful way? I'm a believer in the power of coaching and the importance of practice. But why was I here? What questions was I interested in exploring? What was I called to do now?

And suddenly, there it was. The most magnificent rainbow I'd ever seen. I snapped this photo on my way to our first session. On one side of the road, in the valley, were the remnants of the storm I'd driven through the night before and on the other, to the west, a sunny sky emerging. In between — wow! Spectacular!

[Read the full article](#)

Featured NASS Partner



Three Things Everyone Should Know About SEL and Afterschool

Bridget Laird is CEO of Wings for Kids located in Charlestown, South Carolina

For more than 20 years, I have

grown and worked with Wings for Kids — one of the first organizations in the U.S. focused exclusively on teaching social emotional learning in afterschool. As CEO, I believe in a world where there is equity in academics, opportunity, and emotional well-being for all kids, regardless of their socioeconomic status. And at WINGS, we have spent the last 24 years equipping at-risk kids with the skills they need to succeed in school, stay in school, and thrive in life.

We now know that social emotional learning (SEL) is a critical part of every kid's development. Through SEL, kids learn how to manage their emotions, set and achieve goals, overcome obstacles, and develop healthy relationships — skills necessary to succeed in school, be prepared for the workforce and lead positive and healthy lives. Research tells us that SEL leads to positive changes in kids' lives in and out of the classroom.

[Read the full article](#)

Members Spotlight

Helping Others Beat the Odds to a Brighter Future



*Dr. Mario Willis,
Superintendent,
Hollandale School
District in
Washington
County, Mississippi*

*A Product of My
Environment*

I was raised in a place that tells one of the

nation's most diverse stories of prosperity and hardship — the Mississippi Delta. It's a place considered by David Cohn as a land of extremes, geologically and culturally. Will Campbell characterized the extreme in a much different way. He defined the Delta as “a place of mean poverty and garish opulence.” Economically, the opulence grew equally, but with a much different impact. While others gained abundant wealth financially and through generational prosperity, the mean poverty alluded to by Campbell compounded for generations and plagued other families like hereditary cancer. I was born in Mound Bayou, Mississippi, a town founded by former slaves led by Isaiah Montgomery and Benjamin Green. But I grew up in a small town in Washington County called Hollandale, located 27 miles from the county seat of Greenville, Mississippi. I was educated at E.P. Simmons High School by a proud community of teachers in a school that served as the hub of social, political, athletic, civic and economic knowledge.

[Read the full article](#)

Advocacy at the Core of NASS Values

President Trump Slashes Federal Education Funds for Vouchers

By Adonai Mack,
Sr. Director of
Federal Relations



On Monday, February 10, President Trump unveiled his budget request for Congress' consideration. The proposal includes an

increase for career technical education (CTE) programs to the tune of \$900 million. In addition, the president includes \$5 billion for his school voucher proposal titled the Education Freedom Scholarships. The budget also provides \$13 billion for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B, a \$10 million increase over last year's budget. Conversely, the overall Department of Education budget is cut by 7.8 percent, equivalent to \$5.8 billion.

While the president invests in CTE and vouchers, his proposal makes significant changes and cuts in other areas. The budget proposal includes a consolidation of 29 federal grant programs into a newly-created Elementary and Secondary Education for the Disadvantaged Block Grant. All 29 programs will be allocated to state education departments and allocated similarly to Title I programs. However, the block grant comes with a \$4.7 billion reduction in overall funding.

[Read the full article](#)

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“MMM”

Members Mentoring Members

Webster’s dictionary defines “Mentor” as: “A trusted counselor or guide — a mentor who, because he/she is detached and disinterested, can hold up a mirror to us.” Who better to mentor and “hold the mirror up” than a NASS peer and colleague?

We know the superintendent job can be lonely and isolating. We are often surrounded by folks who tell us what we want to hear versus what we need and hear. It is difficult to get feedback from our direct reports and also from school board members. To maintain that delicate work/life balance, there are certain things we shouldn’t bring home to share with family and friends. But without feedback, how do we continue to grow and learn? Renowned Canadian educator Michael Fullan declared: “The best learning is when the group teaches the group.” Peer-to-peer learning and support is powerful.

Members Mentoring Members (MMM) allows NASS members to contribute and give back in a time-bound capacity, using their expertise and experience to support colleagues. This is a chance for members to gain insight, get objective feedback, and seek valuable support to learn and...

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Professional Learning

Check out these upcoming [Superintendents Academies and Summits.](#)