

Getting Things Done



“Cities are where hope meets the street.” This is according to Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed, speaking during his 2016 TED Talk, “How Are Mayors Better Poised to ‘Get Things Done?’” His message about the strength of what he calls the ascending state of cities is predicated on the concept that local governments’ proximity and flexibility are best poised to make real impact on the quality of people’s lives.


The Reed administration’s approach to improving the city takes a wide range of measures, from addressing safety and balancing the city’s finances to attending to those elements that can make or break a resident’s quality of life like access to green spaces.

As Reed contextualized the mayor’s role in providing supports for “people who are most in need of help,” I couldn’t help but compare it to the principalship and how school leaders “get things done.” Schools rival local governments in their capacity to directly impact children and families. Principals routinely make sure that students not only have access to a well-rounded and complete education, but also leverage wrap-around services and other supports they need to thrive. If cities are where hope meets the street, then schools are where families access opportunities—converting hope into future success.

New Jersey principal Emil Carafa has learned to leverage municipal and school leadership; he’s been doubling as an elementary principal and town mayor since 2015. According to Carafa, who is profiled on page 42, “the work I do in the public [as mayor] is an extension of my work at my school.”

In addition to the impact on the life chances of students, principals also strengthen the entire educational system and leadership pipeline. As the articles in this issue of *Principal* magazine demonstrate, principals cultivate positive school cultures that are built on trust, strengthen the principal pipeline by identifying teacher leaders and nurtur-

ing assistant principals, and through interdependent relationships with superintendents, contribute to strong, district leadership.

As a final note, I salute the ultimate champion of principal leaders and their ability to “get things done” for the students they serve. While Gail Connelly is retiring after 10 years as NAESP executive director, her lasting impact on the principalship can be encapsulated in one of her guiding principles: “Share leadership, collaborate with others, and create a culture of inclusion.” 

—Kaylen Tucker, Ph.D.



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“Reflections of a 21st Century Leader” reviews Gail Connelly’s visionary leadership of NAESP.

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