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THE MINNESOTA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' ASSOCIATION LAUNCHES THE MINNESOTA BULLYING PREVENTION INITIATIVE WITH HAZELDEN

Center City, Minn., September 29, 2009 — The Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA) is excited to be launching, with Hazelden, a national nonprofit organization that helps people reclaim their lives from addiction, and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), a new effort called the Minnesota Bullying Prevention Initiative. According to the 2007 Minnesota Student Survey, 29 percent of students reported they had been bullied once a week or more often and 55 percent of sixth grade students reported having been teased or excluded by others within a 30-day time period. In the 2006-2007 school year, there were 857 incidents of bullying resulting in out-of-school suspension or expulsion. Bullying is a serious issue that affects students' health, the school climate, academic achievement, and school liability.

Hazelden, headquartered in Center City, Minnesota is the leading publisher of evidence-based prevention programs and the exclusive publisher of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* (OBPP), the most researched and best-known program of its kind. With over 35 years of research and successful implementation all over the world, *OBPP* is a whole school program that has been proven to prevent or reduce bullying throughout an educational setting. Many schools that have used the program have seen reductions in bullying behavior by 50% or more.

OBPP, geared to students in grades 1-8, is used at the school, classroom, and individual levels and includes methods to reach out to parents and the community for involvement and support. School administrators, teachers, and other staff are primarily responsible for introducing and implementing the program. These efforts are designed to improve peer relations and make the school a safer and more positive place for students to learn and develop.

MESPA will be working with Hazelden to educate schools about the serious issue of bullying and other related violence issues, and will be serving as the central source in the state of Minnesota for the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* and Hazelden's other violence prevention programs.

"MESPA, the elementary and middle level principals association in Minnesota, is the group that should lead the way in Minnesota bullying prevention. Principals play a vital role in creating a positive school culture," said P.Fred Storti, MESPA executive director. "Hazelden and the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* are the gold standard in evidence-based bully prevention programs."

"Hazelden is excited to be working with such a strong organization like MESPA to bring much needed bullying prevention programming to schools across the state," said Sue Thomas, manager of business development for Hazelden.

To learn more about the Minnesota Bullying Prevention Initiative, visit www.mespa.net or call 651-999-7310 or the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*, visit www.olweus.org or call 800-328-9000.

About Hazelden

Hazelden, a national nonprofit organization founded in 1949, helps people reclaim their lives from the disease of addiction. With nearly 60 years of knowledge and experience, Hazelden offers a comprehensive approach to addiction that addresses the full range of patient, family, and professional needs, including treatment and continuing care for youth and adults, research, higher education, public education and advocacy, and publishing. It has facilities in Minnesota, Oregon, Illinois, and New York, visit www.hazelden.org or call 800-257-7810.

About The Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA)

MESPA is a collaborative, grassroots association serving Minnesota elementary and middle level principals. MESPA has represented Minnesota principals since 1950, and is affiliated with the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and its 29,500 members nationwide. For more information about MESPA, visit www.mespa.net.

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