



MEDIA RELEASE
Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association
1667 North Snelling Avenue, Suite C101
St. Paul, MN 55108

For more information, contact:
Kelsey Gantzer, MESPA Communications Manager, 651-999-7313
Tim Bell, NDP Selection Committee Chair, 952-261-4160
Jessica Cabeen, NDP Finalist, 507-460-1400

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jessica Cabeen, Austin Public Schools, Finalist for Minnesota National Distinguished Principal



Jessica Cabeen

(St. Paul, MN, February 27, 2017) – Jessica Cabeen, principal of Woodson Kindergarten Center in Austin Public Schools, and a member of the Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA), is one of three finalists for Minnesota 2017 National Distinguished Principal (NDP). This marks the 34th year MESPA and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) have presented the prestigious award.

“At the helm of every successful school is a successful principal,” said Gail Connelly, NAESP executive director. “Our National Distinguished Principals program provides us with an opportunity to recognize the outstanding leadership of these principals and their commitment to creating successful learning communities. Because of them, students thrive academically, teachers grow professionally, and communities are strengthened.”

The National Distinguished Principals (NDP) program was established in 1984 to recognize elementary and middle level principals who set high standards for instruction, student achievement, character, and climate for the students, families, and staffs in their learning communities. The program is based on three fundamental ideas:

- Children’s attitudes toward learning and their perceptions of themselves as lifelong learners are established in the beginning school years.
- The scope and quality of children’s educational experiences are determined primarily by the school principal, who establishes, through the important work of teachers and the support of caring parents, the character of a particular school’s program.
- The dedication and enthusiasm of the outstanding principals who guide children’s early education experiences should be acknowledged to both show appreciation for their work as well as to allow them to serve as models for others in the field.

The NDP program is designed to recognize the outstanding leadership of active principals. Criteria established by NAESP require that the individual:

- Is a practicing principal with at least five years experience in the principalship.
- Plans to continue as a practicing principal.
- Demonstrates evidence of outstanding contributions to the community and to the education profession.
- Leads a school that is clearly committed to excellence.
- Leads a school that has programs designed to meet the academic and social needs of all students.
- Leads a school that has firm ties to parents and the community.

Each year, NDPs represent PreK – 8th grade public schools from all across the country as well as principals in U.S. private schools and those from the United States Department of Defense Office of Educational Activity and the United States Department of State Office of Overseas Schools. Public school elementary and middle-level principals are nominated by peers in their state, and final selections are made by committees appointed by each of NAESP’s state affiliate offices.

Jessica was nominated by Brad Gustafson, principal of Greenwood Elementary in Wayzata. In his letter of recommendation, he wrote, “She is a true unsung hero and would represent MESPA principals as NDP in an exemplary manner...Jessica understands the unique needs of the whole child, and especially our youngest learners, like none other. She’s worked tirelessly to contribute her leadership at the state level in both formal and informal ways. She’s championed change for early childhood

education through MESPA. She tries to visit every classroom every day, and maintains the same level of approachability with colleagues. She has brought a genuine passion for learning as well as permission to innovate her school and it's been positively infectious!"

All nominated principals were reviewed by a statewide selection committee, including: MESPA's 12 division presidents; Brad Gustafson, 2016 National Distinguished Principal; and selection committee chair, Tim Bell. On May 5, Cabeen and the other two finalists will be interviewed and the selection committee will determine the 2017 Minnesota National Distinguished Principal.

In addition to Jessica Cabeen, the finalists for the honor are Lisa Carlson, principal of Woodland Elementary in Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan Public School District, and Nancy Antoine, principal of Bridgewater Elementary in Northfield Public Schools.

For more detail on the NDP process, visit *National Distinguished Principal* under *Honors* on MESPA's website: www.mespa.net/ndp

-- end --

MESPA works to: Improve education for Minnesota students through collaboration and advocacy; **Unite** current, past, and future licensed elementary and middle level principals; **Encourage** and support a cooperative relationship between MESPA and other state/national organizations; and **Advocate** for the professional ethical, economic, and social welfare of its members.

MESPA Mission: The Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association strives to be the premier leadership resource for elementary and middle level principals and a strong leading voice for public education. MESPA is committed to ensuring a high quality education for all children through strengthening and enhancing the principal's role as educational leader in our schools.