



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association**

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#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Nancy Antoine, Northfield Public Schools, Named Minnesota's 2021 NAESP National Distinguished Principal**

*(Roseville, MN, May 14, 2021)* – Nancy Antoine (*pictured, right*), principal of Bridgewater Elementary in the Northfield Public Schools District, and a member of the Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association

(MESPA), is Minnesota's 2021 NAESP National Distinguished Principal (NDP). MESPA and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) present the prestigious award.



"I am very honored to have been nominated for the National Distinguished Principal Award, and to have been selected as a finalist!" Said Antoine, "Becoming the NDP is just incredible, and I would not be where I am today without the support and input of the amazing leaders that I have had the opportunity to work with over my career. Many of these leaders I have met while being a MESPA member, spending time together learning and growing professionally. I am grateful for my

Superintendent, Dr. Hillmann, allowing me to explore professional opportunities to bring back to our district. I am very thankful for my Bridgewater Elementary family who have allowed me to lead while pushing them to become leaders as well. This is a once-in-a-lifetime honor, and I am extremely grateful for this award.”

Antoine began her career in education in 1987 as a mathematics teacher in the Pharr-San Juan-Alamo School District in Pharr, Texas. In 1991 she moved to the Minneapolis Public Schools District in Minnesota, where she continued to teach mathematics for a further five years before becoming an instructional assistant at elementary schools in New Hope, Minnesota. In 2001, Antoine became the Assistant Principal of Prairie Elementary School in Worthington, Minnesota, then served as the school’s principal from 2002 to 2007. Antoine has now been principal at Bridgewater Elementary School in Northfield for over 13 years. Antoine received her Bachelor of Science in Mathematics Education from Moorhead State University and her Masters of K-12 Curriculum and Instruction at the University of St. Thomas.

Among her greatest accomplishments as a principal, Antoine is proud of her role in altering the school culture at Bridgewater Elementary. “The year after I came to Bridgewater in 2008, we began grade-level data retreats,” Antoine wrote in her application, “Currently, our teachers meet weekly in their Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), and they use data constantly to inform their instruction and/or practices to make the learning environment work for students. The teachers now set up their own data retreats and this has made a significant difference in terms of student achievement while having a positive impact on the social-emotional needs of the students. The teachers are adept with using data, and see the value in using it in their PLCs.”

When asked how she balances leadership and management duties to support student achievement, Antoine compared Bridgewater to a piece of music, “The staff are like members of a symphony; without specific instruments, the sound will not be as rich as it could be. Without the conductor (principal), the ensemble would not be in sync with each other, and the complex piece of music would sound more like noise. The symphony needs a diverse set of players. A trombone isn’t enough on its own, and it cannot play all parts. There must be room for all of the different instruments to make the final product a successful piece of music that is pleasant to the ears of the audience members. Everyone in the symphony has a common purpose and goal. An effectively led and directed group has the potential to create beautiful music, which are the learning opportunities for the students to be successful.”

“Mrs. Antoine has been a vital part of our team engaging the Northfield community about systemic racism,” wrote Dr. Matthew Hillmann, Superintendent of Northfield Public Schools, “She has shared her personal story of growing up in Minnesota and persisting despite the racist experiences that she has endured. She has inspired others to commit to anti-racism in tangible ways. She can simultaneously hold space for uncomfortable conversations about race while also supporting others in the process,” He concluded, “She is passionate about her job, is a class act in the way she conducts herself professionally, and models the servant leadership approach.”

“MESPA is thrilled to have Principal Nancy Antoine selected by her peers to become the 2021 MESPA National Distinguished Principal,” said MESPA Executive Director,

Jon Millerhagen, "Principal Antoine's service to educators in the state is remarkable. Nancy represents our members as Chairperson on the Board of School Administrators, Education Minnesota's Teacher of the Year judging panel, and a representative on the National Association of Elementary School Principals' Task Force on Race and Equity. Nancy ushered in a deeper commitment to understanding educational equity as President of our association from 2017 to 2019. She is a strong voice for all families and children in Minnesota. We are proud to have her represent MESPA."

The National Distinguished Principal program was established in 1984 to recognize and celebrate elementary and middle-level principals who set high standards for instruction, student achievement, character, and climate for the students, families, and staff in their learning communities. Each year, NDPs represent Pre-K through grade 8 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. All nominated Minnesota principals' applications were reviewed by a statewide selection committee, including representatives from each of MESPA's 12 geographical divisions; 2020 NAESP National Distinguished Principal Bret Domstrand; and selection committee chair, Dawn Brown, Minnesota's NAESP State Representative. On May 7, Antoine and the other two finalists were interviewed by the committee to determine Minnesota's 2021 NAESP National Distinguished Principal.

The other finalists for this honor were: Bobbie Johnson, principal at Jie Ming Mandarin Immersion Academy, St. Paul Public Schools, and Amy Oliver, principal at Monroe Elementary School, Anoka-Hennepin Public Schools.

For more details on the NDP process, visit *National Distinguished Principal* under *Honors* on MESPA's website: [www.mespa.net/ndp](http://www.mespa.net/ndp)

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**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 leaders in our schools.