



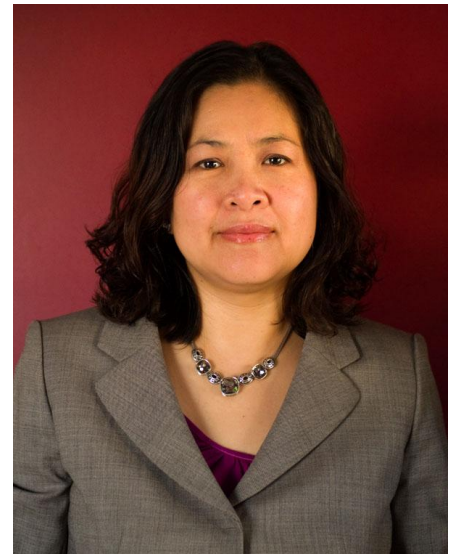
MEDIA RELEASE
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bobbie Johnson, St. Paul Public Schools, Finalist for Minnesota 2021 NAESP National Distinguished Principal

(Roseville, MN, March 26, 2021) – Bobbie Johnson, principal of Jie Ming Mandarin Immersion Academy in St. Paul Public Schools, is one of three finalists for Minnesota 2021 NAESP National Distinguished Principal (NDP). This marks the 37th year that MESPA and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) have presented the prestigious award.



“Principals are at the heart of what makes school communities go,” said Jon Millerhagen, MESPA executive director. “Everything stems from having a great principal: challenging and appropriate curriculum, student achievement and growth, and a great staff that is constantly pushing itself forward with relevant professional development. Principals don’t get nearly enough credit for all they do, and with the NDP award we get a chance to recognize just a few of the principals in our state doing amazing work every day.”

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 staff in their learning communities. The program was based on three fundamental ideas:

- Children's attitudes towards 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.

Each year, NDPs represent Pre-K – 8th-grade public schools from all across the country as well as principals in U.S. private schools and those from the United States Departments 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. Honorees from private schools and overseas schools are selected by special committees.

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

- Has been a member of NAESP at the time of nomination and for the past three consecutive years;
- Has been a building principal (not assistant principal) for 5 years;
- Is clearly committed to excellence;
- Has programs designed to meet the academic and social needs of all students;
and
- Has firm ties to parents and the community.

Johnson was nominated by Elizabeth Hathaway-Castelán, Program Manager of Immersion/Dual Immersion at the Office of Teaching and Learning for St. Paul Public Schools. Hathaway-Castelán wrote, “No one who has met and talked to Principal Johnson steps away without an overwhelming sense of admiration for her dedication, passion, and love for the students of her school.”

Johnson considers the growth of Jie Ming to be one of her proudest accomplishments. The school started in 2011 with a single kindergarten class of 19 students. The current enrollment is over 370, making Jie Ming one of the fastest-growing elementary schools in Minnesota. The mission of Jie Ming is to teach students to be bilingual, bicultural, and bi-literate. Johnson also wants to create an innovative and creative school culture that drives students’ learning.

Dr. Efe Agbamu, an Assistant Superintendent at St. Paul Public Schools, wrote, “Bobbie believes that every student is capable of learning, and her passion is evident in all interactions with students, families, and staff. It is not an unusual occurrence to find Bobbie tutoring her students during the school day, and she can often be found in the classroom; teaming with her staff, and modeling teaching strategies that meet her high expectations.”

Johnson’s approach is not lost on the families who enroll their children at Jie Ming. Leah Young, Senior Editor at One Day magazine and President of the Jie Ming PTA, wrote, “We are now in our fourth year at Jie Ming and both of our sons attend the school—a fourth-grader and a kindergartner. This past year of distance learning has been unprecedented, but Principal Johnson has approached it with humility, a collaborative spirit, optimism, and an indefatigable work ethic. She has rallied her teachers to experiment and work together to produce engaging online work for students. And she has offered transparency and confidence to parents unraveled by the pandemic.”

All nominated principals were reviewed by a statewide selection committee, including representatives from each of MESPA’s 12 geographical divisions; 2021 National Distinguished Principal Bret Domstrand; and selection committee chair, Dawn Brown. On May 7, Johnson and the other two finalists will be interviewed and the selection committee will determine the 2021 Minnesota National Distinguished Principal. In

addition to Johnson, finalists for the honor are Nancy Antoine, principal at Bridgewater Elementary School in Northfield; and Amy Oliver, principal at Monroe Elementary School in Brooklyn Park.

For more details on the NDP process, visit *National Distinguished Principal under Honors* on MESPA's website: 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 leader in our schools.