



**For Immediate Release**  
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### **America's Best K-8 Principals Receive Distinguished Awards for Leading Stellar Learning Communities**

ALEXANDRIA, VA—October 16, 2009—Sixty-three outstanding elementary and middle school principals from schools across the nation and abroad have been named as [2009 National Distinguished Principals](#) (NDP) by the [National Association of Elementary School Principals](#) (NAESP). They will be honored Oct. 23 at an awards banquet at the Capital Hilton Hotel in Washington, D.C., as part of a two-day program, which for the past 20 years has been generously funded by VALIC, the No. 1 provider of defined contribution plan services in the United States to public education employees in the K-12 market.

The NDP program, which is held in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Education, will feature an address by Secretary of Education Arne Duncan at the awards banquet. NAESP and the U.S. Department of Education started the program in 1984 to recognize public and private school principals who make superior contributions to their schools and communities. The distinguished principals are selected by NAESP state affiliates, including the District of Columbia, and by committees representing private and overseas schools.

“Great principals are leaders who can change belief systems, support teachers, and ensure all students have access to good instruction and opportunities to reach their academic potential,” Duncan said. “We need thousands of great instructional leaders like the NDP Class of 2009 to instill the belief that every child can learn, help turnaround the most chronically underperforming schools, and replicate models of success that can be found throughout our nation.”

NAESP Executive Director Gail Connelly commended the 63 principals for being role models for school leadership. “For the past 26 years, our National Distinguished Principals program has provided us with the opportunity to recognize many of our nation’s most accomplished principals—everyday heroes—who work tirelessly to drive school performance and student achievement,” she said. “Principals empower teachers, galvanize parents and communities, and most important, ensure innovative learning environments so that the children they serve can reach their highest potential.”

“For the past 20 years, VALIC has served as the sole sponsor of the National Distinguished Principals program and we are pleased to continue our support of our nation’s principals,” said Bruce R. Abrams, president and CEO of VALIC. “VALIC understands the value of committed educators. It is programs like this that enable us to recognize the accomplishments of our country’s principals and honor their achievements within our communities. Congratulations to all of this year’s outstanding principals.”

**NOTE:** A list of the 2009 NDPs and their biographical information can be accessed at [www.naesp.org/2009\\_NDP.aspx](http://www.naesp.org/2009_NDP.aspx). To request an interview while the principals are in Washington, D.C., call Kaylen Tucker at NAESP, 703-518-6257 or 800-386-2377. On Oct. 22-23, call the NAESP Press Room at the Capital Hilton Hotel in Washington, D.C., at 202-639-4339.

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Established in 1921, the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) serves more than 25,000 elementary and middle school principals in the United States, Canada, and overseas. NAESP leads in the advocacy and support for elementary and middle-level principals and other education leaders in their commitment to all children.

For more than half a century, VALIC has served as a leading plan provider for education and health care institutions. Based on assets, VALIC is ranked as the No. 1 provider of defined contribution plan services in the United States to public education employees in the K-12 market and No. 3 for employees of higher education and not-for-profit health care. As of August 2009, VALIC has more than \$59 billion in assets and manages plans for more than 25,000 groups, serving more than 2 million plan participants. VALIC represents The Variable Annuity Life Insurance Co. and its subsidiaries, VALIC Financial Advisors Inc. and VALIC Retirement Services Co.