NAESP and MetLife Foundation Announce 2008 Sharing the Dream Grant Recipients

Alexandria, VA —September 23, 2008—Thirty principals from 21 states and Guam received $3,000 competitive grants to implement innovative parent and community engagement projects throughout the 2008-2009 school year. Entitled Sharing the Dream, this grant—supported by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and MetLife Foundation—has provided 132 principals the opportunity to build shared responsibility for student learning since 2004.

“Sharing the Dream grants encourage the innovative development of learning communities that is the hallmark of effective principal leadership, as outlined in the second edition of NAESP’s landmark publication, Leading Learning Communities: Standard for What Principals Should Know and Be Able To Do,” said Executive Director Gail Connelly. “We are excited to be able to directly impact the important work that principals do to enhance communication and build capacity within school communities.”

Sharing the Dream grants are based on the premise that effective principals actively engage the community to create shared responsibility for student and school success. Such principals play an instrumental role in building ownership for the work of the school, share leadership and decision-making, encourage parents to become meaningfully involved in the school and their children’s learning, and ensure that students and families are connected to the services they need to stay focused on learning.

“We congratulate these principals for their leadership and innovation in strengthening the important relationships among schools, families, and communities,” said Sibyl Jacobson, president and CEO of MetLife Foundation. “They join a network of over 100 principals and schools whose ideas and lessons are ‘Sharing the Dream.’”

The initiative originated after the 2003 MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: An Examination of School Leadership revealed a significant disconnect between the ways in which principals and other members of the school community view their schools and their relationships with one another. Principals perceived a markedly more positive school atmosphere than did students, teachers, and parents. NAESP and MetLife Foundation developed the program to give schools the resources to decrease this perception gap and work collaboratively toward improving achievement for all students.

This year’s grantees represent a diverse array of middle, elementary, charter, community, rural, urban, and suburban schools from coast to coast. A selection committee determined the winning schools based on clearly defined and innovative goals, expressed community need, and effective data measurement techniques to monitor project success.

Grantees will be supported with a resource toolkit of community engagement materials, an online forum with lessons learned and tips and tools from past and current Sharing the Dream recipients and a series of conference calls where principals will share information about their program. Upon the conclusion of the grant cycle, an executive summary will highlight the accomplishments of the 2008-2009 grantees.
Established in 1921, the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) serves 30,000 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.

MetLife Foundation, established in 1976 by MetLife, supports programs that increase opportunities for young people to succeed, give students and teachers a voice in improving education, develop partnerships between schools and communities and strengthen relationships among parents, teachers, and students.