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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Visitacion Valley Principal Named National Middle School Principal of the Year**

**September 28, 2007 (San Francisco, CA)** – Visitacion Valley Middle School Principal Jim Dierke was named National Middle School Principal of the Year in a surprise ceremony at his school this morning.

Dierke's students, school officials, colleagues, and friends gathered with representatives from the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and MetLife to applaud his work.

"Principal Dierke has worked with the San Francisco Unified School District for 36 years," said SFUSD Superintendent Carlos Garcia. "Here at Visitacion Valley Middle School he has focused on the fundamentals: school safety, classroom management, home-school communication, and trust among the staff, students, and parents."

Dierke has been principal at Visitacion Valley since 1999.

NASSP executive director Gerald N. Tirozzi said, "Jim Dierke has put his heart and soul into making sure his students feel safe and secure in their school building, and has developed a school climate that nurtures academic excellence. NASSP is proud to recognize him for his achievements."

Visitacion Valley Middle School has an ethnically diverse student body of approximately 400, a number of whom live with people other than their parents. Under Dierke's supervision, more than 20 organizations come to the school to support students. More than half the students receive tutoring after school. The school also provides a Gifted and Talented program and the college-prep GEAR UP program. The San Francisco Chronicle recently referred to the school as "an island of safety in a sea of trouble."

When he was named one of the six finalists, Dierke's school received a \$1,500 grant. As the award winner, the school will now receive an additional grant of \$3,500. The grants can be used to promote learning opportunities for students or related investments such as capital improvements, the purchase of technology-related equipment, or to fund specific educational programs.

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