



MEDIA RELEASE

Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association

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Hawley Principal, Chris Ellingson, Receives Professional Leadership Award



Chris Ellingson

(Roseville, MN, February 29, 2024) – The Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA) recognizes Chris Ellingson, principal of Hawley Elementary School with the MESPA Division Leadership Achievement Award for MESPA's Western Division. Principals are responsible for promoting a positive school culture, guiding instruction, and providing leadership. Principal Ellingson was recognized by colleagues statewide on February 8, 2024, at the Mespys, the premier elementary principal celebration of the year celebrated during MESPA Institute, the annual statewide convention of Minnesota's elementary and middle-level principals.

Principal Ellingson notes, "It is an honor to be nominated by my division colleagues for this

award. There are a lot of great principals in our division and our state and to be recognized among them is truly an honor.”

Craig Bahr, principal of Lake Park Audubon Elementary and the Western Division’s president elect, emphasized, “Mr. Ellingson has been a long-serving principal at Hawley Elementary. During this time he has helped lead his school in high academic achievement on state-wide and school-wide assessments. His influence has spread beyond his school and impacted schools across the Western Minnesota Elementary Principal Division through his leadership at the committee level, service as Division President, and willingness to share best practices established at Hawley Elementary. Mr. Ellingson has also advocated for students at a state-wide level through attendance and regular participation in legislative days hosted at the Minnesota State Capitol representing our region and schools honorably.”

MESPA members selected 13 of their peers to receive the 2023 MESPA Division Leadership Achievement Award. Michelle Krell, MESPA Executive Director, congratulated the award winners, “The MESPA Division Leadership Award goes to principals who demonstrate exemplary leadership within their schools, communities, and our association. They embody transformational leadership, propelled by genuine care and dedication to their students, staff, and communities. Their knowledge, enthusiasm, passion, and commitment significantly enrich our association.”

2024 MESPA Division Leadership Achievement Award Recipients

- **MESPA Central Division** - Jennifer Olson, Humphrey and Winsted Elementary Schools, Howard Lake-Waverly-Winsted Public Schools
- **MESPA Northern Division** – Kelsey Johnson, Warren-Alvarado-Oslo Elementary, Warren-Alvarado-Oslo School District
- **MESPA Western Division** – Chris Ellingson, Hawley Elementary, Hawley Public Schools
- **MESPA East Suburban Division** – Maura Weyandt, Edgerton Elementary, Roseville Area Schools
- **MESPA West Suburban Division** – Eduardo Navidad, Alice Smith Elementary, Hopkins Public Schools
- **MESPA North Suburban Division** – Jack Shields, DaVinci Academy of Arts and Science, charter school in Ham Lake.
- **MESPA South Suburban Division** – Christine Evans, Southview Elementary, Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan School District

- **MESPA Northeast Division** – Clayton Linder, East Rapids and West Rapids Elementary Schools, Grand Rapids School District
- **MESPA Southeast Division** – Nick Jurrens, Jefferson Elementary, Faribault Public Schools
- **MESPA Southwest Division** – Doreen Oelke, South Elementary, Saint Peter Public Schools
- **MESPA Saint Paul Division** – Sarah Lightner, Groveland Park, Saint Paul Public Schools
- **MESPA Minneapolis Division** – Vicki Turner, Kenny Elementary School, Minneapolis Public School District
- **Retired Principals of MESPA** – Jim Hoogheem

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The Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA) is the premier leadership resource for elementary and middle level principals, dedicated to connecting, developing, and providing resources for principals, and serving as a leading voice for Minnesota education.