



MEDIA RELEASE

**Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association**

1970 Oakcrest Avenue, Suite 204

Roseville, MN 55113

Contact: Simone LaBonté, Communications Manager

952.297-8672

## **Saint Peter Principal, Doreen Oelke, Receives Professional Leadership Award**



*Doreen Oelke*

(Roseville, MN, February 29, 2024) – The Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA) recognizes Doreen Oelke, principal of South Elementary in Saint Peter Public Schools with the MESPA Division Leadership Achievement Award for MESPA's Southeast Division. Principals are responsible for promoting a positive school culture, guiding instruction, and providing leadership. Principal Oelke 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 Oelke notes, "I am truly humbled and honored to receive this award. I have always

believed that one is only as strong as those that surround them. In my career I have been so fortunate to work with some of the best of the best in the field of education. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve as a school leader and see first hand the amazing work that is being done within our schools.”

Darin Doherty, a close colleague of Principal Oelke and principal of North Elementary in St. Peter, added, “I have had the privilege of working alongside Mrs. Oelke for a decade. Throughout our ten years together, Doreen's leadership style has consistently stood out for her remarkable ability to forge personal connections and nurture relationships within our school community. Her commitment to creating an inclusive and welcoming environment has undoubtedly left an enduring mark. Doreen's dedication to the well-being of every student, combined with her genuine passion for education, has set a standard of excellence that will be remembered long after her retirement. We express our deep appreciation for her invaluable contributions and extend our best wishes for a fulfilling and well-deserved retirement.”

Liam Dawson, principal of Northside Elementary in St. James and president-elect of the Southwest Division, emphasized, “Doreen is an advocate for kids and that is at the heart of what she does. Her insight into the role as principal has positively impacted those she meets and is someone many can turn to within our division when challenges or questions arise in our day-to-day roles.”

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.