



MEDIA RELEASE

Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association

1970 Oakcrest Avenue, Suite 204

Roseville, MN 55113

Contact: Simone LaBonté, Communications Manager

952.297-8672

Saint Paul Principal, Sarah Lightner, Receives Professional Leadership Award



(Roseville, MN, February 29, 2024) –

The Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA) recognizes Sarah Lightner, principal of Groveland Park Elementary School in Saint Paul Public Schools, with the MESPA Division Leadership Achievement Award for MESPA's Saint Paul Division. Principals are responsible for promoting a positive school culture, guiding instruction, and providing leadership. Principal

Lightner 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 Lightner notes, "I am so grateful to be a part of MESPA. The collegiality and professional development help me be a better principal and provide much appreciated support. Thanks to my St. Paul Division for this recognition."

Lighner's colleague, Fatima Lawson, principal of Highwood Hills Elementary, emphasized, "Principal Sarah Lightner is very deserving of this award because of her passion for education, and for making a positive difference in the lives of the students and families that she serves. Her passion transcends her duties to her school and touches on her commitment to supporting her colleagues. As our Division's President-Elect, she inspires and motivates our team, she is a good listener and problem-solver, as well as someone who is adept at identifying and addressing challenges in a fair and conscientious manner. She is without a doubt an embodiment of the qualities of outstanding leadership that awards like this one celebrate."

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

-- end --

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.