



MEDIA RELEASE

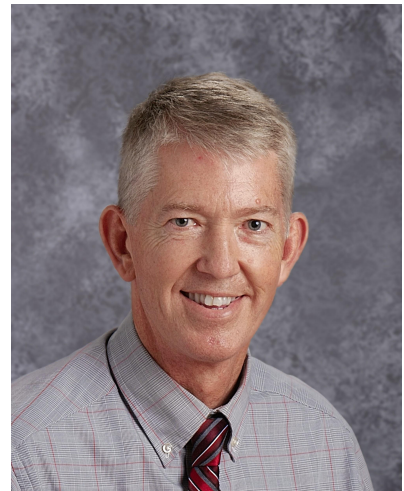
Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association
1970 Oakcrest Avenue, Suite 204
Roseville, MN 55113

Contacts: Sarah Olander, PR & Engagement Manager
952.297.8672; sarah@mespa.net

Dana Christenson, principal, Voyager Elementary School
320.762.3325; dchristenson@alexschools.org

Alexandria Public Schools Principal, Dana Christenson, Receives Professional Leadership Award

(electronic photo attached to this news release)



Dana Christenson

(Roseville, MN, April 21, 2022) – The Minnesota Elementary School Principals’ Association (MESPA) recognized Dana Christenson, principal of Voyager Elementary School, Alexandria Public Schools, with the 2022 MESPA Division Leadership Achievement Award for MESPA’s Western Division. Principals are responsible for a school’s instructional, school culture, and resource leadership. The award honors principals whose exemplary leadership and sustained efforts have made noteworthy contributions to the operation of effective school learning programs—improving education, their communities, and their profession. He was recognized by colleagues statewide on February 3, 2022, 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.

Christenson summed up his educational philosophy in a quote from Amanda Gorman’s inauguration poem, *The Hill We Climb*: “There is always light, if only we are brave enough to see it. If only we’re brave enough to be it.”

Christenson was nominated by Corinna Erickson, principal at Breckenridge Elementary School in the Breckenridge Public Schools District. On behalf of MESPA Western Division principals, Erickson

stated: “Dana is a positive, professional leader at Voyager Elementary in Alexandria and in the Western Division MESPA principal group. He has a calm, comforting presence and leadership approach. He is well-read and knowledgeable in educational topics that improve his approach to what is happening in the world of education today. He is very supportive and recognizes others in their accomplishments.”

Among his most significant career accomplishments, Christenson includes:

- Providing staff development around trauma-informed practices.
- Implementing school culture/climate promising practices in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Education
- Leading during a pandemic.

Christenson has also served as the MESPA Educational Advisory Committee representative for the Western Division for the last two years.

MESPA members selected 13 of their peers to receive the 2022 MESPA Division Leadership Achievement Award. Jon Millerhagen, MESPA Executive Director, congratulated the award winners by saying, “MESPA members who receive the Division Leadership Achievement Award are the strong foundations of their schools, their communities, and our association. They are transformational leaders who care deeply for their students. Our association benefits greatly from their knowledge, enthusiasm, passion, and commitment.”

2022 MESPA Division Leadership Achievement Award Recipients

- Sam Court, Rocori School District, Central Division
- Travis Barringer, North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale, East Suburban Division
- Renee Montague, Minneapolis Public Schools, Minneapolis Division
- Amy Oliver, Anoka-Hennepin School District, North Suburban Division
- Clayton Lindner, Independent School District 318, Northeast Division
- Chris Bjerklie, Red Lake Falls Schools, Northern Division
- Nancy D. Páez, St. Paul Public Schools, St. Paul Division
- Josie Koivisto, Shakopee Public Schools, South Suburban Division
- Jared Groehler, Rochester Public Schools, Southeast Division
- Amanda Feterl, Sibley East Public Schools, Southwest Division
- Melissa Ness, Hopkins Public Schools, West Suburban Division
- Dana Christensen, Alexandria Public Schools, Western Division
- Elmer Koch, Retired Principals of MESPA

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MESPA works to: **Improve** education for Minnesota students through collaboration and advocacy; **Unite** current, past, and future licensed elementary and middle-level principals; **Encourage** and support a cooperative relationship between MESPA and other state/national organizations; and **Advocate** for the professional ethical, economic, and social welfare of its members.

MESPA Mission: The Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association strives to be the premier leadership resource for elementary and middle-level principals and a strong leading voice for public education. MESPA is committed to ensuring a high quality education for all children through strengthening and enhancing the principal's role as educational leader in our schools.