



MEDIA RELEASE
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Eric Skanson, ROCORI School District, Named Minnesota's 2019 NAESP National Distinguished Principal

(Roseville, MN, May 9, 2019) – Eric Skanson (pictured, right), principal of Cold Spring Elementary in the ROCORI School District, and a member of the Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA), is Minnesota's 2019 NAESP National Distinguished Principal (NDP). MESPA and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) present the prestigious award.



The National Distinguished Principal program was established in 1984 to recognize and celebrate elementary and middle-level principals who set high standards for instruction, student achievement, character, and climate for the students, families, and staff in their learning communities. Each year, NDPs represent Pre-K through grade 8 public schools from all across the country as well as principals in U.S. private schools and those from the United States Department of Defense Office of Educational Activity and the United States Department of State Office of Overseas Schools. All nominated Minnesota principals' applications were reviewed by a statewide selection committee, including representatives from each of MESPA's 12 geographical divisions; 2018 NAESP National Distinguished Principal Curtis Slater; and selection committee chair, Tim Bell, Minnesota's NAESP State Representative. On May 3, Skanson and the other three finalists were interviewed by the committee to determine Minnesota's 2019 NAESP National Distinguished Principal.

Skanson began his career in education in 2002 as a 1st, 4th, and 6th-grade teacher in Buffalo Hanover Montrose ISD 877. He served as principal of Renville County West Elementary from 2007-2008 before becoming principal of Cold Spring Elementary in 2008, a position he holds to this day. Skanson received his Bachelor of Science in Education degree from Valley City State University in Valley City, North Dakota; his Master of Education from Hamline University in St. Paul, MN; and his Doctor of Education from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.

“I know and understand that when trust is evident in my school, each member is there to do their part for student achievement,” Skanson said. “My responsibility is to model, repair, and cultivate trust from all members of our school and stay focused on students. Trust builds through a culture that accepts failure as a process and not a finality.”

It is clear from the words of those in the Cold Spring community that Skanson succeeds at creating that culture of trust and respect:

“Dr. Skanson exemplifies caring, respect, and creativity,” wrote Kristi Stavros, parent of students at Cold Spring Elementary, in a letter of recommendation for Skanson. “He cares deeply about the success and well-being of each and every student at Cold Spring Elementary and understands the importance of recognizing the whole child. He strives to make Cold Spring Elementary a place where all students feel safe and happy.”

“Eric is life-time learner,” wrote Joyce Baumann, a third grade teacher at Cold Spring Elementary who has taught under Skanson for more than 10 years, in a letter of recommendation. “He has a passion for finding out ‘what works’ in the school setting and beyond. Eric understands that so much of student success is relational. He works hard to build strong connections with students of our school and to engage them in a fun learning environment. He has initiated innovative programming to build excitement around learning. Students can be a part of his Principal’s Book Club in which they read and discuss novels. School-wide celebrations in which student achievement is recognized build a sense of school community and pride.”

“Principals are one of the single biggest factors in guiding the success of school communities,” said Jon Millerhagen, Executive Director of MESPA. “Great principals help develop challenging and appropriate curricula, lead student achievement and growth, bring together a great staff that is constantly pushing itself forward with relevant professional development, and so much more. Dr.

Skanson is exemplary of the innovative school leadership and students-first mindset taking place all across the state of Minnesota. We are proud to have Dr. Skanson representing the principals of our state on the national stage.”

The other finalists for this honor were: Kurt Becker, principal of Cuyuna Range Elementary School, Crosby-Ironton School District; Dawn Brown, principal of Washington Learning Center, New Ulm Public Schools; and Melissa Sonnek, principal of Edgerton Elementary, Roseville Area Schools.

For more details on the NDP process, visit *National Distinguished Principal* under *Honors* on MESPA’s website: www.mespa.net/ndp

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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.