



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
Christopher Forrest, principal, Wilson Elementary School
763.506.4701; christopher.forrest@ahschools.us

Anoka-Hennepin Public Schools Principal, Christopher Forrest, Receives Professional Leadership Award

(electronic photo attached to this news release)



Christopher Forrest

(Roseville, MN, May 6, 2021) – The Minnesota Elementary School Principals’ Association (MESPA) recognized Christopher Forrest, principal of Wilson Elementary School, Anoka-Hennepin Public Schools, with the 2021 MESPA Division Leadership Achievement Award for MESPA’s North Suburban 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 April 15, 2021 at the MESPYS, the premier elementary principal celebration of the year celebrated via [YouTube livestream](#).

Forrest summed up his educational philosophy with a quote by Maya Angelou: “Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.”

Forrest was nominated by Anissa Cravens, principal at Brookside Elementary School in the Anoka-Hennepin Public Schools District and President-Elect of the North Suburban Division. On behalf of MESPA North Suburban Division principals, Cravens stated: “He has transformed the culture at his school. He is an advocate and leader in guiding the work and conversations around equity within

our elementary principal group. He is viewed as a liaison for our principal group when information needs to be shared at the district level. He is a lifelong learner with a passion for education and for kids, and a positive energy.”

Among his most significant career accomplishments, Forrest includes:

- Creating a positive, collaborative school culture.
- Advocating for a focus on implementation of social emotional learning at both the school and district level.
- Developing plans to support equity goals focused on educating all students, empowering voice, and inspiring change.

MESPA members selected 13 of their peers to receive the 2021 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.”

2021 MESPA Division Leadership Achievement Award Recipients

- Mary Holmberg, Paynesville Area Schools, Central Division
- Kenny Newby, Forest Lake Area Schools, East Suburban Division
- Jamil Payton, Minneapolis Public Schools, Minneapolis Division
- Christopher Forrest, Anoka-Hennepin School District, North Suburban Division
- Darren Sheldon (Ed. D.), Duluth Public Schools, Northeast Division
- Ami C. Aalgaard, Bemidji Area Schools, Northern Division
- Chreese C. Jones, St. Paul Public Schools, St. Paul Division
- Bret Domstrand, Lakeville Area Schools, South Suburban Division
- Dr. Cindy Hansen, Pine Island Public Schools, Southeast Division
- Liam Dawson, St. James Public Schools, Southwest Division
- Dr. Heather Hanson, Robbinsdale Area Schools, West Suburban Division
- Trisha Mariotti, Detroit Lakes Public Schools, Western Division
- Dr. Carole Gupton, 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.