



MEDIA RELEASE
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Pine Island Public Schools Principal, Dr. Cindy Hansen, Receives Professional Leadership Award

(electronic photo attached to this news release)



Dr. Cindy Hansen

(Roseville, MN, May 6, 2021) – The Minnesota Elementary School Principals’ Association (MESPA) recognized Dr. Cindy Hansen, principal of Pine Island Elementary, Pine Island Public Schools, and President-Elect of MESPA’s Southeast Division, with the 2021 MESPA Division Leadership Achievement Award for the Southeast 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. She was recognized by colleagues statewide on April 15, 2021 at the MESPYS, the premier elementary principal celebration of the year celebrated via [YouTube livestream](#).

Dr. Hansen summed up her educational philosophy in a quote: “If anyone wants to be a leader, they must first become a servant.”

Dr. Hansen was nominated by Gina Meinertz, principal at Spring Grove Elementary School in the Spring Grove Public Schools District and President of the Southeast Division. On behalf of MESPA Southeast Division principals, Meinertz stated: “I wholeheartedly nominate Cindy Hansen for the Division Leadership Award. Her calm, confident leadership amid tumultuous times has been sought

out not just at the division level, but at the state level as well. Cindy provides exemplary leadership within her school, district, region, and state.”

Among her most significant career accomplishments, Dr. Hansen includes:

- Teaching an at-risk kindergartner, who had been severely abused, how to read.
- Journeying with one of her students for a year as he processed the grief of his four-year-old sister dying from cancer.
- Being the reason a child smiles when they walk in her school building.

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.