



MEDIA RELEASE

Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association

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Robbinsdale Area Schools Principal, Dr. Heather Hanson, Receives Professional Leadership Award

(electronic photo attached to this news release)



Dr. Heather Hanson

(Roseville, MN, May 6, 2021) – The Minnesota Elementary School Principals’ Association (MESPA) recognized Dr. Heather Hanson, principal of the School of Engineering & Arts (SEA), Robbinsdale Area Schools, with the 2021 MESPA Division Leadership Achievement Award for MESPA’s West 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. 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. Hanson summed up her educational philosophy with a quote from Nelson Mandela: “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

Dr. Hanson was nominated by Nancy Froelich, principal at Meadow Lake Elementary in the Robbinsdale Area Schools District. On behalf of MESPA West Suburban Division principals, Froelich stated: “Heather is the type of principal that goes above and beyond for her school, community, and other leaders in the district. She has been an elementary learning leader and has given lots of time and energy as education is shifting. Heather also has led her school to a National Blue Ribbon School

status and she has shown effective leadership. She is willing to push everybody into thinking outside of the box to allow for all of us to think of new and creative ways to close the opportunity gap. Heather has led SEA into one of the top science, engineering, and arts schools in Minnesota. She involves her staff and finds the most creative ways to generate learning. She would be an awesome representative for our West Suburban Team!”

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

- Earning a Doctorate of Educational Leadership and Administration from St. Cloud State University.
- Earning National Board Certification in teaching.
- Working for Robbinsdale Area Schools for 26 years in various roles including classroom teacher, curriculum and instruction specialist, and the principalship.

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.