



MEDIA RELEASE
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Paynesville Area Schools Principal, Mary Holmberg, Receives Professional Leadership Award

(electronic photo attached to this news release)



Mary Holmberg

(Roseville, MN, May 6, 2021) – The Minnesota Elementary School Principals’ Association (MESPA) recognized Mary Holmberg, principal of Paynesville Area Elementary School, Paynesville Area Schools, with the 2021 MESPA Division Leadership Achievement Award for MESPA’s Central 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](#).

Holmberg summed up her educational philosophy with a quote from Helen Keller: “Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”

Holmberg was nominated by Dr. Tracy Reimer; the program director in the Bethel University doctor of education, leadership in K-12 administration, and licensing program. Dr. Reimer stated: “Mary positively impacted her previous school, Richmond Elementary, that was named a National Blue Ribbon School...Mary exemplifies ‘lead learner’ as she humbly pursues and extensively participates in professional development. She always takes the time to thoughtfully contribute to Central Division

online (and previously, face-to-face) conversations regarding leadership questions and concerns; this was especially noticeable during summer and fall COVID school reopening planning. Mary always displays kindness and brings a positive energy.”

Among her most significant career accomplishments, Holmberg includes:

- Being named Richmond Elementary School Principal.
- Being selected as Paynesville Area Elementary School Principal.
- Being part of the team that overcame challenges and successfully closed the achievement gap at Richmond Elementary School, which earned the school community the National Blue Ribbon Award.

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.