



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association**

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#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Keisha Davis, Osseo Area Public Schools, Selected NAESP Outstanding Assistant Principal from Minnesota**



*(Roseville, MN, Dec. 17, 2020)* – Keisha Davis, assistant principal of Birch Grove Elementary School for the Arts in the Osseo Area Public Schools district, and a member of the Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA), is Minnesota's 2021 NAESP Outstanding Assistant Principal. MESPA and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) present this prestigious award.

The National Outstanding Assistant Principal™ program was established in 2011 to honor assistant principals who are doing a superb job in their roles. NAESP is committed to preparing assistant principals to step into the principal role. This program promotes educational excellence for pre-kindergarten through eighth grade (PreK-8) schooling and calls attention to the fundamental importance of the assistant principal. NAESP will share their successes and best practices in a practical document for other principals to utilize.

"Keisha Davis is a true leader of her school in the areas of restorative practice and cultural responsiveness," said Jason Luksik, chair of MESPA's NAESP Outstanding Assistant Principal selection committee, "It is evident in her practice that she helps students to find their voice and their purpose. Keisha is deserving of this award and will serve MESPA well in representing our members as the next Minnesota NAESP Outstanding Assistant Principal."

Jeff Zastrow, Principal at Fernbrook Elementary School and former Principal of Birch Grove Elementary School for the Arts, recommended Davis highly for this honor. "Keisha is a tireless leader, daily looking for the best ways to support and influence staff." Zastrow said, "She seeks and delivers great professional development, holds a high standard for teacher performance with a racial/cultural equity lens at all time, and communicates clearly those expectations."

Davis considers restorative practices to be one of her best methods as an educator. "These practices help those directly involved as well as those who were affected by an incident." Davis said, "Restorative circles have been life-changing in my practice at our school. Scholars and staff alike comment on its power and request this process when incidents arise." Davis explained that these practices impart a voice to those who are often not heard due to race, position, or other identities. As a result of restorative practice, the trajectory of scholars at Birch Grove Elementary School for The Arts and their behavioral data have changed.

When asked to identify two of her most significant accomplishments as an Assistant Principal she indicated her efforts to make culturally responsive books more accessible, and lowering office referrals for students, especially students of color. Davis created an area in the school library dedicated to books that reflect Birch Grove's scholars. Davis has also sustained BG Family Book Club Night, a practice that was initially grant funded and created by two staff members who are no longer with Birch Grove Elementary. Although the teachers and grant are gone, Davis believes the practice is too important to stop.

"She invited community leaders to come and read the book of the night. This brought together elected officials and the people they represent," said Dr. Ronald Salazar, Principal at Birch Grove Elementary School. Dr. Salazar emphasized that Davis "walks the talk" when it comes to equity for their school. "Equity is more than a slogan to her. Her daily walk is empowering families, staff and students so our scholars can reach for the stars, create wonderful things, and have what it takes to overcome centuries of discrimination."

Prior to being named NAESP Outstanding Assistant Principal from Minnesota, Davis was awarded the Certificate of Investment to the Betterment of Education by the Osseo Area Public Schools District in 2010, and Teacher of The Year by Kappa Delta Pi International Honor Society through her alma mater, St. Cloud State University, in 2011. Following completion of her bachelor's, Davis received her master's degree from Concordia College, and her administrative degree from St. Thomas University. She has been an educator since 2004, and has been Assistant Principal at Birch Grove Elementary School for the Arts since 2015.

"I am honored and humbled to be named NAESP Outstanding Assistant Principal from Minnesota," said Davis. "I want to thank God, my family, friends, colleagues and all of the

scholars who have allowed me to live out my life's purpose of equity in education. I share this recognition with you all!"

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**MESPA is** the professional association of Minnesota's elementary and middle level principals. With the vision to "be the premiere resource for preparing today's principals for tomorrow and a strong leading voice for public education" and a statewide membership of 950 principals, MESPA has represented Minnesota's principals since 1950. MESPA is affiliated with the National Association of Elementary School Principals and its 29,500 members nationwide.

**MESPA Mission:** Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association is dedicated to promoting and improving education for children and youth, strengthening the role as educational leader for elementary and middle level principals, and collaborating with partners in education to assist in achieving these goals.

**The NAESP Foundation** is partnering with **The Pearson Foundation** in this endeavor. The Pearson Foundation extends Pearson's commitment to education by partnering with leading nonprofit, civic, and business organizations to provide financial, organizational, and publishing assistance across the globe. The NAESP Foundation advances excellence, innovation, and equity in schools by endowing leadership and learning for principals for the benefit of all children.