



An affiliate of the National Association of Elementary School Principals



## Local Educator David Hardesty Among Nation's Best K-8 Principals

Laramie, WY – February 24, 2023 – Mr. David Hardesty, principal of Velma Linford Elementary School in Laramie was selected as Wyoming's 2023 National Distinguished Principal. The 2023 celebration marks the 40<sup>th</sup> year that the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) has presented this prestigious award.

Mr. Hardesty was nominated and selected by fellow principals through a statewide search process conducted by the Wyoming Association of Elementary and Middle School Principals, said WAEMSP Executive

Director Kenny Jones.

Mr. Hardesty is a graduate of the University of Wyoming, BA 2005 & MA 2010. He served as an elementary teacher in Laramie and Cheyenne from 2005 - 2013. He became the principal at Velma Linford Elementary in 2013.

"Principals are not just leaders in schools, but they're also trusted leaders in their communities—especially during difficult times," said NAESP Executive Director L. Earl Franks, Ed.D., CAE. "Schools across the country have not gone unscathed from challenges created and exacerbated by a global pandemic. Despite these challenges, principals have doubled down on their commitment to educational excellence and health and well-being for their students and staff. One behalf of NAESP, I extend a heartfelt congratulations and thank you to the 2023 NAESP National Distinguished Principals, who have shown that their dedicated leadership and passion for students and their communities will outshine any challenges that are thrown their way."

In October 2023, Mr. Hardesty will travel to Washington, D.C. for two days of activities planned to honor and bring well-deserved recognition to the elementary and middle-level educators chosen by the states, the District of Columbia, plus private and overseas schools.

Criteria for selection of the principals require that the honorees are active principals of schools where programs are designed to meet the academic and social needs of all students and where there are firmly established community ties with parents and local business organizations.

Mr. John Goldhardt, Ed.D. stated "Mr. Hardesty's caring and courageous leadership for the last 10 years at Linford has resulted in high levels of achievement for students. Ten years ago, Linford was identified by the state as a school that was "below expectations." Today it is a school that is identified as "exceeding expectations" in both achievement and growth. This dramatic change didn't happen on its own. Under Mr. Hardesty's leadership, the school's culture, climate, and purpose methodically and purposely changed to be truly learner focused."

Since 1956, the Wyoming Association of Elementary and Middle School Principals has served as Wyoming's professional educational association and now represents 201 elementary and middle school principals and aspiring principals throughout the state. WAEMSP maintains close ties with the metropolitan Washington, D.C. based National Association of Elementary School Principals and its 18,000 members worldwide.



## WAEMSP's 2023 Assistant Principal of the Year

Rawlins, WY—December 9, 2023 – Jacinda Waldrip, assistant principal of Rawlins Middle School in Rawlins was selected as Wyoming's 2023 Assistant Principal of the year. The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) is committed to preparing assistant principals to step into the principal role. Recognition for the exceptional leadership of the men and women who are responsible for the day-to-day operations of PreK-8 schools instills pride in their accomplishments and reinforces their leadership in helping children develop a lifelong love of learning.

Mrs. Waldrip was nominated and selected by fellow principals through a statewide search process conducted by the Wyoming Association of Elementary and Middle School Principals, said WAEMSP Executive Director Kenny Jones.

A graduate of the University of Wyoming in Laramie, WY and Chadron State College in Chadron, NE. Mrs.

Waldrip has been a second grade teacher, Instructional Facilitator/Curriculum Coordinator up to the time she was hired as the assistant principal of Rawlins Middle School.

One of the eligibility requirements for this honor states the recipient must demonstrate exceptional leadership in a school program; is respected by students, colleagues, parents, and the community at large; and sets high expectations for school staff and students. In review of Mrs. Waldrip's application, it was very clear that Jacinda excels in this area, said WAEMSP Executive Director Kenny Jones.

In his letter of support for Mrs. Waldrip's nomination, Mr. Ryan Searle – principal of RMS stated "If every school had a Jacinda Waldrip at the helm of ensuring high levels of learning for all students, the field of education would be the most popular practice because every college graduate would want to be on her team. Her educational personality is contagious and we at Rawlins Middle School are absolutely in awe of her and we know we are fortunate to work alongside her. She is the real deal when it comes to all things that matter in a school."

During the surprise assembly at RMS Mrs. Waldrip was presented with a plaque from WAEMSP and a certificate to attend the NAESP National Principals Conference which will be held this July in Washington, DC. All Assistant Principals of the Year winners will be recognized during the conference.

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***The mission of WAEMSP is to promote and support the improvement of education for all Wyoming children through effective educational leadership***

## WAEMSP Elections

### Spring 2023

During the week of March 13th WAEMSP will be holding its annual election of officers. We have two elected positions which are open this spring. During the general business meeting at our state conference we received nominations for our **State Vice-President and Middle Level Representative**. Below are the bios for the principals who are running for these open positions.

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#### **WAEMSP Vice President**

##### **Bertine Bahige**

I am excited about the possibility of serving as your WAEMSP Vice President. I have had the honor of being part of this fantastic organization of educational leaders for the past 7 years. Each year, I learn something new from each of you, and I am excited to serve you and help grow our organization.

I started my principal career 7 years ago at Rawhide Elementary school in Gillette. Over the course of six years, I was blessed to see the school grow and thrive. Our district decided to consolidate the Dual Immersion Program at Stocktrail Elementary this past year. I was fortunate to be allowed to move along the program to this site to continue with the work I started at Rawhide elementary school. As the new principal at Stocktrail Elementary school in Gillette, I look forward to continuing to contribute to our organization, as it has given us so much.

After graduating from the University of Wyoming, “The Worlds Needs More Cowboys,” I started my teaching career with a double bachelor's in mathematics and mathematics education at Campbell County High School. After a decade in the classroom, I pursued a master's in educational leadership from South Dakota State University. Over the years, I have enjoyed the challenges of being a secondary school teacher and elementary school principal; my favorite part is the relationships I have built throughout the state with all of you.

As Vice President of WAEMSP, I would be happy to continue the work that has been so successful over the years and to keep it as a resource that supports principals in all areas.

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#### **WAEMSP Vice President**

##### **Joel Thomas**

**Be Better!** That's our school motto and the attitude I would bring to the WAEMSP if I am elected as Vice President.

I had the opportunity to serve as a representative of the SW region years ago, and to be completely transparent; it was a frustrating experience. I loved working with and learning from my colleagues across the state, but something was missing. We never talked about kids! We talked about policies, procedures, bylaws, and many other items that, at the end of the day, did nothing to improve what we were doing for our kids every day. Throughout my years as an administrator, when I've struggled with something, the WAEMSP has always been there with support and suggestions. I would work to grow that part of the organization.

I was an elementary PE teacher in Rawlins for the first seven years of my career. I had a principal named Darrin Jennings who asked me to join our School Improvement Team. I told him I was just a PE teacher and knew nothing about improving a school. He said, “I know you are just a PE teacher, and I can’t believe I’m asking you to do this, but I need your help.” I joined the School Improvement Team and the 1st grade PLC. I immediately saw the impact we could have on students if we worked together as a school. I am currently in my 14th year as the principal of Little Snake River Valley School in Baggs, WY, and nothing has changed; when we work together, we see amazing results!

After moving into my office, as a first-year principal, I sat in my chair and wondered, “What am I supposed to do now?” Fourteen years later, I ask myself the same question every day. I believe this organization is full of great administrators who have the capacity to work together to improve Wyoming for all of our students! I would love to be part of helping all Wyoming students and would be honored to serve as Vice President of the WAEMSP Board.

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## **WAEMSP Middle Level Representative**

### **Stacie Anfinson**

I have been in education for 23 years, and an administrator for the past 10 years. My career started in Sweetwater County at Superior Elementary. After 2 years in Sweetwater 1, I moved to Laramie where I taught elementary school for 14 years. To start my administration experience, I became an assistant principal at an elementary school in Albany County School District 1. After 3 years at the elementary level, I moved into the secondary world at Laramie High School followed by Laramie Middle School. Currently, I am the principal at Rock River School, a K-12 rural school northwest of Laramie.

I am interested in the middle level representative position for several reasons. As a member of the board, I have learned from my colleagues and would like to contribute to our team from a K-12 lens. It is also a great opportunity for professional development and gaining perspectives from multiple school perspectives. We all have unique characteristics at each district and collaborating across the state can be beneficial for all of us. Thank you for the opportunity to be considered a middle level representative on the WAEMSP board. Regardless if I’m elected, I look forward to collaborating with everyone as we continue to navigate our careers in such unique times.

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## **WAEMSP Middle Level Representative**

### **Johnny Horton**

I am honored to be considered for the Middle Level Representative position on the WAEMSP Executive Board. I spent the first 15 years of my career in Jefferson County Public Schools (Jeffco) on the westside of Denver. During my time there, I benefited greatly from the teachers and administrators associations. The connections and relationships I built through the associations in Jeffco had an incredibly positive impact on the students, families, and schools I served. I look forward to building similar relationships back in my home state!

The vast majority of my teaching career has been with middle level aged students. I taught sixth grade for the

first seven years of my career. In Jeffco I was an assistant principal for two years, and the lead principal for three years. While both of these experiences were in elementary schools, I focused my supervision primarily on 4th and 5th grade students as that is where most of my teaching experience was. I love working with students and families at this stage of their development!

During COVID we decided it was time to move back home to Wyoming. In June of 2022 we moved back to my home town of Lander and in August I started as the assistant principal at Lander Middle School. While it was my first position in a middle school, I felt right at home working with 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students. Working with middle level students and their families is incredibly exciting, and presents very unique circumstances and challenges. In the middle school environment, hormones are light years ahead of brain development. Most people recognize the challenge as demonstrated by the most common response I receive when I tell folks I'm the AP at the middle school, "God bless you." The staff that choose this environment day in and day out are full of courage and resilience, and I have deep admiration for them! Leading learning for middle level students, families, and staff is such a critical part of the K-12 experience. I would be honored to support this important work for the WAEMSP!

## Webinar: I Can't Hear You When You Shout

3/15/23 at 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm ET

This webinar will address the legal issues when parents insist on an active presence or role in their child's education to the point that it may cross certain boundaries. What does the law say about how you can handle such situations?

### **Key Takeaways:**

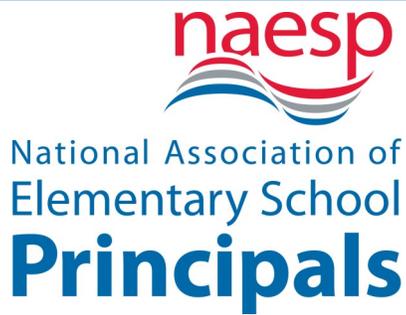
- Understand the legal issues presented when parents may cross boundaries with staff.
- Provide guidance to staff in such situations.
- Feel comfortable in establishing boundaries with parents.

Be able to walk away with practical steps that both balance a parent's right related to their education of their children and the principal's duties to ensure safety and learning of all students.

[Register Now](#)

*This event is free for NAESP/WAEMSP members..*





# 2023 Election

NAESP invites you to learn more about each of the candidates running for the office of NAESP Vice President below:

## Vice President Candidates:



[April D. Knight](#)  
Principal

Avondale Elementary School  
Columbus, Ohio

[Read Candidate Goal Statement](#)  
[Read Letter of Support](#)



[David A. Naylor Jr.](#)  
Principal

Model Laboratory School  
Richmond, Kentucky

[Read Candidate Goal Statement](#)  
[Read Letter of Support](#)



[Thomas Payton](#)  
Principal

Roanoke Avenue Elementary River-  
head, New York

[Read Candidate Goal Statement](#)  
[Read Letter of Support](#)

Eligible voters will vote for NAESP vice president from March 28 – April 7, 2023.

1. Make sure your email is current with NAESP by calling toll-free at (800) 386-2377 or emailing [membership@naesp.org](mailto:membership@naesp.org).
2. Add this email address - [noreply@directvote.net](mailto:noreply@directvote.net) - to your email contacts and safe senders list. Your election ballot will be sent to this address on March 28.



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# Making Strides in Educator Mental Health Support

February 16, 2023 | By [David Griffith](#)

A bipartisan bill aims to increase access to mental health resources for education professionals—something NAESP and its members have been advocating for amid pandemic recovery, growing staffing shortages, and increases in community-wide trauma.

On Feb. 2, Reps. Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR), Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), and Susan Wild (D-PA) introduced the [Supporting the Mental Health of Educators and Staff Act](#), which aims to promote evidence-based best practices for preventing suicide and improving mental health among educators and seek to establish education and awareness initiatives about mental health services among the educator workforce. The bill would also gather information about whether existing federal mental health programs are meeting the needs of education professionals.

To accomplish this, the bill specifically seeks to:

- Require coordination between federal agencies to develop best practices for preventing suicide and improving mental health and resiliency among education professionals and training education professionals in appropriate strategies to promote their mental health;
  - Destigmatize mental health care among the education workforce by designing and disseminating an education and awareness initiative encouraging education professionals to use mental health and substance use disorder services;
  - Provide direct support to educators and school staff members by establishing programs to promote mental health among the education professional workforce; and
- Promote accountability for federal resources for new programs.

NAESP wholeheartedly supports this bill. NAESP Executive Director L. Earl Franks, Ed.D., CAE, released a statement on behalf of the organization endorsing the introduction of the Mental Health of Educators and Staff Act: “As school leaders work tirelessly to address the mental well-being of their students, it is important to consider and to support the mental health of those who work in schools as well. Educators can both practice and model self-care strategies to promote their own mental health—and benefit their students as well. We commend Reps. Suzanne Bonamici, Brian Fitzpatrick, and Susan Wild for taking the lead on this urgent challenge and look forward to working with them and other congressional supporters to pass this legislation.”

## Who’s Supporting School Leaders?

NAESP and its members long have been advocating for increased access to mental health resources and supports. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated issues related to mental health. Teacher shortages, students and staff struggling with trauma, and difficult working conditions have led to educator burnout.

Last fall, NAESP members joined a policy briefing for National Principals Month, which focused on principal wellness. During the discussion, panelists pondered the question: [Who’s taking care of the principal?](#) The answer? Principals were heavily taking care of each other—and that’s not good enough. Not even close.

“It is principals taking care of principals,” said Sue Danielson, principal of Rosa Parks Elementary School in Virginia, during the panel discussion. “It’s not outside folks taking care of us. It’s us taking care of us because we know the importance of supporting one another.”

## The Effect on School Communities

A recent RAND Corp. report, “[Restoring Teacher and Principal Well-Being Is an Essential Step for Rebuilding Schools](#),” showed that 73 percent of teachers and 85 percent of principals reported experiencing job-related stress. By comparison, only 35 percent of working adults outside of the education field reported experiencing job-related stress. Almost half of principals reported dealing with burnout, with 28 percent reporting symptoms

Continued on next page

of depression. Those statistics are sobering, but they're exactly why principal wellbeing and support must be a priority.

When school leaders and their faculty work to overcome daily challenges, it takes a toll on students and staff. It's not sustainable—as we've seen with record numbers of educators leaving schools. And it has a direct impact on the entire school community when those at the helm of a learning community don't have the support they need to do their jobs; that includes access to high-quality mental health resources.

Self-care has become something of a buzzword. Is it important? Absolutely. It's necessary. But a reliance on self-care cannot be an excuse to disregard providing additional assistance. For school leaders who are beyond their limit amid a mental health crisis, self-care can only get them so far before external supports need to kick in to help.

A report from The Institute of Education Sciences showed that 67 percent of public schools it surveyed have taken various approaches to addressing their staff's mental health needs. The report notes that the three most common types of approaches they took were proactive outreach, additional professional development focused on mental health, and giving staff increased prep time.

That's a great start. We know that schools are doing their best to overcome challenge after challenge, but alone, they can only do so much.

The introduction of the bill is a huge step forward in getting principals the support they need and the national attention this issue deserves. When principals have a support system that is prioritizing them and their mental health, the effects are far reaching—to their faculty and staff, school families, and students—which is how we can continue to rebuild as a nation.

*David Griffith is associate executive director of Policy and Advocacy at NAESP.*

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## WAEMSP 2023 Spring Event Timeline

March 13 - 21: WAEMSP Election for Vice-President and Middle Level Representative

March 26: Last day to submit "Don't Quit" fitness center applications

April 3: Summer Reading Materials Released and placed on website

April 3: 2023 - 2024 Early Membership Drive opens

April 11 - May 5: WY-TOPP Summative Assessment Window

April 14 & 15: WAEMSP Executive Board Retreat



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*President Emeritus of University of Maryland, Baltimore County*

## PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS \*

*\*Pre-conference workshops take place on July 9 and have an additional fee.*

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**Todd Nesloney**  
*Director of Culture & Strategic Planning,  
Texas Elementary Principals  
and Supervisors Association*



**Dr. Tyler Cook**  
*Principal, Klein Elementary*



### What Administrators Can Do to Promote Teacher Retention

**Adam Saenz, Ph.D.**  
*C.E.O., Applied EQ Group*



### A Framework for Equity Leadership Design

**Andrea Dixon-Seahorn, Ed.D.**  
*Chief Equity Officer,  
Liberty Public Schools*



### Principal in Balance: Leading at Work and Having a Life

**Jessica Cabeen**  
*Principal, Austin Online Academy,  
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