



PENNSYLVANIA PRINCIPALS ASSOCIATION

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Karen L. Krisch Named Pennsylvania's 2023 National Distinguished Principal

(ENOLA, PA) — **Karen L. Krisch**, Principal of Marion-Walker Elementary School in the Bellefonte Area School District, has been named **Pennsylvania's 2023 National Distinguished Principal (NDP) by the Pennsylvania Principals Association**. As a state winner in the National Association of Elementary School Principals' (NAESP) National Distinguished Principal (NDP) Program, Mrs. Krisch will be honored by NAESP and the PA Principals Association at special award ceremonies later this year.

Dr. Jonathan G. Ross, NDP Selection Committee Chair and Immediate Past President of the PA Principals Association, said, "The NDP Committee is pleased to select Karen Krisch from the Bellefonte Area School District as its nominee for the 2023 PA National Distinguished Principal Award. During her tenure as principal of Marion-Walker Elementary School, Mrs. Krisch has revamped the MTSS [Multi-Tiered System of Supports] process and improved the district's emergency operations process with a focus on enhancing student safety. She will make an outstanding representative for our association at the state and national levels."

An educator for 29 years, Mrs. Krisch served in her current role as principal at Marion-Walker Elementary School (K-5) since 2017. Previously, she was principal at Bellefonte Area Elementary School (2013-2017); principal (2005-2013) and vice principal (2002-2005) at Bellefonte Area Middle School; and an assistant administrator for the Bald Eagle Area School District (2000-2002). She also taught vocational education (Career Prep class) at the secondary level for six years, specifically to high-poverty students.

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“We congratulate Karen Krisch, an exceptional leader and principal, for being named Pennsylvania’s 2023 National Distinguished Principal. Karen has demonstrated a passion for social and emotional learning in her continued efforts to make it part of their school and district culture. In addition, her outstanding leadership skills and devotion to the Marion-Walker Elementary students, staff and community are qualities that make her a distinguished principal and a role model for principals and school leaders across the commonwealth,” said Dr. Eric Eshbach, Executive Director, PA Principals Association.

Under Mrs. Krisch’s leadership, many significant initiatives and programs have been implemented at her school and in the district. Serving as a mentor to new principals in the district is at the top of that list. She was also instrumental in helping to bring reform to the district’s safety plan and protocols over the years. This included students and staff being accounted for during all safety drills, providing armed intruder training to students and staff, serving on the emergency operations team, and most recently, revamping the reunification process. She is also passionate about social and emotional learning (SEL) and has had extensive training in school-based mindfulness as well as serving as a presenter on the topic. She has also worked with researchers from Pennsylvania State University (Penn State) to determine the effectiveness of the district’s SEL programs. “In my school, mindfulness is part of this process to encourage self-care for teachers as well as students,” she shared.

“Karen Krisch is a consummate professional and a truly remarkable principal and leader in our district. She goes above and beyond for the students, staff and families in the Bellefonte Area School District and in her elementary school. She is a most deserving exemplary principal,” wrote Tammie Burnaford, Superintendent of Bellefonte Area School District.

In addition to being a member of the Pennsylvania Principals Association and the National Association of Elementary School Principals, Mrs. Krisch is a member of the Pennsylvania Association for School Administrators, the Pennsylvania Association for Student Assistance Professionals (PASAP) and Leadership Centre County (Class of 2019). She has presented at the PASAP Conference (2010 – present) and at the Central Intermediate Unit 10 Annual PARA Conference 2022, and co-authored an article published in *Phi Delta Kappan* on leadership for mindful practices.

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“I am so honored to be selected as the NDP for Pennsylvania. I have been able to become a good principal because I have been surrounded by other great principal colleagues who have mentored me along the way. My school teams have always contributed so much to my growth as a principal over the years. I would not be here without all of them,” said Mrs. Krisch.

Mrs. Krisch earned a Bachelor of Science in communications disorders from Penn State University, a Bachelor of Science in elementary education from Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania and a Master of Science in international education from Northcentral University.

Mrs. Krisch encourages the staff and teachers at her school to expand opportunities for students resulting in excellent representation at the annual reading competition, participation in Bellefonte Reads and raising nearly \$10,000 per year for the Four Diamonds Fund through the school's mini-Thon. She also participates in the Polar Plunge each year to raise funds for the YMCA Anti-Hunger Program which supplies weekend food backpacks to local schools, and she is a PA Master Naturalist volunteering frequently for conservation and state park programs. In her spare time, she has a “craft room,” and spends much time Cricut crafting. “I also ride my bike to school even though the teachers tell me I look like Ms. Gulch from the Wizard of Oz,” she joked.



Karen L. Krisch

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About the PA Principals Association: The PA Principals Association membership of approximately 3,500 is composed of elementary, middle level and secondary school principals, assistant principals and other educational leaders and is affiliated with the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP). www.papincipals.org

The Mission of the Pennsylvania Principals Association: *To ensure a quality education for every child by comprehensively supporting the educational leaders of our schools.*

The Vision of the Pennsylvania Principals Association: *To be the best service organization of its kind in the United States.*

For more information about the **Bellefonte Area School District**, visit: <https://www.basd.net/>