



Pendergast Principal Jill Helland to Receive Prestigious Exemplary Principal Award

Only nine principals in Maricopa County to receive this honor

September 29, 2020 – Phoenix, Arizona – Jill Helland, principal of [Garden Lakes School](#), in Avondale, part of [Pendergast](#) School District, was awarded the prestigious Exemplary Principal Award from [Steve Watson](#), Maricopa County School Superintendent on September 29, 2020 at a virtual Community Event in the Pendergast District.

This award is presented to individuals who exemplify practices and leadership that contribute to high expectations and exceptional student learning. They must undergo a rigorous five-step evaluation that involves a superintendent nomination, teacher/staff survey, video interview, site visit and data review. Recipients are then given their award during a surprise presentation. The criteria Jill was selected on was based on her ability to:

- Actively engage staff, parents and community members in developing an effective school culture.
- Utilizing data to guide instruction and decisions regarding staff development.
- Having a history of high teacher retention.
- Demonstrating the ability to successfully develop and inspire others.

Pendergast Superintendent Dr. Lily Matos DeBlieux and Chief Academic Officer Dr. Jennifer Cruz nominated Jill for this award and shared these thoughts, “Jill is the consummate professional who leads with her heart and soul. The students, staff, families and community love being part of this A rated school due to Jill’s leadership of high expectations and personal academic achievement, team spirit and innovation. We are so grateful to have Jill at the helm of Garden Lakes and are so proud of her accomplishments. We believe in her!”

According to Maricopa County School Superintendent Steve Watson, “It is an honor to recognize Jill Helland as an Exemplary Principal. She is a transformational leader with an unwavering commitment to students and their academic, social, and emotional growth. She has created a caring and supportive community that both attracts and retains teachers and staff. Jill’s positive approach is an example of leadership at its finest.”