

New West Elementary School Principal Named

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ALTON – On Thursday, the Alton School District Board of Education selected TaRael Kee as the new principal of West Elementary School. Kee will begin his new position on July 1. The current West Elementary Principal, Dr. Brian Saenz, is moving across town to lead as the new Alton Middle School Principal.

Kee, currently an assistant principal and Director of Guidance at Alton High School, holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Missouri and master's and specialist degrees from Lindenwood University. He is also currently pursuing his doctoral degree at Lindenwood.

He began his career in 2008 as a Spanish teacher in Hazelwood, Missouri before becoming a high school guidance counselor and department chair at Collinsville High School. He was then promoted to assistant principal at Collinsville High School before joining Alton High School in 2023. Kee has also been a head track coach and served as president of the Illinois School Counselor Association.

Kee has received numerous awards and accolades across his tenure including being named the Illinois School Counselor of the Year and the Collinsville School District's Educator of the Year. As a professional development provider, Kee has presented both locally and nationally on topics including Culturally Sustaining School Counseling Programs, diversity and equity initiatives and many others.

Alton Superintendent Dr. Kristie Baumgartner said that Kee brings many assets in transitioning to the new role at West Elementary next year. "TaRael brings a leadership energy that is contagious and I'm looking forward to seeing his positive impact on our students at West." Baumgartner also complimented Saenz and his long tenure as West Principal. "We are so thankful to Brian and the outstanding school culture he has built for students with his team at West. We are fortunate to have his continued leadership at Alton Middle School next year," she added.

Kee said he is looking forward to working with West students, staff and families. "I am incredibly excited to join West Elementary and inspire our students to dream big. I am also looking forward to collaborating with the amazing team of teachers and staff already in place."