

MEDIA RELEASE



Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association

1970 Oakcrest Avenue, Suite 204

Roseville, MN 55113

Contact:

Tami Staloch-Schultz, Minnesota School of Excellence Program Chair

Westview Elementary School Principal

Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan Public Schools

952.431.8380

Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association

952.297.8670

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kasson-Mantorville Elementary Validated as 2022-2023 Minnesota School of Excellence

(Roseville, MN – September 19, 2022) – Kasson-Mantorville Elementary has been validated as a Minnesota School of Excellence (SOE) by the Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA). This prestigious honor was awarded to Kasson-Mantorville Elementary for its commitment to modern teaching and learning.

“Through the Minnesota School of Excellence (SOE) program, grounded in national research on high-performing schools, MESPA has created the premier opportunity in the state for validating excellence and a commitment to continual growth in a school community,” said Jon Millerhagen, MESPA executive director. “This school improvement program examines the entire school community through six national standards, ensuring there is a holistic approach to creating a plan for future achievement and celebrating the unique accomplishments of each School of Excellence.”

Tami Staloch-Schultz, chair of the Minnesota School of Excellence Committee, said, “It takes commitment and teamwork to honestly and thoroughly assess areas of strength and at the same time identify a plan for continual growth. The SOE process asks the entire school community – parents, students, staff, administration, and more – to reflect on and celebrate the collaborative work being done in school communities. Schools that receive validation have had important data-driven conversations about what a high-quality, modern learning experience should be for all students and have plans to make that learning experience a reality for many years to come. Honoring the important work of dedicated staff, eager students, and supportive communities is an essential component of becoming a School of Excellence.”

Kasson-Mantorville Elementary is part of the Kasson-Mantorville School District and serves over 600 students in grades K-4. Kasson-Mantorville Elementary's mission is to create a safe and welcoming environment where excellence is expected and improvement is continuous.

"We chose to participate in the SOE process because we are committed to excellence in all that we do!" said Jessica Marquardt, Literacy Specialist. "The process allowed us to take inventory of the incredible things happening in our building, reflect upon the insights provided by our school community, and take aligned steps toward continued improvement. It was a great opportunity to celebrate our students, staff, and school community!"

Words of action are important to Kasson-Mantorville Elementary as Principal Ariana Wright explains, "All Means All, We are Better Together, Kids Come First." Their collective commitment to excellence brings life to these words and unifies the overall purpose to support students fully. This includes academically, socially, and emotionally. During the SOE process, Kasson-Mantorville Elementary has worked to bring in a highly engaging literacy and math curriculum to ensure that teachers have the resources they need to both engage learners, and move student learning forward. With this new curriculum adoption, both reading and math achievement has increased. Wright proudly shares, "50% of all third grade students scored an exceeds on the MCA in 2021. We anticipate similar results in 2022. Students need a strong academic foundation to ensure they are prepared for college and career in their future. Along with academic excellence, we are committed to developing our students as individuals, and cultivating quality character in our future leaders."

In the past several years, Kasson-Mantorville Elementary worked on developing a strengths-based culture in their school. Wright explains, "As staff have learned more about the unique talents and strengths they bring, students have benefited from highly effective teams and collaboration. Staff are developing their skills in seeking the strengths of students as well. Our staff have become talent scouts, helping to share with students the potential and possibilities for their future."

"As Kasson-Mantorville Elementary continues to refine their practices, the School of Excellence process identified a need for additional intervention resources to guide precise instruction based on specific academic needs" Wright continues. "Over the summer, we took advantage of the ESSER funding opportunities at the state to select curriculum for summer and after school programming, to help our at-risk students make great gains. We look forward to evaluating the results of this resource implementation throughout the year. Our school community looks forward to planning a celebration to

recognize our School of Excellence award. Our students, staff, families and community members work together in partnership to make our school a premier place to learn and teach. This award will certainly be shared with the entire Kasson-Mantorville community as we continue our commitment to excellence and dedication to kids.”

Wright goes on to say, “As principal and lead learner at Kasson-Mantorville Elementary School, I am incredibly proud of the tireless efforts of staff, supportive partnership of parents, resources provided by the community, and dedication of our students to achieve at their personal best each day.

Kasson-Mantorville Elementary provides a safe and welcoming environment for all where excellence is expected and improvement is continuous.”

Four schools achieved recognition as 2022-2023 Minnesota Schools of Excellence:

- *Kasson-Mantorville Elementary*, Kasson-Mantorville Schools, Principal Ariana Wright
- *Oak Hills Elementary*, Lakeville Area Schools, Principal Dr. Wade Labatte
- *Hawthorne Elementary*, Albert Lea Area Schools, Principal, John Mahal
- *Sebeka Public School*, Sebeka Public Schools, Principal, Amie Westberg

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Minnesota School of Excellence Program Mission and History

The Minnesota School of Excellence Program promotes excellence through a rigorous evaluation process that showcases dynamic schools of the 21st century. Established by the Minnesota Elementary School Principals’ Association (MESPA), the program is recognized by the Minnesota Department of Education, as well as the National Association of Elementary School Principals, and was nominated for the Brock International Prize in Education—which “recognizes particular innovations and achievements in the field of education.”

The Minnesota School of Excellence Program was established in 1986, combining the findings of current research on effective schooling with the practical on-site experience of working principals and education staff. It offers a comprehensive school improvement process that results in student learning growth. This school improvement process focuses on six national standards and involves a systematic self-study, development of a school improvement plan, and implementation of the plan based on demonstrated results. Since the program’s inception, 222 schools have earned Minnesota School of Excellence validation. The validation remains effective for seven years, at which point schools may choose to reapply for validation.

MESPA Mission and History

MESPA is the professional association of Minnesota’s elementary and middle level principals. MESPA has represented Minnesota’s principals since 1950 and is affiliated with the National Association of Elementary School Principals and its 20,000 members nationwide.

The Minnesota Elementary School Principals’ Association strives to be the premier leadership resource for elementary and middle-level principals and a strong leading voice for public education. MESPA is committed to ensuring a high quality of education for all children through strengthening and enhancing the principal’s role as educational leader in our schools.