

## MEDIA RELEASE



**Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association**  
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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Five Schools Validated as 2018-2019 Minnesota Schools of Excellence:**

*A vanguard in Minnesota education*

*(St. Paul, MN – August 21, 2018)* – Five Elementary Schools have been validated as Minnesota Schools of Excellence by the Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA). This prestigious honor was awarded to the schools for their commitment to 21st century teaching and learning.

“Through the Minnesota School of Excellence program, grounded in national research on high-performing schools, MESPA has created the premier opportunity in the state for validating greatness 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.”

Sam Richardson, chair of the School of Excellence Committee, said, “It takes hard work from a committed team to thoroughly assess areas of strength and at the same time plan for continual growth. The SOE process provides an opportunity for the entire school community to reflect on the collaborative work being done and to celebrate these accomplishments. Schools that receive validation have had important data-driven conversations about what a high-quality 21st century learning experience should be for all students and have plans to make that learning experience a reality. Honoring the important work of dedicated staff, eager students, and supportive communities is an essential component of becoming a School of Excellence.”

Five schools achieved recognition as 2018-2019 Minnesota Schools of Excellence:

- *Eastview Elementary*, Lakeville Area Public Schools, Principal Taber Akin
- *Floodwood School*, Floodwood School District, Principal Dr. Rae Villebrun
- *Hawley Elementary*, Hawley Public Schools, Principal Chris Ellingson
- *New York Mills Elementary*, New York Mills Public Schools, Principal Judith Brockway
- *Vandyke Elementary*, Greenway Public Schools, Principal Susan Hoefl

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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, 202 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.