

MEDIA RELEASE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ramsey Elementary School Validated as 2020-2021 Minnesota Schools of Excellence

(Roseville, MN – September 2, 2020) – Ramsey Elementary School has been validated as a Minnesota School of Excellence (SOE) by the Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA). This prestigious honor was awarded to Ramsey 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.”

Ramsey Elementary is part of the Anoka-Hennepin School District and serves 721 students in grades K-5. Ramsey Elementary's goal is for all students to reach their full potential as learners by creating a safe and motivating learning environment, teaching from a rigorous curriculum, celebrating student success, and involving families in all aspects of their child's education and in their school community.

"As teachers we often do not recognize all of the great things we are doing," said Amy Purinton, a Kindergarten teacher at Ramsey. "That is what was great about the SOE process, which allowed us to see our strengths, where we are going, and what we can improve upon." Alicia Ostrander, a Special Education teacher at Ramsey, said that the SOE process gave more staff members an opportunity to engage in discussion about the future of the school. "As we started the SOE process and gathered the data, all of the stakeholders were able to share their voice and opinion. This process allowed us to spend more time looking at what areas we could expand on by allowing even more staff inclusion and ownership across the staff as we looked for ways to grow."

Ramsey Elementary's SOE committee considered their high expectations for learning and performance as one of their key strengths. Dr. Amy Reed, principal of Ramsey Elementary wrote, "Ramsey staff collaborates around multiple sources of student learning data. Through this collaboration, staff are able to differentiate teaching to align standards with student developmental needs." The SOE process highlighted the importance of data and evaluation at Ramsey Elementary to help their students succeed. All staff at Ramsey participate in meetings to review student learning evidence, and develop support plans for students who require help with academics or behavior.

Reed noted that they have some room to grow, and identified equity as a specific area for improvement. "In order to grow in this area," Reed wrote, "we recognize the need to focus on our school's strategic action plan to specifically involve our parents and community even more." In the 2020-21 school year, Ramsey plans to develop a Student Equity Team so their students can engage in the conversation. Reed and the SOE committee hopes to learn how they can better serve their students of color through this new team.

Reed summarized their experience with SOE as an opportunity to learn and grow. "The School of Excellence process allowed us to deepen our understanding of best practices as it relates to continuous school improvement by involving all stakeholders in the process of reflecting on our strengths and addressing our areas of growth. These critical conversations deepened our collective commitments centered on being a champion for kids, increasing our collaborative practices, and most importantly,

fostering a culture of excellence that allows every student to have the best experience possible at our school.”

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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, 216 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.