

## MEDIA RELEASE



### **Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association**

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Sebeka Public School Validated as 2022-2023 Minnesota School of Excellence**

*(Roseville, MN – September 19, 2022)* – Sebeka Public 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 Sebeka Public School 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.”

Sebeka Public School is part of the Sebeka ISD 820 School District and serves over 400 students in grades PreK-12. Sebeka Public School's mission is to educate students to become responsible citizens and lifelong learners.

Sebeka Public School Principal Amie Westberg discusses why they chose to complete the School of Excellence process. "We chose to do the School of Excellence process to see what we are doing well and find out what areas we need to improve on. We were excited to do this with the help of our support staff, school board and community members. We appreciated getting their insight into our school."

Through this process, they were able to come together as a whole teaching staff and take a closer look at what they are doing at Sebeka. Westberg explains, "Every single teacher's voice was heard and used during this process. We were able to celebrate the good as well as look at where our holes are. This allows us to now take a closer look at what we can do to fill in the holes. During the SOE process, we were like one big family that is celebrating what we do that is great. At the same time, looking at our future of how we can change to make ourselves even greater."

Westberg goes on to say, "As a PreK-12 building, the SOE process really helped us to open our eyes to everything we offer. At the same time, we were able to see where we needed to go. We constantly reexamine what we are offering our students and determine if we need to adjust what we offer. Our teachers want what is best for their students and are willing to adjust and learn new techniques that they can add to their toolboxes."

Westberg is looking to the future and where Sebeka would like to focus. "We have a wonderful community and we want them to feel more welcomed and involved with our school. For our Open House, we invite our community for a free meal, cotton candy, and the chance to walk around our school. We would like to have more community nights at our school where we offer a meal and activity for everyone. We plan on getting our students out into the community through job shadowing, internships, helping out at the local food shelf, visiting local nursing homes and assisted living facilities, and continuing our Day of Caring.

The Sebeka Leadership Team felt the research that was conducted for the SOE process paved the way for the future of their school. They wanted to represent themselves as a team in this process as everyone came together as a whole and will continue to work together as they focus on improvements and community involvement.

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.