

## MEDIA RELEASE



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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Nine Elementary School Validated as 2008-2009 Minnesota Schools of Excellence**

*Minnesota Schools of Excellence clearly connect the education process to student learning*

(St. Paul, MN -- September 5, 2008) Nine Minnesota elementary schools received the distinction of being validated as a 2008-2009 Minnesota Schools of Excellence. The Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA) developed this research-based program aligned with national standards in: leadership, vision, student learning, the culture of adult learning, data and decision-making, and community engagement. MESPA endorses schools whose principal, staff, students, and community -- working as a team -- demonstrate the desire to strengthen education by successfully undertaking the Minnesota School of Excellence program. This school improvement process, recognized by the Minnesota Department of Education and National Association of Elementary School Principals, involves a systematic self-study, development of a school improvement plan, and implementation of the plan based on demonstrated results.

“In this time of high stakes testing, the quality of our school communities can far too easily be misrepresented by the single-purposed federal testing requirement,” said P. Fred Storti, MESPA executive director. “High stakes tests, such as the MCA II tests used to evaluate Minnesota schools for Adequate Yearly Progress as required by the federal No Child Left Behind Act, offer a snapshot in time with no context. One high stakes test should not determine a school’s public stature and cannot adequately assess its educational effectiveness. Elementary and middle level schools provide the foundation for children’s lifelong learning, and the Minnesota School of Excellence program clearly connects the education process to student learning,” Storti continued.

“The Minnesota School of Excellence program takes schools on a meaningful analytical endeavor, engaging staff and community in purposeful conversations about their school,” said Matt Dorschner, Minnesota School of Excellence program chair. “It is the premier way to identify current strengths and areas needing improvement for a school. The reward of the analysis is two-fold. First, it takes measure of

where a school is and reveals where it needs to go. Second, it creates a wonderful opportunity for communities to celebrate their school – and to connect to their role in the school’s accomplishments.”

The nine elementary schools that achieved recognition as 2008-2009 Minnesota Schools of Excellence are: *Delano Elementary School*, Delano (ISD #879) -- Darren Schuler, principal; *L'Etoile du Nord French Immersion School*, St. Paul (ISD #625) – Dr. Fatima Lawson, principal; *Hubert Olson Elementary School*, Bloomington (ISD #271) – Paul Meyer, principal; *Indian Mounds Elementary School*, Bloomington (ISD #721) – Joan Maland, principal; *Lake Park Audubon Elementary School*, Audubon (Lake Park ISD #2889) – Sam Skaaland, principal; *Pinewood Elementary School*, Mounds View (ISD #621) – Bill Book, principal ; *Sheridan Hills Elementary School*, Richfield (ISD #280) – Joey Page, principal; *Valley View Elementary School*, Bloomington (ISD #271) – Paul Helberg, principal; *Washburn Elementary School*, Bloomington (ISD #271) – Jon Millerhagen, principal.

For details about the Minnesota School of Excellence Program, and about each school and their school improvement process, visit the MESPA Web site at [www.mespa.net/Minnesota Schools of Excellence.html](http://www.mespa.net/Minnesota_Schools_of_Excellence.html).

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The Minnesota School of Excellence program was established in 1986. The program offers a powerful comprehensive school improvement process that results in student learning growth. The program combines the findings of current research on effective schooling with the practical on-site experience of working principals and education staff. Since the program’s inception in 1986, 135 schools have earned Minnesota School of Excellence validation.

MESPA is the professional association of Minnesota’s elementary and middle level principals. With the vision to “be the premiere resource for preparing today’s principals for tomorrow and a strong leading voice for public education” and a statewide membership over 950 principals, MESPA has represented Minnesota’s principals since 1950. MESPA is affiliated with the National Association of Elementary School Principals and its 29,500 members nationwide.

#### **MESPA Mission Statement**

The Minnesota Elementary School Principals’ Association is dedicated to promoting and improving education for children and youth, strengthening the role as educational leader for elementary and middle level principals, and collaborating with partners in education to assist in achieving these goals.