

## MEDIA RELEASE



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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



***Bill Book, principal  
Pinewood Elementary School***

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

(St. Paul, MN, September, 2008) -- *Pinewood Elementary School* in Mounds View, a part of Mounds View Public Schools, is validated as a 2008-2009 Minnesota School 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.”

Bill Book is the principal of Pinewood Elementary School, a K-5 institution and one of six elementary schools in the Mounds View Public Schools. Its attendance area includes families from Mounds View, Shoreview, Blaine and New Brighton. Pinewood Elementary’s vision is to “hold high expectations” while “believing that all learners will achieve academic success and demonstrate respect and responsibility.” The staff work on the principle that “lifelong growth will be fostered through shared teamwork among students, families, staff and community.” Pinewood Elementary is a school with high expectations for student learning and there is a continuous emphasis on improvement and lifelong learning, while students are challenged to do their best within a respectful, safe and caring atmosphere. Staff use teaching approaches that facilitate high levels of student growth. The motto that “Everyone Believes and Achieves” at Pinewood conveys a shared belief that everyone can be successful when there is a commitment to hard work, perseverance and individual improvement.

As principal, Book believes: “Each person on our staff plays a key role in providing a challenging, respectful, and caring atmosphere for student learning. Dedicated staff, supportive parents and community members, and great students are ingredients for success. We work and learn together to help students do their best at Pinewood!

Teachers at Pinewood Elementary meet frequently to discuss student progress and ways to improve student performance. Schedules and resources for high performance, grade level, and support staff services are coordinated to customize reading and math instruction and reduce instructional group size for students. A comprehensive online database of student achievement data is available to ensure that students are working to their fullest potential. Access to this continuous data helps teachers tailor their instruction to match student needs, and adjust instruction, as needed. Book summarizes Pinewood’s approach: “At Pinewood, the school-wide effort to improve student achievement is outstanding! Staff collaborate to assess the ongoing progress of all students and identify key instructional approaches that will lead to higher levels of achievement. Building processes are led by a Building Instructional Leadership Team (BILT) and a Building Operations Leadership Team (BOLT).”

Because the faculty consider it very important to continuously learn about new teaching approaches that will increase student achievement, learning opportunities take place via whole school training, small groups that study specific topics together, and collegial study outside of the school day. At the site level, the BILT reviews student performance continuously and plans staff development opportunities that will support school-wide goals in reading or math. Specific areas of instructional focus are identified and a staff development plan is created to facilitate training throughout the year.

The BOLT focuses on non-instructional issues, such as: selection of Parent-Teacher Conference schedules, building or space problems. BOLT members work in collaboration with the principal to resolve operational issues. Norms of collaboration guide team efforts during decision-making and discussion. There is an ongoing loop of communication between BOLT representatives and the entire Pinewood faculty. Working in cooperation with parent representatives, BOLT also studies and learns about budget allocation realities each year and provides input to the principal via the development of budget options.

In addition to *Pinewood Elementary School*, eight other elementary schools achieved recognition as 2008-2009 Minnesota Schools of Excellence: *Delano Elementary School*, Delano (ISD #879); *L'Etoile du Nord French Immersion School*, St. Paul (ISD #625); *Hubert Olson Elementary School*, Bloomington (ISD #271); *Indian Mounds Elementary School*, Bloomington (ISD #721); *Lake Park Audubon Elementary School*, Audubon (Lake Park ISD #2889); *Sheridan Hills Elementary School*, Richfield (ISD #280); *Valley View Elementary School*, Bloomington (ISD #271); *Washburn Elementary School*, Bloomington (ISD #271).

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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.

