

MEDIA RELEASE



Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association

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Six elementary and middle level schools achieved recognition as 2015-2016 Minnesota Schools of Excellence:

- *Carlos Elementary School*, Alexandria Public Schools, Principal Lisa Pikop
- *Cedar Park Elementary*, Rosemount–Apple Valley–Eagan Public Schools, Principal John Garcia
- *Cold Spring Elementary School*, Rocori Public Schools, Principal Eric Skanson
- *Groveland Elementary School*, Minnetonka Public Schools, Principal David Parker
- *Lake Park Audubon Elementary*, Lake Park Audubon Public Schools, Principal Sam Skaaland
- *Miltona Science Magnet School*, Alexandria Public Schools, Principal Lisa Pikop

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.”

MESPA endorses schools whose principal, staff, students, and community -- working as a team -- demonstrate the desire to strengthen education by successfully undertaking the research-based Minnesota School of Excellence school improvement process. This includes a systematic school-wide self-study, development of a school improvement plan, and implementation of that plan. The entire Minnesota School of Excellence Program is aligned with six national standards: Learning Centered, Diverse Communities, 21st Century Learners, Quality Instruction, Knowledge and Data, and Community Engagement.

Sam Richardson, chair of the School of Excellence Committee, said of the School of Excellence process, “It takes hard work and commitment to thoroughly assess areas of strength and at the same time plan for continual improvement. 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 the important data-driven conversations about what a high quality 21st century learning experience should be for all students. Honoring the important work of dedicated staff, eager students and supportive communities is an essential component of becoming a School of Excellence.”

“Through the MN 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, as opposed to making decisions based solely on students’ assessment data.”

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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.

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, 177 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

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.

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 20,000 members nationwide.