

MEDIA RELEASE



Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association

1667 North Snelling Avenue, Suite C101
St. Paul, MN 55108

Contact:

Sam Richardson, Minnesota School of Excellence Program Chair
Glendale Elementary School Principal
Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools
952-226-0200
Kelsey Gantzer, MESPA Communications Manager
651-999-7313

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Randolph Elementary School Validated as a 2016–2017 Minnesota School of Excellence

(St. Paul, MN – August 29, 2016) – Randolph Elementary School has been validated as a Minnesota Schools of Excellence by the Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA). This prestigious honor was awarded to Randolph Elementary School for its commitment to 21st century teaching and learning.

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.

“Through the Minnesota 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 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.”

Sam Richardson, chair of the School of Excellence Committee, said, “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 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.”

Randolph Elementary School is located in the Randolph Public School District and serves 383 kindergarten through sixth grade students. Randolph School District’s mission is “to work in partnership with the family and the community to provide a caring, disciplined, and challenging environment that enables students to become life-long learners who value themselves, contribute to their community, and succeed in a changing world.” Randolph also recently adopted a set of core beliefs called TRUE BLUE: Together Randolph Unites Everyone—Be Bold, Loyal, Unique, Excellent.

“Though the School of Excellence application process was a lot of work and at times demanding, it made us examine the positives as well as the challenges that our school faces,” said Principal Matt Rutledge. “We were able to take an in-depth look at what makes us Randolph Elementary School. This honor acknowledges our accomplishments as a small rural school district and allows our teachers and staff to continue to reflect and grow as a school.”

Randolph is aware that teaching and learning are constantly evolving. Teachers begin each school year with a series of professional development opportunities, have workshop days throughout the year, and conclude the year with three additional days of professional development. In addition to professional development opportunities in the school, teachers are encouraged to attend classes out of their buildings and to observe their colleagues. This gives teachers the opportunity to collaborate with other teachers at surrounding area schools, learn new teaching methods and classroom management strategies, and share what they have learned with their peers.

Teachers are accountable for their instructional practices through the implementation of an Individual Growth and Development Plan (IGDP). The purpose of the IGDP is to develop, improve, and support qualified teachers through three components: teacher practice, student engagement, and student learning and achievement. Teachers set measurable goals for these components, implement these goals, and then evaluate. In addition to IGDP, teachers review weekly lesson plans and meet monthly with administration to discuss and adjust instructional practices and learning plans.

Randolph Elementary strives for all members of the school community to embody learner-centered leadership through reflection, inquiry, collaboration, and advocacy. It is through these characteristics that teachers are able to provide a high-quality education where students are continuously growing academically, socially, and emotionally. Learner-centered leadership also enables teachers to self-reflect and collaborate with peers in order to grow professionally. In order for students to achieve, teachers must continuously develop professionally as well.

At Randolph, teachers play an integral role in decisions concerning curriculum, technology, and other school affairs. Principal Rutledge identifies the strengths of all members of the school community and places them in leadership positions that best fit those strengths. Capitalizing on the strengths of each member creates a strong sense of team and creates more accountability. In addition to the many teacher-led committees at Randolph, there are several groups that collaborate with administration and support staff. One example is the Student Assistant Team (SAT) which meets biweekly in an attempt to meet the wide range of students' needs. New staff members are also paired with a mentor that acts as a resource, guide, and advocate to offer support and welcome the new member to the community.

“The main discovery and message that we received from the [SOE] self-study was the fact that the staff is very supportive and committed to Randolph Schools,” Rutledge said. “Even though there were areas in which we need to improve, the overall consensus is that Randolph does a great job and does not ignore areas that need attention.”

All stakeholders at Randolph have full access to data that measures the quality of student performance and management of operations. Relevant assessment data is shared with parents at semiannual conferences and a letter is sent home after Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCAs) testing to explain the scores. Parents can consistently access data through SchoolView, a student data program that allows parents to view specific test scores and current grades. Randolph Elementary School administration and community leaders engage in ongoing dialogue to advocate for policies that support the high performance of students and adults. Randolph School District is unique in the fact that the

elementary, high school, and superintendent office share one building, enabling the administration to collaborate effectively with each other as well as the teachers and staff.

The school strives to create a relationship with families in order to sustain an equal partnership while supporting student learning and growth. Families are also welcomed into the school for an open house event at the beginning of the year, for fall and spring parent-teacher conferences, and for various community events, such as Fill the Gym Night where students and families are invited to the school to support the high school sport teams. Randolph also supports and implements an open-door policy throughout the year to help families participate in their child's learning. Randolph Elementary encourages open dialogue between all members of the school community.

“Randolph Schools prides itself in its community relations, which was emphasized in the SOE application,” Rutledge said. “The application process highlighted the impact the school has on the community as well as the positive influence the community has on the school. Randolph Elementary School makes a point to celebrate its accomplishments with the community because together with the staff we make our school successful. Because of community support we are able to continue to grow and have experiences beyond the classroom.”

Randolph School exposes students to a wide variety of opportunities to expand and celebrate other backgrounds and ideologies. These opportunities include bringing a plethora of guests into the school for all-school assemblies and classroom instruction. As part of their TRUE BLUE philosophy, Randolph Elementary works to unite everyone by bringing students, faculty, and staff together to help the local community with several outreach activities.

As a Title One school, Randolph Elementary is able to provide the necessary resources to help students who are struggling in math and/or reading, as well as support students who are excelling by meeting their individual needs. Randolph Elementary strives to create an environment where students are healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. By regularly incorporating short movement activities into the instructional day, students are not only able to get their “wiggles” out, but are energized and able to focus on the next learning activity.

Administration, teachers, and staff are aware that a student's emotional needs must be met before academic needs can be addressed. For those students who are struggling emotionally or personally, the school offers a social worker and psychologist as well as many other supportive individuals. Beyond the school day, Randolph offers a variety of experiences to enhance the social, emotional, and physical needs

of students, such as athletics, choir, glee club, Lego league, math masters, scouts, and STEM club. By continually examining the student population, Randolph creates activities that meet the diverse interests of their students. Through in-school and out-of-school experiences, Randolph is able to support a balanced, whole child and ultimately a life-long learner.

“Thank you to the Minnesota Elementary Principal Association for this honor,” Rutledge said. “This was a great opportunity to form a diverse group and have meaningful discussions about educational topics concerning our district. We are very proud of our school and all that we have accomplished. Receiving this honor only solidifies the commitment our staff and community have for their school. I would like to thank the Randolph SOE committee for all their time and energy in completing the application process.”

Six schools achieved recognition as 2016-2017 Minnesota Schools of Excellence:

- *Cuyuna Range Elementary School*, Crosby-Ironton Public Schools, Principal Kurt Becker
- *Eagle Creek Elementary*, Shakopee Public Schools, Principal Josie Koivisto
- *Hiawatha Community School*, Minneapolis Public Schools, Principal Deb Regnier
- *Howe Community School*, Minneapolis Public Schools, Principal Kevin Oldenburg
- *Kenny Community School*, Minneapolis Public Schools, Principal William Gibbs
- *Randolph Elementary School*, Randolph Public Schools, Principal Matt Rutledge

--- end ---

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, 189 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.