

## MEDIA RELEASE



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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Armatage Montessori School Validated as a 2017–2018 Minnesota School of Excellence**

*(St. Paul, MN – August 28, 2017)* – Armatage Montessori School has been validated as a Minnesota School of Excellence by the Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA). This prestigious honor was awarded to Armatage for its commitment to 21st century teaching and learning.

“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 and have plans to make that learning experience a reality. Honoring the important work of dedicated staff, eager students, and supportive communities is an essential component of becoming a School of Excellence.”

Armatage Montessori is located in the Minneapolis Public School District and serves 654 students in K-5, PreK, Montessori, and Early Childhood Special Education. Armatage’s mission is to foster lifelong learners that work toward meeting their own potential in a caring and respectful school community.

“[The School of Excellence process] provided additional opportunities for our Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) to examine our practices, parent relationships, and community outreach as a mechanism for improvement,” said Joan Franks, principal of Armatage Montessori. “The survey process helped us reflect and align our work in order to reinforce the success we have had with the realignment of resources. We were pleased to see our ILT and survey results reinforced data conversations we have had in previous years.” Our school survey data indicated that Armatage possesses a culture of regular discourse about emerging knowledge, trends, and changes in the society and that we use both short-term and long-term implications strategies for attaining our school’s vision. Engaging in these conversations with PLCs, ILTs, and one-on-one data meetings will keep us current as changes develop.

Armatage Montessori School fosters a community of learners through its dual Professional Learning Community [PLC] models. Their horizontal PLCs reflect traditional PLC practices: classroom teachers, content specialists, special education resource teachers, EL teachers, and administration meet roughly every four weeks to look at current student achievement levels, essential learning needs, and strategies for implementation. Building coaches use data findings to provide resources and support for individual teachers, and staff build on our culture of learning through collaborative problem solving.

Their vertical PLCs also meet roughly every four weeks to discuss the findings of the horizontal teams, to share best practices and to assess the alignment of the K-5 curriculum, instruction, and Montessori materials. Teachers meet individually with administration and curriculum specialists to discuss fall and winter Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) data. Individual teachers share their overarching goals and findings with their PLC groups, and larger trends are discussed with the ILT.

“The differentiation inherent in the Montessori process and the success it has provided for our students [is a strength of Armatage that was highlighted through the SOE process],” said Franks. With an emphasis on the whole child, including social and emotional development, the Montessori method appeals to the full spectrum of intelligences and learning styles—logical, linguistic, kinesthetic, artistic, spatial—and seeks to educate the whole child. Because the quality of the overall learning environment is paramount, students are taught to take responsibility for the culture of their class. Students learn to respect each other’s work and to give each other the space and the tranquility that are conducive to learning.

“On behalf of our staff and students, we are extremely proud to receive recognition of our hard work and dedication,” said Principal Franks and Assistant Principal Paul Scanlon. “We believe the collaboration between students, staff, and community is a key component to our success.”

Eight schools achieved recognition as 2017-2018 Minnesota Schools of Excellence:

- *Sioux Trail Elementary School*, Burnsville–Eagan–Savage School District, Principal Shannon McParland
- *Braham Area Elementary*, Braham Area Schools, Principal Jeff Eklund
- *Jordan Elementary*, Jordan Public Schools, Principal Melissa Barnett, Assistant Principal Carol Lagergren
- *Triton Elementary*, Triton Public Schools, Principal Nancy Stucky
- *Normandale Hills Elementary*, Bloomington Public Schools, Principal Andrew Vollmuth
- *Lyndale Community School*, Minneapolis Public Schools, Principal Mark Stauduhar, Assistant Principal Sarah Hunter
- *Elm Creek Elementary*, Osseo Area Schools, Principal Elizabeth Ness
- *Armatage Montessori*, Minneapolis Public Schools, Principal Joan Franks, Assistant Principal Paul Scanlon

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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, 197 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.