

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
Greenvale Elementary School Principal
Northfield Public Schools
507-645-3500
Kelsey Gantzer, MESPA Communications & Operations Manager
651-999-7313

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jordan Elementary School Validated as a 2017–2018 Minnesota School of Excellence

(St. Paul, MN – August 28, 2017) – Jordan Elementary School has been validated as a Minnesota School of Excellence by the Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA). This prestigious honor was awarded to Jordan 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.”

Jordan Elementary is located in the Jordan Public School District and serves approximately 650 students in grades K-4 and another 150 PreK students. Jordan Public Schools participated in a Strategic Planning process in 2014 to focus on their mission statement: Inspiring a caring community to ignite learning,

innovation, and success for all. “We created a vision statement for Jordan Elementary School prior to this process, and the SOE process directed us back to that vision, ensuring we were focused on the academic and social-emotional development of students, and professional growth and well-being of staff,” said Melissa Barnett, principal of Jordan Elementary.

“Through the SOE process, we reaffirmed our commitment to the growth of all of our school community members and believe if students and staff feel safe and cared for they will find success in all areas of school,” said Barnett. “Our focus on the whole child not only increases social skills but also improves academic achievement, creates positive school climate, expands a student’s independence level, and lessens challenging behavior. By fostering positive relationships with our students and fellow colleagues, we can better engage and empower students to become 21st Century learners where collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and effective communication are enhanced through technology in the daily curriculum.”

“The School of Excellence process supported our growth as a collaborative culture,” said Barnett. “We implemented the systematic shifts that would best support student growth: moving from teacher-directed to student-driven classrooms, supporting the growth of the whole child through PBIS and Mindfulness, and focusing on Learning Targets aligned to standards to tighten instruction. These shifts have opened ongoing discussions on growth mindset, standards based grading, personalized learning, and culturally responsive teaching. We are excited to move forward and to continue to grow as educators.”

Principal Barnett described her philosophy in undergoing the SOE process in a quote by Dylan Williams: “As educators we must create a culture where, ‘Every teacher believes they need to improve, not because they aren’t good enough, but because they can be even better.’ To make this happen, we had to slow down and take time to reflect and honor our hard work from the past two years and recognize the amazing opportunities we provide our students. The SOE process encouraged us to question the ‘why’ of our practice and come to a common understanding of our purpose as educators. We focused on challenging the status quo and improve our daily practice. This led us to new ideas and better opportunities for our community of learners as a whole.”

Barnett summed up Jordan’s School of Excellence experience by saying, “We would highly recommend the School of Excellence process for any school that is looking to engage all stakeholders in conversations and professional discourse, in order to grow and improve the teaching and learning environment. For us, it encouraged more collaborative conversations and helped us to reflect on the action steps we took to

create a culture of excellence. It will be our ‘road map’ as we look towards the future and continue our work as educators and members of a school community.”

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.