

MEDIA RELEASE



Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sioux Trail Elementary School Validated as a 2017–2018 Minnesota School of Excellence

(St. Paul, MN – August 28, 2017) – Sioux Trail 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 Sioux Trail 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.”

Sioux Trail Elementary School has 330 students in grades K-5 and is located in the Burnsville–Eagan–Savage school district. The school’s staff, students, and families share a common vision of “Growing Together; Putting Kids First.”

“[The Minnesota] School Excellence process has benefited Sioux Trail Elementary in so many ways,” said Shannon McParland, principal of Sioux Trail Elementary. “Having staff, parents, students, and community members sharing their voices and perceptions about our school was amazing. Their perceptions assisted us with planning our future goals. This collaborative process has created a culture where we dialogued about all aspects of our school, from our budgets to learner-centered leadership to our vision to data driven decision making and so many other areas within our entire school community. We used our data to drive these discussions to support Sioux Trail Elementary being a 21st century school. We have become a community of learners who are constantly learning from each other.”

Sioux Trail Elementary is a district leader in innovative programming. District teachers and administrators frequently look to Sioux Trail for guidance in instructional strategies, assessment, and curriculum. In their Minnesota School of Excellence application, Sioux Trail wrote, “As the number of students in our non-dominant culture groups grew, we found that we weren’t connecting with all of our student populations and seeing the academic results we expected. We knew we needed to fundamentally reexamine our beliefs, values, and assumptions as they applied to instruction, curriculum, and assessment. So began our CPSS (Culturally Proficient School Systems) journey. Leading our district, we became a pilot site for this innovative program.”

“The strengths we identified [during the SOE process] were our culturally proficiency framework, gifted for all program including Genius Hour and MakerSpaces, being a professional learning community, and our academic achievement with meeting all our learners’ needs. We support the whole child and develop students’ social, emotional and academic growth,” said Principal McParland.

“Our staff works really hard to build trusting relationships with each other and our community. We learn and grow together knowing we will make mistakes, yet turn them into learning opportunities. We have honest conversations regarding our data by celebrating when goals are met and working together when our goals are not met. We revise our school vision each year to align with our beliefs and focus our work to support students and families.”

Sioux Trail used the SOE process to identify strengths, as well as find areas of growth. “We were surprised that our community was not aware of all great things occurring within our school,” said Principal McParland. “We learned that sharing what is occurring within our school walls to our entire

community is vital. Our school communication needs to include students' voices, celebration of our students' success, and how we are progressing towards our goals.”

Principal McParland summed up the school's SOE experience by saying, “This truly has been an amazing process and great opportunity for our school community. We learned and grew together and are excited to see our successes in the coming year being a 21st century school community. We are so honored to receive this validation at this time and know this process has supported our efforts to meet every learners' needs at Sioux Trail Elementary. I am so proud of our entire community and the work we do together! Thank you to our community and ISD191 district leadership for their support.”

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.