

MEDIA RELEASE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Eastview Elementary Validated as a 2018–2019 Minnesota School of Excellence

(St. Paul, MN – August 21, 2018) – Eastview Elementary School has been validated as a Minnesota School of Excellence (SOE) by the Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA). This prestigious honor was awarded to Eastview Elementary School 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 from a committed team to thoroughly assess areas of strength and at the same time plan for continual growth. 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.”

Eastview Elementary is part of Lakeville Area Public Schools and serves 662 students in grades K-5. Eastview’s mission statement is: “Working Together, Learning Forever.”

“Eastview Elementary School’s motto of ‘Working together; Learning Forever’ guides the work of this strong school community,” said Taber Akin, principal of Eastview Elementary. “As a school community, we strive for student success, and increased academic achievement through innovative and engaging learning opportunities and strong partnerships, and we embrace growth.”

“The MESPA School of Excellence process highlighted that everyone in the school community is expected to be a continuous learner, and there is shared responsibility for implementation and accountability,” Principal Akin said. “The process clearly identified that staff and students have high expectations for their learning and performance. Our community collaborates to ensure the use of current technology to access information, communicate, learn, and produce work. Through the highly engaging procedure we learned that our entire school community is regularly engaged in data gathering, analysis, and that data is viewed as fundamental in guiding and creating systematic interventions to improve student, adult, and school performance. The principal, teachers, and involved volunteers regularly engage with stakeholders to expand relationships to ensure success for each student. They are visible participants in community efforts identifying, advocating for, and securing supports for all students and families.”

One strength Eastview Elementary identified through the SOE process was a commitment to learning about diversity and a strong sense of community. Eighty percent of community members surveyed rated Eastview above-average to outstanding on the question, “The entire school community actively works to sustain a culture that values diverse people, ideas, perspectives, and experiences.” Eighty-six percent agreed that “the principal and teachers continuously seek to engage all parents as equal partners in supporting student learning and growth.”

“Our open communication with parents allows us to incorporate their voices in our School-Wide Continuous Improvement Plan,” Principal Akin said. “An Eastview student designed an opportunity [for a school-wide Cultural Day] that would be inclusive and recognize and celebrate our school diversity. She presented her idea to the Eastview Leadership Team. With the collaborative support of the leadership team and families, we hosted our first annual school-wide Cultural Day in November. Through the SOE process we understand that we can do more collaboration to expand our knowledge and support of our underrepresented populations.”

Eastview also has a continued focus on culturally responsive teaching, regularly examining their own backgrounds and biases. They engage in this work through collaborative team conversations as part of

ongoing work as a Professional Learning Community, work in book studies on best practices in literacy, and more.

Other strengths of Eastview Elementary identified by the SOE process included promoting high levels of learning and a commitment to technology. Technology is integrated in classrooms through the work of teachers as well as a digital learning specialist.

“The MESPA School of Excellence process has benefited Eastview by providing several different lenses to look at our progress, identify strengths, and highlight areas for growth,” Principal Akin said. “Eastview is an outstanding school and the MESPA School of Excellence process provides formal recognition and celebration of the hard work of this wonderful school community.”

Five schools achieved recognition as 2018-2019 Minnesota Schools of Excellence:

- *Eastview Elementary*, Lakeville Area Public Schools, Principal Taber Akin
- *Floodwood School*, Floodwood School District, Principal Dr. Rae Villebrun
- *Hawley Elementary*, Hawley Public Schools, Principal Chris Ellingson
- *New York Mills Elementary*, New York Mills Public Schools, Principal Judith Brockway
- *Vandyke Elementary*, Greenway Public Schools, Principal Susan Hoeft

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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, 202 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.