

MEDIA RELEASE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Floodwood School Validated as a 2018–2019 Minnesota School of Excellence

(St. Paul, MN – August 21, 2018) – Floodwood 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 Floodwood 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.”

Floodwood School is part of the Floodwood School District and serves 250 students in grades PreK-12. Floodwood’s mission is to prepare all students for success.

“The school has benefitted from the SOE process in several ways,” said Dr. Rae Villebrun, Superintendent and Principal of Floodwood School. “One strength of our school highlighted by the SOE process is the determination and dedication of the teaching staff to improve their teaching practices to improve the learning of our students. The time and effort the teachers make to professional development and actively participating on committees focusing on improvement have been a key factor in the gains our students make. Another strength is our ability to meet the needs of students. Through small group instruction, interventions specific to areas of concern, and progress monitoring, we have been able to provide lessons and support so that each student is successful.”

Floodwood's Leadership Team, consisting of select staff, has been instrumental in improving instruction. A set schedule of peer observations, involving more teachers in the process, the feedback teachers receive after their observations, and the opportunity to observe in other classrooms have proven to be important parts of teacher growth and support. Since implementing the Leadership Team, Floodwood School has seen the results in its MCA test scores. From 2015 to 2017, the percentage of students (including students who receive Free and Reduced Lunch) who meet proficiency standards has increased in both reading and math and exceeds state averages in proficiency.

Another strength of the Floodwood School identified by the SOE process was a commitment to technology and STEM. Floodwood has Smartboards in all classrooms, utilizes Google Classroom to manage and organize classes, and created a full-time media/library position to ensure that teachers and students have media support all week.

“One of the ways Floodwood benefitted from the SOE process was realizing that we need to do a better job of explaining what we are doing in our classrooms, what interventions are and why they are important, as well as what our overall goals are and how parents can help our students achieve success,” Dr. Villebrun said. “Communication is always an area of improvement, but through the SOE process, we realized that we had a lot of work to do. What we do and how we do it is important, but telling our families is just as important. They can't support us if they don't know what they are supporting.”

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.