

## MEDIA RELEASE



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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **New York Mills Elementary School Validated as a 2018–2019 Minnesota School of Excellence**

*(St. Paul, MN – August 21, 2018)* – New York Mills 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 New York Mills 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.”

New York Mills Elementary is located in New York Mills Public Schools and serves 483 students in grades PreK-6. New York Mills Elementary School's mission is to develop flexible, engaged learners and responsible citizens by providing resources through community collaboration.

“Going through the SOE process has been extremely beneficial for my staff, students, and parents,” said Judith Brockway, principal of New York Mills Elementary School. “The process allowed us to examine our practices to see if we were on track and to hear the voice of our parents in a way that we hadn't before. We knew that we were ‘doing’ all of the right things but the process gave us a tool to dig a little deeper to find out if we were doing them the way that they needed to be done.”

The SOE process identified many strengths at New York Mills Elementary School. New York Mills has implemented a character education program called Eagle Pride so that its staff and students are on the same page when it comes to how to treat each other. New York Mills has an amazing and caring group of staff and students, as well as extremely supportive and engaged parents. New York Mills has also strengthened its ties with area businesses and the community at large with its “Adopt a Class” program.

New York Mills promotes high levels of learning and has also made great strides in meeting the needs of all of its learners by implementing a “YET Room.” The YET Room is a positive place for students to go who need to work on social skills and the important executive functioning skills that they may be lacking and need to learn in the classroom. Another strength of New York Mills is a commitment to technology and STEM. New York Mills makes it a priority to use technology to make global society a reality for its students.

“Probably the biggest characteristic of our school that we have seen highlighted by the SOE process is the fact that we truly operate as a school family and are there for each other when the going gets tough,” Principal Brockway said. “While we feel we are continually improving we know that there is always work to be done and know that we are on a journey that really doesn't have a final destination. Going through the MN School of Excellence process required us to slow down long enough to reflect on our practices and we learned to build that time into our journey each year. We are excited to be a MN School of Excellence and are going to continue to work as a school family that is extremely proud of our staff, students, and supportive 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 Hoefl

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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.