

MEDIA RELEASE



Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Battle Lake Elementary Validated as 2019-2020 Minnesota Schools of Excellence

(Roseville, MN – August 28, 2019) – Battle Lake Elementary has been validated as a Minnesota School of Excellence (SOE) by the Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA). This prestigious honor was awarded to Battle Lake Elementary for its commitment to modern teaching and learning.

“Through the Minnesota School of Excellence (SOE) program, grounded in national research on high-performing schools, MESPA has created the premier opportunity in the state for validating excellence and a commitment to continual growth 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.”

Tami Staloch-Schultz, chair of the Minnesota School of Excellence Committee, said, “It takes commitment and teamwork to honestly and thoroughly assess areas of strength and at the same time identify a plan for continual growth. The SOE process asks the entire school community – parents, students, staff, administration, and more – to reflect on and celebrate the collaborative work being done in school communities. Schools that receive validation have had important data-driven conversations about what a high-quality, modern learning experience should be for all students and have plans to make that learning experience a reality for many years to come. Honoring the important work of dedicated staff, eager students, and supportive communities is an essential component of becoming a School of Excellence.”

Battle Lake Elementary is part of the Battle Lake Public School District and serves 218 students in grades K-6. Battle Lake Public School District's mission statement is: "Striving toward educational excellence in a safe, respectful, accepting environment: preparing all students to meet the challenges of a changing world."

"The district has been recognized both at the state and national level for student achievement which has created a lot of pride within the school and community," wrote Battle Lake Elementary's leadership team in the school's SOE application. These honors include Battle Lake Elementary being named a Blue Ribbon School in 2011. Battle Lake Elementary leadership used the SOE process to assess initiatives already underway and to hone in on other areas for improvement that weren't on their radar previously.

A strength of Battle Lake Elementary identified by the SOE process was its focus on a liberal arts philosophy and the impact that focus had on student achievement and school culture. "Our graduates are well-rounded thinkers who have developed strong communication and leadership skills," the SOE team wrote. "A love for the arts permeates the community. All of this happened because we carefully analyzed what we were doing and what we wanted to become. Once the vision was created, everyone pitched in by setting high expectations and doing their part to create an extraordinary school culture."

Other strengths identified by the SOE process included the school offering Mandarin as a global language, a partnership with Glendalough State Park which allows Battle Lake to incorporate environmental education into its offerings, and the integration of the International Society for Technology Education (ISTE) standards into curricula to ensure that students are prepared to be successful in the modern world.

An area of growth for Battle Lake Elementary highlighted by the SOE process is its incorporation of diversity to enhance the learning of the entire school community. As an 85 percent white school, Battle Lake Elementary is seeking to incorporate diversity more fully into its instruction through the use of digital resources. Students will interface with students from other schools online as part of a digital citizenship curriculum, and they will travel together in the spring to visit the Festival of Nations, Minnesota's oldest multicultural festival.

"One of the most valuable pieces of information that came to light as part of this review/analysis process was the importance of continually reviewing goals, skills taught, and essential knowledge," the SOE team

wrote. “Items that you feel were covered extraordinarily well will still be lost if they aren’t reinforced on a consistent basis.”

Eight schools achieved recognition as 2019-2020 Minnesota Schools of Excellence:

- *Battle Lake Elementary School*, Battle Lake Public School District, Principal/Superintendent Darren Kern
- *Breckenridge Elementary School*, Breckenridge School District, Principal Corinna Erickson
- *Hermantown Elementary School*, Hermantown Community School District, Principal Debra Reynolds
- *Mora Elementary School*, Mora School District, Principals Randy Qual and Brenda Spartz
- *Shannon Park Elementary School*, Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan Public Schools, Principal Erik Davis
- *Viking Elementary School*, Pelican Rapids Public Schools, Principal Derrick Nelson
- *Washington Elementary School*, Cloquet Public Schools, Principal Robbi Mondati
- *Winfair Elementary School*, Windom Public Schools, Principal Jamie Frank

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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, 210 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.