

MEDIA RELEASE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Breckenridge Elementary Validated as 2019-2020 Minnesota Schools of Excellence

(Roseville, MN – August 28, 2019) – Breckenridge 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 Breckenridge 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.”

Breckenridge Elementary is part of the Breckenridge Public School District and serves 310 students in grades preK-6. The school's mission statement is: "We are devoted to providing personalized learning through challenging, relevant and dynamic experiences in a safe environment where mutual respect is fostered and builders of the future are developed."

"When I initially heard of the School of Excellence program and schools that have earned this recognition I felt like Breckenridge Elementary has done an outstanding job of becoming a 21st-century school," wrote Breckenridge Elementary Principal Corinna Erickson in the school's SOE application. Erickson proceeded to undertake the rigorous SOE process with the whole Breckenridge Elementary School community.

Goal-setting is a major strength of Breckenridge Elementary identified by the SOE process. Both short- and long-term smart goals are set for staff, administration, school board members, and the community as a whole. These goals are discussed at least every other week at meetings and shared with the community to hold everyone accountable and to give Breckenridge Elementary both a shared vision and strategies to better serve students.

Other strengths identified by the SOE process include the incorporation of students' voices in their own learning through project-based learning in 5th and 6th grades, pooling resources with neighboring school districts to bring in nationally-renowned speakers for teacher professional development, and the integration of technology into the classroom at nearly a 1:1 device-to-student ratio.

An area of growth for Breckenridge Elementary identified by the SOE process is that more work is needed on trauma and social emotional learning. While Breckenridge has implemented staff trainings around Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES), the SOE process helped Breckenridge realize that they have more work to do to understand how best to serve students impacted by trauma. Recent additions including a full-time counselor serving K-3 students have helped to meet this need.

"The staff here have worked hard and deserve this opportunity for recognition in a more formal way for all the work they have done," Erickson wrote. "We want to celebrate all that we have done and share with our community all that we are proud of."

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.