

## MEDIA RELEASE



### Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association

1970 Oakcrest Avenue, Suite 204

Roseville, MN 55113

#### Contact:

Tami Staloch-Schultz, Minnesota School of Excellence Program Chair

Westview Elementary School Principal

Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan Public Schools

952.431.8380

Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association

952.297.8670

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Hermantown Elementary School Validated as 2019-2020 Minnesota Schools of Excellence

*(Roseville, MN – August 28, 2019)* – Hermantown 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 Hermantown Elementary School 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.”

Hermantown Elementary School is part of Hermantown Community Schools and serves 760 students in grades K-4. The school's mission statement is: "Hermantown Elementary School is a relationship-centered, safe and positive learning environment where children are the primary focus. We believe every staff member, child, family and community member has something of great value to contribute to our school community, and we actively engage them as partners in learning. Together we create the environment where each child's social and emotional needs are addressed through intentional instruction that fosters healthy relationships, develops responsible citizens, and builds the framework for academic success."

"Throughout the past two years [during the SOE process], we have focused on celebrating our strengths and recognizing our areas for improvement," wrote Debra Reynolds, Hermantown Elementary School principal, in the school's SOE application. "Even though this was at times overwhelming, our staff members stepped up and continue to work hard to improve these areas of priority."

One of Hermantown Elementary School's strengths identified by the SOE process was the supportive structures it has in place to meet students' social-emotional needs. The teacher-led Mental Health Intervention Team, Behavior Intervention Team, and Academic Intervention Team provide teachers with guidance and support to help students achieve success academically and emotionally. Most recently, Hermantown established an overall Social Emotional Learning Team to determine strategic teacher supports that are needed to meet the needs of students. All of these systems help to meet the social emotional needs of students so that they can thrive academically.

Other strengths of Hermantown Elementary School identified by the SOE process include a staff professional development culture that encourages peer-to-peer sharing of best practices and continual growth, an emphasis on research-based instructional practices to differentiate teaching based on the needs of different learners, and a robust school/home connection that includes regular newsletters, frequent parent volunteer opportunities, and events that are inclusive of the whole community. All Hermantown teachers use the Seesaw for Families app to frequently share reminders, classroom activities, and student work.

One area for growth Hermantown Elementary School identified during the SOE process was its use of data. Hermantown Elementary School is putting more emphasis on tracking every individual student's achievement and providing learning opportunities for all students to grow at all levels. Next year, Hermantown will be implementing a new school-wide assessment tool to aid in data collection and

interpretation. The data will help educators find specific trends for all students, thus driving instruction effectively for that student.

“The School of Excellence Process has definitely enhanced our staff unification to help our students to grow and reach success at their individual levels,” Reynolds wrote. “We will carry on with the process of continuous improvement. Our students deserve it.”

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.