

## 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

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

*(Roseville, MN – August 28, 2019)* – Washington 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 Washington 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.”

Washington Elementary School is part of Cloquet Public Schools and serves 540 students in grades K-4. Washington Elementary School's mission statement is: "The staff, students and parents of Washington Elementary School are dedicated to creating a climate that promotes academic, artistic and physical excellence, high expectations, cultural pride, respect for individual differences and the rights of others in a safe and nurturing environment."

One major strength of Washington Elementary School identified by the SOE process is its strong foundation in Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). Washington Elementary has integrated PBIS into its culture for six years and has a high level of staff buy-in, helping result in a strong school culture. The PBIS initiative guides Washington staff and students towards common behavioral expectations across the building. Rewards and activities are used to reinforce positive behaviors, and the PBIS team meets monthly to review discipline data and staff feedback and concerns, make adjustments as necessary, and plan how best to address student needs.

Other strengths of Washington Elementary School highlighted by the SOE process include: its investment in a great deal of professional development for all staff, especially in regard to being trauma aware; its American Indian Education programming, which integrates American Indian teachings throughout the school; technology integration including a Smartboard and Apple TV in every general education classroom as well as 1:1 mobile devices for all 3rd and 4th graders; and a variety of family volunteer opportunities including reading to students, chaperoning field trips, preparing materials, and more.

One area of improvement for Washington Elementary School identified through the SOE process was in strategic planning. Though the school had a plan in place, it had not been recently reviewed by staff. Through the SOE process, Washington Elementary determined a plan to regularly share the strategic plan in meetings and continually review and monitor progress towards strategic 5-year goals.

"At Washington Elementary, we have a terrific school community supported by our students, staff, families and greater Cloquet community and we are very proud of our school!" wrote Robbi Mondati, principal of Washington Elementary School, in the school's SOE application.

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

--- end ---

### **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.