

MEDIA RELEASE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Winfair Elementary Validated as 2019-2020 Minnesota Schools of Excellence

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

Winfair Elementary is part of Windom Public Schools and serves 317 students in grades K-3. Windom is a small town located in the southwestern Minnesota prairie, where schools are the heart and soul of their communities.

“At Winfair, we have a LOT of heart and soul,” wrote Winfair Elementary Principal Jamie Frank in the school’s SOE application. “We firmly believe that by establishing meaningful relationships with every student, creating a positive school culture, collaborating with all stakeholders, using highly effective instruction, and maintaining high expectations for students and staff alike, every child on our campus will succeed.”

One major strength of Winfair Elementary identified by the SOE process was that it provides access and equity to high-quality education for every student. Winfair does this through programs including Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) for meeting students’ academic and social-emotional needs, Top 20 social-emotional training lessons with the counselor to develop character, with Top 20 language reiterated by other adults in the school, and social skills learning through Friendship Groups, Skills Training Groups, individual counseling, and more. Winfair makes every effort to close the opportunity gap by providing a wide variety of activities and opportunities for students.

Other strengths of Winfair Elementary highlighted by the SOE process include: the incorporation of technology into every classroom; an energetic, growth-mindset culture amongst students and staff; and collaborative teams that continue to ensure assessments, rubrics, and learning continuums are aligned to the rigor intended by MN Academic Standards.

An area of improvement for Winfair Elementary identified by the SOE process was the alignment between the school-wide professional development plan with school and learning goals. Upon reviewing the data, the Winfair leadership team has begun work on a comprehensive professional development plan that will be visible and communicated to all stakeholders. It is a living document and will be edited as Winfair continues to learn and grow.

“Student learning is at the heart of everything we do at Winfair,” Frank wrote. “And as our vision statement says, we work passionately every day to inspire our students to grow and do more than they ever dreamed!”

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.