



Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association

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Prairie Elementary Awarded Minnesota School of Excellence

(Roseville, MN, August 27, 2024) — The Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA) is thrilled to announce that Prairie Elementary in Worthington has been named a Minnesota School of Excellence (SOE), one of only six schools in the state to receive this esteemed designation for 2024.

The Minnesota School of Excellence program, designed and implemented by MESPA, is a rigorous school improvement process that aligns with national and state standards for quality and effectiveness. Schools awarded the SOE designation have undergone a comprehensive self-study, driven by input from staff, students, and the community, and have demonstrated exceptional dedication to enhancing educational practices, fostering a positive school culture, and promoting continuous improvement.

Excellence is a process. Everything done in an effective school community focuses on ensuring the learning of adults and students. The MN SOE program supports this focus by

combining the findings of current research on effective schooling with the practical on-site experience of working principals and education staff.

Prairie Elementary stood out because of its inclusive and effective family outreach. As they reflected in their application, “We continually have [conference] attendance hovering around 95%. We believe conferences are so highly attended because we have created a welcoming space for all families and make every effort to communicate with each and every one of them, regardless of language barriers. Our school also understands the importance of communicating with diverse populations by having onsite interpreters available every day, sending home information in multiple languages, and striving to make sure that all families have the ability to receive information.” As Prairie Elementary fosters strong family engagement, it ensures that every family, regardless of their background or language, is actively involved in their child's education, leading to better student outcomes and a more connected school community.

“The staff at Prairie Elementary embrace a focus on student-centered continuous improvement,” commented Heidi Meyer, Principal of Prairie Elementary. “Each year, our leadership team conducts a comprehensive needs assessment, which informs our strategic plan for the year. The six standards identified in the School of Excellence process aligned perfectly with our priorities. The leadership team accepted the challenge and rigor of the SOE’s evaluation protocols, gathering information and analyzing the data from the stakeholder surveys. In many ways we were validated for the amazing work we do every day—while also providing a road map for what we can do to strengthen and improve.”

Principal Meyer continues, “Receiving the SOE award is a testament to a highly talented and dedicated staff. We have worked diligently to establish a team-centered culture of collaboration. Our teams rely on each other to find innovative ways to meet the needs of all students. Their dedication goes beyond the walls of our school; they also know that connecting with families and the community is imperative to student success. We are grateful for the SOE recognition and will continue to be motivated to be the best we can be.”

The SOE program evaluates schools across standards:

- 1. Learning-Centered:** Balance management and leadership roles to lead schools in ways that place student and adult learning at the center.
- 2. Diverse Communities:** Set high expectations and standards for the academic, social, emotional, and physical development of all students in an environment that acknowledges, fosters, and celebrates diversity.
- 3. 21st Century Learners:** Demand content and instruction that ensure student achievement.

- 4. Quality Instruction:** Create a culture of continuous learning for adults, tied to student learning and other school goals.
- 5. Knowledge and Data:** Manage knowledge and data to inform decisions and measure the progress of student, adult, and school performance.
- 6. Community Engagement:** Actively engage the community to create shared responsibility for student performance and development.

"We are proud to recognize Prairie Elementary as a Minnesota School of Excellence," added Michelle Krell, the executive director of MESPA. "The Minnesota School of Excellence program is more than just a recognition. It's a comprehensive improvement process that empowers schools to reflect on their practices, engage with their communities, and strive for the highest levels of academic and personal growth for all students."

"It takes commitment and teamwork to honestly and thoroughly assess areas of strength and at the same time identify a plan for continual growth," explained Tami Staloch-Schultz, chair of the Minnesota School of Excellence Committee. "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 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."

The Minnesota School of Excellence designation is valid for seven years, during which Prairie Elementary will continue to uphold the high standards set forth by the program.

About MESPA

The Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA) the premier leadership resource for elementary and middle-level principals. Founded in 1950, MESPA is dedicated to advancing the principalship through advocacy, leadership development, support and connection for high-quality education across the state. MESPA represents over 1,000 members statewide. For more information, visit www.mespa.net.

For further details on the Minnesota School of Excellence program and a full list of awarded schools, please visit www.mespa.net/SOE.