

## 2010 BROCK PRIZE IN EDUCATION CANDIDATE



**Matthew  
Dorschner**

**Nominated by  
Stacy Decorsey**  
2009 Minnesota National  
Distinguished Principal

**The Minnesota School of Excellence Program promotes  
excellence through a rigorous evaluation process that  
showcases dynamic schools of the 21st century.**



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**Jordan Elementary School**  
ISD 717 Jordan Public Schools

Stacy DeCorsey, Principal  
815 Sunset Drive  
Jordan, MN 55352  
952-492-4276

April 29, 2010

Dr. Trent E. Gabert  
Chair, Executive Committee  
Brock International Prize in Education  
Associate Dean, College of Liberal Studies  
The University of Oklahoma  
1610 Asp Avenue, Suite 108  
Norman, OK 73072-6405

**Re: Letter of Nomination for Matthew Dorschner**

Dear Dr. Gabert:

It is with great pleasure that I nominate Principal Matt Dorschner for the Brock International Prize in Education. The Minnesota School of Excellence program that he leads clearly connects the education process to student learning.

The *Minnesota School of Excellence* program is a research-based program aligned with national standards to promote: learning centered, diverse communities, 21<sup>st</sup> century learners, quality instruction, knowledge and data, and community engagement. It involves a systematic self-study, development of a school improvement plan, and implementation of that plan based on demonstrated results. The Minnesota Elementary School Principals Association (MESPA) endorses schools whose principal, staff, students, and community -- working as a team -- demonstrate the desire to strengthen education by successfully undertaking the Minnesota School of Excellence program. The Minnesota Department of Education and the National Association of Elementary School Principals recognize this school improvement process.

"In this time of high stakes testing, the quality of our school communities can far too easily be misrepresented by the single-purposed federal testing requirement," said P. Fred Storti, MESPA Executive Director. "High stakes tests, such as the MCA II tests used to evaluate Minnesota schools for Adequate Yearly Progress as required by the federal No Child Left Behind Act, offer a snapshot in time with no context. One high stakes test should not determine a school's public stature and cannot adequately assess its educational effectiveness. Elementary and middle level schools provide the foundation for children's lifelong learning, and the *Minnesota School of Excellence* program clearly connects the education process to student learning."

The total commitment to excellence demonstrated by schools receiving Minnesota School

of Excellence validation is the very center of quality education in this state. I feel strongly that the program could be successfully implemented across the nation with tremendous results.

“The School of Excellence Program takes schools on a meaningful analytical endeavor, engaging staff and community in purposeful conversations about their school,” stated Matt Dorschner, Minnesota School of Excellence Program chair. “It is the premier way to identify current strengths and areas needing improvement for a school. The reward of the analysis is two-fold. First, it takes measure of where a school is and reveals where it needs to go. Second, it creates a wonderful opportunity for communities to celebrate their school – and to connect to their role in the school’s accomplishments.”

As Mr. Brock has stated the most important thing we do in this life is educate our children. The purpose of the Brock Prize is to identify the best ideas on education in the world and to expose them to our educators, teachers, administrators, and politicians.

Enclosed are letters of support for Mr. Dorschner, and the *Minnesota School of Excellence Program*. His innovative contributions have had a tremendous impact on education in Minnesota. Given an environment in which so much is at stake, it is imperative that we recognize major innovations in education and adopt them into other education systems. I trust that once you look further into this program, you will agree that Mr. Dorschner would be wonderful recipients of the Brock International Prize in Education.

Sincerely,

*Stacy DeCorsey*  
National Distinguished Principal

## **Stacy DeCorsey**

- **Minnesota National Distinguished Principal**
- **2010 Brock Prize Juror**



Stacy DeCorsey, principal of Jordan Elementary School in the Jordan Public School District and a member of the Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association, is Minnesota's 2009 National Distinguished Principal (NDP).

"The Jordan School District's success with students, parents, and community is directly related to Stacy DeCorsey's vision and dedication," said Kirk Nelson, Superintendent, Jordan School District.

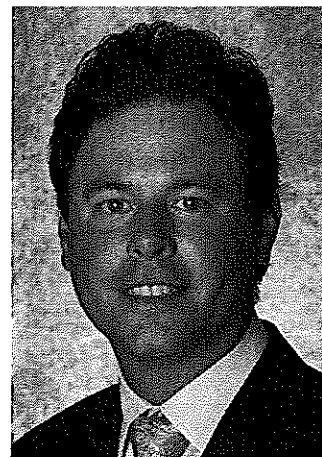
"Stacy has made her colleagues better and the district successful by her leadership -- demonstrating best practice, motivation, and a positive approach," Nelson continued. "Stacy understands that success comes from building relationships and encourages all constituents toward continuous improvement. Stacy DeCorsey is one of those rare individuals whose influence changes lives. Her extraordinary leadership, boundless energy, and incredible attitude combine to make her the ideal educational leader."

DeCorsey has pioneered many initiatives in her building including: S.M.A.R.T. motor development, RTI efforts, Healthy Snack Cart, and the Food for Friends backpack program.

DeCorsey has served the Minnesota education community since 1998. She has been the principal at Jordan Elementary in Jordan since 2003, and before that was the principal at Westwood Elementary in St. Cloud for three years, and Dean of Students at Glencoe Silver Lake High School in Glencoe for two years.

DeCorsey received her superintendent and K-12 principal licensures, as well as her Masters in Education from Saint Mary's University in St. Paul, MN; and her Bachelors degree in Elementary Education/Special Education from Dakota State University, Madison, SD.

## **2010 Brock International Prize in Education Recommended Candidate**



### **Biographical Sketch of Mathew Dorschner**

Matthew Dorschner lives the promise of education, the promise that our schools possess the capacity and vision to purposefully meet the changing needs of their communities. He believes this is the responsibility schools must own. Under Dorschner's direction, the Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA) has committed to enhancing the Minnesota School of Excellence Program to address the dynamic needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century schools.

Matthew Dorschner's commitment to educational improvement is evident from the span of his career: from teaching Minnesota's most challenging students with emotional and behavioral needs in Forest Lake, Minnesota; to leading schools in rural, high-poverty small town, and inner-ring suburban locations; to studying for a doctorate in education policy; to guiding the Minnesota School of Excellence Program through comprehensive changes that enable schools statewide to effectively evolve to embrace the needs of their communities.

He became passionate about progressing from theoretical models for school improvement to making the models relevant practices when leading his school through the Minnesota School of Excellence process. After serving on the MESPA board of directors, Dorschner was asked to chair the statewide program. As chair, Matthew Dorschner has identified and instituted dramatic changes that bring the rigor and relevance of the Minnesota School of Excellence Program to a truly authentic 21<sup>st</sup> century school improvement instrument. He has:

- Revised the six program core standards to reflect current national standards on instructional leadership in schools.
- Focused the self-study process, setting the priority on student learning and developing predictive hands-on assessment tools throughout the school community.
- Crafted a support network to ensure the vitality of each school's improvement process.
- Pursued a reflective model with ongoing school follow-up, resulting in high impact strategies that build capacity and can be shared between communities.

## **Matthew M. Dorschner**

4201 Sunset Drive #222  
Spring Park, MN 55384  
Cell (612) 221-8062  
dors0111@umn.edu

### **LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE**

---

- MN School of Excellence Chair-Minnesota Elementary Principals Association (MESPA)
- Title I Director ISD 97
- Co-facilitated K-12 Curriculum Redesign ISD 97
- Initiated all day everyday kindergarten ISD 138
- Administrative Representative for Curriculum Council ISD 112
- Strategic short & long range expertise refined in ISD 138
- Systems Accountability Report (SAR) Facilitator ISD 97
- Appointed to Mercy Hospital Board of Directors 2005-2006
- Early Childhood Administrator ISD 97
- Elementary Enhancement Research (Inspire) ISD 112

### **PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP**

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<b>2008-Present</b>	<b>ISD-112</b>	<b>Chanhassen Elementary School</b>	<b>Chanhassen, MN</b>
<i>Principal</i>		<i>District Student Population</i>	<i>9,000 students</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Building leadership K-5<sup>th</sup> grade setting-550 students</li><li>• High performing school set in an affluent suburb</li><li>• Initiated a new leadership model to improve shared decision making</li><li>• Recognized by Johns Hopkins University for Parent/School Partnership presented at Minnesota Department of Education Conference</li></ul>			
<b>2006-2008</b>	<b>ISD-138</b>	<b>North Branch Primary School</b>	<b>North Branch, MN</b>
<i>Principal</i>		<i>District Student Population</i>	<i>3,700 students</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Site-Based Management Model-650 students</li><li>• Trained in Pathwise Observation Model</li><li>• Integrated DCD push-in/pull-out program</li><li>• Created a vital and relevant primary parent group</li><li>• Testified before Senate Education Committee for pilot funding</li></ul>			
<b>2002-2006</b>	<b>ISD-97</b>	<b>Moose Lake Elementary School</b>	<b>Moose Lake, MN</b>
<i>Principal</i>		<i>District Student Population</i>	<i>800 students</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• District wide Assessment Coordinator</li><li>• District Extended School Year Administrator</li><li>• School of Excellence Recipient 2005</li><li>• Implemented school-wide proactive behavior model</li><li>• Initiated Anti-Bullying curriculum (Olweus) and held a community wide kick-off campaign</li></ul>			

## **TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

- |                  |   |                        |
|------------------|---|------------------------|
| <b>1998-2002</b> | <b>Forest Lake Elementary</b>   | <b>Forest Lake, MN</b> |
|                  | <i>Special Education Teacher</i>  |                        |
|                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• District Level IV E/BD Program Coordinator/Teacher</li></ul>                        |                        |
| <b>1996-1998</b> | <b>Martin County West High School</b>   | <b>Sherburn, MN</b>    |
|                  | <i>High School Special Education Teacher</i>  |                        |
|                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Resource room teacher</li><li>• Jr. High boys basketball &amp; golf coach</li></ul> |                        |

## **21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY TECHNOLOGY PROFICIENCIES**

- Prezi-Zooming Presentations
- Wiki facilitation
- Blogging
- Skype
- Survey Monkey
- Castle Leadership

## **EDUCATION**

Doctorate (In Progress--Expected Degree '12)	<b>Education Policy &amp; Leadership</b> U of M-Twin Cities
Principal Licensure	<b>K-12 Licensure</b> Saint Mary's University Winona, MN
Master of Education	<b>Special Education</b> Bethel University St. Paul, MN
Bachelors of Science	<b>Elementary Education</b> Mankato State University Mankato, MN



## Minnesota School of Excellence Program Overview

The Minnesota School of Excellence (MN SOE) program promotes excellence through a rigorous evaluation process that showcases dynamic schools of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The MN SOE program engages schools in purposeful conversations, leading to meaningful action. The program, supported by the Minnesota Department of Education and the National Association of Elementary School Principals, assesses six national standards for quality elementary and middle level schools. These standards are based on the NAESP *Leading Learning Communities: Standards for What Principals Should Know and Be Able To Do* in correlation with MESPA guidelines. The national standards were created in partnership with Collaborative Communications Group, with national research and development made possible by the LAB at Brown University, Principals Leadership Network, and funded by the office of Education Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education.

The MN SOE program has grown from the 1984 work of the MESPA Task Force on Standards and Assessment. To continue reflecting current issues in education, the program was updated in 1992, 1998, 2005 and again in 2010. The result is the current three-part MN SOE process that validates school communities dedicated to continual improvement. Through the program, elementary and middle level school principals, staff, and school community members demonstrate, as a team, the desire to improve the quality of education by:

- Completing a school community self-study (application Part 1).
- Developing a plan to build on evident strengths and address areas needing improvement.
- Assessing ongoing results from implementing the plan.

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. From its inception in 1986 through 2009, the MESPA MN SOE program has validated 140 Minnesota elementary and middle level schools. For a current list of endorsed schools, visit *Professional Development* on the MESPA Web at [www.mespa.net](http://www.mespa.net).

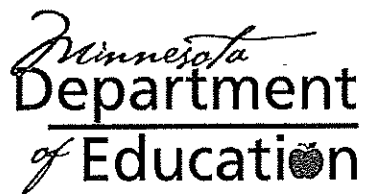
**The MN SOE process has strong potential for national application embedded in its six standards** that are grounded in national leadership research. If this educational improvement process were replicated on a national scale, it would have the potential for unprecedented influence in positively working with schools and their leaders. It takes schools beyond a single test measure and truly moves the school communities toward a systematic improvement process. Charles Handy, author of *Beyond Certainty: The Changing Worlds of Organizations*, argues that leadership in future organizations, including schools, will have to exhibit stronger conceptual skills than in the past. According to Handy (2000), schools will have to internalize the fact that they are ‘post-

heroic' and need to develop systematic learning organizations to function. The MN SOE provides this 'post-heroic' framework for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Six Minnesota School of Excellence standards**

The Minnesota School of Excellence program assesses six standards for quality elementary and middle level school communities. Research has shown that if these six standards are evident in a school, best practices are being followed.

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. **21<sup>st</sup> 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 progress of student, adult, and school performance.
6. **Community Engagement:** Actively engage the community to create shared responsibility for student performance and development.



April 9, 2010

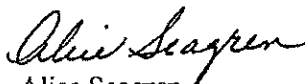
To the Brock Prize Jurors:

I am writing in support of the nomination of the MESPA Minnesota School of Excellence Program. This program is an innovative school improvement model developed with the advice and partnership of the Minnesota Department of Education.

The MESPA Minnesota School of Excellence Program began in 1984 but has been modified to reflect current issues and best practice. MDE was pleased to be a part of working with MESPA in 2005 to revamp and retool the program. The process is not easy and requires that commitment of all school staff in analyzing strengths and weaknesses in 6 areas: Learning Centers, Diverse Communities, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learners, Quality Instruction, Knowledge & Data, and Community Engagement. It usually takes one to two years of serious work before becoming eligible for this award. This program creates the culture, capacity and the framework that each school will use with successive generations of staff. As Commissioner, I see, too often, temporary quick fixes that are never sustained. This program has brought the sustained practice of professional development around the analysis of student need result resulting in improved academic achievement.

Given our global competitive economic environment, we must identify programs that will move us to consistent quality and sustained educational best practice. The MESPA Minnesota School of Excellence fulfills these goals and would be deserving of the Brock International Prize in Education.

Sincerely,

  
Alice Seagren  
Commissioner

## Letters of Support from Recent MN School of Excellence Program Participants



### ***Greenway Elementary Schools***

*SD 316, The Greenway Schools*

*Jolene Landwer, Principal*

*Coleraine, MN 55722*

*218-246-2456*

Being recognized as a Minnesota School of Excellence has had a profoundly positive impact on our educational community and program. It is amazing what a powerful motivator PRIDE is. A thousand mile journey begins with one step – and that step was the program evaluation process provided by the Minnesota School of Excellence application process. The self-evaluation process gave us valuable information about our school. It showed us where we had strength and where we needed to improve. We approached this application process with a TEAM that included all instructional and support staff members: anyone who has contact with our students throughout the school day. Based on information provided in our Minnesota School of Excellence application our school was validated as a Minnesota School of Excellence. This validation first happened in 1997, and we re-initiated the process to receive endorsement again in 2006.

Upon receipt of this validation we hosted a community wide celebration that lit a fire under staff and community that has never gone out. With everybody taking responsibility for student success, our students have consistently out-performed not only schools in our area, but schools across the state. Student success is an attitude. Our staff approaches each day with passion, determination and commitment. Community pride is outwardly apparent. Everyone stands a little taller and a little prouder because of our continued student success.

*Jolene Landwer, principal (retired 2009)*  
*Greenway Elementary Schools, Coleraine, MN*  
*Minnesota National Distinguished Principal, 2007*



## ***Gideon Pond Elementary School***

***ISD 191 Burnsville-Eagan-Savage***

***Laura Pierce, Principal***

***613 E. 130<sup>th</sup> Street***

***Burnsville, MN 55337***

***952-707-3000***

It is with great honor and without reservation I am writing this letter in recognition of the MESPA Minnesota School of Excellence Program as a nominee for the Brock International Prize in Education. As principal of Gideon Pond Elementary School, a K-6 facility that just recently received the distinction of being selected as a MESPA Minnesota School of Excellence, I am pleased to share a testimonial and the affect the self-study and school improvement process afforded our community.

Prior to completing the self-study, our community of students, staff, and parents knew we were an outstanding school and provided children with academic experiences that would supply them with the skills needed when learning for the future. This knowledge was based on thorough review of discipline reports, attendance reports, state standardized test scores, classroom assessments, and yearly parent satisfaction surveys.

Although we came to the same conclusion after completing the self-study process, we identified within our data overall strengths and areas of growth that needed addressing. The results of the self-study process identified four areas of need used to determine growth goals. These goals have provided us with a focused direction to increase our capacity in delivering an even more effective instructional program for our learners.

We identified the need to (1) encourage collaboration among the entire staff working toward creating and sustaining a common school vision and mission, (2) research, study and implement best practices from other successful schools, (3) increase the capacity to prepare 21<sup>st</sup> century learners for the future with the integration and use of technology, and (4) allocate resources effectively by aligning all decisions with the purpose of increasing student achievement.

Not only was our staff able to determine specified areas of improvement to meet the needs of all learners, but the conversations encouraged our staff to work as a more cohesive, collaborative, and effective team. One notable result of the self-study process was our students state standardized test scores. At the conclusion of the self-study process, Gideon Pond Elementary School was recognized by the Minnesota Department of Education for a second year in a row of making AYP in 2009. 77.5% of our 3<sup>rd</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grade students demonstrated proficiency on the MCA II Math test (2.5% increase from 2008) and 83% demonstrated proficiency on the MCA II Reading test (7% increase from 2008). This demonstrated increase was a direct result of focusing on strengths and areas of growth within our instructional delivery, school programs, curricular decisions, and parent support because of the data derived from the self-study and school improvement process.

In closing, the MESPA Minnesota School of Excellence Program is a valuable, standardized process of which all schools should have the opportunity to participate. Utilizing the self-study process provides instructional leaders with the knowledge, data and tools to increase the capacity of collaborative data driven decision-making and increased academic achievement.

Sincerely,  
*Laura Pierce, Principal*



# Independent School District 473

730 Fifth Avenue South

Isle, Minnesota 56342

District Office  
Michael L. Conner  
Superintendent/K-12 Principal  
P.O. Box 25  
Isle, Minnesota 56342-0025  
(320) 676-3146  
Fax: (320) 676-3966

Nyquist Elementary  
Deau J. Kapsner  
Elementary Dean of Students  
P.O. Box 54  
Isle, Minnesota 56342-0054  
(320) 676-3494  
Fax: (320) 676-3966

Isle High School  
Jeffrey J. Searles  
High School Dean of Students  
P.O. Box 25  
Isle, Minnesota 56342-0025  
(320) 676-3101  
Fax: (320) 676-3966

To: Brock International Prize in Education

I am excited to recognize the Minnesota School of Excellence Program sponsored by the Minnesota Elementary School Principals Association (MESPA). I was honored to lead the Nyquist Elementary School located in Isle, Minnesota through the rigorous components of the program.

The identification process of key players in the program included the staff, students and community who played an equal role in the reflection process. This included where we had been and were thrilled to be a part of the visioning process to dream about the possibilities and goals of where we want our school to be in the future.

The Minnesota School of Excellence program allowed us to follow a defined framework that was a major catalyst for change within my school and community. I am confident that without the guidance and support offered through this program we would not have been able to reach our goals to impact the students and community in such a positive and exciting way.

The recognition of the Minnesota School of Excellence Program by the Brock International Prize in Education would bring valuable insight to an outstanding program that impacts the lives of children and contributes to the wellness of the community.

Respectfully,

  
Michael Conner, Superintendent



**L'Etoile du Nord French Immersion School (LNFI)**  
1363 Bush Avenue • Saint Paul, MN 55106-4115  
Telephone: (651) 221-1480 • Fax: (651) 221-1487 •  
[www.frenchimmersion.spps.org](http://www.frenchimmersion.spps.org)

## **Minnesota School of Excellence validation: What it means for our school and community!**

L'Etoile du Nord French Immersion School embarked on an in depth study of its school and community during 2007-2008 thanks to its participation in the Minnesota School of Excellence Program that was developed by Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association. The Minnesota School of Excellence Program is recognized by the Minnesota Department of Education. It involves a systematic self-study, development of a school improvement plan, and implementation of the plan based on demonstrated results. This program combines the findings of current research on effective schooling with the practical on-site experience of working principals, education staff, and community members. Everything done in an effective Minnesota School of Excellence model focuses on ensuring the learning of adults and students, *a rarity with other programs which tend to focus more on test results and student learning only!*

Many great things have happened to us since being validated as a school of excellence! As a result of our participation and validation, the Minnesota School of Excellence Program has taken our school on a meaningful analytical endeavor, engaging our staff and community in purposeful conversations about *who we are* and *where we are going*. It has formed the basis for our essential questions, and has guided our actions as we continue our effort to define ourselves, and bring about meaningful change to our students and community. We have never stopped reflecting on our practice as we continue to identify current strengths and areas needing improvement for our school.


As a result of this recognition, it is safe to say that the school has not only maintained the momentum for excellence, but also has enjoyed similar recognitions on a more national scale. For instance, we were 2008 recipients of the National Network of Partnership Schools. In 2009, we received the Promising Practices Award! Recently, we have been invited to apply for the NCLB Blue Ribbon award.

The Minnesota School of Excellence recognition has given our students, staff, and community members the impetus to carry on and continue to improve and strive for excellence! It has made us more conscious of our vision, goals and objectives, and has built a more collaborative spirit and pride in our school. More importantly, we are more conscious of the way we educate our students, and plan our staff development activities. Staff members have built a very solid learning community where everyone takes care of everyone else, and continues to work hard toward a common goal while reflecting, reviewing and reinvigorating the passion for learning in all. Without our validation as a

school of excellence, we believe that this culture of excellence and confidence might not be possible!

The Minnesota School of Excellence Program is without a doubt an innovation in education, and a way to build excellence and hold schools and communities accountable for the work that they do, as they prepare students for a successful career in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, regardless of their level, background and experiences.

Sincerely,  
*Fatima T. Lawson, Ph.D.*, Principal

	<p><b><i>Pinewood Elementary School</i></b> <i>ISD 621, Mounds View Public Schools</i></p>	<p><i>William Book, Principal</i> <i>5500 Quincy Street</i> <i>Mounds View, MN 55112</i> <i>651-621-7503</i></p>
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The MESPA Minnesota School of Excellence process was an affirming one for our students, staff, and school community. It offered us a way to analyze and recognize our strengths, celebrate our successes and convey the results to our community. This rigorous process also helped us pinpoint areas where we could improve, based upon a close look at the six standards of an outstanding school. At Pinewood, this was a terrific springboard to improve student learning via new applications with technology.

Recognition as a Minnesota School of Excellence has validated our school wide focus on improved learning and continuous growth for students and staff! School wide celebrations were held, students shared their talents, banners and flags were created, and students, staff and the community joined us in recognizing this milestone for our school. Receiving endorsement as a MESPA Minnesota School of Excellence also has reinforced the ongoing responsibility of seeking new approaches to get a little better every year!

*Bill Book, Principal*  
Pinewood Elementary



To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this testimonial at the request of MESPA and the Minnesota School of Excellence Program it sponsors. Kimball Elementary School was honored with being recognized as a School of Excellence during the 2007-2008 school year. The honor of being recognized meant a lot to Kimball Elementary School and the town of Kimball, but I have to say I think the process meant even more.

Kimball is a small, rural town just south of St. Cloud. In the fall of 2002 the school district found itself in financial trouble. Over the next several years many difficult budget decisions needed to be made. It was very evident that staff and community morale were suffering and the quality of education at Kimball was being questioned. I feel very strongly that a School of Excellence is not defined by how large the budget is, but is defined by the people (students, parents, and teachers). In 2005 I initiated the Minnesota School of Excellence process and over the next two years we engaged in countless discussions surrounding the standards for effective elementary schools. During the self-study phase we would spend hours talking about the different points of view on a singular item. The process helped us define who we are as an educational system and where we would like to go.

The Minnesota School of Excellence achievement and celebration felt great, but the process was meaningful and unforgettable.

Sincerely,

*Jonathan Clark*  
Kimball Elementary School Principal



***Lake Park Audubon Elementary***  
***ISD 2889, Lake Park Audubon Schools***

***Sam Skaaland, Principal***  
***601 4<sup>th</sup> Street***  
***Audubon, MN 56511***  
***218-439-3301***

**Minnesota School of Excellence Testimonial:**

The Minnesota School of Excellence recognition process has been a valuable experience for the staff, students, and communities associated with Lake Park Audubon Elementary School. This process has helped us closely examine our school according to national standards of school effectiveness and make adjustments to improve the education for students we serve. One of the best parts of this process was coming together as a team and discussing each aspect of our school in detail. We found many areas of success, but we always found ways to improve our school in each category. The process forced us to look in a mirror and see our school more clearly, and there were parts of what we saw that motivated our staff to improve.

The Minnesota School of Excellence program is a continuous school improvement process – not just a goal to be reached. It encourages a continual examination of programs and practices and provides a mechanism for all segments of the school community to join the effort.

Lake Park Audubon Elementary School is proud to be a Minnesota School of Excellence. We feel that we have joined other schools from across the state through the Minnesota Elementary Principals' Association in an effort to improve education, and in turn improve the lives of our children.

***Sam Skaaland***  
**Lake Park Audubon Elementary, Principal**



## ***Oxbow Creek Elementary School***

*SD 011, Anoka Hennepin Schools*

*Rolf Carlsen, Principal*

*6505 109<sup>th</sup> Avenue North*

*Champlin, MN 55316*

*763-506-3800*

Oxbow Creek Elementary is a school of nearly one thousand students in the Anoka Hennepin School District, which is located just north and west of the Twin Cities metropolitan area. We have a beautiful facility that was built by our community in 2002. We serve a diverse community of students who come to us from varied backgrounds, with a variety of needs and abilities, who share the goal of preparing themselves for their futures through education. I'm proud to say that they attend a Minnesota School of Excellence when they come to us with that important goal.

We chose to apply for that validation shortly after moving in to our new facility. We were looking for a process that would encourage us to evaluate our strengths and weaknesses as a school, prioritize our action plans for change, and move forward in a spirit of continuous improvement. We also were hoping for some positive press coverage and an opportunity for the community to celebrate the excellent school we felt we have. We found MESPA's Minnesota School of Excellence program to be just the tool we wanted.

It took us a good year to complete the process, but the systemic analysis required by the application ensured that we were thorough and well organized from beginning to end. By the time we reached our community celebration day, I knew all the efforts were worthwhile. Not only do we have the pride of our Minnesota School of Excellence validation as a takeaway, but we also have a valuable template for guiding the school improvement we continue to desire.

*Rolf Carlsen*

Principal, Oxbow Creek Elementary

763.506.3800

[rolf.carlsen@anoka.k12.mn.us](mailto:rolf.carlsen@anoka.k12.mn.us)



## President's Message

Jon Millerhagen  
MESPA President

Reprinted from the  
*MESPA Advocate*  
newsletter, issue 39, vol.  
3 (May 2010)

# Excellence is a Journey

## Is the Minnesota School of Excellence Program for you?

**O**n March 18, 2010, as president of our association, I had the good fortune to speak at the Lino Lakes Elementary Minnesota School of Excellence celebration. Principal Jan Masterson and the school staff created a lovely celebration that included tours of the building, and a lively student presentation. I had a chance to meet wonderful parents and teachers, even some that I taught with when I was in the Forest Lake district.

In 2000, during my fourth year as principal of Washburn Elementary in Bloomington, we were looking for ways to affirm the great work that teachers, parents, and students were doing in our school. The Minnesota School of Excellence Program provided a structured, researched, and proven process that helped us accomplish our goal.

Perhaps you have been intrigued by the thought of trying the MESPA Minnesota School of Excellence Program at your school. Involvement with this school improvement process is one of the best decisions I have made as a principal. Let me share some insights from my experience going through the validation process twice and being the state chairperson for the Minnesota School of Excellence Committee for four years.

Early in my career, I always thought it was impressive to see a school sign identifying a community of learners who had received Minnesota School of Excellence endorsement. What I didn't realize then was the strength of a school improvement program that examined the entire school community, as opposed to making decisions based solely on students' assessment data. With this program, grounded in national research on high performing schools, MESPA has created the premier opportunity for validating the greatness of your school.

### NOW TO THE GOOD PART...

The major components of the application are: a school self-study using national standards that reveal strengths and weaknesses in your school; and a narrative that documents how you have

successfully built on strengths and addressed weaknesses determined in the self-study. Our final document was 50 pages with lots of charts and examples of data.

This is a group process and you need to develop a strong school-wide team. If you are interested, members of the state Minnesota School of Excellence Committee will be willing to help you with strategies and filters that can encourage the process to go smoothly.

Once the application is submitted to the Minnesota School of Excellence Committee and validated — and don't be discouraged if you are asked to expand your improvement process before you receive validation, you will begin thinking about your school-wide celebration. The celebration may be as elaborate or as subtle as you wish. The key is to create an experience that reflects your school's signature.

### THE RESULTS...

The Minnesota School of Excellence validation for your school brings benefits you might not think of as you are going through the process.

*Continued on page 10.*

### Benefits of MESPA Membership

Membership in MESPA provides you the network of peers and resources you need to succeed!

- ▶ Legal representation and services
- ▶ Legislative advocacy
- ▶ Professional development, with continuing education credits
- ▶ Communications tailored to the professional needs of education leaders
- ▶ Honors, recognition and public relations
- ▶ National standards supported by our Minnesota School of Excellence Program

### President's Message from page 2.

#### IN MY EXPERIENCE...

Teachers in the school are proud to be in a Minnesota School of Excellence and hold themselves to a higher standard because of it.

Families who are school shopping notice our Minnesota School of Excellence plaques and choose to enroll their children because they believe we are an exceptional school. Parents in the school realize the benefits of their volunteering and involvement and participate more because of Minnesota School of Excellence.

We realize fewer incidents of disruption because students are proud of being a Minnesota School of Excellence, and it is easier to encourage students to take annual assessments seriously and "Do their best" because of our status.

Business partners are more readily willing to affiliate their images with us because of our Minnesota School of Excellence status.

I assure you that the benefits are well worth the energy it takes to become a Minnesota School of Excellence. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Matt Dorschner, chair of the state Minnesota School of Excellence Committee at 952-556-6710; dorschnerm@district112.org. Enjoy the journey to excellence!

# Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association



## Guidelines

**The Minnesota School of Excellence Program promotes excellence through a rigorous evaluation process that showcases dynamic schools of the 21st century.**

For an electronic version of this document, go to [www.mespa.net](http://www.mespa.net).  
Click on *Professional Development* and *Minnesota School of Excellence*.  
Rev. 2010



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## Directions for Completing the MN SOE Process

What to do and when to do it  
Timeline  
Sample letter of intent

### What to do and when to do it

1. Submit a letter of intent, indicating you are interested in pursuing the Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA) Minnesota School of Excellence process. A sample letter follows these directions.
2. Complete a Minnesota School of Excellence Self-Study (Part 1 of the MN School of Excellence Application). Electronic copies of the MN School of Excellence Application (Parts 1 and 2) are on the MESPA Web site at [www.mespa.net](http://www.mespa.net), under *Professional Development*.

The self-study, Part 1 of the application, is a team effort to be conducted by members of your school community. It asks you to assess the strengths of your school community in terms of the six MESPA standards for effective elementary and middle level schools. Each of the six School of Excellence standards contains several strategies. Within each strategy, you are asked to consider indicators of that strategy and rank on a scale of 1 to 5 how evident each indicator is in your school community. Include a description of your self-study methodology.

**Note:** If your school has applied for the Parent Involvement Schools of Excellence Certification through the National PTA, that application may be used in place of the MN SOE standard 6 (community engagement).

3. After completing the Self-Study (application Part 1), use the Minnesota School of Excellence Application Part 2 to build on strengths and plan for improvement in your school community. Excellence is a process. Let the self-study guide your growth. In Part 2 of the application, **show concretely using brief narratives to cite examples of:**
  - How your school carried out the self-study process.
  - Results demonstrated from building on the strengths evident in your self-study (indicators ranked 4 or 5);
  - Plans for improvement to address areas that were not as strong (indicators ranked 1 or 2); and
  - Results from the implementation of your plans.

**Note:** Standard 5, Knowledge and Data, is based on student and staff performance with data from your MCA scores and other applicable sources. In the application, attach documentation that supports your objectives in responding to areas from the self-study. Using multiple sources of data, including the Minnesota Department of Education Web site, illustrate your plans with concise, specific data examples.

4. When Part 2 of the application is complete, submit a paper and electronic copy (including data tables) **along with your completed self-study (application Part 1)**, and a \$100 application fee (payable to MESPA) to MESPA.

**Note:** Remember to obtain the required signatures from your school community to verify your application process.

### Annual Minnesota School of Excellence timeline

Letters of intent to pursue the Minnesota School of Excellence (MN SOE) process are due in the MESPA office by **October 1** each year. These letters are not binding, but alert MESPA as to which school communities are interested in the process and may have questions or need assistance. Also, the letter verifies that the self-study will be a team effort and is supported by the superintendent, school staff, and parents.

The timeline for completing the MN SOE self-study and application for validation varies from one school community to another. For many it can be accomplished in one school year, but it may take up to two years. Once the applications are completed, the MN SOE program proceeds along the following timeline.



## Directions for Completing the MN SOE Process

What to do and when to do it

Timeline

Sample letter of intent

### Annual Minnesota School of Excellence timeline (continued)

**October 1:** Letter of intent to engage in the Minnesota School of Excellence program due.

**June 1:** MN SOE applications (Parts 1 and 2) due in the MESPA office, along with the \$100 application fee.

**Mid-June:** Applications receive preliminary review from the MESPA MN School of Excellence Committee.

**June 30:** Schools notified if the committee feels Part 2 of an application requires revision or additional information to more fully address results from the self-study (application Part 1); revisions due mid-August.

**Mid-August:** MN SOE Committee conducts final review of applications.

**Before Labor Day:** MN SOE validations finalized and announced to the media. Schools receiving MN SOE validation are highlighted on the MESPA Web site.

**November:** Schools receiving MN SOE validation meet to plan school and community celebrations, and the next step in their MN SOE processes. Follow-up on their process continues throughout the year.

**February:** Principals at schools receiving MN SOE validation honored during the annual MESPA Institute.

**March – June:** Schools receiving MN SOE validation are highlighted in the spring *MESPA Advocate* newsletter. MN SOE celebrations take place, honoring the combined work toward excellence by the principals, teachers, staff, students, parents, and community. Principals document ongoing results stemming from the MN SOE improvement plans.

### Sample letter of intent

Date: _____	
To:	<div> P. Fred Storti  MESPA Executive Director  1667 N. Snelling Avenue, Suite C101  St. Paul, MN 55108 </div> <div> Matt Dorschner  MN School of Excellence, chair  Chanhassen Elementary, principal  7600 Laredo Drive  Chanhassen, MN 55317 </div>
Re:	Minnesota School of Excellence Program
<p>This letter confirms the intent of our school community to implement a process of school improvement guided by the Minnesota School of Excellence Application (Parts 1 and 2). I have reviewed the process with my superintendent and/or Board of Education, teaching staff, and parent group.</p>	
<p>Sincerely,</p> <p>Principal name _____</p> <p>School district _____</p> <p>School name _____</p> <p>School address _____</p> <p>City, state, zip code _____</p> <p>School telephone _____</p> <p>E-mail contact _____</p>	





# Minnesota School of Excellence Program Overview

**What is the Minnesota School of Excellence program?**  
**Six MN School of Excellence standards**  
**PTA standards**  
**Process of validation with seven-year limit**

## What is the Minnesota School of Excellence program?

The Minnesota School of Excellence (MN SOE) program promotes excellence through a rigorous evaluation process that showcases dynamic schools of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The MN SOE program engages schools in purposeful conversations, leading to meaningful action. The program, supported by the Minnesota Department of Education and the National Association of Elementary School Principals, assesses six national standards for quality elementary and middle level schools. These standards are based on the NAESP *Leading Learning Communities: Standards for What Principals Should Know and Be Able To Do* in correlation with MESPA guidelines. The national standards were created in partnership with Collaborative Communications Group, with national research and development made possible by the LAB at Brown University, Principals Leadership Network, and funded by the office of Education Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education.

The MN SOE program has grown from the 1984 work of the MESPA Task Force on Standards and Assessment. To continue reflecting current issues in education, the program was updated in 1992, 1998, 2005 and again in 2010. The result is the current three-part MN SOE process that validates school communities dedicated to continual improvement. Through the program, elementary and middle level school principals, staff, and school community members demonstrate, as a team, the desire to improve the quality of education by:

- Completing a school community self-study (application Part 1).
- Developing a plan to build on evident strengths and address areas needing improvement.
- Assessing ongoing results from implementing the plan.

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. From its inception in 1986 through 2009, the MESPA MN SOE program has validated 140 Minnesota elementary and middle level schools. For a current list of endorsed schools, visit *Professional Development* on the MESPA Web.

## Six Minnesota School of Excellence standards

The Minnesota SOE program assesses six standards for quality elementary and middle level school communities. Research has shown that if these six standards are evident in a school, best practices are being followed.

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. **21<sup>st</sup> 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 progress of student, adult, and school performance.
6. **Community Engagement:** Actively engage the community to create shared responsibility for student performance and development.



## **Minnesota School of Excellence Program Overview**

**What is the Minnesota School of Excellence program?**

**Six MN School of Excellence standards**

**PTA standards**

**Process of validation with seven-year limit**

### **Embrace PTA standards**

The national Parent Teacher Association (PTA) School of Excellence program is comprehensive. If a school is seeking that validation, it may be used in place of standard 6, the community engagement standard in the Minnesota School of Excellence program.

**A process of validation: any school can apply and have the potential to receive the seven-year validation.** This is a continuous learning process. Any school community that has embraced and incorporated the Minnesota School of Excellence process has demonstrated the successful desire to create a community-wide, continuously growing learning environment.

### **Seven-year limit**

Once a school has received Minnesota School of Excellence validation, the validation remains in effect for seven (7) years. After that time has passed, MESPA encourages school communities to reinitiate the process of self-study and submit a new application.



## Frequently Asked MN SOE Questions, with answers!

- Can any school apply for Minnesota SOE validation?
- When is the letter of intent due?
- Is there a fee for taking part in the Minnesota SOE program?
- When is the application due?
- What does a completed application look like?
- Can we include additional materials with our application?
- How long does the Minnesota SOE validation last?
- Who can we contact if we have questions?

### **Can any school apply for Minnesota School of Excellence (MN SOE) validation?**

Any Minnesota elementary or middle level school community may seek Minnesota SOE validation provided the school's principal is a member of MESPA. Regardless of whether or not a school seeks validation as a Minnesota School of Excellence, any school may use the Minnesota SOE program as a school improvement process.

### **When is the letter of intent to seek Minnesota SOE validation due?**

A letter indicating a school community's intent to seek MN SOE validation is due in the MESPA office by October 1. Please mail it to the address below under "When is the application due?" or fax it to: (651) 999-7311.

### **Is there a fee for taking part in the Minnesota SOE program?**

Yes. An application fee of \$100 (payable to MESPA) is due with the completed application.

### **When is the application due?**

The completed application (Part 1: self-study; Part 2: building on strengths and planning for improvement), application fee, and signed verification page are due in the MESPA office by June 1. Please direct them to:

Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association  
1667 N. Snelling Avenue, Suite C101  
St. Paul, MN 55108  
Attn: Minnesota School of Excellence Program

e-mail: [mespa@mespa.net](mailto:mespa@mespa.net)  
Attn: Minnesota School of Excellence Program



## Frequently Asked MN SOE Questions, with answers!

Can any school apply for Minnesota SOE validation?

When is the letter of intent due?

Is there a fee for taking part in the Minnesota SOE program?

When is the application due?

What does a completed application look like?

Can we include additional materials with our application?

How long does the Minnesota SOE validation last?

Who can we contact if we have questions?

### What does a completed application look like?

Electronic copies of the blank Minnesota SOE application (Part 1, self-study; Part 2, building on strengths and planning for improvement) may be found on the MESPA Web site at [www.mespa.net](http://www.mespa.net) under *Professional Development*.

The completed application (Parts 1 and 2) should be submitted at the same time electronically and in paper form. The electronic submission should include all data tables, but will not include signatures. The paper materials may be bound in a three-ring or other binder. Please include:

- the completed six-page checklist from the Minnesota School of Excellence Self-Study (application Part 1)
- the completed plan for building on strengths and planning for improvement (application Part 2)
- data printouts from the Minnesota Department of Education Web site and other applicable data sources, to support answers in standard 5 (Knowledge and Data)
- a page of signatures from your school community verifying the application

**Note:** If your school has applied for the Parent Involvement Schools of Excellence Certification through the National PTA, that application may be used in place of the Minnesota SOE standard 6 (community involvement).

### Can we include additional materials with our application?

Yes. An optional CD may be submitted with your application – showing evidence of your school community's strengths and best practices. However, these materials are optional and do not have bearing on a school's validation. The MN School of Excellence Committee may not have time to view materials that are not part of the self-study or strength/improvement plan.

### How long does the Minnesota SOE validation last?

The Minnesota SOE validation remains in effect for seven years. After that time has passed, MESPA encourages school communities to reinitiate the process of self-study and submit a new application.

### Who may we contact if we have questions?

If you have any questions, please contact Matt Dorschner, a member of the Minnesota SOE Committee, or the MESPA office:

- Matt Dorschner, chair, Minnesota School of Excellence Program: 952-556-6710; [dorschnerm@district112.org](mailto:dorschnerm@district112.org)
- Olivia Gault, MESPA Director of Professional Development: 651-999-731; [ogault@mespa.net](mailto:ogault@mespa.net)
- For a list of School of Excellence Committee members and their e-mail addresses, please visit the MESPA Web site at [www.mespa.net](http://www.mespa.net) and click on *About MESPA* and *Committees*.

# Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association



## Application Part 1: Self-Study

**The Minnesota School of Excellence Program promotes excellence through a rigorous evaluation process that showcases dynamic schools of the 21st century.**

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Rev. 2010

School name: \_\_\_\_\_ District name and number: \_\_\_\_\_



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School name: \_\_\_\_\_ District name and number: \_\_\_\_\_



## Standard 1 – Learning Centered

Balance management and leadership roles to lead schools in ways that place student and adult learning at the center.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use this table to assess the standard of leadership in your school community.</li> <li>Key indicators of school community leadership are grouped under five strategies to develop and hone effective leadership.</li> <li>For each Indicator, select the corresponding column 5-1, or N: 5 indicating <i>Outstanding</i> and N indicating <i>No Basis for Judgment</i>.</li> </ul>	Outstanding	Average		Below Average		No Basis for Judgment
	5	4	3	2	1	N
<b>1A. Stay informed of the continually changing context for teaching and learning.</b>						
The school possesses a culture of regular discourse about emerging knowledge, trends, and changes in the society.						
Short-term implications for attaining the school's vision are identified.						
Long-term implications for attaining the school's vision are identified.						
<b>1B. Embody learner-centered leadership.</b>						
Everyone in the school community is expected to be a continuous learner.						
The learning culture exhibits the core values of reflection, inquiry and emerging knowledge.						
The learning culture exhibits the core values of shared understanding and collaboration.						
The learning culture exhibits the core values of excellence in results and advocacy for quality learning.						
<b>1C. Capitalize on the leadership skills of others.</b>						
A shared leadership culture builds on the alignment of everyone's leadership style, skill and experience, based on the work to be done.						
Shared leadership creates shared responsibility for implementation and accountability for learning results.						
<b>1D. Align operations to support student, adult and school learning needs.</b>						
The principal, teachers, staff, and stakeholders ensure allocation of school resources (time, people and financial) is equitable.						
The principal, teachers, staff, and stakeholders ensure allocation of school resources is determined by students' academic, emotional, social, and physical needs.						
Schedules, assignments and resources are aligned to the changing needs of students, adults and the school community.						
<b>1E. Advocate for efforts to ensure that policies are aligned to effective teaching and learning.</b>						
School, district and community leaders engage in ongoing dialogue, advocacy and action for changes in local, state, national and federal policies that support high performance of students and adults.						

School name: \_\_\_\_\_ District name and number: \_\_\_\_\_



## Standard 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.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use this table to assess the standard of leadership in your school community.</li> <li>Key indicators of school community leadership are grouped under four strategies to develop and hone effective leadership.</li> <li>For each indicator, select the corresponding column 5-1, or N: 5 indicating <i>Outstanding</i> and N indicating <i>No Basis for Judgment</i>.</li> </ul>	Outstanding	Average		Below Average		No Basis for Judgment
	5	4	3	2	1	N

### 2A. Build consensus on a vision that reflects the core values of the school community.

Everyone describes the school as a learning community that continuously examines the alignment of teaching and administrative practices with the school's vision, mission and core beliefs.						
Elements of the vision are evident in the daily language, decisions and ethical actions of almost all engaged stakeholders.						

### 2B. Value and use diversity to enhance the learning of the entire school community.

The entire school community actively works to sustain a learning community that values diverse people, ideas, perspectives and experiences.						
The entire school community honors, supports and values diversity as a way to increase learning, not as a barrier to learning.						
The principal and teachers continuously seek to engage all parents as equal partners in supporting student learning and growth.						
The school strategic action plan incorporates diverse parent voices, knowledge, skills and experiences to support high performance of students and adults.						

### 2C. Broaden the framework for child development beyond academics.

The principal, teachers, and stakeholders consistently implement a balanced whole child learning culture for all students with in- and out-of-school learning experiences provided by the school and community.						
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### 2D. Develop a learning culture that is adaptive, collaborative, innovative and supportive.

The principal, administrators, teachers, staff and some stakeholders regularly examine the implications of diverse people, ideas, perspectives and experiences in supporting increased student and adult performance.						
Everyone constantly examines his/her own background and experiences for biases that must change in order to better support diverse student and adult learning needs.						
Learning plans and instructional practices are reviewed, revised and adjusted based on performance.						

School name: \_\_\_\_\_ District name and number: \_\_\_\_\_





## Standard 3 – 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learners

Demand content and instruction that ensure student achievement.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use this table to assess the standard of leadership in your school community.</li> <li>Key indicators of school community leadership are grouped under four strategies to develop and hone effective leadership.</li> <li>For each indicator, select the corresponding column 5-1, or N: 5 indicating <i>Outstanding</i> and N indicating <i>No Basis for Judgment</i>.</li> </ul>	Outstanding	Average			Below Average		No Basis for Judgment
	5	4	3	2	1	N	
<b>3A. Ensure alignment of curriculum with district and school goals, standards, assessments and resources.</b>							
The principal, teachers and stakeholders revisit school goals based on changing school community demographics and community expectations for results.							
The school curriculum is repeatedly examined to ensure growth, refinement, realignment and new standards because of rapid advances in knowledge about how people learn and how to measure learning.							
The principal, administrators, teachers and students raise expectations for their learning and performance.							
<b>3B. Invest in a technology-rich culture that connects learning to the global society.</b>							
The principal, teachers and students work together to ensure the use of 21 <sup>st</sup> century technology to access information, communicate, learn and produce work.							
The school community is a learning environment in which the global society is made real through the investment in, and infusion of, digital learning for students and adults.							
<b>3C. Hire, retain and support high quality teachers.</b>							
The principal, teachers and stakeholders are engaged in determining how to recruit, celebrate, support and retain high-quality teachers.							
The principal, teachers and stakeholders find new resources to support creative professional development opportunities.							
<b>3D. Ensure rigorous, appropriate and relevant instruction for all students.</b>							
The principal, teachers and community leaders expect rigorous experiential learning and development for all students.							
Networks are constantly explored for sustainable community partnerships to support real-world learning and developmental needs of individual students.							

School name: \_\_\_\_\_ District name and number: \_\_\_\_\_



## Standard 4 –Quality Instruction

Create a culture of continuous learning for adults, tied to student learning and other school goals.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use this table to assess the standard of leadership in your school community.</li> <li>Key indicators of school community leadership are grouped under four strategies to develop and hone effective leadership.</li> <li>For each indicator, select the corresponding column 5-1, or N: 5 indicating <i>Outstanding</i> and N indicating <i>No Basis for Judgment</i>.</li> </ul>	Outstanding	Average			Below Average	No Basis for Judgment
	5	4	3	2	1	N

### 4A. Invest in comprehensive professional development for all adults to support student learning.

Adult learning is directly tied to student learning and developmental needs.						
Professional development models quality teaching practices and produces measurable changes in teaching and learning.						
The principal and teachers seek external resources for complementary professional development in order to maximize the effect of the investment.						

### 4B. Align the school-wide professional development plan with school and learning goals.

A comprehensive professional development plan is aligned with standards in the field and school learning goals.						
The implementation of the plan is monitored for rigor and relevance for adult learning.						
Professional development experiences are focused, require application of new knowledge and skills, are based on student learning data and are analyzed to identify new gaps in adult or student learning.						

### 4C. Encourage adults to broaden networks to bring new knowledge and resources to learning environments.

The principal, teachers and stakeholders create, lead, participate in and sustain local, state, national and international networks as a key strategy for accessing new knowledge and diverse resources to increase student and adult performance.						
The principal models effective use of technology to support networking and accessing resources for instructional leadership development.						

### 4D. Provide time, structure and opportunities for adults to plan, work, reflect and celebrate together to improve practice.

The learning culture is sustained by constant management of collaborative structures, which addresses the changing learning needs of students and adults.						
The inclusion of stakeholders and the use of technology encourage individual leadership to enhance planning, reflection and the work of the school.						
Celebration of adult and student learning permeates the daily culture.						

School name: \_\_\_\_\_ District name and number: \_\_\_\_\_



## Standard 5 – Knowledge and Data

Manage knowledge and data to inform decisions and measure progress of student, adult, and school performance.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use this table to assess the standard of leadership in your school community.</li><li>• Key indicators of school community leadership are grouped under five strategies to develop and hone effective leadership.</li><li>• For each indicator, select the corresponding column 5-1, or N: 5 indicating <i>Outstanding</i> and N indicating <i>No Basis for Judgment</i>.</li></ul>	Outstanding	Average			Below Average		No Basis for Judgment
	5	4	3	2	1	N	

### 5A. Make performance data a primary driver for school improvement.

The principal, teachers and stakeholders expect full access to data that measures the quality of student performance and management of operations of the school learning community.						
Intentional conversations regularly explore the link between the implications of performance data and improved practice.						

### 5B. Measure student, adult and school performance using a variety of data.

The principal, teachers, district staff, and stakeholders collaborate in creating new or modifying existing performance evaluation and accountability systems for student and adult learning.						
Performance evaluation and accountability systems include a variety of data: formative and summative, disaggregated and trend, quantitative and qualitative, and self-assessment and external assessment.						

### 5C. Build capacity of adults and students to use knowledge effectively to make decisions.

The entire school community is regularly engaged in data gathering and analysis.						
The principal, teachers, staff, and stakeholders view data as fundamental in guiding and creating systematic interventions to improve student, adult and school performance.						
Students are taught to use data to make informed decisions in their own learning.						

### 5D. Benchmark high-achieving schools with comparable demographics.

The principal, teachers and community leaders systematically search for benchmarks of administrative operations and instructional practices used by high-performing schools to meet specific student or adult learning needs.						
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### 5E. Make results transparent to the entire school community.

The principal, teachers and students, parents and community leaders seek to make the entire community aware of school results data.						
Every effort is made to ensure that the data and resulting knowledge is understood by all stakeholders and guides joint discussion and action about high-yield school and community strategies to increase student and adult performance.						

School name: \_\_\_\_\_ District name and number: \_\_\_\_\_



## Standard 6 –Community Engagement

**Actively engage the community to create shared responsibility for student performance and development.**

**NOTE:** If your school has applied for the Parent Involvement Schools of Excellence Certification through the National PTA, that application may be used in place of this standard. Please indicate the substitution in your Minnesota School of Excellence Application.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use this table to assess the standard of leadership in your school community.</li> <li>Key indicators of school community leadership are grouped under five strategies to develop and hone effective leadership.</li> <li>For each indicator, select the corresponding column 5-1, or N: 5 indicating <i>Outstanding</i> and N indicating <i>No Basis for Judgment</i>.</li> </ul>	Outstanding	Average			Below Average	No Basis for Judgment
	5	4	3	2	1	N

### 6A. Engage parents, families and the community to build relationships that support improved performance.

The principal, teachers and involved volunteers regularly engage with stakeholders to expand relationships and participation.						
Data about participation and student performance is compared with effective engagement programs and practices around the nation.						

### 6B. Serve as civic leaders who regularly engage with numerous stakeholders to support students, families and schools in more effective ways.

The principal, teachers, and staff are visible participants in community efforts identifying, advocating for, and securing supports for students and families.						
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### 6C. Shape partnerships to ensure multiple learning opportunities for students, in and out of school.

The school works collaboratively with the community to create, align and sustain a partnership system of in- and out-of-school learning experiences accessible to all students.						
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### 6D. Market the school's distinctive learning environment and results to inform parents' choices of options that best fit their children's needs.

District and school staff market the school and its uniqueness to the entire community.						
The school community shares responsibility for determining the best choices of options to fit each student's particular needs.						

### 6E. Advocate for high-quality education for every student.

The principal and teachers work collaboratively with parents and community leaders to educate and advocate for funding support for education, policies and legislation that support learning for every student.						
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School name: \_\_\_\_\_ District name and number: \_\_\_\_\_



## Adequate Yearly Progress Assessment

Did your school make Adequate Yearly Progress, as determined by the Minnesota Department of Education, during the year that you conducted the Minnesota School of Excellence process?

Indicate Yes or No for each category that is appropriate for your school.

### AYP Status

	Reading		Mathematics		Attendance Rate
	Participation Rate	% Proficiency	Participation Rate	% Proficiency	
All students					
American Indian/Alaskan Native					
Asian/Pacific Islander					
Hispanic					
Black					
White					
Limited English Proficient					
Special Education					
Free/ Reduced Price Lunch					

In determining whether a school or district has made adequate yearly progress, MDE looks at:

- **Participation:** Schools and districts must test 95% of students in tested grades. A school or district must have at least 40 students in a cell in order for it to count for participation. A school or district must have at least 20 students in a group in order for it to count for proficiency.
- **Proficiency:** Students in tested grades must show adequate yearly progress towards proficiency and be 100% proficient in reading and mathematics by 2013-14. Students must score above the "50" mark for their grade to be considered proficient. For example in third grade a score of 350 or above is proficient, in fourth grade a score of 450 or above is proficient, etc.
- **Attendance:** Elementary schools, middle schools and districts must have an average daily attendance rate of 90% or show acceptable growth towards 90% to make AYP. Attendance data is taken from the previous school year.

School name: \_\_\_\_\_ District name and number: \_\_\_\_\_



## Self-Study Process

### **Describe your self-study methodology.**

Provide a narrative describing how your school carried out the Minnesota School of Excellence self-study. Who was involved? What was their process?

School name: \_\_\_\_\_ District name and number: \_\_\_\_\_

# Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association



## Application Part 2:

### Building on Strengths and Planning for Improvement

The Minnesota School of Excellence Program promotes excellence through a rigorous evaluation process that showcases dynamic schools of the 21st century.

For an electronic version of this document, go to [www.mespa.net](http://www.mespa.net).  
Click on *Professional Development* and *Minnesota School of Excellence*.  
Rev. 2010

School name: \_\_\_\_\_ District name and number: \_\_\_\_\_



### Minnesota School of Excellence Application Part 2: Building on Strengths and Planning for Improvement

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After completing the Self-Study (application Part 1), use the Minnesota School of Excellence Application Part 2 to build on strengths and plan for improvement in your school community.

Excellence is a process. Let the self-study guide your growth. In Part 2 of the application, **show concretely using brief narratives to cite examples of:**

- How your school carried out the self-study process.
- Results demonstrated from building on the strengths evident in your self-study (indicators ranked 4 or 5);
- Plans for improvement to address areas that were not as strong (indicators ranked 1 or 2); and
- Results from the implementation of your plans.

**Note for Standard 5:** The Knowledge and Data standard is based on student and staff performance with data from your MCA scores and other applicable sources. In the application, attach documentation that supports your objectives in responding to areas from the self-study. Using multiple sources of data, including the Minnesota Department of Education Web site, illustrate your plans with concise, specific data examples.

School name: \_\_\_\_\_ District name and number: \_\_\_\_\_





## Signatures Verifying Application

Name of School

Name of School Principal

School District

Date of Application

Chair, Board of Education (type name)

signature

Superintendent, School District (type name)

signature

Principal (type name)

signature

Chair, Faculty Advisory Council (type name)

signature

Chair, Parent Group (type name)

signature

For MESPA office use: validation signatures

Date of MN School of Excellence validation \_\_\_\_\_

Chair, \_\_\_\_\_  
Minnesota School of Excellence Program Committee

President, \_\_\_\_\_  
Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association

Executive Director, \_\_\_\_\_  
Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association

School name: \_\_\_\_\_ District name and number: \_\_\_\_\_



## General Information about the School Community

### Describe the school setting.

Provide a brief narrative snapshot of the school in one page. Include a summary of the school's mission or vision in the statement.

School name: \_\_\_\_\_ District name and number: \_\_\_\_\_



## Standard 1 – Learning Centered

Balance management and leadership roles to lead schools in ways that place student and adult learning at the center.

**What results did your school community demonstrate for Standard 1 in your MN School of Excellence Application Part 1 (Self-Study)?**

Let the self-study guide your growth. For each strategy on the following pages, show concretely using brief narratives to cite examples of:

- How your school carried out the self-study process.
- Results demonstrated from building on the strengths evident in your self-study (indicators ranked 4 or 5);
- Plans for improvement to address areas that were not as strong (indicators ranked 1 or 2); and
- Results from the implementation of your plans.

**1A. Stay informed of the continually changing context for teaching and learning.**

**1B. Embody learner-centered leadership.**

**1C. Capitalize on the leadership skills of others.**

**1D. Align operations to support student, adult, and school learning needs.**

**1E. Advocate for efforts to ensure that policies are aligned to effective teaching and learning.**

**NOTE: THIS IS AN ABRIDGED VERSION OF THE APPLICATION. In the actual application, this page is followed by five pages corresponding to each of the five Standard 1 strategies listed above.**

School name: \_\_\_\_\_ District name and number: \_\_\_\_\_



## Standard 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.

**What results did your school community demonstrate for Standard 2 in your MN School of Excellence Application Part 1 (Self-Study)?**

Let the self-study guide your growth. For each strategy on the following pages, show concretely using brief narratives to cite examples of:

- How your school carried out the self-study process.
- Results demonstrated from building on the strengths evident in your self-study (indicators ranked 4 or 5);
- Plans for improvement to address areas that were not as strong (indicators ranked 1 or 2); and
- Results from the implementation of your plans.

**2A. Build consensus on a vision that reflects the core values of the school community.**

**2B. Value and use diversity to enhance the learning of the entire school community.**

**2C. Broaden the framework for child development beyond academics.**

**2D. Develop a learning culture that is adaptive, collaborative, innovative and supportive.**

**NOTE: THIS IS AN ABRIDGED VERSION OF THE APPLICATION.** In the actual application, this page is followed by four pages corresponding to each of the four Standard 2 strategies listed above.

School name: \_\_\_\_\_ District name and number: \_\_\_\_\_



## Standard 3 – 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learners

Demand content and instruction that ensure student achievement.

**What results did your school community demonstrate for Standard 3 in your MN School of Excellence Application Part 1 (Self-Study)?**

Let the self-study guide your growth. For each strategy on the following pages, show concretely using brief narratives to cite examples of:

- How your school carried out the self-study process.
- Results demonstrated from building on the strengths evident in your self-study (indicators ranked 4 or 5);
- Plans for improvement to address areas that were not as strong (indicators ranked 1 or 2); and
- Results from the implementation of your plans.

**3A. Ensure alignment of curriculum with district and school goals, standards, assessments and resources.**

**3B. Invest in a technology-rich culture that connects learning to the global society.**

**3C. Hire, retain and support high quality teachers.**

**3D. Ensure rigorous, appropriate and relevant instruction for all students.**

**NOTE: THIS IS AN ABRIDGED VERSION OF THE APPLICATION.** In the actual application, this page is followed by four pages corresponding to each of the four Standard 3 strategies listed above.

School name: \_\_\_\_\_ District name and number: \_\_\_\_\_



## Standard 4 – Quality Instruction

Create a culture of continuous learning for adults, tied to student learning and other school goals.

**What results did your school community demonstrate for Standard 4 in your MN School of Excellence Application Part 1 (Self-Study)?**

Let the self-study guide your growth. For each strategy on the following pages, show concretely using brief narratives to cite examples of:

- How your school carried out the self-study process.
- Results demonstrated from building on the strengths evident in your self-study (indicators ranked 4 or 5);
- Plans for improvement to address areas that were not as strong (indicators ranked 1 or 2); and
- Results from the implementation of your plans.

**4A. Invest in comprehensive professional development for all adults to support student learning.**

**4B. Align the school-wide professional development plan with school and learning goals.**

**4C. Encourage adults to broaden networks to bring new knowledge and resources to learning environments.**

**4D. Provide time, structure and opportunities for adults to plan, work, reflect and celebrate together to improve practice.**

**NOTE: THIS IS AN ABRIDGED VERSION OF THE APPLICATION.** In the actual application, this page is followed by four pages corresponding to each of the four Standard 4 strategies listed above.

School name: \_\_\_\_\_ District name and number: \_\_\_\_\_



## Standard 5 – Knowledge and Data

Manage knowledge and data to inform decisions and measure progress of student, adult, and school performance.

**What results did your school community demonstrate for Standard 5 in your MN School of Excellence Application Part 1 (Self-Study)?**

Let the self-study guide your growth. For each strategy on the following pages, show concretely using brief narratives to cite examples of:

- How your school carried out the self-study process.
- Results demonstrated from building on the strengths evident in your self-study (indicators ranked 4 or 5);
- Plans for improvement to address areas that were not as strong (indicators ranked 1 or 2); and
- Results from the implementation of your plans.

**5A. Make performance data a primary driver for school improvement.**

**5B. Measure student, adult and school performance using a variety of data.**

**5C. Build capacity of adults and students to use knowledge effectively to make decisions.**

**5D. Benchmark high-achieving schools with comparable demographics.**

**5E. Make results transparent to the entire school community.**

**NOTE: THIS IS AN ABRIDGED VERSION OF THE APPLICATION.** In the actual application, this page is followed by five pages corresponding to each of the five Standard 5 strategies listed above.

School name: \_\_\_\_\_ District name and number: \_\_\_\_\_



## Standard 5 – Knowledge and Data

Manage knowledge and data to inform decisions and measure progress of student, adult, and school performance.

5A. – 5E.

Attach data summaries to support your conclusions.

- You do not need a separate data summary for each strategy.
- At a minimum, attach Minnesota Department of Education MCA data. If you choose, you also may include your district or NWEA data.

School name: \_\_\_\_\_ District name and number: \_\_\_\_\_





## Standard 6 – Community Engagement

Actively engage the community to create shared responsibility for student performance and development.

**NOTE: PTA certification option**

If your school has applied for the Parent Involvement Schools of Excellence Certification through the National PTA, that application may be used in place of this standard. Please check the box below if your school is using the PTA certification.

☐ We are submitting the PTA "Parent Involvement School of Excellence Certification" in place of this standard.

**What results did your school community demonstrate for Standard 6 in your MN School of Excellence Application Part 1 (Self-Study)?**

Let the self-study guide your growth. For each strategy on the following pages, show concretely using brief narratives to cite examples of:

- How your school carried out the self-study process.
- Results demonstrated from building on the strengths evident in your self-study (indicators ranked 4 or 5);
- Plans for improvement to address areas that were not as strong (indicators ranked 1 or 2); and
- Results from the implementation of your plans.

**6A. Engage parents, families and the community to build relationships that support improved performance.**

**6B. Serve as civic leaders who regularly engage with numerous stakeholders to support students, families and schools in more effective ways.**

**6C. Shape partnerships to ensure multiple learning opportunities for students, in and out of school.**

**6D. Market the school's distinctive learning environment and results to inform parents' choices of options that best fit their children's needs.**

**6E. Advocate for high-quality education for every student.**

**NOTE: THIS IS AN ABRIDGED VERSION OF THE APPLICATION. In the actual application, this page is followed by five pages corresponding to each of the five Standard 6 strategies listed above.**

School name: \_\_\_\_\_ District name and number: \_\_\_\_\_



## Plans for Responding to Non-AYP Status

### **Establish school improvement plans to address AYP status.**

If it was determined your school not make Adequate Yearly Progress in any categories (see page 8 in your self-study, Part 1 of your Minnesota School of Excellence Application), what improvement plans have been put in place to address the non-AYP status?

School name: \_\_\_\_\_ District name and number: \_\_\_\_\_