

MEDIA RELEASE



Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association
1667 North Snelling Avenue, Suite C101
St. Paul, MN 55108

Contact:

Matt Dorschner, Minnesota School of Excellence Program Chair
952-556-6710
Olivia Gault, MESPA Director of Communications
651-999-7310

For Immediate Release



*Michael Conway, principal
Wyoming Elementary School*

Wyoming Elementary School Validated as 2010-2011 Minnesota School of Excellence

(St. Paul, MN, August 2010) — Wyoming Elementary School, Independent School District #831 (Forest Lake Area Schools), is validated as a 2010-2011 Minnesota School of Excellence.

The Minnesota School of Excellence Program promotes excellence through a rigorous evaluation process that showcases dynamic schools of the 21st century. Established by the Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA), the program is recognized by the Minnesota Department of Education, as well as the National Association of Elementary School Principals.

MESPA endorses schools whose principal, staff, students, and community -- working as a team -- demonstrate the desire to strengthen education by successfully undertaking this research-based school improvement process. Aligned with six national standards (Learning Centered, Diverse Communities, 21st Century Learners, Quality Instruction, Knowledge and Data, Community Engagement), the Minnesota School of Excellence Program includes a systematic self-study, development of a school improvement plan, and implementation of the plan. "As Commissioner, I see, too often, temporary quick fixes that are never sustained," said Commissioner Alice Seagren, Minnesota Department of Education. "This program has brought the sustained practice of professional development around the analysis of student need, resulting in improved academic achievement."

“In this time of high stakes testing and federal Race to the Top tenets for reform, the quality of our school communities can far too easily be misrepresented by single-purposed high stakes tests,” said P. Fred Storti, MESPA executive director. “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,” Storti continued.

“Public education promises that our schools possess the capacity and vision to purposefully meet the changing needs of their communities,” said Matt Dorschner, Minnesota School of Excellence Program chair, and principal of Chanhassen Elementary, Eastern Carver County Schools. “The Minnesota School of Excellence Program provides a dynamic, fluid process for measuring where a school is and revealing where it needs to go. This creates the opportunity for everyone in the school community to understand and connect to their role in the school's accomplishments and student achievement.”

Michael Conway is the principal of Wyoming Elementary School, a suburban school with 638 grade K-6 students. “Wyoming Elementary provides a stimulating and challenging curriculum, develops a healthy self-concept in each person, and a positive attitude toward immediate and life-long learning,” said Conway. “Together with community and family support we will encourage respect for others and personal responsibility.”

The school’s mission statement is posted in the main lobby to greet all who enter the school’s front doors. *For the well being of each student, the Wyoming elementary School staff continually strives in our mission to achieve the following:*

To develop a spirit of cooperative effort and effective communications between students, parents, teachers support staff and administration.

To strive for the highest level of academic achievement.

To foster growth in the development of a positive self-image.

To develop self-discipline and responsibility for personal behavior.

To promote the importance of learning as a life-long need.

To instill respect for the rights of other people and their cultures.

To develop skills necessary to become a contributing member of our democratic society.

In an effort to achieve our mission, we will monitor and evaluate the continual process of being an effective school.

As principal, Mike Conway, encourages and supports a strong learning community, and advocates for continual learning opportunities for staff, students, and families. He supports the implementation of The Daily 5 and Patricia Pavelka Guided Reading management systems, 6+1 Writing Traits, Fountas and Pinnell literacy assessment, a large Guided Reading library, Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, and the Peaceful School Bus Program. 21st century skills are enhanced through technology integration such as SMARTBoards and SOS (Sharing Our Smarts), iPod Touches, Student Response Systems, and daily student-led live news broadcasts.

Wyoming offers differentiated instruction in classrooms, as well as strategies to meet the needs of diverse learners. Academic opportunities begin with two Kindergarten options: an all-day, every-other day program; and a tuition-based all-day, every-day program (Kindergarten Plus). Before and after school programs include: Extended Day (for identified students), math power enrichment, Future Problem Solving, and community education classes such as Mad Scientist and Watch Me Draw. Wyoming is committed to having physical education experiences every day through either PE follow-up or with a PE specialist.

Wyoming Elementary has a core of very involved parents who help and support the school. An average of 40 parent and community volunteers visit Wyoming Elementary throughout each school day and provide additional academic support. Parents are involved in curriculum development at the district level. Parents are recruited to be members of curriculum committees. When these opportunities arise, parents at Wyoming Elementary are encouraged to participate.

Wyoming Elementary is also connected to the community through experiences such as an Orchestra Hall partnership, Audubon, Lee and Rose Warner and Wargo Nature Centers, the Chisago County Water Expo, Wyoming local businesses, Fairview Lakes Regional Medical Center, First State Bank of Wyoming, Wyoming Fire and Police Departments, Forest Lake American Legion and DARE (Drug Alcohol Resistance Education). The school's mentor program pairs adults in the community with students.

In an effort to create a partnership between school and home, Wyoming Elementary has implemented numerous academic supports and enrichment activities. Students and families are provided opportunities to extend learning beyond the school day with programs such as: Family Math Nights, Book Fair, Fun Run/Walk, Band, Orchestra and general music concerts, Mighty Multipliers, Math Power, Student Council, Math Masters of Minnesota and other courses offered through Forest Lake Community Education.

Conway noted: “Wyoming School is built on a solid foundation of brick and mortar but its heartbeat is the families and staff that make Wyoming Elementary what it is. The Wyoming staff thanks our school board, Superintendent Dr. Linda Madsen, and the community of Wyoming for all their support. A special thank you to our Staff Development team (Ann Bothun, Carol Geiger, Cheryl Runquist, Connie Glowacki, Karen Richards, Kathy Mc Morrow, Kathy Wright, Katie Edwards, and Chairperson Mary Gookins) for spearheading the MESPA Minnesota School of Excellence process. Wyoming Elementary is honored to be receiving this validation and will continue to strive for school improvement.”

In addition to *Wyoming Elementary School*, eight other elementary schools achieved recognition as 2010-2011 Minnesota Schools of Excellence: *East Union Elementary School*, Chaska (Eastern Carver County Schools, ISD #112); *Franklin Elementary School*, Eveleth (Eveleth-Gilbert Public Schools, ISD #2154); *King Elementary School*, Deer River (Deer River Public Schools, ISD #317); *Marshall Primary Level: Park Side and West Side Elementary Schools*, Marshall (Marshall Public Schools, ISD #413); *Poplar Bridge Elementary School*, Bloomington (Bloomington Public Schools, ISD #271); *Rippleside Elementary School*, Aitkin (Aitkin Public Schools, ISD #001); *Shannon Park Elementary*, Rosemount (Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan Schools, ISD #196); *Triton Elementary School*, Dodge Center (Triton Public Schools, ISD #2125).

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Minnesota School of Excellence Program Mission and History

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

The Minnesota School of Excellence Program was established in 1986, combining the findings of current research on effective schooling with the practical on-site experience of working principals and education staff. It offers a comprehensive school improvement process that results in student learning growth. This school improvement process focuses on six national standards and involves a systematic self-study, development of a school improvement plan, and implementation of the plan based on demonstrated results. Since the program’s inception, 149 schools have earned Minnesota School of Excellence validation.

MESPA Mission and History

The Minnesota Elementary School Principals’ Association is dedicated to promoting and improving education for children and youth, strengthening the role as educational leader for elementary and middle level principals, and collaborating with partners in education to assist in achieving these goals.

MESPA is the professional association of Minnesota’s elementary and middle level principals. With the vision to “be the premiere resource for preparing today’s principals for tomorrow and a strong leading voice for public education” and a statewide membership over 950 principals, MESPA has represented Minnesota’s principals since 1950. MESPA is affiliated with the National Association of Elementary School Principals and its 29,500 members nationwide.