



Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association

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Washington Elementary Named a 2025–26 Minnesota School of Excellence

Washington Elementary earns statewide honor for its commitment to high expectations, using diversity to enhance learning, and strong community partnerships.

(Roseville, MN, September 2, 2025) —Washington Elementary has been named a 2025-26 Minnesota School of Excellence, an honor awarded by the Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA). This status is given to a select group of Minnesota schools that sustained a one-to two-year commitment of self-reflection and underwent a peer review. The research-based reflection is centered around six standards of effective schools. Washington Elementary stands out for setting high expectations for students in an environment that acknowledges, fosters, and celebrates diversity.

This recognition matters now more than ever. Schools are being called to meet the academic and emotional needs of all learners. Specifically, Washington excels in two ways: 1) they have built consensus on a vision that reflects the core values of the school community and 2) they value and use diversity of all kinds to enhance the learning of the entire school community. These go hand-in-hand as their mission and vision include equity, inclusion and excellence, in addition to empowerment and community partnerships.

“Being recognized as a Minnesota School of Excellence is a powerful testament to our core values and the shared vision of our entire community,” Principal Ann Haggerty commented. “This achievement highlights our commitment to fostering an inclusive environment where all students are empowered to lead and learn, and where we intentionally use our diverse community to enrich the educational experience for everyone. We are deeply grateful for this honor, which celebrates the collaborative spirit of our teachers, staff, students, and families.”

Living Their Vision Through Practice

First, it's clear that the school's teaching and administrative practices are aligned with their vision through the multitude of examples of programs and support. Just one highlight is their intentional selection of read-aloud books, which directly aligns to their vision of equity and inclusion. They choose books that have protagonists from underrepresented communities. In their application, they emphasized that this allows students to “engage in meaningful discussions about empathy, respect, and inclusivity. These practices not only align with the school's core values but are also reflected in the interactions and language used by students and staff.”

Programs that Support Excellence and Equity

Washington Elementary furthers their commitments to excellence, equity, leadership empowerment and community partnerships through programs across grade levels. For example, WIN (What I Need) time offers daily targeted support in math and reading with classroom, intervention, and special education teachers. Teachers have reported, “WIN time has been instrumental in helping students close learning gaps and build confidence in their academic abilities.”

The Leader in Me program, coupled with the Second Step SEL curriculum, contribute to a schoolwide culture of leadership, empathy, and responsibility. These skills are essential in creating a positive school climate.

Strong Family and Community Partnerships

To highlight their community partnerships, Washington sees families as essential partners. As such, Washington provides different ways to strengthen the home to school connection. These include: Multi-Language Learner Parent Circle sessions, grade-level family events and monthly Washington Wildcat Rallies to name a few. They have also partnered with the Greater Mankato Diversity Council, which provides lessons that fosters an understanding and respect for cultures in the community. “By offering these lessons, Washington

Elementary strengthens the learning experience for all students and cultivates an environment where diversity is embraced.”

Washington has created a learning environment that honors all students. From individual students’ Wildly Important Goals (WIGs) to hallways decorated with greetings in multiple languages, to their inclusive Level 3 Life Skills special education classroom, the school’s message is clear: everyone belongs.

“Washington Elementary is a powerful example of what happens when a school community lives and breathes its mission and vision—supporting every student and building strong partnerships with families,” said Michelle Krell, Executive Director of the Minnesota Elementary School Principals’ Association. “Their School of Excellence designation is a reflection of intentional work being done to create a learning environment where every child feels valued, challenged, and supported.”

They emphasized in their application, “As we continue to prioritize diversity in our teaching and learning practices, Washington Elementary remains committed to ensuring that all members of our school community feel honored, respected, and included.”

About the MN School of Excellence Program

The Minnesota School of Excellence program is grounded in research, based on six standards of effective schools and is peer reviewed. It’s a one- to two- year-long journey of reflection, learning, and goal-setting. The Minnesota School of Excellence program emphasizes that excellence is not an end goal—it’s a process. It’s built day by day, decision by decision, through reflection, responsiveness, and a shared belief that growth is always possible.

Congratulations to Washington Elementary for this extraordinary achievement.