



# *A Marine Area Community School* **grove** ELEMENTARY


News from January 2017

## OUR MISSION

**Grove Elementary** will utilize the natural resources, history, arts, and civic stewardship of the community as a foundation for the study of language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, physical education, art, and other curriculum subjects.

The place-based learning environment will be student centered, designed by teachers, and reinforced and supported by the local community.

## Announcing “Grove Elementary”!


 We are thrilled to formally announce the official name and logo of the charter: “Grove Elementary: A Marine Area Community School.”

MACS board member Jon Dettmann worked with the Minneapolis design firm Ultra Creative and company partner, Marine on St. Croix resident Sharon Gorney, to develop the name and logo. At the November 19, 2016, board workshop, Director Dettmann noted that the name is unique, short, memorable, and has connotations that represent the mission of the school (such as learning, growing, community, and outdoors). “A brand is surprisingly important, even for a school,” Director Dettmann explained. “If it is done well, a brand is more than a logo. It is a simple and immediate way to communicate who you are, and what you will provide to your families and community.” The design group went through many ideas associated with the river and the outdoors and determined that “Grove” is the first choice. At the December 2016 business meeting, the board formally approved the logo and name.

The school’s new online presence will be rolled out soon, with the new website domain of [groveelementary.org](http://groveelementary.org) being developed and Facebook name updated. Charter marketing committee volunteer Ele Anderson joked, “Time was invented so that everything doesn’t happen all at once. Our first step is to announce the name and brand to our amazingly supportive community and families through this newsletter.”

Stay tuned for more leaves to grow on our MACS tree!

## The Latest on the School’s Location

 Grove Elementary is getting closer and closer to being able to make a facility location decision. At the January 2017 business meeting, the board unanimously decided to enter into lease negotiations with the owners of the Wilder Forest buildings, which are located on Norell Avenue about six miles southwest of Marine and about nine miles northwest of downtown Stillwater. Meetings with May Township will also be scheduled.

Board Chair Kristina Smitten explained the process: “From nearly the start of our planning, we’ve been considering three locations: the current Marine Elementary building, the former Concordia Language Village buildings at Wilder, and Christ Lutheran Church in Marine. Because District 834’s Board of Directors imposed a stay on itself due to the ongoing legal situation, District 834 leadership has felt unable to discuss the possible sale of the Marine building. We are proactively moving forward—we need to for our students and our community—and we are absolutely thrilled about the opportunities presented by the Wilder facilities.”

MACS Director Lisa White added that the Wilder site will fit very well into the school’s mission. “We are lucky that the greater Marine area offers so much in the way of natural resources, local and Minnesota history, arts, and civic stewardship. With its 900 acres of forests, lakes, wetlands, prairies, hiking and cross-country ski trails, and a wildlife sanctuary accessible by trail, Wilder provides a natural backdrop for the teaching team’s curriculum decisions. There is also a large grassed area and extensive wooded areas for exercise, exploration, and play.”

**Grove Elementary • A Marine Area Community School**  
PO Box 178 • Marine on St Croix, MN 55047

**[info@marineareaschool.org](mailto:info@marineareaschool.org) • [www.marineareaschool.org](http://www.marineareaschool.org)**  
**[www.facebook.com/marineareacommunityschool](https://www.facebook.com/marineareacommunityschool)**

## Staying Up to Date:

### The Federal CSP Grant

The Federal Charter School Program (CSP) grant application revision was sent to the Minnesota Department of Education in January!

New charter schools are eligible to apply for CSP grants ranging from \$100,000–\$225,000 (depending on the number of enrolled students) each year for up to three years. The grants are federal dollars administered by state departments of education.

The initial grant application needed minor revisions and clarification. An extensive team headed by MACS board members Lisa White and Lisa Dochniak updated the application. The school's authorizer (The Minnesota Guild) and many charter and education professionals put many hours of work into the document, which details the founding team's vision and structures for the school. Director White explained that we now wait to see if we are approved, and for how much.

### Hiring Teachers? Read On:

Grove Elementary's founding board has been revving up the hiring process. At the December 17, 2016, workshop, board members met via Skype with education consultant Nathan Eklund to discuss the process of hiring of a school administrator. At the following January business meeting, because the school will be teacher-powered, the board expanded and moved the process forward to include members of the teaching team as a whole.

Grove Elementary will hire seven teachers (grades kindergarten through sixth), and one school administrator. The position descriptions will be posted on key education employment bulletin boards and on our own website ([www.marineareaschool.org](http://www.marineareaschool.org)). The hiring committee will begin reviewing responses and set interview dates starting end of business on February 28, 2017.

## What We Mean By:

### "Teacher-Powered"

At Grove Elementary, the teaching team will be responsible for the learning program and have the autonomy to make specific decisions influencing the school's and therefore each child's success. When teachers are the decision-makers, they are innovative, use resources effectively, collaborate and engage more, and redefine success.

Grove's teaching team, including the school administrator, will set the schedule, evaluate colleagues, determine and broaden assessments, thoughtfully blend e-learning with traditional learning strategies, and promote positive discipline. They will select and integrate the curriculum into the place-based education model and will develop a scaffolded curriculum where students will build on prior learning experiences to meet state standards, such as identifying characteristics of living things (grade K), observing and noting changes as living things grow (grade 2), and controlling variables to note how environment impacts growth (grade 5).

The teaching team will determine school-level policies, set the budget, address issues in direct and respectful ways, and (with help from the community) will design and implement enrichments for students such as art, field trips, music, languages, and campus maintenance. They will also have the responsibility to identify needed professional development.

### "Place-Based Education"

Grove will implement authentic, accessible, place-based education and enhance learning by integrating community resources (local history, arts, natural resources, and civics) into the content areas (math, arts, health and physical education, reading, language arts, science, and social studies). Examples include using math and science skills to build and place birdhouses in the forest area

behind the school and regular visits to Marine's Stonehouse Museum to explore artifacts that directly impacted the history of our town and state.

Research has shown that place-based education has many benefits to student learning, including fostering lifelong civic engagement and helping boost student academic achievement. An extensive list of volunteer community resources has been compiled and will continue to be built upon by parents, community members, the school administrator, and teaching team and staff. The teaching team will be responsible for determining how to best use these community resources and for implementing the resources into the curriculum.

### "Project-Based Learning"

Project-based learning is an effective way to engage all students in the learning process as they embark on real-world exploration. Research shows that students led in a project-based approach developed greater content knowledge, showed more engagement, and demonstrated greater reasoning skills than students experiencing more traditional forms of instruction.

For this interdisciplinary approach to be most effective, devoting a time of day (such as during normally scheduled science or social studies content, depending on the topic) and varied learning spaces (such as indoor "makerspace" or outdoor forests, gardens, or historical buildings) foster authenticity and immediate application in an environment with a wealth of opportunity for learning. The teacher's goal is to motivate students toward 21st century skills like critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration along with the basic skills of research, reading, and writing for a specific purpose.

We will add references and further reading notes on our website.