



# MINNDEPENDENT

To: Executive Committee

From: Tim Benz

Re: President's Report – March, 2022

## Enrollment

The Minnesota Department of Education released official enrollment figures for public, nonpublic and homeschooled on February 25. Reported enrollment in nonpublic schools was 69,971 students, a growth of 5.7%. That is the second consecutive year of growth (0.3% in 2020-21). There have not been consecutive years of growth in decades. There was growth at every grade level, with the majority in elementary grades.

The Star Tribune did a story on the data, and I was interviewed for a perspective on nonpublic growth. Article is linked here <https://www.startribune.com/minnesota-public-school-enrollment-drops-but-decline-is-less-severe-than-last-year/600150589/>.

## Federal funds

EANS I and EANS II are still in process. We have been in communication with MDE on planning for remaining funds that are not spent by eligible participating schools in these programs. Based on the federal legislation, these funds revert back to the Governor's Fund (GEER), and he can designate as he chooses. We have received assurances, not guarantees, that these funds would revert back for nonpublic purposes. Designing the program will take some time, and we anticipate facilitating a survey for nonpublic schools to identify areas of need moving forward. Spending windows for the funds are 9/2023 (EANS I) and 9/2024 (EANSII), but there is some belief congress may extend these deadlines. The public schools are also finding it challenging to spend their massive amounts of funding within their spending periods.

## Legislative update

The legislature is fairly quiet. The State of Minnesota has a \$9.3 billion surplus, which has created a call for more spending from the House of Representatives. The Senate is more focused on tax cuts. One primary issue identified by Governor and legislature is backfilling the Unemployment Insurance Fund, which was depleted during the pandemic. We have met with several legislators on our legislative agenda, which can be found here <https://minndependent.org/advocacy/>. While there is receptivity to each issue, it will come down to willingness to spend vs. tax cuts and limited spending.

New legislative districts were released in February, which is done once every decade. This has led to several retirements and potential primary races between candidates from the same party. This creates



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lots of moving parts. Since we track nonpublic schools by legislative districts (senate and house), we will need to begin the tedious task of comparing previous districts to new districts and reassigning schools to their new districts. Michele can't wait 😊.

### Awards

The slate of award winners was announced on Tuesday, March 8. Lisa has begun outreach to schedule each award winner's individual video. The number of nominations increased significantly from previous 2 years. There was great diversity across our member schools and geography of nominations.

Sponsorships have been lagging. Several previous high-level sponsors have declined or have been delayed due to a variety of factors. We are currently at \$15,500 toward the budgeted goal of \$50,000. Follow-up, and new sponsors outreach continue. Premier, Leadership and Honor Teacher are three areas that currently lack secured sponsorships.

### Development

On the development report there is quite a variation in a couple areas – donors and Honor Fund revenue. As you'll recall, the delayed 2020 Education Awards (originally set for April, 2020) was conducted in December, 2020 and there were donors to that event that normally would have been in the 2019-20 year. In the Honor Fund, there have been several lapsed donors, including our largest individual donor. We believe some of this may have been due to the new name, and/or location. We have done extensive research with the USPS to see if there is mail lost somewhere and we further verified all of our change of address documentation is correct. One particular donor uses a donor advised fund, and we are still listed as our former name and location. The original contribution never arrived, and this donor is waiting until the company's records are updated to our new name and location. Based on our information, this information is triggered off federal IRS filings and 990 submission, which we completed in early 2021.

### Staffing

Debbie Kaliszewski will has indicated she will officially retire on April 30, 2022. The job has been posted in several outlets but have received very limited interest. In discussions with two individuals in the accounting field, which have confirmed they are having a difficult time finding candidates to fill similar roles in their firms. We have begun discussions about fractional, or contracted services to fill this role.