



October 2025 Newsletter

Dear friends of private and independent education,

MINNDEPENDENT is hiring! As you may have heard, our dear colleague Michele Skare will retire from MINNDEPENDENT after 15 years providing first-rate service to our member schools and partners. Her departure leaves a big hole in our team, but creates a fantastic opportunity for someone to be part of the small, but mighty MINNDEPENDENT team. [Learn more here and pass along to your network or colleagues.](#)

The 2025 [School Leadership Conference](#) was a homerun! Each year, this conference delivers A+ professional development, countless opportunities to network and a unique setting to “refill” a leader’s professional and personal bucket. If you are a member school, all materials from the conference can be accessed in the members-only area of our website. Need a reminder of your login information? [Contact Michele Skare](#) and she will get you set up.

One attendee shared, *“I started attending a few years ago and this was the best and most relevant conference for my needs. I will be back and will highly recommend and encourage other administrators to attend. It's better than many conferences and the cost is minimal. I'm not sure how you manage to do that.”* I could not have summarized it better myself – and thanks to our generous sponsors and partners, we can provide a top notch and meaningful experience.

A special welcome to the newest MINNDEPENDENT member schools - [Covenant Christian Academy](#) (Big Lake), [Immanuel Lutheran](#) (Lakefield), [Immanuel Lutheran-SILO](#) (Lewiston), [Immanuel Grace Lutheran](#) (Hutchinson), [Mary Queen of Peace](#) (Rogers), [Redeemer Christian Academy](#) (Wayzata) and [St. Mary's Catholic School](#) (Owatonna). Not yet a member? What are you waiting for? Join today to ensure you have access to STEM grants, high-quality professional development while bringing more horsepower to MINNDEPENDENT’s unified voice and advocacy. [Contact me](#) for more information.

Thank you for your support of private and independent education.

ASK THE PRESIDENT

Have a question about issues like school transportation, Title funds, current legislation, etc.? Want Tim's take on the Vikings season? Ask the President! Click the button below.

[Ask Tim](#)

MINNDEPENDENT has negotiated a discounted rate for member schools interested in participating in the [#SocialSchool4EDU](#) Membership Program

[READ MORE](#)

MINNDEPENDENT Jobs Board

Member schools can post job listings for free.

[READ MORE](#)

Hats & Mittens is a nonprofit committed to providing hats and mittens for local children in need. Learn more and get involved!



Tim Benz President

[READ MORE](#)

Share your school's news!

Whether it's a noteworthy student achievement, a remarkable teacher initiative, or a collective success that deserves recognition, we want to share it! Drop us line below.

[EMAIL US](#)

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WHERE MONEY MEANS MORE



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Thrivent Choice[®] celebrates 15 years of giving!

- **Is your school a Thrivent Choice Recipient?**
- **What does Thrivent Choice mean for your school?**

The Thrivent Choice charitable grant program engages Thrivent clients and Thrivent Member Networks by providing grants to support their favorite churches, nonprofit organizations and causes...like YOUR School. Thrivent clients receive Thrivent Choice Dollars they can direct to causes they care about.

15 Years of Generosity!

Let's celebrate 15 years of [Thrivent Choice®](#) and an impact of over \$620 million. This October, join in the celebration. When eligible members direct Choice Dollars®, their selected organization(s) could be one of 15 randomly selected to receive a \$15,000 grant from Thrivent.

If you've already directed Choice Dollars in October — thank you. Your organization(s) is entered. (Maximum one entry per organization).

Thank you for helping us make an impact — today and for the next 15 years to come.

Note: Winners will be notified by the end of November. You can check [here](#) to see which organizations received the grants.

If your school is not a [Thrivent Choice](#) Recipient contact OR if you'd like more information, please reach out.



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Help us find the newest member of the MINNDEPENDENT Team.

Are you, or is someone in your network, looking to join an organization that advocates and advances for the interests of private and independent schools? MINNDEPENDENT is the place for you!

We are hiring an [Administrative Assistant](#) who will be a vital team member of a high functioning and



connected organization serving more than 180 schools.

Interested and want to learn more? [Find details and more information here.](#)

STEM SCOOP

GET READY!

The 2026-2027 STEM GRANT PROGRAM LOI application process opens on November 4, 2025.

This opportunity is open to all member schools*.

Complete grant guidelines and the application link will be available in the November Newsletter.

(*Interested in becoming a member?? [Check our membership page](#) or [contact Tim Benz](#), MINNDEPENDENT president.)



Experience Aquaculture at the University of Minnesota

Minnesota Sea Grant is hosting two **FREE aquaculture-focused** teacher workshops at the University of Minnesota, Saint Paul campus. This 3-hour immersive, hands on experience will promote and prepare educators for the Great Lakes Aquaculture Challenge that begins in January and runs through April of 2026.

This program will be offered in two sessions on Thursday, November 13.

- **Morning Session:** 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM
- **Afternoon Session:** 2:00 PM – 5:00 PM

Participants will:

- Tour the Minnesota Sea Grant Aquaculture Lab
- Learn how we grow fish
- Take part in an engineering and design challenge to build a model aquaponic system

- Receive educational resources from Minnesota Sea Grant

Transportation will be provided to and from the Minneapolis Convention Center.

Cost: Free to attend [Click here to register](#)



Build Tech Skills and Confidence with Girls Who Code Clubs!

Start a free [Girls Who Code Club](#) for your students and get everything you need to build community, inspire curiosity, and show young people how coding connects to the world around them. Clubs meet just 1-2 hours per week and can run after school, during lunch, integrated into an existing program, or even online—whatever works for your schedule. Sign up and you'll get access to the free curriculum for 3rd-12th graders, training, and facilitation resources.

Ready to get started? Complete the Clubs Application at girlswhocode.com/clubsapply and make sure to list MINNDEPENDENT as your Community Partner on the application!



Innovating Science Education for All

Join the premier gathering for science and STEM educators. Bring your most innovative ideas, connect with fellow professionals and industry leaders, and leave with fresh insights and creative strategies to inspire imaginative learning and boost student engagement. Embark on your journey at NSTA Minn25 where future-driven knowledge and endless possibilities await!

[LEARN MORE](#) and [REGISTER](#)

Minnesota STEM Curriculum

[Bridge UP! Curriculum](#)

MnDOT's Bridge UP! curriculum provides free classroom resources for teachers using bridge design and construction principles as the foundation for learning.

[Cedar Creek Education Digital Library](#)

Library of mostly K-2 ecology activities from Cedar Creek Ecosystem Reserve in northern Minnesota.

[Chemistry Outreach](#)

Chemistry Outreach is a University of Minnesota program that does chemistry demonstrations and discusses chemistry careers in local schools and at larger events.

[Hamline University's Center for Global Environmental Education](#)

Discover K-12 online resources including engaging videos and interactive modules about storm drain education, the Mississippi Rivers, Lake Superior and more!

[Living River Online](#)

This online program demonstrates how organisms live within an ecosystem. Three interactive stations feature exciting videos and fun learning modules about floodplains, mussels, pike and the Mississippi River! The course explores different ways to look at the

[Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom Virtual Field Trips](#)

Virtual field trips to numerous Minnesota farms representing a diverse array of agriculture. Includes distance learning, in person, and connected curriculum.

[Energy Trailer, Minnesota State Energy Center of Excellence](#)

The Mobile Energy Classroom Trailer is a resource for teachers who would like to use tools and equipment to engage their classes deeply in energy generation, efficiency, and exploration labs. These are meant to be hands on opportunities to help meet classroom needs. Science, Technology, Engineering, Math, Agriculture, Career and Technical Education teachers are welcome to request the trailer.

[Minnesota Zoo's Educator Resources](#)

A wide array of activities, resources, and curriculum to support schools and youth groups. Explore Moose Mission, a new educational platform to learn about the science of moose in Minnesota.

[MnDOT's STEM Education and Outreach](#)

MnDOT has created new ways to help students explore STEM topics in the real world! Activities are free and easy to download or schedule.

[No Boundaries to the Boundary Waters](#)

An educational program of Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness designed to bring the ecology and wonder of the Boundary Waters into classrooms across Minnesota. Free units are provided, including teacher resources.

[STARBASE Minnesota](#) STEM Unit and Kits for Schools

Free Destination Mars kits and curriculum.

[Young Naturalists](#)

Minnesota Conservation Volunteer magazine's Young Naturalists series is designed to engage students with a wide variety of nonfiction topics on natural science and outdoor life.

National STEM Curriculum

[Agricultural Literacy Curriculum Matrix](#)

The National Agricultural Literacy Curriculum Matrix is an online, searchable, and standards-based curriculum map for K-12 teachers available through Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom.

[Click2Engineering Community of Practice](#)

Click2Engineering is an asynchronous, module-based online professional development program for after-school educators. Participants in this community of practice get to be a part of developing future learning experiences and will have

special access to existing Click2Engineering resources, including new curriculum and one-on-one coaching opportunities!

[Earth School](#)

Embark on 30 adventures through TED that will help you understand and celebrate our natural world, while learning about how dependent we are on our planet.

[Fractivities](#)

Fractivities are free, hands-on projects that teach fractal concepts in a fun, artistic way. Students utilize their math skills in real-world applications and also work together as a team to create large fractal designs.

[I am a Scientist](#)

"I Am A Scientist" is a collection of educational resources designed to challenge public misconceptions and inspire the next generation of STEM leaders. They use storytelling and creative lesson plans to introduce the multifaceted people, purposes, and pathways in STEM. Download digital and classroom resources including story kits, poster kits and spark kits.

[Maker Camp](#)

Maker Camp's project library includes tons of projects to create, discover and make.

[NASA STEM @ Home Resources](#)

Hands on activity ideas and videos split into K-4, 5-8, and 9-12, as well as e-books, virtual tours and apps, be a scientist talks, videos, coloring pages, puzzles, and more.

[Nature Conservancy Virtual Field Trips](#)

Designed for ages 9-15 but customizable for all ages, virtual field trips allow students to travel the world and explore natural environments without leaving the classroom. Each virtual field trip contains a video, teacher guide, and student activities.

[Plum Landing](#) from PBS Kids

Explore this PBS Kids show's activity guides that include videos with linked activities aimed to preschool and elementary aged students. Dozens of topics include: 'Animal Power', 'Mission: Seed Spot', 'Chirp, Honk, Woof!' and 'Evapo-rama'.

[Project Learning Tree Activities](#)

Try these fun and easy-to-do activity ideas from Project Learning Tree to connect the children in your life to the outdoors and nature. Suitable for children ages 3-15, some activities work better for younger children, others are more suited for older children.

[Science and Our Food Supply](#)

Free *Science and Our Food Supply Teacher Guides* are challenging hands-on, minds-on activities that link food safety, nutrition, and biotechnology to students' everyday lives. They are crafted in a teacher-friendly modular format that easily fit into science, health, and other classes.

[Science Fair Example Projects](#)

Our SSEF Example Project Videos page has a sampling of top-scoring videos from the 2020 state science fair sorted by grade and includes a review worksheet and teachers' guide for use in classrooms or distance learning.

[Scratch](#)

Students can use Scratch to code their own interactive stories, animations, and games. In the process, they learn to think creatively, reason systematically, and work collaboratively — essential skills for everyone in today's society. Educators are integrating Scratch across many different subject areas and age groups.

[Teach Chemistry Classroom Resources](#) Many virtual and in-person resources for teaching chemistry, easily able to be sorted by age group.

[Teen Astronomy Cafe - To Go!](#)

The Teen Astronomy Café - To Go! program provides digital education Instant Packs aligned with the Next Generation Science Standards that are suitable for both informal use and use by classroom educators.

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We enjoyed getting to meet so many of you at the Minndependent 2025 School Leadership Conference. So, whether you've got a pressing need or you're just starting to ideate, we can help.

Let's Connect!



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MINNDEPENDENT Preferred Partner Spotlight



Pope Design Group

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Pope Design Group is an architecture and interior design firm employing creative professionals whose passion is creating environments that enhance lives.

Founded in 1974 and headquartered in Minnesota, the firm today continues a legacy of defining project success by achieving our clients' organizational goals and designing spaces where people and their endeavors thrive.

Pope Design Group's education work has focused on supporting independent and private schools in Minnesota. We strive to design and deliver solutions that support a school's mission, vision and values, while also meeting budget and schedule milestones.

Preferred Partnership Program

This exclusive program recognizes the top 30% of our partners who have demonstrated a strong commitment to our mission and member schools. By partnering with Preferred Partners, schools can access a comprehensive ecosystem of trusted resources to provide the best possible products and services to their communities.





Important Dates to Remember

- **November 4, 2025: STEM Grant Program LOI application opens**
- **January 15, 2026: Social Media Success webinar with Andrea Gribble**

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