



February 2026 Newsletter

Dear Friends of Private and Independent Education,

The Minnesota Legislature will gavel in on Tuesday, February 17. It is scheduled to be a shorter session than 2025, but it's safe to say it likely won't be boring. As you'll recall, last year's session was anything but boring and had the potential to be devastating to the students and families in private and independent schools. Thankfully, the voices of thousands across our school communities helped to defeat the proposal to fully eliminate all nonpublic pupils aids and transportation services. Hopefully we will experience a "normal" session this year!

MINNDEPENDENT maintains an active presence while keeping a watchful eye on legislation that may impact private and independent schools. Two priorities we will carry into the 2026 are the expansion of school safety and security funding to include nonpublic schools, and the expansion of counseling services to students in grades K-6. Below is a summary of the three-pronged approach that drives MINNDEPENDENT's legislative strategy.

We advocate with a focused and united voice for the interests of private and independent schools

- **Advocate for...Inclusion/participation of private/independent school students and staff**
- **Protect...Programs and services that support private/independent school students and staff**
- **Defend against...Legislation that overreaches or infringes on unique missions of private/independent schools**

MINNDEPENDENT will provide updates on the legislative session and potential opportunities for active engagement of school communities.

Thank you for your support of MINNDEPENDENT.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tim", is positioned at the bottom left of the main content area.

ASK THE PRESIDENT

Have a question about school transportation or Title funds? Curious about the legislative session? Want Tim's take on how to fix the Twins' problems? 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!

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



MINNDEPENDENT 50th Anniversary Factoid

Did you know.....

The first meeting of the Minnesota Independent School Fund, Inc. Board of Trustees took place on March 8, 1976 at the Chancery of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis. Representatives from all 25 founding member schools were present. In that meeting, the Trustees voted to approve leasing an office at 925 Pioneer Building, located at Jackson and Fourth Street in downtown Saint Paul. The office was 423 square feet at a bargain price of \$2400/year! MINNDEPENDENT/MISF remained in that building until 2006 when it relocated to 445 Minnesota Street in St. Paul.

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Unlock Your School's Future in 2026?

Are you ready to benefit from the Great Wealth Transfer?

With a historic \$84 trillion set to change hands, now is the time to secure new planned gifts for your school. [Thrivent Charitable](#) experts are here to guide you.

Who is Thrivent Charitable? Thrivent Charitable Impact and Investing takes a holistic, personalized approach to help your donors create strategic charitable plans, illuminating new paths to personalize generosity for causes they cherish...YOUR SCHOOL 😊

What areas does Thrivent Charitable offer guidance on?

- 1. Flexible Endowment Solutions:** Endowment funds offer an additional layer of long-term, stable income for your school.
- 2. Education on a variety of giving options:** Thrivent Charitable can come alongside your school to help bring in more planned gifts, and complex gifts such as real estate, stock, farm equipment/grain/cattle, crypto, etc. Plus, Thrivent Charitable can help your donors illuminate new paths of giving to benefit the organizations they care about. Examples are **Give Now, Give Later, Give and Receive.**

SAVE THE DATE: Wednesday March 25, 2026, 10am – 11am

Professional Development Webinar presented by Thrivent Charitable:

Strategies to Maximize Charitable Impact for Your School

Practical approaches to expand giving, strengthen endowments, and support long-term sustainability (Webinar information and registration below)

If you want to learn more today, here is the link for more information: [Thrivent Charitable - Thrivent Charitable](#)

Let's build your school's legacy together-- contact us today to explore new giving opportunities!



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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Strategies to Maximize Charitable Impact for Your School

Practical approaches to expand charitable giving, strengthen endowments, and support long-term sustainability

WEBINAR

**Wednesday, March 25, 2026
10:00-11:00 am**

WEBINAR DESCRIPTION

This session will explore how private and independent schools can incorporate

charitable planning into their advancement and long-term financial strategies. Participants will learn practical giving options to engage donors—such as alumni, grandparents, and supporters with non-cash assets and planned gifts—who are interested in making a lasting impact.

Through examples, the session will highlight how thoughtful charitable planning can support endowments, tuition assistance, and mission-driven priorities. The presentation will conclude with an overview of how organizations like Thrivent Charitable can partner with schools to support these efforts.



PRESENTER BIO

Benjamin C. Boline, J.D., Charitable Solutions Consultant, Thrivent

Ben Boline joined the Thrivent Charitable Giving Services team in 2015, assisting donors and their financial advisors with charitable gift planning. His work includes helping to identify and execute gifts that meet donors' charitable interests while also serving the donors' financial and tax needs. Ben also helps nonprofits that seek to establish and build

their endowments as well as planned giving programs. Because of Ben's faith and that of his family, he is especially driven to do work that is meaningful and supportive of faith-based nonprofits.

Ben is a graduate of Gustavus Adolphus College with a degree in political science and criminal justice, and received his law degree from the University of St. Thomas School of Law. Before joining Thrivent Charitable, Ben worked in private law practice in the Twin Cities, concentrating on estate planning and estate administration. Ben and his wife live in Blaine, Minnesota, with their four children, where he and his family are active members of Artisan Church. You can often find Ben and his family making memories while road tripping across the United States as they find new adventures.

[Register Now](#)

Registration closes March 23 at 12:00 pm

This webinar is sponsored by:

thrivent[®]

Now Accepting Nominations

Nominations close February 16 at 5:00 pm

Do you know someone who makes a remarkable difference in your school community? Is there a rockstar volunteer who lends a helping hand for every event?

Now is the time to honor them. Nominations are officially open for the Private and Independent Education Awards, and we invite you to recognize the individuals and programs that inspire, lead, and serve with excellence.

Nominees may include a dedicated teacher, a tireless volunteer, a generous donor, an innovative leader, or a program that transforms student learning. If they've made a meaningful impact, we want to celebrate them.

Nomination Categories:

Behind the Scenes Award

Honors the unsung heroes—staff, coaches, and volunteers who go above and beyond to create welcoming, caring school communities.

Community Champion Award

Recognizes individuals or groups who make a positive impact within their school and the broader community, including board members, donors, and dedicated supporters.

Program Award

Highlights innovative and successful programs that enhance student learning, engagement, and growth.

Leadership Award (2 awardees)

Celebrates visionary school leaders, including heads, presidents, principals, superintendents, and executive directors, whose leadership creates lasting, transformative impact on their schools and communities.

Honor Teacher Award (2 awardees)

Recognizing exceptional educators who exemplify passion, integrity, and an unwavering commitment to student success, leaving a lasting impact both inside and beyond the classroom.

Education Awards Details and Information

All information related to the Education Awards can be found on our website.

- View award categories
- View the nomination form before submitting
- Submit a nomination
- Learn more about becoming a sponsorship partner

EDUCATION AWARDS WEBPAGE

SAVE THE DATE!

2026 STEM Education Conference

Innovation Across the Curriculum



Wednesday, August 12, 2026

Host Member School
Heritage Christian Academy
15655 Bass Lake Road, Maple Grove, MN 55311



MINNDEPENDENT invites you to submit a proposal to present at the **2026 STEM Education Conference**.

We encourage session proposals exploring **interdisciplinary approaches** that connect STEM with language arts, creative arts, social studies, and beyond. Presentations focused on **innovation, social entrepreneurship, social-emotional learning, social justice, college/career readiness, and Minnesota's Science Standards** are also welcome.

[LEARN MORE](#)

5-12th grade educators are invited to apply for an exciting opportunity to spend a week aboard a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency research vessel alongside scientists and to bring Great Lakes science back to their classrooms. The program, organized by the **Center for Great Lakes Literacy** (CGLL), is July 7-13, 2026. **Deadline for applications is Feb. 28, 2026.**



[LEARN MORE](#)



High Tech Kids is offering two (2) FTC Recreational Events this year. These events are for teams who either did not compete in qualifiers/leagues, or for teams who would like to compete again.

The Recreational Event will look just like a regular qualifier with inspection, judging, qualifying matches, elimination matches and a full set of awards. The key difference is that there will be no advancement to the post season from these events.

Event Dates:

- February 28 - Kennedy High School, Bloomington
- April 19 - Prairie View Middle School, Otsego

Teams who have advanced from their Qualifier to the MN State Championship are ineligible. For details see [FTC Recreational Event Information](#)



Girls Who Code Summer Programs Application

Ready to build something amazing this summer? [Apply to Girls Who Code Pathways!](#)

Pathways is a free, flexible summer program where high school girls explore AI, cybersecurity, game design, and web development while creating meaningful tech projects and joining a lifelong community of changemakers in tech. If you're a high school girl, this is your chance to explore the world of tech at your own pace, create meaningful tech-for-good projects, and join a supportive global community of students like you.

Students affiliated with **MINDEPENDENT** will once again receive priority consideration for Pathways.

Why you'll love Pathways:

- Build personalized projects around causes you care about
- Explore AI, Game Design, Cybersecurity, and
- Data Science at your own pace
- Connect with industry mentors and students from around the world

Program dates: June 29th to August 14th, 2026



MINNESOTA **STEM** ECOSYSTEM

Minnesota STEM Day at the Capitol

Wednesday, April 15, 2026, from 12:00 PM – 4:00 PM

On April 15th, the Minnesota Capitol will be a buzz with STEM! SciMathMN and the Minnesota STEM Ecosystem invite you to join us for an afternoon of STEM! You can expect to see and hear members of the STEM Learning Community who represent in-school and after-school STEM learning, and workforce development. This is an opportunity to come together and discuss the future of STEM learning in our state.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Minnesota STEM Curriculum

Minnesota Science Standards | Generation Genius Videos and Lessons

K-8 Science for Any Classroom Ready in 30 Seconds. Videos, Worksheets, DIY Activities. Alignment for grades K-2, 3-5, and 6-8 [LEARN MORE](#)

Center for Global Environmental Education at Hamline University provides a full list of K-12 Classroom Resources by Topic. Featured K-12 Resources include:

- American Indian Cultures
- Climate Change
- Ecology
- Engineering
- Geology
- Hawai'i
- Lake Superior
- Marine Environments
- Mississippi River
- Storm Drain Stewardship
- Water and Watersheds
- Waters to the Sea™

[LEARN MORE and LINK to Resources](#)

MINNDEPENDENT
Preferred Partner Spotlight

Renaissance

See Every Student.

Rachel Bertagnoli

Assessment + Analytics Executive

Rachel.Bertagnoli@Renaissance.com

952-746-0958



Making a difference every day. See how schools and districts are using Renaissance products to accelerate their students' learning

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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.



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Need to renovate your space to meet the evolving needs of your students and growing demands on your environment? We can help. Whether it's STEM classrooms, innovation centers, collaboration spaces with state-of-the-art technology, gathering spaces, flex space or anything in-between, we welcome the opportunity to deliver a customized solution to meet your needs. And we'll do it by leveraging our industry-leading expertise, client-centered team and integrated design-build project delivery model to deliver quality, well-timed renovations of educational spaces quickly so our clients can fully maximize the value of their existing spaces.

If you're contemplating reimagining your space, we'd love to hear what you have in mind and share how we can bring the depth and breadth of capability to support your mission, while delivering on time, on budget and with maximized value.

Learn more at opus-group.com.



Connect with Our Experts!



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Important Dates to Remember

- February 16, 2026: Education Awards Nominations Close at 5:00 pm
- March 25, 2026: Webinar: Strategies to Maximize Charitable Impact for Your School, 10:00-11:00 am (registration closes March 23 at 12:00 pm)
- April 26, 2026: Private and Independent Education Awards
- August 12, 2026: STEM Education Conference
- September 28-30, 2026: School Leadership Conference

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