



MINNDEPENDENT

May 2026 Newsletter

Dear friends of private and independent education,

May arrives with great anticipation and excitement across the educational community.

The 2026 legislative session is scheduled to conclude on Monday, May 18. As is often the case in the final days, uncertainty remains around what a final agreement and legislation will look like. As we have shared, several school safety proposals are currently under consideration and will likely be negotiated until the very end of session.

MINNDEPENDENT has been clear and consistent in hearings and legislative meetings: any final agreement on school safety must include equitable treatment for students in nonpublic schools. To support this effort, MINNDEPENDENT has launched an action alert to make it easy for you, your school communities, and advocates to contact elected officials. Your voice matters and must be heard. Follow this link to send a message: [ACT NOW TO PROTECT ALL OUR KIDS](#).

On April 26, MINNDEPENDENT celebrated the [2026 Private and Education Awards](#). This annual opportunity shines a bright light on the amazing people in our schools. Learn more about this year's honorees by visiting our [Education Awards](#) page. You can also access the [Education Awards showcase](#) on our VIMEO channel. You will be inspired!

Guests at the Education Awards also experienced the world premiere of the [MINNDEPENDENT 50th Anniversary video](#), highlighting the value and impact of a strong, unified voice for the private and independent school sector over the past half century. We invite you to take a few minutes to watch this special retrospective.

Member schools — please complete the [annual member needs assessment and survey](#). Your feedback helps ensure MINNDEPENDENT continues delivering meaningful programs, services, and advocacy that meet the evolving needs of our schools. Not yet a member? What are you waiting for? Join the largest and most connected organization supporting private and independent schools in Minnesota. We've welcomed more than 30 new schools in the past three years, and the time to join is now. Your membership strengthens our unified voice today and into the future.

Registration is open for the [2026 STEM Education Conference](#). This day of inspiration and networking is designed to enhance and elevate your professional development journey. In addition, don't forget to add the [2026 School Leadership Conference](#) (September 28-30) to your calendars today!

As we approach the close of the 2025–26 school year, we wish everyone a rewarding and memorable final stretch. To the educators, leaders, staff, and volunteers who generously give their time, energy, and talents each day, we extend a sincere "THANK YOU" for shaping the lives of students.

ASK THE PRESIDENT

Having a problem with busing or Title services? Interested having Tim join your school board, advisory council or staff meeting to give an update on private/independent schools in MN? Will the Wolves or the Wild advance to the conference finals? Click the link below!

[Ask Tim](#)

Social Media & Advertising

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](#)

Share your school's news!

Thank you for your support of MINNDEPENDENT and private and independent education.



Tim Benz
President

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!](#)

Make a **gift today** in honor of the 50th anniversary of MINNDEPENDENT



MINNDEPENDENT 50th Anniversary Factoid

Did you know.....

Jim Field served as president of MISF from 1989-2014. For more than a quarter century, Jim was the face of private and independent education. Following his retirement, and in recognition of Jim's faithful leadership, the MISF Board of Directors established the James B. Field Legacy Award. This award honors an individual or organization that champions private and independent education in Minnesota. This year, MINNDEPENDENT recognized Doug Jaeger with the 2026 James B. Field Legacy Award. Learn more about [Doug and his impact of service](#).



Member Survey & Needs Assessment

It's time for MINNDEPENDENT's annual [member survey and needs assessment](#). We ask all members to complete this brief survey to ensure we are meeting the needs of your school community and assist in planning our programming for the coming years.

Not a current member? What are you waiting for? It's time to get on board – remember everything MINNDEPENDENT does on behalf of nonpublic schools is critical, and an expanded membership provides important “horsepower” to our advocacy efforts. Get connected to our network of 188

member schools. Having a unified voice for our nonpublic school community has never been more important. [Send me a message and let's discuss membership](#) – you can't afford not to be a member.



Our Integrated Design-Build Delivery Model Delivers Differentiated Value

We have a demonstrated track record of putting our industry-leading expertise, client-centered team and integrated design-build project delivery model to work to successfully deliver an exceptional result every time. As your partner, we start by listening and asking questions to determine exactly what you need and want to achieve. Whether it's 18,000 or over 180,000 square feet, we have the experience and processes to dive right in and work directly with you to successfully deliver a space that meets your needs and exceeds your expectations for collaboration and results.

So, whether you're looking to renovate or build a new worship space, state-of-the-art educational classroom, aquatic complex or anything in between, 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!



Scott Shifflett
Vice President, Construction
952.656.4471
scott.shifflett@opus-group.com



Jay Fourniea
Vice President, Architecture
952.656.4830
jay.fourniea@opus-group.com



ADVOCACY UPDATES

MINNDEPENDENT has been clear and consistent in hearings and legislative meetings: any final agreement on school safety must include equitable treatment for students in nonpublic schools.

To support this effort, MINNDEPENDENT has launched an action alert to make it easy for you, your school communities, and advocates to contact elected officials. Your voice matters and must be heard.

No child's safety should be determined by the type of school they attend.

**Follow this link to send a message:
[ACT NOW TO PROTECT ALL OUR KIDS.](#)**

[Click here to read more about MINNDEPENDENT's advocacy efforts in the legislature](#)

STEM EDUCATION CONFERENCE

Registration Now Open!

**Wednesday, August 12, 2026
8:00am - 3:30pm**

Ignite curiosity, spark innovation, and empower your students for the future of learning!

Join educators, STEM specialists, and school leaders from across Minnesota for an inspiring day of hands-on workshops, expert-led sessions, and meaningful collaboration.

Whether you're looking to deepen your STEM knowledge, explore innovative teaching strategies, or connect with a passionate professional community, the STEM Education Conference will equip you with the tools, insights, and energy to transform your classroom.

Earn 4.75 CEUs by attending!

[VIEW ALL CONFERENCE SESSIONS HERE](#)



CONFERENCE FEES

(Includes breakfast, lunch, and conference materials)

Register early and save!

MEMBER SCHOOLS:

\$55 Early-bird registration (through June 21, 2026)

\$75 Regular registration (after June 21, 2026)

NON-MEMBER SCHOOLS:

\$110 Early-bird registration (through June 21, 2026)

\$150 Regular registration (after June 21, 2026)

Please invite colleagues to join you at the STEM Education Conference! Be sure to share the details and have them register today.

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER](#)

To check if you are a member school, please click here

KEYNOTE

How Lucky Are You? Your Attitude is the Lesson They'll Remember

Teaching is meaningful work, but it is not always easy. Educators do not get to choose every student, every situation, every coworker, or every surprise that walks through the classroom door. But they do get to choose the attitude they bring into the room.

In this energizing keynote, Princess Paula brings the FISH! Philosophy to life with a practical and refreshing focus on one powerful mindset shift: moving from "I have to" to "I get to." Through humor, real-world examples, and the FISH! practice of Choose Your Attitude, educators will be reminded that their presence, perspective, and daily choices have a direct impact on their students, their teams, and the culture of their school.

This keynote is designed to encourage teachers to pause, reset, and reconnect with the purpose behind their work — not by ignoring the hard parts, but by choosing how they show up in the middle of them.



Paula Skoviera, Princess Paula Consulting

With over 20 years of experience working alongside Chambers of Commerce, school districts, nonprofits, networking groups, and businesses of all sizes, Princess Paula, as she is professionally and affectionately known, is a keynote speaker who knows how to light up a room and inspire action. Paula has mastered the art of networking and digital marketing, making her an indispensable ally in the digital age. Her high-energy presentations blend humor, storytelling, and sharp insights that leave audiences feeling motivated and ready to tackle their goals. Born and raised in Ontario, Canada, this Italian Canadian brings a unique blend of professional insights and personal warmth to everything she does. A proud graduate of Lakehead University with degrees in Humanities and Education, Paula has made it her mission to help people harness tools like Generative AI, master the art of networking, and most recently, share the four practices of the FISH!

Philosophy with teams and organizations across the globe. When Paula's not on stage, she's probably creating the perfect charcuterie board, tackling a home renovation project, or playing piano and singing at special events. She's the proud mom of three adult kids, a fabulous daughter-in-law, and the "Mrs." to her husband's "Santa" during the holiday season. Let's not forget her two furry co-workers: rescue dogs Bentley & Cooper.

STEM PROGRAM SPONSORS

SCHOTT FOUNDATION



HOST SPONSOR



HOSPITALITY SPONSOR



PARTNER EXHIBIT SPONSORS

thrivent[®]

the **Works**[®]
museum
Engineering Fun

A T S + R
PLANNERS + ARCHITECTS + ENGINEERS

Since 1972
Xperitas
Nonprofit Immersion Travel



SPONSOR EXHIBITORS

Sponsor exhibitors will be available to showcase products and services offered to the STEM Education Community.

[CLICK HERE](#) to read about sponsorship opportunities.

QUESTIONS

Contact Lisa Vosbeek, Director of Development & Programs
lvosbeek@minndependent.org - 651-424-4930

THE STEM SCOOP



STEM DAY
at the **MINNESOTA**
STATE FAIR

AUGUST 27, 2026



JOIN US AT

TWIN CITIES STEM Fest 2026

FREE FOR K-12 STUDENTS!

REGISTER HERE

WHO: Students K-12 and their Families, Schools, and Community Groups

WHEN: June 6, 2026, 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.

WHERE: Maturi Pavillion
University of MN, Twin Cities

WHAT TO EXPECT:

-  Hands-on Experiments and Discovery
-  Twin Cities Innovation & Industry Leaders
-  Connections to STEM Career Pathways

 Transportation support may be available for large student groups.

For more information contact
Jalonda Combs at jcombs@oicofamerica.org
or visit www.stemlinx.net



Presented by: 

Hosted by: 

In partnership with:  
 



EmpowerMN CS+AI

August 4 - 6, 2026 | Minneapolis, MN

Registration is now open for EmpowerMN CS+AI 2026!

EmpowerMN CS+AI 2026 is a three-day professional development event for educators interested in computer science and AI education.

Participants will:

- Choose from seven hands-on CS or AI workshops
- Learn from experienced facilitators
- Attend guest speaker and networking sessions

Dates: August 4–6, 2026

Location: University of Minnesota Twin Cities

Cost: \$100 (includes 1-year CSTA membership)

Stipend: \$630 for full attendance (eligibility applies)

Travel Reimbursement: Up to \$600 available

Open to educators of all experience levels.

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

Productive Struggle: How Artificial Intelligence Is Changing Learning, Effort, and Youth Development in Education | Bellwether

[This report](#) examines how AI tools are reshaping students' effort, persistence, and productive struggle in learning, highlighting both opportunities and risks for youth development. It offers concrete guidance for education leaders, system designers, and edtech partners on using AI to promote deep thinking rather than replacing the challenging work of learning.

The MINNDEPENDENT Newsletter is sponsored by

thrivent®



Teacher Appreciation Lunch & Learn (Before School's Out)

A simple way to say thank you to teachers—with practical financial education.

*Thrivent is offering Minndependent member schools a **Teacher Appreciation** experience: we'll provide lunch for the teachers' lounge and spend about **90 minutes** available for casual, come-and-go conversations -answering questions and sharing education that helps teachers feel more confident about their money.*

- *No products. No sales. Education only.*
- *Teacher-focused topics like: understanding and maximizing pension benefits, budgeting and cash flow, managing debt, saving for emergencies, and planning for key life goals.*
- *Teachers can stop by for a quick question—or stay longer for a deeper conversation.*

Interested in hosting at your school? Reach out to schedule a date before the end of the school year.



Sue Furry
Manager of Engagement
sue.furry@thrivent.com
612-844-5674



Bruce Plautz
Sr. Engagement Leader
bruce.plautz@thrivent.com
612-844-5609

Ways to support MINNDEPENDENT

There are many ways to support MINNDEPENDENT. Please consider assisting with one of the following:

- Empower our work with schools by supporting our annual fund
- **Sponsor a MINNDEPENDENT conference or event**
- Simply click on the donate button

DONATE

To learn more about serving as an MINNDEPENDENT partner, please contact Lisa Vosbeek, MINNDEPENDENT Director of Development and Programs, at lvosbeek@minndependent.org

MINNDEPENDENT Preferred Partner Spotlight



Cathy Tooley

CEO and Founder

cathy@toolsforsuccessindy.com

317-961-1205



Empowering Teachers, Engaging Administrators & Equipping Leaders

- [Building Strong Connections through Parent-Teacher Conferences](#)
- [Gratitude in the Classroom: November Strategies for Educators to Boost Teacher Well-Being & Student Culture](#)
- [Practical Strategies for K-12 Educators to Reignite Motivation and Momentum in the New Semester](#)
- [Why We Keep Making the Wrong People Coaches in Schools – Tools for Success](#)

Meet Our Preferred Partners for 2025-2026

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.



Member School News

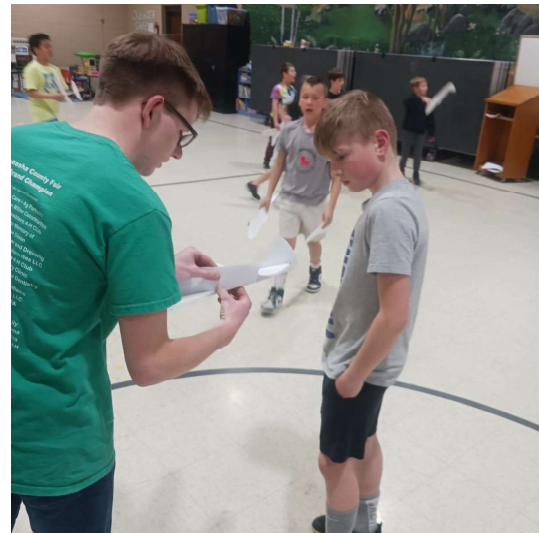


Nacel Open Door has about 30 royal blue graduation caps & gowns from their former St. Paul Preparatory School days, which they would like to donate. The tassels on the caps are royal blue & white, but would need a different grad year attached if they were to be reused.

If you or another school you know is interested, please contact Carrie Hess at Nacel Open Door, chess@nacelopendoor.org or 651-288-4613.

Immanuel Lutheran School - Silo

Recently, second graders had a guest who made an impactful visit to their classroom. He taught students about engineering and empowered them to use those skills to build glider airplanes!





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 a line below.

[EMAIL US](#)

DO YOU FOLLOW US?

Be sure to follow us on social media! That way, we can tag your school when posting about activities, grant or award recipients, or other news that includes your school. Share and share alike!



School Leadership Conference

Save the dates: September 28-30, Ruttger's Bay Lake Resort



RFP: Session Proposal Form

MINNDEPENDENT invites you to submit a proposal to present at the 2026 School Leadership Conference. This event is a premier gathering of school leaders, principals, and leadership teams from our 188 member schools across Minnesota.

The conference sessions are designed to address relevant issues affecting schools and educational leadership - from technical issues to leadership development to educational innovation. We are seeking session proposals that provide practical tips, strategies, and best practices for school leaders to implement in their own schools.

Breakout sessions, typically 75 minutes in length, are a vital part of our conference. We welcome proposals that address a wide range of topics pertinent to educational leadership.

All interested presenters and community partners must complete the [SESSION PROPOSAL FORM](#) before June 30, 2026 for your session to be considered for the 2026 School Leadership Conference.

Thank you for your interest in supporting leadership development at private and independent schools in Minnesota.

[Click here for the session proposal form](#)

Important Dates to Remember

August 12, 2026

[STEM Education Conference](#)

Heritage Christian Academy, Maple Grove

September 28-30, 2026

[School Leadership Conference](#)

Ruttger's Bay Lake Resort

A TRUSTED PARTNER
For Private & Independent Schools



MINNDEPENDENT

minndependent.org | info@minndependent.org



MINNDEPENDENT | 5200 Willson Road Suite 310 | Edina, MN 55424 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!