



MINNDEPENDENT

June 2026 Newsletter

Dear Friends of Private and Independent Education,

MINNDEPENDENT's annual membership renewal begins on July 1. To our 189 member schools and 9 Associate members - **THANK YOU!** MINNDEPENDENT membership has grown 12.5% in the last three years, and our retention rate has increased to 97%. Learn about MINNDEPENDENT, our 50-year history, and the impact made on private and independent schools by viewing [our 50th anniversary video](#).

If you are not currently a member but would like to gain access to robust programming, partnerships, and investing in a strong public policy voice, please [contact me](#) to discuss membership. Check out our updated [benefits of membership flyer](#) to see how you and your school community benefit from membership. In light of the strong headwinds faced over the last two legislative sessions, it's vitally important to further expand MINNDEPENDENT's reach and ensure a robust and unified voice for future advocacy strategies.

Summer is always a time of transition and change. While we do our best to track leadership changes, we sometimes miss a few. If your school has a new or upcoming change in leadership or staffing, send them along to office@minndependent.org. This will ensure new leaders will receive MINNDEPENDENT communications and are kept up to speed on upcoming opportunities and updates.

The 2026 legislative session came to a bumpy conclusion in May. [Here is a legislative summary](#), prepared by MINNDEPENDENT's lobbyist Chas Anderson of Park Street Public. Advocacy remains at the heart of our organizational mission.

The MINNDEPENDENT [STEM Education Conference](#) and [School Leadership Conference](#) are ideal opportunities to earn valuable CEUs and connect with other member schools. Learn more about each conference below.

MINNDEPENDENT's fiscal year ends on June 30. We invite you to [make a gift](#) to support MINNDEPENDENT's ongoing efforts to connect and strengthen Minnesota's private and independent schools.

We wish everyone a restful and peaceful summer. Thank you for your support of MINNDEPENDENT.

ASK THE PRESIDENT

Have a question for Tim? Looking for someone to present at your school board, advisory council or staff meeting about the legislative session and outlook? Have any tips to straighten out Tim's golf game? 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. Non-member schools can post a listing for \$65.

[READ MORE](#)

Tim Benz

Tim Benz
President



MINNDEPENDENT 50th Anniversary Factoid

Did you know.....

MINNDEPENDENT is one of 37 state affiliates of the [Council for American Private Education](#) (CAPE).

CAPE's mission is to preserve and promote educational pluralism so that parents have a choice in the schooling of their children. Founded in 1971 to provide a coherent voice for private education, CAPE is dedicated to fostering communication and cooperation within the private school community and with the public sector to improve the quality of education for all of the nation's children.

The [State CAPE Network](#) is comprised of coalitions of state-level private school associations. Each state coalition addresses the unique needs of the private school community in its own state. Because most issues and activities pertaining to private schools begin or manifest themselves in the states, the State CAPE Network plays a unique and critical role in helping CAPE's Board of Directors identify, define, and clarify issues affecting private education.

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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.



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STEM EDUCATION CONFERENCE

Innovation Across the Curriculum



Wednesday, August 12

8:00am - 3:30pm

Heritage Christian Academy - Maple Grove

Early Bird Pricing ends June 21!

Register Today!

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.”

[View a personal message from Princess Paula herself!](#)



[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.

[Learn more about Princess Paula](#)

STEM PROGRAM SPONSORS

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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



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](#)

Resource Hub for STEM Educators

High-quality educational programs and support are essential to the success of STEM students.

The Minnesota Academy of Science (MAS) is here to help!

[Explore Resources](#)



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Let's Connect!



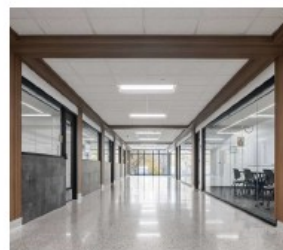
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Meet Our Preferred Partners for 2025-2026

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

Congratulations to all the graduates!
From littles, to middles, and bigs, best wishes as you continue your education journey.



Totino-Grace Students Design First-of-Its-Kind Bowling Aid for Wheelchair Athletes, Earn National Recognition

For a quadriplegic athlete bowling with a specialized wheelchair ramp, controlling the spin of a ball has never been very possible. Until now.

Totino-Grace seniors Alvin Nguyen and William "Billy" Walsh spent the better part of this school year designing and building a device that changes that. Their invention allows a quadriplegic bowler to rotate a bowling ball before sending it down their specialized ramp, giving the athlete direct control over the hook of the ball as it rolls down the lane. According to the American Wheelchair Bowling Association, it is a device that has never existed before.



[Click HERE to read more!](#)



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.



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, grants 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](#)

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

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

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For Private & Independent Schools



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