



MINNDEPENDENT

July 2026 Newsletter

Dear friends of private and independent education,

We hope you're enjoying the summer, while finding time to rest and recharge. This month's newsletter is intentionally brief to honor the quieter pace of summer. We look forward to reconnecting with many of you in the coming months.

A couple reminders to add to your 2026-27 calendar:

- Wednesday, August 12 at Heritage Christian Academy - the [STEM Education Conference](#). This conference is a fantastic opportunity to enhance your professional development journey and expand your network and connections. Members and nonmember schools are welcome to attend! Check out the [conference agenda](#) and register today!
- Monday-Wednesday, September 28-30, 2026 at Ruttger's Bay Lake Resort – the [2026 School Leadership Conference](#). The conference agenda is being finalized and registration will open in early August. This conference is the premier gathering of leaders and administrators from private and independent schools. New leaders are strongly encouraged to attend.

Membership renewal is in full swing. Not yet a member? There's no better time to join the largest network of private and independent schools in Minnesota. Check out the details below!

Thanks for your steadfast belief and support of MINNDEPENDENT.

Tim Benz
President

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](#)



MINNDEPENDENT 50th Anniversary Factoid

Did you know....

The MINNDEPENDENT board of directors consists of up to 21 persons. As dictated by the MINNDEPENDENT Bylaws, six director positions are reserved for employees of member schools or associate members. This ensures the voice of membership is always included in the organization's strategy, direction and impact.

Current school representatives are Rev. Dr. Timothy Berner (Concordia Academy), Mike Brennan (Holy Family Catholic HS), Heidi Gallus (St. Michael Catholic School), Joel Landskroener (Mayer Lutheran HS), Brian Lynch (Benilde-St. Margaret's) and Kate Wollan (Nativity of Our Lord).

Click [HERE](#) to see the full board of directors roster.



Renew Today. Stay Connected. Amplify Your Voice.

Membership renewal is underway. Invoices were emailed to all members on July 1. Thanks to those who have already renewed! If you haven't received your invoice, [contact our office](#), we're happy to help.

Together, we create a strong, mission-driven community committed to advancing high-quality education, ensuring every member school has a voice, and providing school leaders, educators, and students with the resources they need to thrive. The past two legislative sessions have demonstrated the power of our collective advocacy. **The 2027 legislative session will bring new opportunities and new challenges.** MINNDEPENDENT will remain vigilant in advocating for your interests, protecting your school's autonomy, and ensuring you have the flexibility and resources to fulfill your unique mission.

Thank you for your continued partnership and trust in MINNDEPENDENT. Your membership makes our work possible.

Know a school that would benefit from joining our community? We'd love an introduction. Invite them to connect with us and discover the value of MINNDEPENDENT membership.

The MINNDEPENDENT Newsletter is sponsored by

Delivering Quality & Value with Speed & Convenience

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!



Scott Shifflett
Vice President, Construction
952.656.4471
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Jay Fourniea
Vice President, Architecture
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STEM EDUCATION CONFERENCE

Innovation Across the Curriculum



Wednesday, August 12

8:00am - 3:30pm

Heritage Christian Academy - Maple Grove

There is still time to register!

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)

MEMBER SCHOOLS: \$75 registration fee • **NON-MEMBER SCHOOLS:** \$150 registration fee

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

SCHOTT FOUNDATION



HOST SPONSOR



HOSPITALITY SPONSOR



PARTNER EXHIBIT SPONSORS



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](#)



The MINNDEPENDENT Newsletter is sponsored by



Kickstart the School Year with Financial Clarity: Empowering Teachers for a Prosperous Future

Did you know...

70% of Americans have less than \$1,000 saved.

The avg. American overspends by almost \$7,500 per year.

59% Don't have a budget.

Studies say that people spend 80% more when using credit cards!

Increase personal financial clarity for you, your staff, and parents with Thrivent's FREE (really, and no sales pressure) money coaching service called **Money Canvas**.

Benefits of **Money Canvas** by Thrivent?

- ✓ See where your money goes each month
- ✓ Improve your spending habits
- ✓ Free up money to put toward your priorities (saving, paying off debt, starting to invest)

[Introduction to Money Canvas \(3 minute video\)](#)

Register for your first Money Canvas session below and include **Minndependent** as how you learned about Money Canvas.

[Click here to learn more and register for Money Canvas](#)



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MINNDEPENDENT Preferred Partner Spotlight



Michael Nauss

Senior Director, Midwest Region

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We know schools because we are in schools

- [Benefits of Membership](#)
- [STEM Certification](#)

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



Team Finishes 2nd in the World in First LEGO Season

In early May, "Robot Rampage," a St. Croix Lutheran Academy middle school robotics team, delivered a historic performance at the 2026 FIRST LEGO League Challenge World Festival. Competing against 160 elite teams from more than 50 countries, Robot Rampage secured the Champions Finalist Award (2nd place overall) and was the only American team among the top six champions.

This June, they traveled to Niagara, Canada to compete against 100 teams from around the world at an international FIRST LEGO League competition. Robot Rampage delivered another outstanding performance, this time earning a top award for their innovation project. They were one of only two teams from the United States to receive a major judged award at this highly competitive event.

Congratulations, Robot Rampage and St. Croix Lutheran Academy!



[Click HERE to 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 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



Agenda and Registration coming soon!

[Click here to learn more](#)

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 a 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

A TRUSTED PARTNER

For Private & Independent Schools



minndependent.org | info@minndependent.org



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