August 2026 Newsletter

Dear friends of private and independent education,

The start of school (and the State Fair) is right around the corner. How did that happen? We wish everyone a safe, meaningful and successful year!

The time to register for the **2026 School Leadership Conference** is NOW! **Early-bird pricing ends Friday, August 21.**

Wherever you are on your leadership journey - this conference is perfectly suited for you. This gathering remains the premier (and most fun!) convening of private and independent school leaders.

Still not sure if you should come? This quote sums it up perfectly:

"I started attending a few years ago and this was the best and most relevant conference for my needs. I will be back and highly recommend and encourage other administrators to attend. It's better than many conferences and the cost is minimal."

We hope to see you in September!

Can't attend this year? Consider sending another member of your leadership or administrative team. The conference offers valuable opportunities to gain new ideas, connect with fellow school leaders, and bring back insights that can benefit your entire school community.

Membership renewal invoices were emailed on July 1. If you have not received your invoice, or misplaced it, **let me know**. Our goal is always 100%-member retention. Not a current member? Reach out and let's talk how membership benefits your school community, amplifies a unified voice and builds connection to the largest network of private and independent schools in Minnesota.

Thank you for your support and investment in private and independent education.



Tim Benz

ASK THE PRESIDENT

Have a question for Tim? Looking for someone to present at your school board, advisory council or staff meeting about the state of nonpublic education in Minnesota? Wonder what Tim's "go to" foods are at the State Fair? 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

President

MINNDEPENDENT 50th Anniversary Factoid

Did you know.....

The average tenure of membership with MINNDEPENDENT is 10.7 years. Currently, 93 schools have been members for more than ten years, including 63 schools continuing membership for 15 years or more! This is a testament to the powerful impact made by a collective network of private and independent schools.



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

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Did you know…
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- ✓ 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



Sue Furry
Manager of Engagement



Bruce Plautz
Sr. Engagement Leader

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School Leadership Conference

September 28-30, Ruttger's Bay Lake Resort - Deerwood, MN



The MINNDEPENDENT School Leadership Conference is the premier gathering of private and independent school leaders across Minnesota. Whether you are a new school leader hoping to expand your network or a seasoned veteran looking for fresh new ideas, this is the conference for you. Need to recharge after the first month of school? This conference is the place for you.

Connect with fellow leaders for an energizing conference of networking plus presentations from experts in the areas of AI, Leadership, and School/Employment Law. All this, plus a bit of fun on the shores of Bay Lake.

Attendees will earn 6.75 CEUs

EARLY BIRD PRICING ENDS AUGUST 21!

Early Bird (through August 21st)
1 Night: $340
2 Nights: $450
Conference Day Only: $135

Regular Registration (after August 21st)
1 Night: $370
2 Nights: $480
Conference Day Only: $135

Special pricing for first-time attendees

1 Night: $370
2 Nights: $370
(two nights for the price of one!)

Conference Day Only: $135

Overnight stay pricing includes resort fees, materials, and all meals
Conference Day Only pricing includes materials + meals

Check with your LEA about using Title Funds for your registration

REGISTER TODAY!

Conference Agenda, Details, Session Descriptions and Presenter Bios

FEATURED SESSION

Reimagining Enrollment: Data-Driven Strategies for Sustainable Growth

Independent and faith-based schools are navigating shifting demographics, heightened competition, and increasingly discerning families. This session explores how schools can move beyond reactive enrollment tactics toward a sustainable, data-informed enrollment strategy that aligns mission, marketing, admissions, and retention. Participants will examine how to identify enrollment friction points, measure what matters most, and turn insights into action that strengthens both growth and community trust. Session focus:

- Leveraging enrollment data to inform recruitment and retention strategies
- Using technology to streamline inquiry-to-enrollment workflows
- Benchmarks and KPIs for measurable improvement



Rachael Cramond, Sr. Director of Customer Experience, **VenturEd Solutions**

Bio: Rachael is the Director of Customer Experience at VenturEd. She has worked with VenturEd Solutions' products for 11 years at all levels of family and school support, as well as product implementation. She previously worked for 4 years in special education prior to her time at VenturEd Solutions. She lives in the Twin Cities in Minnesota with her husband and two young children. Rachael attended Catholic school and is now a parent of a child in Catholic school.



Craig Dodson, Vice President of Customer Support, **VenturEd Solutions**

Bio: Craig Dodson, based in St. Paul, Minnesota, is a seasoned leader with extensive experience in support services, leadership development, and driving results. Currently serving as Vice President of Support at VenturEd Solutions, Craig brings over two decades of expertise in client support, education solutions, and enrollment management. His career highlights include leadership roles at Community Brands, where he advanced from Senior Manager to Vice President, and a successful tenure as Director of Admission and Enrollment Management at Mounds Park Academy. Beyond his professional achievements, Craig has dedicated nearly eight years as Head Coach at the Minnesota Boat Club, showcasing his commitment to mentorship and team development.

2026 SPONSORS

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"THE GREEN MACHINE"

THE STEM SCOOP



STEM DAY at the MINNESOTA STATE FAIR

AUGUST 27, 2026

SCIMATH MN

MINNESOTA
Agriculture in the Classroom

FREE Resources for K-6 Educators

The AgMag meets Minnesota standards and helps students understand where the food, fiber, and fuel they use in everyday life come from.

LEARN MORE

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA | CFANS
COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL AND NATURAL RESOURCE SCIENCES

Paid Professional Development for MN High School Educators

Ways of Knowing in the Forest
October 15, 2026 - Cloquet Forestry Center, Cloquet, MN
A forest can tell many stories depending on the questions we ask. Throughout this immersive experience at the Cloquet Forestry Center (CFC), you'll return to the same forest site multiple times, exploring it through various perspectives and ways of knowing. Along the way, you'll learn about ongoing research and land stewardship in forest ecology that blends Indigenous and western practices in fire regime restoration while experiencing classroom-ready activities that use outdoor learning to spark curiosity, encourage careful observation, and help students to investigate forests and the natural world through multiple perspectives.

Note: Lodging is available at the CFC for participants arriving the night before for $50 (limited to participants only).

Download a flyer for more information

MINNESOTA ZOO®

ZOOMS STEM Design Challenge
The Zooms STEM Design Challenge presented by Flint Hills Resources offers students a chance to develop a solution to a "real" problem faced by Zookeepers and staff at the Minnesota Zoo. From designing an enrichment to building a model

of a renovated animal exhibit, the problem will challenge students to use their science and math knowledge, creativity, problem-solving, and research skills during the engineering design process in order to best solve the problem and present a solution. Selected students are invited to showcase their design challenge solution in the ZOOMS Design Exhibition in March at the Minnesota Zoo.

LEARN MORE



Hats & Mittens, established in 1996 by Rebecca Jorgenson Sundquist, is a nonprofit committed to providing hats and mittens for local children in need. Over the years, as demand has increased, the organization has focused exclusively on offering warmth to the community while inspiring future generations through a children's philanthropy curriculum created in partnership with Doing Good Together.

This program, tailored for Pre-K through Middle School,
helps young people discover the joy and importance of giving back.

Below are testimonials from the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board, which has successfully implemented the curriculum at several locations:

- "This program helped me to realize that even though I may not have as much as others, I can still be an advocate for others in our community" - MPRB Participant
- "The curriculum makes the program a breeze - easy to convey themes, while keeping youth interested with hands-on projects and meaningful discussions. The hats were a favorite." - MPRB Staff

For more information, contact rebecca@hatsandmittens.org
or visit https://hatsandmittens.org/

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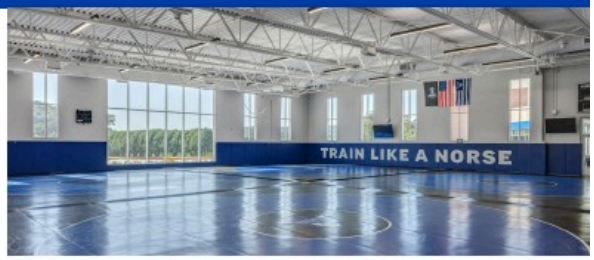
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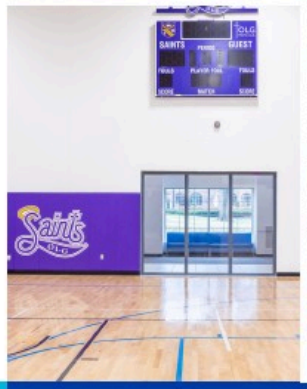
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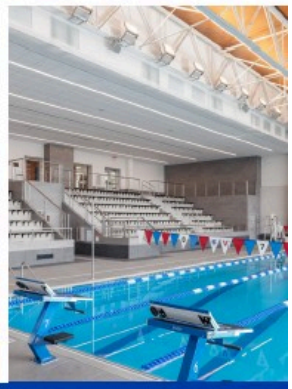
We've leveraged the unique combination of our industry-leading expertise, client-centered team and integrated design-build project delivery model to successfully deliver dozens of athletic facilities within the public and private educational/institutional sectors – everything from fieldhouses to activity centers, athletic fields, natatoriums and more – for both K-12 and collegiate level clients across the country.

If you're contemplating a new or renovated facility, 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.







"Opus set the standard for me. I can't point to another person or contractor that did such great work for me. I will use them as the standard. They were outstanding. And I would not hesitate to get them on another project ever."

Frank Miley
President, Cretin-Derham Hall
(Retired)

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

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2026-2027

PRESENTS

Open to all School Leaders and Leadership Teams in MN!



Continuous Improvement for School Leadrship

with

Ted Neitzke

"Ted has changed the way I lead. His practical tools have brought clarity and effective processes to our school, and his positive approach has been a tremendous encouragement to me personally."

- Ben Sartori, St. Michael Catholic School

*Join us for a powerful in-person 4-part series designed to **ignite momentum, build shared purpose**, and **embed your strategic plan into the heart of your school culture.** Ted Neitzke will lead us in creating a shared language and introducing practical, mission-driven strategies that turn your strategic goals into meaningful, everyday actions within your school.*

MINNDEPDENDENT is the event sponsor, so all MNSAA and MINNDEPENDENT members receive a reduced rate!

Four dynamic, in-person sessions:

- Friday, October 30, 2026: 9am-3pm
- Thursday, December 10, 2026: 9am-3pm
- Thursday, January 14, 2027 - VIRTUAL: 1 hour
- Thursday, March 11, 2027: 9am-3pm
- Friday, April 2, 2027: 9am-3pm

Location:

St. Hubert Catholic School
8201 Main St., Chanhassen, MN

Who should attend?

School leaders and leadership teams committed to shaping a vibrant future for their school.

What is included?

- Materials for all sessions
- Continental breakfast, lunch & refreshments
- CEUs

Registration fees:

MNSSA and/or MINNDEPENDENT Members:

- Early Bird: $800 - ends September 10
- Standard: $825

Non-Member Standard:

- $1,000

✅ Schools may use Title dollars

✅ CEUs will be available and BOSA hours pending approval

✅ Open to all educators in Minnesota! No membership required

Session Descriptions **Register Here**

Early Bird Registration Ends September 10!

MINNDEPENDENT
Preferred Partner Spotlight

ESCALE
Strategic Coaching • Leadership Execution



Casey Breen

Lead Coach
cbreen@escaleadvisors.com
612-518-2620

At Escale, we help high-growth school leaders overcome overwhelm and uncertainty by using a proven system for sustainable scaling. Through private or group coaching, we support leadership teams in executing strategic growth without sacrificing time or well-being.

In this video, Casey Breen breaks down the 5 critical benchmarks every Catholic school leader should audit before August workshops - especially Benchmark #5: Leadership Time Distribution.

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



[Mayer Lutheran Middle and High Schools] recently dedicated their new state-of-the-art Science Wing. The new science suite includes amenities such as Virtual Reality lab stations for virtual dissections and simulations, a 3D printer / CNC fabrication room, student engineering display space, expanded chemical storage, and improved safety equipment.

“Science and Technology has been a leading program on our campus for years,” said ML Executive Director Joel Landskroener. “The new science wing will greatly bless the efforts of our teachers and students to grow in their knowledge, understanding, and appreciation for the amazing world that God has given us to explore.”







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!

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

September 28-30, 2026
School Leadership Conference
Ruttger's Bay Lake Resort

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