October 2026 Newsletter

Dear friends of private and independent education,

The 2026 **School Leadership Conference** wrapped up two weeks ago, and we are still reveling in the amazing experience. This year saw increases in both attendance and sponsorship participation. Once again, this conference delivered top notch learning opportunities, countless opportunities for networking and a great setting for leaders to refill their professional and personal bucket. **Mark your calendar for September 27-29, 2027 for next year's conference** (you can't say we didn't give you enough notice)! A very special thank you to the presenters and generous sponsors who ensure the conference meets the diverse needs of our member school leaders.

We like to share testimonials that reflect the spirit of our convenings, here's one that summarizes it perfectly, *"This was a lovely conference, and I valued time away to "retreat" and be filled. Thank you for hosting, it was wonderful."*

On October 1, the U.S. Department of the Treasury and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) issued proposed regulations to implement the new Federal Scholarship Tax Credit (FSTC), commonly known as the Education Freedom Tax Credit (EFTC), the first federal tax credit supporting private contributions for K-12 scholarships. Under the proposed regulations, eligible taxpayers may claim an annual credit of up to $1,700 for qualifying contributions, or up to $3,400 for married couples filing jointly to an eligible Scholarship Granting Organizations (SGO).

For a very clear summary of the program, I encourage you to visit the **Council for American Private Education (CAPE) website** for more details. MINNDEPENDENT is the Minnesota state CAPE affiliate.

ASK THE PRESIDENT

Have a question for Tim? Interested in a presentation for a board or staff meeting about the state of nonpublic education in Minnesota? Want Tim's take on the Vikings playoff chances this year? 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

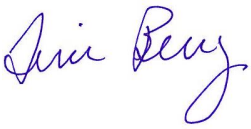
Member schools can post job listings for free. Non-member schools can post a listing for $65.

READ MORE

Thirty-one states have indicated they will opt into the FSTC program. Unfortunately, Minnesota is not one of them. MINNDEPENDENT is steadfast in the belief that this program is a benefit for every student in Minnesota. Opponents of the FSTC have incorrectly called it a "private school voucher program." This federal tax credit has a unique opportunity to unlock a significant amount of charitable and philanthropic activity that would reach across all sectors and benefit students in every educational setting. MINNDEPENDENT has encouraged the Walz Administration to opt into the program by January 1, 2027 and keep these philanthropic resources in Minnesota to benefit Minnesota students. Should Minnesota not opt into the FSTC, Minnesota donors could still access the credit by donating to an eligible SGO in a participating state.

By the time the next enewsletter arrives in your inbox, Minnesotans will have elected a new Governor and Legislature. MINNDEPENDENT strongly encourages everyone to participate and exercise their right to vote. MINNDEPENDENT will begin planning for the upcoming legislative session right away and ensure the voice of Minnesota's private and independent school community is heard and valued.

Thank you for your support of private and independent education.



Tim Benz
President

Donate today to empower the mission of MINNDEPENDENT.

MINNDEPENDENT 50th Anniversary Factoid

Did you know.....

The Northwest Area Foundation provided the initial funding to establish the Minnesota Independent School Fund in 1976 and support the 25 founding member schools. The funding was a three-year grant and outlined four specific purposes – underwriting for MISF start-up/administrative costs, a challenge grant to MISF to expand its donor base, a challenge grant to member schools to enhance fundraising efforts, and underwrite development officer training seminars.

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No Tricks—Just Treats for Your School with Thrivent Action Teams!

🎃 Stock the Classroom This Fall

Help scare away classroom supply shortages with Thrivent's generosity programs!

Thrivent clients, including parents, grandparents, colleagues, and friends of your school, may lead **two Thrivent Action Teams each year** and receive **$250 in seed money plus resources** to support a school project.

This fall, consider hosting a **"Stock the Classroom" supply drive** for tissues, books, paper, markers, pens, crayons, and other classroom essentials. It's a frightfully fun way to help teachers focus on what matters most: **their students, not out-of-pocket expenses.**

Interested in bringing Thrivent generosity programs to your school?
Contact us today to learn more!



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2026 School Leadership Conference Highlights



The 2026 School Leadership Conference brought together school leaders from across Minnesota for three days of learning, connection and renewal.

- **65 school leaders**
- **6.75 CEUs**
- **3 days of learning and connection**
- **Expert speakers and practical leadership strategies**

Looking Ahead..... Save the Date!

2027 School Leadership Conference
September 27-29, 2027
Ruttger's Bay Lake Resort - Deerwood, MN

We look forward to bringing school leaders together again in 2027
for another meaningful opportunity to learn, connect, reflect, and recharge.

THE STEM SCOOP



This opportunity is open to all member schools*.

Complete grant guidelines, resources and the application links will be available in the November ENEWS and on the STEM Grant Webpage.

Interested in becoming a member?
*Check our **membership page** or **contact Tim Benz,** MINNDEPENDENT president.*

The Minnesota STEM Ecosystem in partnership with the **Minnesota Tech Network** -- **Northern Lights Collaborative for Computing Education**, and **Ecolibrium3**, is hosting a free hands-on workshop: **"Innovate with AI."**

Event Details:

- **What: Innovate with AI (Free 4-Hour Workshop) brunch is provided**
- **When: October 24 | 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM**
- **Where: LNPK Community Hub, Duluth**
- **Who it's for: Everyone! Students and young adults, parents and families, educators, entrepreneurs, professionals, community leaders, and anyone curious about learning AI fundamentals.**
- **LEARN MORE**

Start Your Own Girls Who Code Club with Girls Who Code & MINNDEPENDENT!

Girls Who Code Clubs are free, flexible programs for students in grades 3–12. Start a Club at your school or organization and receive ready-to-use curriculum, facilitator training, and resources to help students explore AI, game design, cybersecurity, web development, and more—no coding experience required.

Ready to get started? Complete the Clubs Application at **girlswhocode.com/clubsapply** and select MINNDEPENDENT as your Community Partner to unlock additional benefits and support!

Looking for STEM curriculum resources?

We've compiled a list of **state and national STEM curriculum resources** to help educators explore opportunities to strengthen and support STEM learning in their schools. Whether you are developing curriculum, planning instruction, or looking for guidance, this list provides a helpful starting point for exploring STEM education resources.

VIEW STEM CURRICULUM RESOURCES

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Advanced AI Strategies for School Leaders

WEBINAR

Tuesday, October 27, 2026
10:00am - 11:15 am

Registration closes Sunday, October 25 at 5:00pm

This hands-on session gives private and independent school leaders practical ways to use AI in their daily work and guide responsible adoption across their schools. Participants learn to analyze school data while protecting student privacy, draft policies and procedures, and build AI workflows for operations, enrollment, human resources, and communication. They also learn how to help faculty identify useful AI applications across roles and subject areas. Participants leave with ready-to-use prompts, live examples, and a resource library they can use and share with their teams.

William Grube is the founder of Gruvy Education. *Through Gruvy Education, he partners with over 300 schools and several state-level organizations to provide AI training. He equips educators with the skills and knowledge to use AI effectively in their specific roles.*



COST
MINNDEPENDENT Members: FREE
Non-members: $75
(check with your LEA about paying with Title Funds)

REGISTER HERE

MNSAA
MINNESOTA NONPUBLIC SCHOOL ACCREDITING ASSOCIATION

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.*

As the event sponsor, all MINNDEPENDENT and MNSAA members receive a reduced rate!

Four dynamic, in-person sessions:

- Thursday, October 29, 2026: 9am-3pm *(please note date change!)*
- 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: $825
Non-members: $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**



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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Using the Art of Collaboration to Deliver Maximum Value

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If you're contemplating a master planning effort or just curious about what it might entail, 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.

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Connect with Our Experts!



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MINNDEPENDENT Preferred Partner Program

MINNDEPENDENT's 2026–27 Preferred Partnership Program

Trusted Partners. Meaningful Connections. Greater Visibility.

As we begin a new membership year, we're pleased to welcome our **2026–27 Preferred Partners**, a select group of organizations that have demonstrated a strong commitment to MINNDEPENDENT and our member schools.

Preferred Partners provide trusted expertise, products, services, and resources that support schools' educational, operational, strategic, and leadership needs.

Explore our 2026–27 Preferred Partners and connect with organizations that understand and **support Minnesota's private and independent schools.**

Meet Our Preferred Partners for 2026-2027

Member School News

October is National Principals Month! It's a time to honor and celebrate the hard work, dedication, and vital leadership of our private and independent school principals.

Want to celebrate your principal? Visit **https://www.principalsmonth.org/** for ideas. You can find everything from free e-cards to advocacy to a social media kit to help you honor YOUR amazing principal. Be sure to tag **#nationalprincipalsmonth** when posting!





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

October 27, 2026
10:00am - 11:15am
Webinar: Advanced AI Strategies for School Leaders
Presented by William Grube, Founder of ***Gruvy Education***
Members: FREE Non-Members: $75

November 3, 2026
STEM Grant LOI Application Process Opens

Open to all member schools

January 14, 2027

Webinar: Social Media Success with Andrea Gribble

Registration coming soon!

April 25, 2027

Private and Independent Education Awards

Mendakota Country Club

September 27-29, 2027

School Leadership Conference

Ruttger's Bay Lake Resort

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