November 2026 Newsletter

Dear friends of private and independent education,

Tuesday's elections will bring about significant change to Saint Paul in 2027. Senator Amy Klobuchar will become Minnesota's next Governor on January 4, 2027. In addition, the DFL has projected majorities in the Minnesota House (77-57) and Minnesota Senate (39-28). There will also be notable changes to the House and Senate legislative and committee leadership. Obviously, MINNDEPENDENT's primary focus is on education related committees.

MINNDEPENDENT will begin building relationships going into 2027 and finalize a legislative strategy. At the same time. we strongly encourage school administrators to open lines of communication with your local elected official to share the good work happening each day in private and independent schools.

Do we anticipate headwinds in the 2027 legislative session? It's possible. How can you help? If you are not a current member of MINNDEPENDENT, now is the time to **become a member**. Join today and help support your fellow private and independent schools. While MINNDEPENDENT advocates for ALL private and independent schools, it's imperative to further expand our network to ensure a strengthened position in the upcoming legislative session. Are you passionate about private and independent education or your local nonpublic school? We invite you to **make a gift** and invest in MINNDEPENDENT. Your gift reaches across a robust network of school and ensures a strong and unified voice.

The annual **STEM Grant Program** is now open! This program – one of the most robust member benefits – has invested more than $1.9 million in grants, programs and services directly in member schools. Keep an eye on the **program calendar** to ensure your school does not miss out on this fantastic member benefit. Wonder what types of

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

projects have been funded over the past decade? Take a look **here** and receive some inspiration!

As we approach the season of thanks, we extend our heartfelt and sincere thanks to you. Your support helps empower our mission as a trusted partner to private and independent schools for a half-century.

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.....

MINNDEPENDENT/MISF established the **Private and Independent Education Awards** in 2009. This annual event honors, recognizes, and celebrates the leaders, educators, staff, champions, and programs that impact students and school communities across Minnesota. Learn more about the **2026 honorees** and be inspired. Nominations for the 2027 Education Awards will open in December.

MINNDEPENDENT
A Trusted Partner For Private & Independent Schools

MINNDEPENDENT Monthly

We invite our member schools to share a quick fact about MINNDEPENDENT in your upcoming newsletter communications. Sharing your membership helps families understand how MINNDEPENDENT supports, strengthens, and represents private and independent schools across Minnesota. Moving forward, we will provide brief, monthly updates that you can easily drop into your newsletter to keep your community informed about our latest advocacy efforts, grant opportunities, professional development highlights, and more.

Simply copy the text below, insert your school's name in the blank, and download our logo HERE to include alongside your post. (When the image opens, right click to "save

image as")

Thank you for your partnership and for sharing our mission with your school community!

Proud Member of MINNDEPENDENT

Did you know that _____ is a proud member school of MINNDEPENDENT?

MINNDEPENDENT is a statewide organization that connects and strengthens Minnesota's private and independent schools through programming, partnerships, and public policy. By fostering a vibrant educational ecosystem, they help ensure our school has access to exceptional professional development for our educators, exciting STEM funding and innovation programs, a reliable resource hub, and a unified voice for private and independent schools in Minnesota.

To learn more about the network supporting our school community, visit **minndependent.org**.

The MINNDEPENDENT Newsletter is sponsored by

OPUS. DEVELOP DESIGN BUILD

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!



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Jay Fourniea
Vice President, Architecture
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STEM Grant Program

The 2027 STEM Grant Program is now open for submissions.

NOW ACCEPTING LETTERS OF INTEREST



This opportunity is open to **all member schools*.**

This opportunity is open to all member schools*

Member Schools - are you ready to elevate your school's STEM education?

MINNDEPENDENT is excited to announce the launch of our **2027 STEM Grant Program**, designed to empower your school's STEM initiatives and foster innovation.

We offer four distinct grant opportunities to support your specific needs:

· **Innovation Grants (up to $5,000):** Fund innovative STEM projects that align with your school's goals.

· **Starter Grants (up to $1,500):** Launch new STEM programs or initiatives.

· **Sustainability Grants (up to $1,000):** Provide supplemental funding for previously funded STEM projects.

· **Community Partnership Grants (We Care Solar):** Support hands-on solar education and service-learning for students in grades 6-12 in partnership with We Care Solar.

Take this opportunity to advance STEM learning at your school and inspire the next generation of innovators!

Complete grant guidelines, resources, and application process are now available on the **STEM Grant Webpage**.

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

Current Grant Cycle Now Open

Submit your Letter of Interest by January 12, 2027 (6:00 p.m.)







Ready to take the next step?

Express Your Interest: Must submit a Letter of Interest (LOI) to be eligible to submit a grant application.

- Letter of Interest PDF Reference Form
- Submit Letter of Interest through Survey Monkey
- *Deadline - Tuesday, Jan. 12, 2027, by 6 pm*

Apply for a Grant: If your LOI is approved, you'll be invited to submit a full grant application.

- Grant Application PDF Reference Form (all grant types)
- Submit STEM Grant Application in Survey Monkey
- *Deadline - Tuesday, Feb. 9, 2027, by 6 pm*

Visit our STEM Grant Resource Page to LEARN MORE

STEM GRANT RESOURCE PAGE

Key Resources:

- STEM Grant Program Calendar
- STEM Grant Program Overview
- STEM Grant Program Applicant Guide
- Academic Standards and Other STEM Resources
- Resources for Inclusive STEM Learning
- Community Partnership Grant (We Care Solar) Program Overview
- Project Descriptions of STEM Grant Awarded Last Six Years

Unlock new possibilities, inspire students, and shape the future of STEM education at your school.

Check out the Member School News below to read how Carondelet Catholic School is using their STEM Grant for this school year.

QUESTIONS?

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Director of Development & Programs
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THE STEM SCOOP

Girls Who Code is giving away a 3D printer for CSEdWeek!

- **Clubs** are free, flexible technology programs for all 3rd-12th graders of any skill level.
- There is no coding experience required to join or lead a Club.
- Clubs with at least three members are eligible for $250 in funding!

👉 Sign up at www.girlswhocode.com/clubsapply to explore the free curriculum. Remember to indicate you are affiliated with MINNDEPENDENT on the application.

🗓️ There is no deadline to start a Club but if you complete the application by November 30th, you will be entered in our CSEdWeek giveaway for a chance to win a 3D printer. ***See official rules***.

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

Scroll-Worthy: Maximizing Your School's Impact on Social Media with Andrea Gribble

Thursday, January 14 (10:00 am -11:30 am)

WEBINAR DESCRIPTION

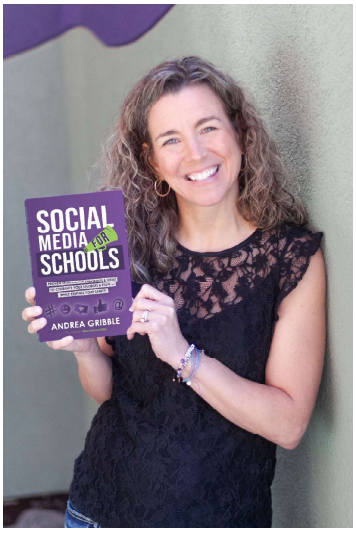
Does your school's social media blend into the feed instead of standing out? In this session, Andrea Gribble - founder of #SocialSchool4EDU and national leader in K12 social media storytelling - shares what's working right now to capture attention online. From Instagram Reels to weekly feature posts, you'll discover simple, practical

strategies to highlight your students and staff in ways that truly connect with your community.

Packed with dozens of real-life school examples (including MINNDEPENDENT schools), this webinar will give you fresh inspiration and ready-to-use ideas you can implement immediately to elevate your school's online presence.

PRESENTER BIO
Andrea Gribble
***Founder,* #SocialSchoolEDU**

Andrea Gribble is on a mission to make every school's story shine. As founder of **#SocialSchool4EDU**, she helps schools and districts celebrate students and staff while connecting with their communities through social media. She's the author of *Social Media for Schools: Proven Storytelling Strategies & Ideas for Celebrating Your Students & Staff – While Keeping Your Sanity* and host of the weekly podcast *Mastering Social Media for Schools.*



REGISTER TODAY

WEBINAR FEES:
Members: FREE
- **CLICK HERE to see if your school is a member of MINNDEPENDENT**

Nonmembers: $100
- Check with your LEA about using Title funds for webinar fees.

Easy School Marketing

Member Schools Only

Small School Leaders Virtual Conference
Tuesday, Feb. 9-12, 2027

MINNDEPENDENT has secured an **Association Ticket for the 2027 Small School Leaders Virtual Conference**, providing **FREE access to all member schools!**

This four-day virtual conference is designed for small schools, but the content is highly relevant and valuable for schools of all sizes. Whether your team focuses on enrollment, development, leadership, communications, or student retention, you'll find sessions that offer practical, actionable strategies.

Why Attend?

✔ Connect with private and independent school leaders and staff across the country.
✔ Learn from experienced professionals and industry experts.
✔ Gain practical strategies you can put into action immediately to support your school's success.

Topics include:

- Marketing & Enrollment
- Development & Fundraising
- School Leadership
- Student Retention

Your **MINNDEPENDENT Association Ticket allows** your entire school community the opportunity to participate in all conference sessions at **NO COST!** Administrators, teachers, advancement teams, board members, admissions staff, and other school personnel are all welcome to attend.

IMPORTANT: Register Now to Secure Your Access!

Please visit our website for complete instructions on how to register yourself and each of your staff members who would like to attend. Registration is quick, easy, and FREE!

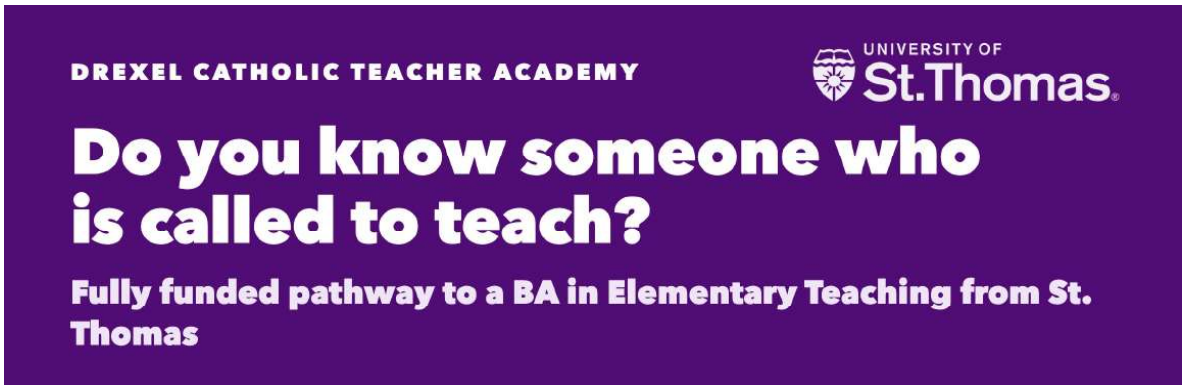
Registration Deadline:

- January 30, 2027

Conference Details:

- **Conference Schedule: CLICK HERE** to view conference schedule and session topics.

REGISTER TODAY



LEARN MORE

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

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

Sessions:

- December 10 - 9:00-3:00 - in person
- January 14 - virtual in the morning - time TBD
- March 12 - 9:00-3:00 - in person

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: $650
Non-members: $825

- ☑ 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**



Please join us in congratulating MINNDEPENDENT Board Member Dean Broadhead on being named one of the Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal's 2027 Most Admired CEOs!

This well-deserved honor recognizes leaders who are making an incredible impact across the Twin Cities through their professional achievement, industry leadership, and dedicated community contributions.

Way to go, Dean! Thank you for sharing your leadership, talents, and vision with MINNDEPENDENT and our member schools.

Read more about the recognition here: https://broadheadco.com/.../dean-broadhead-named-one-of.../



Hats & Mittens is a nonprofit committed to providing hats and mittens for local children in need.

Learn more about Hats & Mittens and their program that helps your PK-8 students discover the joy and importance of giving back.

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

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WHERE MONEY MEANS MORE™

thrivent®

A Season of Thankfulness: Celebrating the Schools That Serve Our Communities!
A Harvest of Thanks

🍎 Grateful for teachers 🍂 Thankful for parents
🌾 Blessed by generous communities 🍁 Inspired by students

🍂 Turn Thankfulness into Generosity with Thrivent Action Teams

Thrivent clients may lead **two Action Teams each year** with **$250 in seed money**. Ideas include a Thanksgiving meal basket drive, staff appreciation breakfast, or warm coat drive.

🍁 Thrivent Choice Dollars Expire December 31!

Eligible clients can direct **Choice Dollars** to enrolled schools, but **undirected dollars expire December 31.** Remind your families and supporters that are Thrivent clients to direct their Thrivent Choice Dollars to your school.

Contact us to learn more.
Happy Thanksgiving and thank you for all you do!



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MINNDEPENDENT
Preferred Partner Program

MINNDEPENDENT's 2026–27 Preferred Partnership Program

Trusted Partners. Meaningful Connections. Greater Visibility.

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

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OPUS

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ESCALE
Strategic Coaching • Leadership Execution

Phoenix
SCHOOL COUNSELING

MNSAA
MINNESOTA NONPUBLIC SCHOOL ACCREDITING ASSOCIATION

LANGER CONSTRUCTION
Since 1946

Member School News

Carondelet
CATHOLIC SCHOOL






From Carondelet's Instagram Page

(We ❤️ when our member schools follow MINNDEPENDENT and tag us!)

"**We're grateful to MINNDEPENDENT for selecting Carondelet as one of 17 schools to receive a 2026-2027 STEM grant** supporting innovative, hands-on learning. The grant allows us to expand and replenish our existing STEM programming for students in grades 3-5, providing greater access to creative engineering and coding experiences through programs and tools such as Strawbees, micro:bits, and Makey Makey."

MEMBER MONDAYS

Introducing… MINNDEPENDENT Member Mondays!

Every Monday starting in January, we'll spotlight one of our member schools on MINNDEPENDENT's social media channels (Facebook and Instagram). We're excited to celebrate the amazing things happening in our member schools, and **we need your help to make it happen!**

Here's how your school can participate:

1. Complete this **FORM** to share something interesting about your school! It could be a fun fact, a special project, a recent accomplishment, or something your school is especially proud of. This is your chance to show our audience what makes your school special!
2. Share your school logo and a few photos that highlight the information you provide in the form. These will help bring your story to life!
3. Follow MINNDEPENDENT on Facebook and Instagram! When we feature your school, we'll tag your social media accounts so your school community can join in the celebration and share the excitement.

We can't wait to shine a spotlight on our incredible member schools and share the wonderful things happening in your communities. Thank you for helping us celebrate what makes each of our schools unique!

DO YOU FOLLOW US?

👉 **Let's connect on social media!**

When you follow our pages, it makes it easy for us to tag your school whenever we celebrate your campus activities, grant updates, or award recipients. Let's work together to amplify your stories—remember to tag us back so we can 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

Tuesday, December 1, 2026
Nomination period opens for
The Private and Independent Education Awards

Tuesday, January 12, 2027, by 6:00 p.m.
Due date for STEM Grant ***Letters of Interest (LOIs)***

January 14, 2027
Webinar: Social Media Success with Andrea Gribble
Register Here

Tuesday, February 9, 2027, by 6:00 p.m.

*Due date for **STEM Grant Applications***

By the end of March 2027

Grant award decisions will be announced to applicants

April 25, 2027

Private and Independent Education Awards

STEM Grant Awardees will also be honored

Mendakota Country Club

August 2027 | Date TBD

STEM Education Conference

September 27-29, 2027

School Leadership Conference

Ruttger's Bay Lake Resort

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MINNDEPENDENT

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