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**PLEASE VISIT  
OUR CALENDAR  
FOR IMPORTANT  
DATES.**



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## CTE TIP LEADERSHIP TEAM

**Presents at the 2023 CareerTech VISION Conference**

**100% Retention:**  
How Minnesota's  
CTE Teacher  
Induction  
Program Retains  
Teachers



**Presenters From Left:** Dr. Zane Sheehan, Alternative Preparation Initial Teacher Licensure; Shelli Sowles, MDE, CTE Coordinator; Troy Haugen, Director of Career & College Readiness; and Dr. Lavyne Rada, Minnesota Career & Technical Education and Teacher Induction Program Leader

LCSC's Minnesota Career & Technical Educators Teacher Induction Program (CTE TIP) Leadership Team shared their program's model and success with CTE professionals from around the country at the CareerTech VISION Conference in Phoenix, Arizona, in November 2023.

The Minnesota CTE TIP is a professional learning community run by Lakes Country Service Cooperative. It is specifically designed to support early career teachers in the field of career and technical education. The program aims to empower, develop, and enhance the success, resilience, and retention of these teachers.

*Continued on next page*

**EDUCATION**

*Electronic Edition*

[www.lcsc.org](http://www.lcsc.org)

Source: CTE TIP Leadership Team, CTETIP\_23ACTE PPT  
Author: Mary Phillipe, LCSC Communications Generalist

# CTE TIP Leadership Team



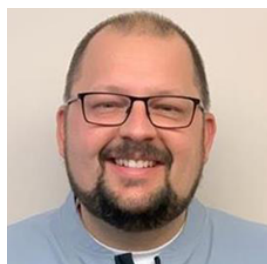
**Dr. Lavyne Rada**  
MN CTE TIP Program Leader  
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**Shelli Sowles**  
MDE, CTE Coordinator  
[mde.cte@state.mn.us](mailto:mde.cte@state.mn.us)

**Learn more at**  
**teachcte.org.**

## **Eight Key objectives of the program include:**

- building teacher efficacy and resilience and influencing job satisfaction and teacher retention
- providing monthly professional development
- providing teaching, program, and curricular resources
- providing mentoring and coaching
- facilitating programming to address early career teacher challenges
- providing CTE focused pedagogical resources and support
- providing an opportunity to analyze and reflect upon teaching
- identifying CTE job openings and monitoring the movement of CTE teachers throughout Minnesota

The team expressed pride in achieving increased teacher retention rates after launching the 2022 pilot. Dr. Lavyne Rada, who is the Program Leader of Minnesota's CTE TIP program, reported that the conference attendees were excited to replicate the program in their own states. The Minnesota CTE TIP program was designed based on The University of Minnesota Teacher Induction Program for Agricultural Educators, which was first introduced in 1999. “Your workshop made the conference worth attending,” said a CareerTech VISION Conference attendee.

**If you would like more information about the program, you can contact Troy Haugen at [thaugen@lcsc.org](mailto:thaugen@lcsc.org) or visit the website at [Teachcte.org](https://teachcte.org).**



# FROM THE Executive Director

"Learning, Leading, and Innovating  
to Achieve Vibrant, Inclusive Communities."



**Jeremy Kovash**  
*Executive Director*



Greetings. I hope you all had a wonderful holiday. The lack of snow and ice reduced family opportunities to do the things we really enjoy, such as hockey on the lake, ice fishing, and skiing, so we punted. My wife, Deanna, my three sons, and family and friends spent much of the holiday watching movies, reading books, playing games, and constructing a few puzzles. We found the holiday to be quite refreshing. My favorite book read was "The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store" by James McBride, and my favorite movie was the classic Christmas Vacation, although we did introduce the boys to the classic holiday movie: Die Hard.

As we enter 2024, I am excited for the future of continuing to support you, our communities. We have exciting plans for Lakes Country Academy, our facilities, our educational programs in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Education, Career and Technical Education, Health & Safety, technology, Cooperative Purchasing Connection, insurance and much more. I hope you enjoy this issue of The Communicator and wish you a blessed start to 2024.

**Avel eCare and Lakes Country Service Cooperative Partnership**

**Challenge**  
Avel eCare School Health recognizes that students are coming to school with an increasing number of health issues. The upward trend ranges from a high incidence of Type 1 Diabetes to a dramatic increase in mental health struggles, chronic physical and behavioral health conditions.

Knowing all of these challenges are needed, school administrators are still tasked with effectively helping students in an ever-evolving role.

**Solution**  
Avel eCare School Health delivers on-demand nursing support to K-12 school districts to ensure immediate response to student needs throughout the school day. Using advanced telehealth technology, school staff can connect with dedicated school nurses for direct student care needs and leverage the Avel nurses for programmatic support.

**Benefits**

- One button access to a nurse
- Average student assessment takes less than 5 minutes
- An average return to class rate of 90%
- Increased productivity time for certified staff

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## AVEL eCARE | SCHOOL HEALTH

### Avel eCare and Lakes Country Service Cooperative Partnership

Avel eCare School Health delivers on-demand nursing support to K-12 school districts to ensure immediate response to student needs throughout the school day. Using advanced telehealth technology, school staff can connect with dedicated school nurses for direct student care needs and leverage the Avel nurses for programmatic support.

Avel eCare School Health provides care across the country and has completed tens of thousands of encounters since the service began in 2015.





# Three New State Grant Programs for School Facilities

by Jane Eastes, LCSC Deputy Executive Director

## 1. Solar for Schools

The Department of Commerce opened the first round of the **Solar for Schools** grant program for 2024. **Applications are due February 7.**

When approved by the Minnesota Commerce Department's Energy Resources Division, schools will be able to send in a full application before June 7. This is an excellent opportunity to improve your building's energy footprint and provide a STEM teaching opportunity on energy generation to students.

Prior to beginning an application, schools must first obtain a unique project ID number from Commerce by emailing

**[SolarForSchools@state.mn.us](mailto:SolarForSchools@state.mn.us)**.

Thirty million dollars was added to the program last year. The grants will now cover between 40% and 70% of costs based on the school's needs. At the federal level, the Inflation Reduction act signed in 2022 provides schools with clean energy funds which can now receive up to 30% in tax credits to reduce the cost of installation.

For K-12 schools, the maximum allowable grant size is determined by the most recent Adjusted Net Tax Capacity (ANTC) divided by the Adjusted Pupil Unit (APU). For state colleges and universities, the maximum allowable grant will be 50%, for tribal contract schools 60% and for cooperative school districts 40%. The overall maximum grant is \$500,000 outside of Xcel service territory and \$675,000 for within Xcel service territory. These are also both the lifetime caps for school districts both in and outside Xcel service territory meaning that the maximum grant dollars that a school's district can receiving for either one or multiple systems is \$500,000 and \$675,000 respectfully.

The program began in 2021 with a \$9 million round of funding. Seventy schools across the state have received grants, with another 35 schools in the process of receiving grants. Since the program began, Minnesota has seen a 50% increase in the number of schools with solar power.

*Continued on next page*

## 2. Air Ventilation Pilot Grant for schools—expected to open by March 31, 2024



The State made \$900,000.00 available for a pilot program to improve air ventilation in schools through the Department of Commerce Energy Division. The initial grant round has not opened but is expected to open before March 31.

This grant may be used to reimburse a qualified school up to 50 percent, not to exceed \$50,000 per school, of its costs for HVAC related work. Schools and students in communities with high rates of poverty, as determined by receipt of federal Title I funding, will get priority.

Work covered by this grant includes:

- Completing a heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) assessment report;
- HVAC testing, adjusting, and balancing work;
- Ventilation equipment upgrades, replacements, or other measures recommended by a HVAC assessment report;
- Work on an HVAC system to improve health, safety, energy, or system efficiency, or to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the system; and
- Other HVAC projects that have not already been approved under the Long Term Facilities Maintenance (LTFM) statute (Minnesota Statutes § 123B.595)

## 3. Electric School Bus Deployment

The Minnesota legislature appropriated \$13 million dollars for the establishment of an electric school bus deployment program in the 2023 legislative session. The purpose of the grant money is to accelerate the deployment of electric school buses and to encourage schools to use vehicle electrification as a teaching tool that can be integrated into the school's curriculum. The Dept of Commerce Energy Division is currently developing terms and application materials for this grant and does not have an estimate for when the grant round will open. Funds can be used for up to 75 percent of the cost of deploying, on the school district or transportation service provider's real property, infrastructure required to operate electric school buses, including but not limited to battery exchange stations, electric vehicle infrastructure, or electric vehicle charging stations.

Up to 95 percent of the cost will be covered for prioritized school districts. The legislation (216C.374) defines priority schools as:

- (1) a school district listed in the Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates School District Estimates as having 7.5 percent or more students living in poverty based on the most recent decennial U.S. census;
- (2) a school district identified with locale codes "43-Rural: Remote" and "42-Rural: Distant" by the National Center for Education Statistics;
- (3) a school district funded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs; or
- (4) a school district that receives basic support payments under United States Code, title 20, section 7703(b)(1), for children who reside on Indian land.





## Josh Nelson

LCSC Deputy Director  
of Educational Programs

## READ Act and Other Education Program Support Updates

School Leaders,

There is a lot of buzz around the region and state now that we are steeped in planning and implementing what came out of the last legislative session. It is always difficult to predict how exactly some of these initiatives will roll out, but what was predictable was that the process of getting statute from writing to implementation was/is chaotic, confusing, and frustrating. We see many people at the state, regional, and local levels working hard every day to figure out how to get into compliance with new laws, all while exploring funding opportunities that will create better outcomes for kids. It takes time for all levels to come into alignment, which is why we consider this to be the chaotic period of planning and implementation. Hang in there!

As your regional entity, we are committed to supporting you with implementation while advocating for you at the state level. Sometimes that means providing you specialist support in the trenches or applying for grants to supplement your efforts or meeting with the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) or legislators to tweak delivery systems to make sense for rural Minnesota schools. We often work hand in glove with your associations in these efforts and find all of them a valuable partner when influencing decisions that we all have to live with.

I thought it would be timely to send a brief update of what we (LCSC) know and are able to provide as of today, January 12, 2024. In many cases, we are still in a state of limbo, but progress is being made. This is not an exhaustive list of our programs and supports, but rather a summary of new or developing programs.

As always, we feel blessed to partner with you in providing equitable outcomes for kids! Always feel free to reach out should you have questions or ideas about how we can support you locally in your efforts to support student learning and social well-being.

My Best,

### EDUCATION UPDATES

#### READ Act

Attached you will find a quick reference document that highlights statutory components and deadlines of the legislation. I am guessing you are all familiar with (and monitoring) the MDE website ([READ Act \(mn.gov\)](https://mn.gov)), that is revised as pieces fall into place. Meeting deadlines when implementing statute of this enormity statewide sometimes seems impossible. The messaging from our Education Programs team at LCSC is to adhere to deadlines, but it is most important that we implement with the intent to positively impact reading proficiency. We fear that the rush to meet deadlines will create a 'check the box' mentality, which is counterproductive to the intent of the law. As a member of the MDE team stated in a call I was on, "A state that has done this work before us did not see results until years four and five." In other words, this is a marathon, not a sprint.

#### Multi-tiered COMPASS Support

There is an integration team comprised of MDE and service cooperative staff that has spent the past six months developing robust support for regions around the state in the areas of math, literacy, Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) identified school support. We are excited that these efforts will result in a team of LCSC specialists who will support your implementation efforts. The hope is the team will be in place on or before July 1, 2024, and readily available to you at no cost to the district. Put this in the category of 'can't happen soon enough, but better late than never.' In the meantime, our Regional Center of Excellence team is here for your support as needed.

#### SPED Pipeline Grant

We were recently notified that we were awarded the competitive Special Education (SPED) Pipeline grant. These funds will provide tuition support to Tier 1 and Tier 2 SPED teachers who wish to enroll in a licensure program that leads them to a Tier 3 or Tier 4 license. A secondary focus is to provide scholarships to paraprofessionals enrolling in a SPED teacher prep program. The details of how this money will be disbursed are still being finalized. We are striving for money to be available for the 2024 summer school session.

*Continued on next page*

## (Updates continued)

### 18 Online

LCSC secured another round of funding to send current and/or aspiring concurrent enrollment teachers back to school to gain the graduate level content courses needed to be in compliance with the Higher Learning Commission's rules that deem teachers 'qualified' to teach College in the High School courses.

### Alternative Teacher Prep

LCSC was the first alternative teacher preparation provider to be approved by the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) to offer alternative licensure programming (alternative to the traditional university pathway) to CTE teachers seeking additional licenses in their field. In short, CTE teachers seeking additional licenses such as Work-based Learning, Construction Careers, Manufacturing Careers or Transportation Careers can enroll with us rather than going the traditional university route. We built a program that considers prior experiences during the enrollment process, so that participants aren't forced to learn what they already know. Our delivery system works individually with participants to build a program of study and then delivers facilitated learning opportunities that will lead them to licensure.

### Mentorship and Induction

We fundamentally believe that a teaching license is a demonstration of minimum competence, and because of that, recognize that teachers need support after a license is acquired. We have been able to secure grant funds to develop and deliver mentorship for teachers in CTE. You will hear more about this in days to come. Additionally, we are ramping up to apply for the Statewide Teacher Mentorship grant that will help us expand mentorship support to teachers in other disciplines.

### Personal Finance Legislation

2024-2025 Requirement for Students 9-12 – We are hearing loud and clear that many school leaders are opposed to this being a stand-alone course. I think we can all agree that we don't need one more required course in the catalog, depriving students of electives. We are aware that many of the finance literacy standards are embedded in existing courses. When you seek clarification on how you need to go about meeting the standards, it has been one of those 'depends on who you talk to' answers. While we are advocating for flexibility to meet the standards in an existing required course, you may find some of the answers to your questions on the MDE FAQ page.



## The Minnesota Healthcare Consortium (MHC)

The Minnesota Healthcare Consortium (MHC) and Medica have worked together to develop a simple and efficient group health insurance submission process for group leaders who are interested in a 2024-25 health insurance proposal. Visit <https://mnhc.gov/news/> for more information.



## QUESTIONS

If you have questions about submitting a proposal, contact Dan Weir, Insurance and Risk Management Consultant at [danjw@ebisinc.net](mailto:danjw@ebisinc.net) or Melissa Walvatne, Director of Finance and Risk Management at [mwalvatne@lcsc.org](mailto:mwalvatne@lcsc.org)



# Breckenridge

## Public School

Secures

# \$1.2 Million

Grant for 21st Century  
Enrichment Opportunities

by Monica Thompson, LCSC Coordinator  
of Technology Integration and Academic Challenges

Breckenridge Public School has been awarded a \$1.2 million grant spanning over three years, courtesy of the Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers Grant. The primary objective of this grant is to enhance the learning experiences of students by establishing or expanding community learning centers. These centers are designed to provide academic enrichment and other valuable opportunities during non-school hours, including before and after school, as well as during the summer. The grant is a strategic move to broaden students' horizons, supplementing their regular academic programs, and fostering stronger connections with education and the community.



Miriam Tobola, Grant Coordinator, emphasized the significance of the grant, stating, "This grant will allow us to establish a community center within our high school media center to provide students (particularly in grades 5-12) with a broad array of academic supports, enrichment programs, and school engagement opportunities to complement their regular academic programs and help students improve academically and improve connections with education and the community."

Included within the grant is the establishment of the Breckenridge Learning and Student Success Opportunity (LASSO) Center, which aims to be a secure and supportive environment for all students and families in the community and surrounding area. This center will offer engaging learning experiences and a range of programs, activities, and resources centered around 21st-century academics, including science, technology, engineering, arts, math (STEAM), and social-emotional learning supports.





The goals of the grant are to provide high-quality academic enrichment opportunities, improve academic performance, build community connections, and enhance social-emotional skills. To meet these goals the school plans to offer free, high-quality, and accessible enrichment programming in core areas, including homework tutoring in reading, math, and science, career and college readiness initiatives, and innovative programming for all students in the region.

As part of the grant funding, the school has dedicated a portion of its media center space to house STEAM-focused activity stations. These stations, developed with assistance from Smartlab Learning (<https://www.smartlablearning.com>) will cover topics such as circuitry, communication and media arts, manufacturing technology, mechanics and structures, robotics and control technology, scientific data and analysis, software engineering, and environmental technology.

The Smartlab stations and resources have recently been installed, and a grand opening date for the LASSO Center is expected to be announced soon.

Miriam Tobola expressed her enthusiasm for the future of the LASSO Center and the Smartlab, stating, "We hope to offer summer learning camps - possibly a STEM Camp and/or Coding Camp for students.

With this grant and the establishment of the Breckenridge LASSO Center, the school is ready to make significant strides in providing a comprehensive and enriching educational experience for its students, community and surrounding area.



# OnToCollege

OnToCollege has partnered with over 800 schools (50+ of those are in Minnesota) across 30 states to increase test scores and strengthen college and career readiness cultures. LCSC and Minnesota Rural Education Association (MREA) have vetted the program and they encourage their members to consider the program for their test prep and college/career readiness needs. Take a look at our partnership page to see the listing of MN schools and testimonials.



## WHAT DOES TEST-OPTIONAL REALLY MEAN?

### WHY Colleges Become Test Optional

LCSC/MREA partnership | OnToCollege

Contact Betsy at [betsy@ontocollege.com](mailto:betsy@ontocollege.com) or 612-987-8098 to learn more about the OnToCollege program and discounted pricing for LCSC and MREA members.

## CPC AND FISHER TRACKS

**From the starting line to the finish line!**

Learn more about CPC's contract with Fisher Tracks [HERE](#)

CPC members receive exclusive pricing on equipment, materials, supplies, and installation services.



Fisher Tracks is an awarded vendor under the CPC Contract for athletic running tracks. They offer comprehensive, turnkey solutions that can take your project "from the starting line to the finish line."





# WIN

## ACADEMY STUDENTS IN STARBUCK



by Susan Knutson, W.I.N. Academy Principal/District 2149  
Special Education Coordinator

On Wednesday, December 20th, students of WIN Academy in Starbuck packed over 50 holiday meals. These meals are being sent home to local families in order to ensure that they had the necessary preparations to enjoy a holiday feast that everyone deserves.

Generous donations from local businesses in and around the Minnewaska School District have made this program possible. Tom's Food Pride supplies the groceries at an affordable price and, this year, they have also donated a free turkey to each meal box. We are extremely grateful for the support of the community.

## Lake Region Arts Council Awards Project Grants



### to Ulen-Hitterdal Public Schools

**Author:** Therese Vogel, Communications Director, Ulen-Hitterdal Public School

#### Student Residency Program

Art teacher Sarah Mendis is excited to announce that the school's Art Department has received a Legacy grant through Lake Region Arts Council to hold a K-6 and 7-12 art student residency program in April 2024. Glass artist Jolene Juhl from Greenbush, Minnesota, will work with students for four days with the project concluding with an evening artist talk and demonstration. This \$4,300 grant will fully cover the specifics of the project. Funds will be raised separately to purchase one or two pieces of Jolene's art to be given away during the evening raffle in conjunction with the Ice Cream for Books event. This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through grants from Lake Region Arts Council, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the Arts and Cultural Heritage fund.

#### Author Residency Program

Ulen-Hitterdal School 3rd grade teacher, Janet Maesse, announced that the elementary students were awarded a \$2,610 Project Grant from the Lake Region Arts Council. In March of 2024, the school will hold a 3-day author residency program with Ryan Jacobson for 3-6 grade students and author presentation for K-2 students together with a general public program. Jacobson will discuss what inspires him to write the stories he does, discuss the three primary elements of most stories, and help the students develop compelling characters in their stories. On the final day of the residency, a public session will be held in the auditorium for students, parents, relatives, and community members. This Activity is funded in part by a grant from Lake Region Arts Council through a Minnesota State Legislative appropriation.



# ACADEMIC

## CHALLENGES

Source/Author: Monica Thompson,  
Coordinator of Academic Challenges



## Senior High Knowledge Bowl Off to a Strong Start

The 2023-24 senior high knowledge bowl season kicked off with 147 teams competing over two days at Concordia College in Moorhead in December. Knowledge Bowl (KB) is an academic competition where students answer questions about history, literature, mathematics, science, current events, and everything in between.

During a meet, teams of five students begin with the written round, where they work cooperatively to complete a multiple-choice test. Based on their team's written round score, they're placed into rooms where teams of four students face off against two other teams to answer questions read by a KB coach or volunteer.

Knowledge Bowl was first launched in 1979, in Fergus Falls, MN. What once started out with only eight schools participating has now grown to over 290 schools throughout the nine Minnesota Service Cooperatives across the state!



### RESULTS:

#### Monday, December 18th

##### Large Division:

1. Moorhead Mango
2. Fargo North Neon
3. Fargo Davies Dove
4. Fargo South Sun
5. Moorhead Mauve
6. Fargo South Scarlet

##### Small Division:

1. Hancock Hot Pink
2. Wheaton Winter
3. Brandon-Evansville Berry
4. Richland Rain
5. Richland Rose
6. Richland Ruby

##### Mid Division:

1. Hillcrest Havana
2. WCA Walnut
3. Morris Misty Blue
4. WCA Winter
5. LPA Lava
6. Minnewaska Magenta

#### Tuesday, December 19th

##### Large Division:

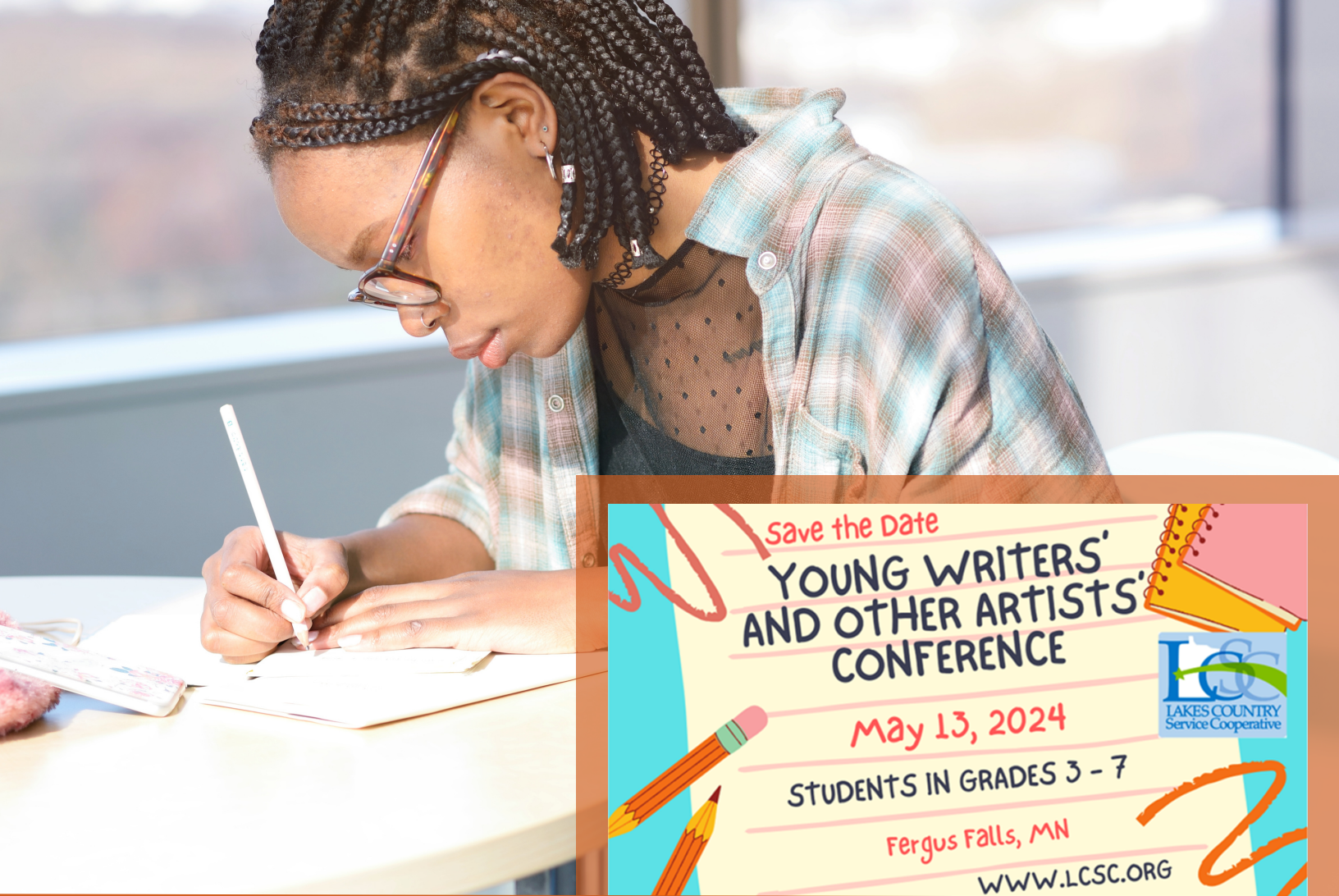
1. Park Christian Pink
2. Fergus Falls Fire
3. DGF Dove
4. Park Christian Pacific
5. Alexandria Apple
6. DGF Diamond

##### Small Division:

1. Ashby Apple
2. Rothsay Rose
3. CGB Chestnut
4. Underwood Urban and Underwood Umbrella
5. Chokio-Alberta Chrome
6. Underwood Ultraviolet

##### Mid Division:

1. Hawley Honey
2. New York Mills Nutmeg
3. New York Mills Neon
4. Hawley Hazel
5. Park Christian Plum and Hawley Havana
6. Hawley Hibiscus



**Source/Author:** Monica Thompson, Coordinator of Academic Challenges

Held each spring, the Young Writers' Conference provides students in grades 3-7 with an opportunity to attend classes presented by Minnesota authors and other artists. Other artists include storytellers, cartoonists, puppeteers, creative drama teachers, creative dance instructors, illustrators and others.

Last year, approximately 260 students attended the event in Fergus Falls. Everyone got an opportunity to share some laughs and be amazed by Nick Bretz. Nick is not only a magician, but he also has a 4th degree black belt in TaeKwonDo. Students also attended sessions with a storyteller, writer, and an artist where they learned about the art of storytelling, writing techniques and made art with an artist.

The 2024 Young Writers' and other Artists Conference is scheduled for May 13, 2024, at Minnesota State Community & Technical College in Fergus Falls. Online Registration will open soon at [www.lcsc.org](http://www.lcsc.org).

If you have any questions or would like more information about any of these programs please reach out to Monica Thompson ([mthompson@lcsc.org](mailto:mthompson@lcsc.org)), Academic Challenges Coordinator or Jolene King at [jking@lcsc.org](mailto:jking@lcsc.org), Program Assistant.







Since the Spring of 2017, participants have completed over 4,400 **18 Online** courses.

## **18 Online provides the 18 graduate credits you'll need to become a qualified content area concurrent enrollment instructor.**

Teachers instructing concurrent enrollment (dual credit) courses are required by the Higher Learning Commission, the accrediting body for post-secondary educational institutions, to have a master's degree in the subject matter they are teaching, or to have a master's degree and 18 graduate credits in the subject matter they are teaching.

18 Online is a collaborative effort between Lakes Country Service Cooperative, Northwest Service Cooperative and Minnesota State University Moorhead.

If you want more information about the program or you are interested in enrolling **[CLICK HERE.](#)**

### **Content Areas**

**ART • BIOLOGY, ANATOMY, PHYSIOLOGY • BUSINESS (MBA) • CHEMISTRY • COMMUNICATIONS • ENGLISH • HISTORY • MATH • POLITICAL SCIENCE • PSYCHOLOGY**

Lakes Country Service Cooperative Presents:

## **Improving Your Organization**

Topic :

### **Strategic Planning**

This full-day session will identify planning processes that can help participants set goals and determine strategies to move their organizations forward.

**\$ REGISTRATION FEE**  
NO COST TO ATTEND - LIMITED  
REGISTRATION - SIGN UP TODAY!



**FACILITATOR**  
Dave Bartholomay



**DATES**  
22 February, 2024

**TIME**  
8:30 AM - 3:30 PM

**LOCATION**  
1001 E MOUNT FAITH  
FERGUS FALLS, MN 56537

*Register Now*  
[www.lcsc.org](http://www.lcsc.org)



**SCAN ME**

## **IMPROVING YOUR ORGANIZATION THROUGH STRATEGIC PLANNING**

This full-day session will identify planning processes that can help participants set goals and determine strategies to move their organizations forward.

This training is generously funded by the Blandin Foundation and brought to you in collaboration with United Way of Otter Tail & Wadena Counties.



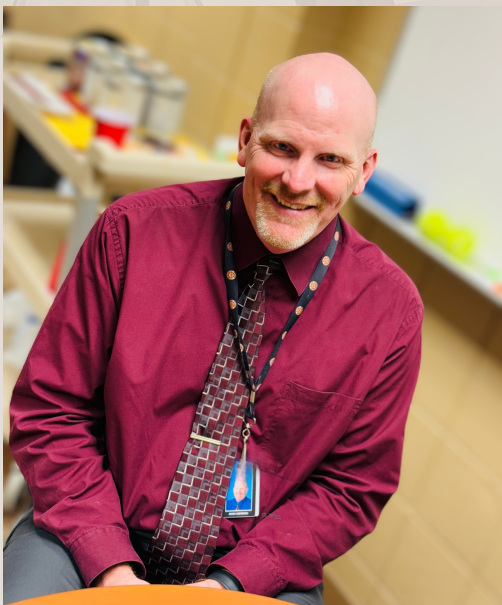
**Source:** Mark Anderson, Fergus Falls Kenedy Secondary School Principal, Fergus Falls Public School Website, AVID – Winona Public School Website  
**Author:** Mary Phillipe, LCSC Communications Generalist



## Otter Time

**"Sometimes kids just need time to be."**

**- Mark Anderson  
Kennedy Secondary Principal**



Fergus Falls Kennedy Secondary School initiated a new student program called "Otter Time" last fall, which has been successful so far!

The program aims to guide students on Career and College Readiness and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and provide a designated 30-minute guided study time each day. Fergus Falls Kennedy Secondary Principal Mark Anderson shared that students have appreciated this move towards a more equitable and consistent student study time.

As a freshman, students are assigned to a dedicated teacher who is responsible for monitoring their academic progress over the next four years. Every Monday, the assigned teacher will review the student's grades and meet with them to discuss any concerns and the assignments they need to complete to achieve their goals. After the meeting, students will attend their assigned classes, which last for 67 minutes each. During this time, they will receive instruction from their teachers and be able to work on their homework in class. This way, when they attend the Otter Time session, they can complete their work without feeling frustrated or overwhelmed.

*Continued on next page*



Otter Time begins directly after lunch and lasts for 30 minutes. This gives the students the time to get the help they need. Here, students can also take the initiative to see teachers for extra support, make up work, and undertake any test retakes that need to happen. Students are allowed to retake a test one time to improve their grade and can use Otter Time to do so. Otter Time also will enable students to go where they need to feel safe. Safe spaces are available all over the school for students who need this time and space. Anderson knew there would be some challenges with the implementation of this program, and they are currently working with a few students struggling to make the right choices during their 30 minutes. “In our first trimester, we have already seen fewer failures than in the past.

We are trending in the right direction, but we still have some details to work out to ensure kids are in class when needed and sign up for Otter Time to avoid detention,” shared Anderson. He also shared seeing an improvement in attendance. Anderson stated that Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is a significant part of their district's initiative and his personal passion. The primary objective is to encourage children to become good human beings. They strive to help them understand that we all have equal rights despite our varying beliefs. The goal is to create a safe space for them to discuss their beliefs and differences and to be open to accepting others for who they are. SEL aims to teach children how to engage in difficult conversations respectfully and address disagreements or unpopular decisions.



As the former Director of the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program for Winona Area Schools, Anderson had the chance to observe programs in over 50 K-12 schools. During his observations, he noticed that the excellent schools that were doing exceptional things had allocated at least 30 minutes for students to engage in social and emotional activities. Additionally, each student was assigned a teacher to be their “go-to” person for four years. This allowed students to build strong relationships with their peers and teachers and have a designated person as their guide throughout their four years. Even if students didn't always agree with their go-to person, they knew they had someone to turn to when they needed help.

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During an experiment with Otter Time right before the winter break, a list of activities, including welding, bead class, and art class, was made available a la carte. Anderson mentioned that they plan to continue offering these fun activities as the students and teachers enjoyed these opportunities to try something new.

For the next four and a half weeks, Career and College Readiness coursework will assist 9th to 11th-grade students in preparing for career and college registration. “We will help them determine which courses are appropriate for them and what path they should take outside of high school based on the Career and Tech Education (CTE) wheel,” shared Anderson. The aim is to enhance their opportunities as sophomores and choose the path that suits them best. Meanwhile, seniors will focus on post-high school life. They will concentrate on checklist number two, learning to write resumes and cover letters. Anderson will review these documents and provide feedback to each student.



Before implementing the Otter Time program, freshmen and juniors could work on goal setting, reflection, and accomplishment. Now, at Kennedy Secondary School, sophomores and seniors also participate in these Career and College Readiness practices.

I think more schools should look at using this program. Our staff members like it. The question is whether we should add more time to the 30 minutes.

**Mark Anderson**

Anderson also knows that with the help provided, grades will continue to improve, offering more opportunities for the students. “My ultimate goal with this program is to get all or most of the seniors to enroll in work-based classes, which is the career and college pathway, to help them determine what they want when they leave high school,” said Anderson.

Do you want to learn more about Otter Time, Career and College Readiness, and SEL? Contact Fergus Falls Kennedy Secondary School Principal Mark Anderson at [manderson@fergusotters.org](mailto:manderson@fergusotters.org)





# Unlocking the Potential

## UNDERSTANDING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN EDUCATION

by Monica Thompson, LCSC Coordinator  
of Technology Integration and Academic Challenges

In recent years, the term "Artificial Intelligence" (AI) has become increasingly prevalent, permeating various aspects of our lives. As educators, it is essential to grasp the fundamentals of AI, comprehend its potential impact on education, and acknowledge the concerns that accompany its integration into learning environments.

Artificial Intelligence refers to the development of computer systems capable of performing tasks that typically require human intelligence. These tasks encompass problem-solving, learning, speech recognition, and decision-making. AI systems often utilize machine learning algorithms to analyze data, identify patterns, and continuously improve their performance.

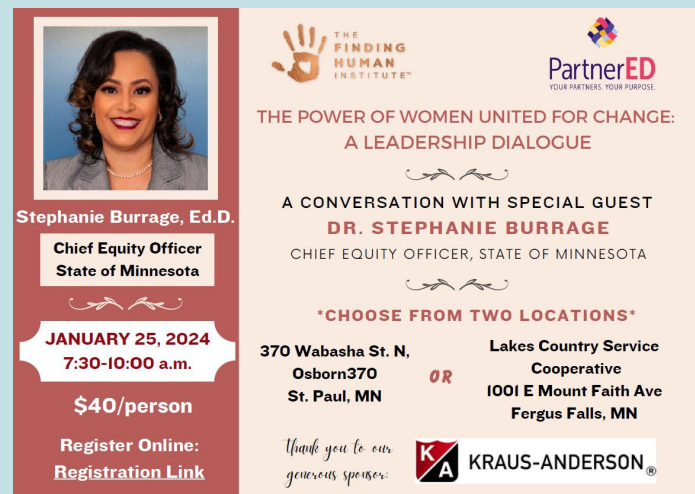
The integration of AI in education indicates a transformative era, offering numerous benefits. Personalized Learning is a key advantage, as AI can tailor educational content to individual student needs, pace, and learning styles and provide real-time feedback, enabling students to receive customized guidance. Moreover, AI facilitates the automation of administrative tasks, freeing up educators to focus on personalized instruction.

AI-powered tools offer immersive learning experiences, leveraging technologies like virtual reality and augmented reality. These innovations enable students to explore historical events, conduct virtual experiments, and engage in interactive simulations. Adaptive learning platforms use AI algorithms to track student progress and adjust content to address specific learning gaps, ensuring a more effective and personalized learning journey.

While the potential benefits of AI in education are vast, it is crucial to address the associated concerns. Privacy and Data Security stand out as paramount issues, as AI systems collect and process vast amounts of information. Ethical considerations, such as bias in algorithms, pose a challenge, as AI systems may inadvertently perpetuate existing inequalities. Professional development opportunities should be provided to educators to enhance their AI literacy, enabling them to navigate the evolving landscape of educational technology.

Artificial Intelligence holds immense promise for revolutionizing education, offering personalized learning experiences and innovative tools. However, educators must approach AI implementation with a vigilant eye on ethical considerations and potential challenges. By fostering a balanced and informed approach, educators can leverage AI to enhance the educational landscape, ensuring that the benefits are maximized while mitigating potential risks.

As we conclude this exploration into the realms of Artificial Intelligence in education, this article itself was penned by AI (ChatGPT) in a matter of minutes. The astonishing speed and accuracy with which AI can generate content underscores the boundless capabilities at our fingertips. By crafting a thoughtful prompt and tapping into the power of AI, we've merely scratched the surface of what this transformative technology can achieve.



The poster is for an event titled "THE POWER OF WOMEN UNITED FOR CHANGE: A LEADERSHIP DIALOGUE". It features a portrait of Dr. Stephanie Burrage, Ed.D., Chief Equity Officer of the State of Minnesota. The event is scheduled for January 25, 2024, from 7:30-10:00 a.m., with a cost of \$40/person. Registration is available online via a provided link. The event will be held at two locations: 370 Wabasha St. N., Osborn 370, St. Paul, MN, or Lakes Country Service Cooperative, 1001 E Mount Faith Ave, Fergus Falls, MN. The poster also mentions a thank you to generous sponsors, including KRAUS-ANDERSON.

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## ATTENTION ALL WOMEN LEADERS!

Don't miss out on a unique opportunity to network and engage in a dialogue on "The Power of Women United for Change; A Leadership Dialogue." Our special guest speaker for this session is Dr. Stephanie Burrage, the Chief Equity Officer for the State of Minnesota.

## January 25, 2024

Please note that this event is open to all women leaders and is not limited to education professionals. While the presentation by Dr. Burrage will be streamed from St. Paul, the intimate discussion and dialogue will be facilitated in person at both locations.

The cost of the session is \$40. Please spread the word and invite other women leaders who might benefit from participating in a dialogue like this. Register today to secure your spot!







# WEST CENTRAL

## AREA SCHOOLS

Source/Author: Kari Kreft, WCA  
Instructional Coach and Public Engagement

### STEAM on the Go

The West Central Area STEAM students recently went on their second field trip. This time, they visited the Otter Cove Children's Museum in Fergus Falls.

Mrs. Nelson has been teaching STEAM classes at North for a few years now. This summer, she had the brilliant idea to incorporate field trips into the program. It turned out that the students loved the idea of after-school field trips. The STEAM field trips have been a huge success, and the kids sign up right away and can't wait for the next one.



### Learning Experiences

WCA North 2nd graders went to MSUM to watch the play *The Rainbow Fish* and visit the planetarium. It was an incredible experience as they were working hard on their Reader's Theater scripts about diver and inventor Jacques Cousteau, and studying forms of matter. It was fun to make direct connections to things we have been learning. They even got a tour of the solar system!



### 2023 Seniors Job Shadowing Day



WCA's Senior Seminar Class participated in their annual job shadowing day on November 9th. The students spent time learning about a career of interest, creating resumes and cover letters, and practicing interview skills. They were mentored by professionals from various businesses, and some students even got to do actual work. The mentors critiqued the students' resumes and conducted mock interviews. The experience was valuable and well-received by both students and mentors.





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