November 2024

LCSC Communicator

LAKES COUNTRY Service Cooperative

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Regional News, Views, and Information

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Perham Public School's Champion Time
Champion Time provides students with a daily opportunity to engage with their teacher regarding academic work and to ensure accountability for specific courses.

Building Assets Reducing Risk

Battle Lake and Perham Public Schools are embarking on a three-year implementation journey with the BARR (Building Assets, Reducing Risks) program. Funded by the Otter Tail Family Services Collaborative and a grant from the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), BARR promises a holistic approach to education, nurturing students' academic, social, and emotional well-being.

BARR Founder and CEO Angela Jerabek emphasizes that BARR has two key foundational beliefs: students are very capable of learning if we can truly see who they are, and educators are incredibly talented if you provide a system where we can realize their talents.

"We are excited about the program, said Battle Lakes PreK-12 Principal Ryan Severson.

Continued on next page

Source: Ryan Severson, Battle Lake Public School PreK-12 Principal; Ehren Zimmerman, Perham Public School High School Principal; Tamara Uselman, Otter Tail Family Services Collaborative Coordinator, barrcenter.org
Author: Mary Phillipe, LCSC Communications Generalist

> Concerns are getting discussed on a large scale when they normally wouldn't be due to lack of time.
>
> - **Kyle Knutson**
> Perham High School
> Math Teacher

BARR represents a forward-thinking approach to education that is gaining traction. In over 40 Minnesota schools, BARR creates a nurturing community where academic, social, and emotional dimensions are interwoven to support student growth.

"BARR is all about building relationships and how these relationships impact academic success and the school culture. We're excited to be kicking it off," said Severson. "We're at the beginning of year one, so there will be some time when we need to figure out how it will fit within our schedule to work best for us." Severson also added that being a smaller school has allowed them to quickly adjust and accommodate the rollout of BARR.



Perham High School Champion Time is daily from 8:10 a.m. - 8:40 a.m. for all students.

BARR works to create systems change through eight interconnected strategies that change the way teachers and staff work:

- Whole student focus: Recognizing that students come with diverse needs, BARR ensures their academic, emotional, physical, and social well-being are addressed.
- Ongoing professional development: Educators receive practical training and continual coaching support to maximize their effectiveness.
- Building relationships: Weekly U-Times or I-Times sessions help teachers connect with students, fostering social and emotional skills development.
- Teacher teams: Cohorts of staff and students collaborate, strengthening relationships and allowing for more effective support systems.
- Data-driven student discussions: Regular meetings use student data to identify strengths, design interventions, and celebrate achievements.
- Targeted interventions: High-risk students receive intensive support tailored to their specific needs.
- Engaged administrators: Leaders utilize BARR to achieve local goals and network with other schools for best practices.
- Family involvement: BARR prioritizes strong family communication, recognizing them as active partners in student success.

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The Perham High School staff gathers in the BARR conference room for their Grade Level Small Block meetings. In the photo, the 10th Grade Team is shown, with Mr. Super presenting a student highlight. Student highlights kick off each of their meetings.

All these strategies work together in a systems approach to affect student behavioral outcomes. The program looks to build assets in the areas of supportive relationships, student engagement, expectations, and rigor while reducing the risks of chronic absenteeism, discipline incidents, substance abuse, and suicide ideation and attempts.

Severson highlighted that the feedback from the Battle Lake staff regarding the implementation of BARR has been predominantly positive. They appreciate the opportunity to collaborate in addressing challenges and supporting students. “The intentionality of the program is important because it ensures that meetings are focused on meeting students' needs and building relationships rather than going in circles. This program considers the whole child, not just their academic performance,” said Severson.

Battle Lake BARR Coordinators Jenny Roisum and Ryan Severson are crucial to the program's success. To ensure effective implementation, they will participate in over 200 hours of weekly coaching and training sessions with their BARR coach. Roisum, who juggles multiple roles as a social studies teacher and Dean of Students, collaborates with Principal Severson to manage the program's demands in their small district.

Both Battle Lake and Perham Public Schools learned about the success of BARR through the Otter Tail Family Services Collaborative Coordinator, Dr. Tamara Uselman.



Dr. Tamara Uselman
Otter Tail Family Services
Collaborative Coordinator

Uselman strongly advocates for BARR, encouraging schools within the collaborative to consider its implementation. Before becoming the Coordinator, Uselman was the Director of Equity and Inclusion at Fargo Public Schools, where BARR thrived at Fargo South High School. “The first step in educational equity is access to opportunity. BARR is unique in that it builds the academic muscles of students through a network of teachers, staff, and family. When BARR becomes how we ‘do school,’ students have even greater access to educational opportunities. Students are more likely to feel valued and connected, learn content and skills, and graduate on time, choice ready,” said Uselman.

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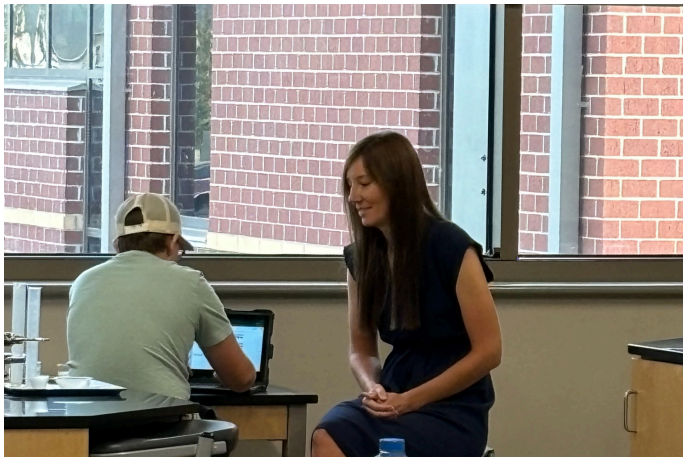
The Collaborative will monitor the implementation and results of BARR as well as other initiatives to ensure a positive difference is being made with collaborative funds.

Perham Public School is currently several weeks into the BARR implementation phase. Alongside the Otter Tail Family Services Collaborative funding, they have also secured a grant from MDE to roll out BARR in two of their schools. Middle School Principal Jim Kennedy and BARR Coordinator Cari Tellers supervise the implementation at Prairie Winds Middle School. Concurrently, Principal Ehren Zimmerman and BARR Coordinator Hannah Levenhagen are launching the program at the high school. “We are all going to be better educators because of this program!” said Perham High School (PHS) Principal Ehren Zimmerman.

Zimmerman said they have "hit the ground running" with BARR, adjusting their schedule to align with its objectives. They noted that similar elements to BARR had been used previously; however, the current training and implementation offer a more structured way to foster an engaging environment. This is primarily achieved through the program's small block, big block, and community connect components. “Now there is a team of people working around every student. This formalized the support in direct engagement opportunities, and the team is keeping a finger on the issues affecting the students,” said Zimmerman.

“BARR TAKES YOUR “ROCK STARS” AND PUTS THEM IN A “ROCK BAND.”

– Dr. Tamara Uselman
Otter Tail Family Services
Collaborative Coordinator



Zimmerman noted that PHS used to be highly departmental. Currently, it operates with both grade-level and departmental structures. In the past, the math team, science team, and Professional Learning Community (PLC) met frequently. “Now, we have staff meeting and discussing with colleagues they might not have interacted with much before. We are now part of a team, fostering stronger relationships,” Zimmerman stated.

A new method at PHS for student intervention, now called "Champion Time," has introduced an invigorating shift in how academic support is provided to 550 high school students. By shifting this essential period to the start of the day, from 8:10 to 8:55 a.m., Zimmerman has allowed students greater autonomy in managing their schedules. Each student is paired with a Champion Teacher, fostering a more personalized support system. Students appreciate the flexibility offered during this time, as those in good academic standing are not required to be on campus if they choose otherwise. Meanwhile, students who need additional support due to attendance issues or grades falling below a C- are automatically scheduled for sessions with a Champion Teacher. This ensures that every student receives the necessary guidance to succeed. While there were initial concerns from students about fairness, most students seem to remain on campus, utilizing the time in the commons or classrooms, thus creating a vibrant and supportive academic environment.

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One of PHS's key objectives is to enhance attendance. Zimmerman noted that the school report card indicated that overall attendance has been lacking. However, since the program started, Zimmerman has observed increased enthusiasm for students attending school each morning. Early data from the program suggests a decline in both student tardiness and absenteeism.

PHS students have been participating in BARR for several weeks and are leveling into tiers of support. Students are categorized into tiers ranging from zero to three. A level three student will transition directly to Community Connect, where significant support may be required from school administrators, social workers, and counselors to get essential community support. Where a level zero student participates in Tier 1: Universal supports. "At times, we overlook the importance of acknowledging level one students," remarked Zimmerman. To address this, over 200 personalized postcards have been handwritten by teachers and sent to all levels of students to celebrate their achievements and growth. Zimmerman noted that parents value this communication and enjoy receiving updates about their child's progress.

The evidence speaks for itself. The BARR model is established as one of the most-proven, system-wide school improvement models within K-12 education. BARR has over 22 years of independent research data, indicating that, on average, large urban schools experience a 40% decrease in failure rates after one year of BARR implementation, while smaller rural schools see a 29% reduction.

While Battle Lake and Perham Public Schools are still in the early stages of implementing BARR programming and have much to discover, both are already witnessing positive changes in student engagement and attendance.

For further information on the BARR program research and outcomes, visit barrcenter.org.

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Note: School Specialty comes to CPC through AEPA. All AEPA contract benefits described below are also CPC Member benefits. **Learn more about CPC's membership with AEPA**.

* Earn your rebate after $15,000 of online supplies and furniture purchases within a calendar year. District rebates are calculated from Jan. 1 – Dec. 31 and are paid to the purchasing district the following year.

FROM THE

Executive Director

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



Jeremy Kovash
Executive Director

The Lakes Country Service Cooperative Board of Directors

As we prepare for a Lakes Country Service Cooperative Board election, I thought it an important time to share their role with you, our members. The Board of Directors of Lakes Country Service Cooperative (LCSC) serve as a guiding force and a guardian of the cooperative's mission to support educational and community services in the region. In addition to setting strategy, overseeing programs, and advocating for our communities, the board enacts fiscal responsibility and values input, ensuring that LCSC remains accountable, adaptable, and community-centered.

One of the board's most important roles is to ensure the responsible management of LCSC's financial resources. By overseeing budgets, evaluating program costs, and optimizing resource allocation, the board upholds a commitment to fiscal discipline. This stewardship is essential in maximizing the impact of LCSC's funds, allowing the cooperative to sustainably support districts, educators, and students while also adapting to the changing needs of our communities.

The Board of Directors values the perspectives of the communities LCSC serves. Through engagement with school districts, parents, educators, and local leaders, the board gathers essential feedback on the programs and services provided by the cooperative. This input allows the Board to make informed decisions that reflect the unique needs and priorities of our region, from developing targeted professional development opportunities to enhancing student support services.

As champions of educational advancement, the board encourages LCSC to pursue innovative practices while maintaining a clear focus on accountability. This approach ensures that every program, service, and initiative aligns with our shared mission and benefits our communities. Our board of Directors are active, elected officials of our membership.

As we prepare for an election following the general election in November, I'd like to thank our board for their service and leadership:

2024 LCSC BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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Classroom TO COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

JANE EASTES
Deputy Executive Director

On November 13, Lakes Country Service Cooperative and our community partners, Horizon Public Health and West Central Initiative are excited to host a Changemaker Hub for K-12 schools and community members in our region.

A Changemaker Hub is a day-long learning experience that brings High School youth together with their educators and community members to think deeply about the role of education today and in the future. It is designed and run by World Savvy, a national K-12 Education nonprofit headquartered in Minneapolis. World Savvy works with districts across the nation in its mission to assist in building "future ready" learning environments to prepare youth with the knowledge and skills for success in the workplace and active engagement in the community.

Why Host a Changemaker Hub?
We've watched districts struggle to keep students in attendance and struggle to attract and retain teachers in the profession. We all know that these two issues are complex and national in scope. We strongly feel that the strongest solutions will come from listening to and working with our local and regional communities.

This is a rare opportunity to facilitate meaningful dialogue, to listen to youth, and to gather ideas to contribute to a strong future for our schools.

We have watched World Savvy, a national K-12 education nonprofit headquartered in Minneapolis, create and hone a day-long experience focused on listening and engaging with youth and adults, specifically on what an education system that supports everyone looks like. They are getting great reviews from schools around the country.

We are grateful that World Savvy is making a substantial investment in our communities. There is no registration fee for this event. World Savvy is providing professional facilitation, a comfortable location at the Bigwood Center in Fergus Falls, and lunch.

We are hoping that each district will bring a team of high school youth, educators and community members.

If you are interested in participating, please reach out to Staci Allmaras (sallmaras@lcsc.org), Jane Eastes (jeastes@lcsc.org), or Josh Nelson (jnelson@lcsc.org).



SPED

TEACHER INDUCTION PROGRAM GRANT

Author: Angela Doll, LCSC Special Education Director

Lakes Country Service Cooperative (LCSC) received a three-year grant from the Minnesota Department of Education for teacher mentoring, focusing retention efforts on early-career Special Education Teachers.

The goal of this grant is to provide another layer of support for early-career Special Education teachers to help them feel more confident and positive about their jobs, in an effort to retain teachers past their fifth year of employment. While each of our school districts in Region 4 has its own induction and mentoring programs for new teachers, with this grant, LCSC is able to provide even more support to district efforts by giving participants paid opportunities outside of their school day for additional support and learning.

Utilizing work already done in the area of teacher mentoring for Career and Technical Education (CTE) teachers, the Special Education Teacher Induction Program (SPED TIP) was established as a pilot program open to any early-career special education teacher in a Region 4 school district. SPED TIP is based on the CTE TIP model, which was developed by LCSC's College and Career Readiness team for CTE teachers three years ago.



Although CTE TIP is now a statewide venture, SPED TIP was established for Region 4 school districts to use the successful model of CTE TIP, focusing on the mentoring of Special Education teachers.

All new or early-career Special Education teachers in the 35 school districts in Region 4 were invited to participate in this pilot program as mentees. All experienced (5 years or more) special education teachers in Region 4 were invited to apply to participate as mentors through their district level and building level administrators, as well as special education administrators in their districts. LCSC received over 20 applications for mentees and 4 applications from mentors from eight different school districts in Region 4.

Our initial seminar was held in person at LCSC on September 29th and 30th as an introduction to this year's program. Part of our time together included developing the professional development program plan for the year using data from needs assessments completed by participants and mentors. This year's cohort will meet about once a month virtually for discussion and coaching on topics identified during the in-person seminar, and cohort participants will come together in person again to close out this year's activities at the beginning of June. During our end-of-year seminar, participants will complete similar assessments to show areas of growth from participation and identify further professional development needs for future programming.

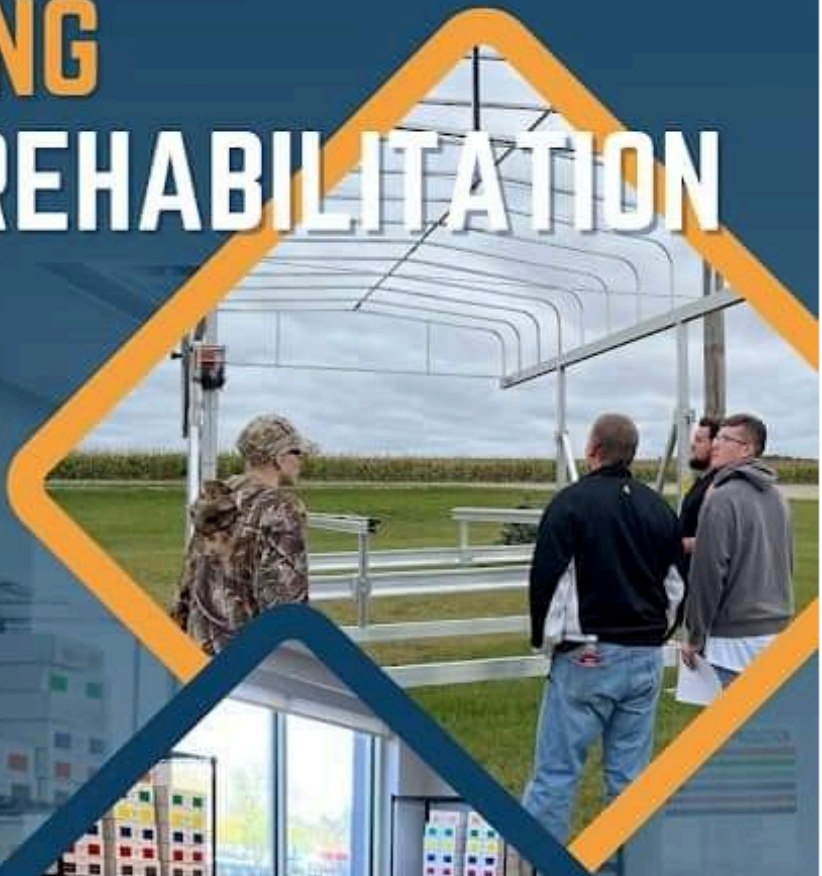
LCSC hopes more school districts in Region 4 will choose to participate next year, and that we can support more early-career Special Education teachers throughout the region.

Do you have questions about the SPED TIP grant? Contact Angela Doll at adoll@lcsc.org.

empowering kids

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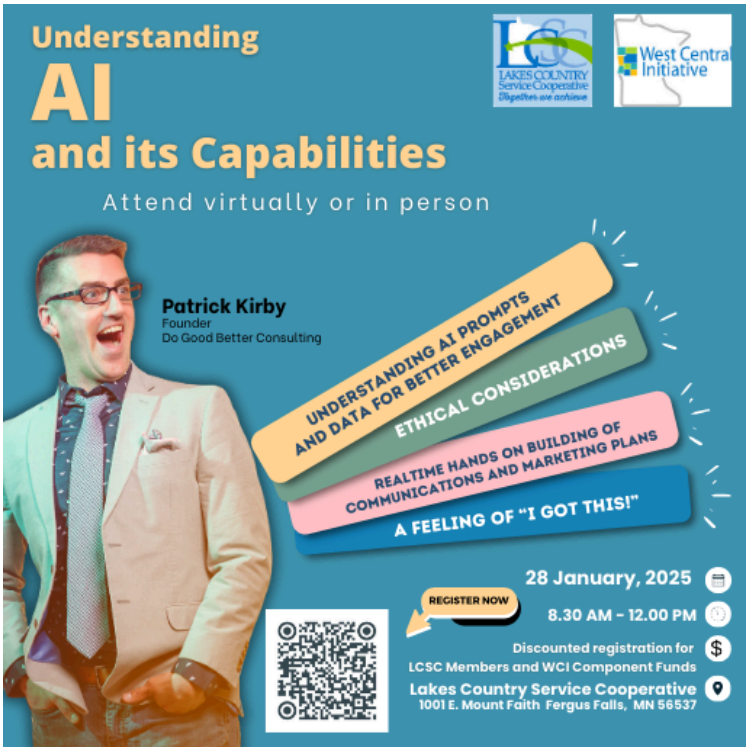






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And sure, all this AI talk sounds great. But how on earth do you actually do it!?

This half-day training will walk you through some of the more accessible programs, develop (in real time!) plans, and answer questions without you having to dedicate your precious time to navigating this potentially complicated new way of communicating, creating, and interacting.



We'll walk together through done-with-you communications, fundraising, and marketing plans to use AI in a way that doesn't overwhelm but ensures that you know enough to be dangerous while maintaining and doubling down on your soft skills that will be even more important in the future.

Registration is available to attend in person and stream via Zoom for individuals who want to participate virtually.

This will be a hands-on workshop, so we encourage you to bring a laptop.



Follow-up Webinar to ask Patrick anything in March 2025

Oh? Is that not enough!? Do you have follow-up questions on how things go as you begin to execute this plan we have created? Do you have a problem or issue that is blocking your organization from moving forward quickly? You are in luck. Patrick will be scheduling a webinar to answer all your questions in March 2025. All included in your registration.



Lake Park Audubon Public Schools' Greenhouse Project



Teaching Students About Sustainable Farming Innovations

Approximately twelve years ago, Lake Park Audubon Public School (LPA) decided to discontinue its Agricultural (Ag) programming. At that time, the belief was that, despite being an agricultural community, they did not need to allocate time and funding to a program catering to students aspiring to enter farming. However, LPA Superintendent Dr. Timothy Godfrey held a different perspective and expressed his intention to reinstate this program to the school board. "Having served as superintendent in several rural districts, I know there is much more to an Ag program than just Horticulture and Animal Husbandry," stated Godfrey.

In today's agricultural landscape, technology plays a significant role. He noted that drone programs are typically part of Ag education, alongside agri-business, mechanics, and Future Farmers of America (FFA). FFA has evolved significantly from its origins, reflecting a dynamic shift that goes beyond traditional agricultural education. Today, FFA's curriculum embraces a comprehensive approach that emphasizes leadership development and governance—skills that are indispensable for nurturing future leaders.

Source: Dr. Timothy Godfrey
Superintendent
Lake Park Audubon Public Schools Superintendent
Author: Mary Phillipe
LCSC Communications Coordinator

Continued on next page

Godfrey grew up on his family's farm in a small rural area near Fullerton, North Dakota, a major farming hub, where his entire school district had just 50 students. His experiences have shaped his advocacy for project-based learning and experiential education, emphasizing the significance of allowing students to take charge of their learning journey. Engaging in hands-on projects and real-world tasks encourages students to explore concepts and apply their knowledge in practical contexts. This approach fosters critical thinking and creativity and enables students to demonstrate their mastery through various methods beyond traditional testing.

In 2021, Godfrey informed the board of his plan to reintroduce the Ag program and construct a greenhouse. He received the board's approval to make a down payment for the greenhouse with Lauer Green House Designers, and then Godfrey focused on raising private funds to complete the project. They successfully gathered $40,000 in private donations and used a contingency fund from a separate construction project they could reallocate to the greenhouse. They were also fortunate to receive a generous contribution from a former board member and agriculture teacher who had passed away. Upon learning about the greenhouse project, the former board member's wife directed a donation from their foundation to support it, as agriculture had been her husband's passion.

The project is not just about building a greenhouse. "Anyone can have a greenhouse," Godfrey remarked. "I want to emphasize sustainable farming." He is eager to assist students in discovering and developing new technologies that have yet to be utilized. The greenhouse will be a cutting-edge, computerized facility intended for year-round use, featuring fully automated shade, irrigation, and heating systems that can be programmed with timers. It is built on a new concrete foundation and includes a sump pump to manage excess water. "We positioned the greenhouse in a spot where, when illuminated, it will catch the attention of those passing by on Highway 10," Godfrey said with a grin.



Located on the east side of Lake Park School, it will soon have a connecting door to the welding lab. This doorway is expected to be constructed within the next week or two, enabling student access and facilitating the installation of water, electricity, and gas to ensure its full operational capacity.

Continued on next page



> Anyone can have a greenhouse," Godfrey remarked. "I want to emphasize sustainable farming."
>
> **Superintendent**
>
> Dr. Timothy Godfrey

Godfrey noted that the community is very excited about the greenhouse project. He has engaged with many individuals in the local area and across the county who are interested in "Farm to Table" initiatives and recognize the importance of promoting healthy eating among youth and is developing a project to grow, dry, and sell herbs.

Recently, LPA received a smaller bus donation from MAHUBE OTWA, and students are currently busy creating a business plan focused on accounting, art, and marketing. They are involved in designing the art aspect of the bus and will fabricate it this year. Once completed, they plan to serve food from the bus to local businesses. "All decisions for this initiative will be student-driven, a key shift we aim for. While our students excel at preparing for tests and managing their grades, they often struggle with problem-solving," Godfrey explained. This project will provide them with that opportunity and integrate work-based learning into the curriculum. The program will be open to students from middle school through twelfth grade, encompassing 375 students.

The elementary school in Audubon also has a greenhouse, though it lacks the automation and advanced technology of the Lake Park model. The two schools plan to collaborate to establish a comprehensive program from elementary to high school.

The Greenhouse Project is a forward-thinking initiative designed to equip students with essential critical thinking and problem-solving skills. In an ever-evolving job market, employers highly value these competencies, seeking individuals capable of innovative and analytical approaches to challenges. By engaging in the Greenhouse Project, LPA students enhance their academic experiences and lay a solid foundation for future career paths.

If you would like to learn more about the greenhouse project at Lake Park Audubon Public Schools, contact Superintendent Dr. Timothy Godfrey at tgodfrey@lpa.k12.mn.us.

elevate teaching

A CALL TO ACTION

Author: Jane Eastes, LCSC Deputy Executive Director
Source: Elevate Teaching - elevateteaching.us

Recruiting and retaining teachers is one of the top challenges facing schools in Minnesota and nationwide. Between 80 and 90 % of schools across the state are affected by school shortages (2023 Biennial Report of The Professional Educators Licensing and Licensing Board (PELSB)). In addition, about a third of the teaching workforce is leaving in the first five years of starting their profession. The shortage is particularly acute for STEM and SPED teachers and teachers of color.

At Lakes Country Service Coop we are experiencing the effects of teacher and staff shortages in our programs and see the impact on our school and community members. We are engaging in conversation around the questions, why is it so hard to recruit teachers, and why do so many leave in the first five years? While the disruption and hardship caused by the COVID crisis exacerbated the problem, signs of a slowdown in the teacher pipeline started before the pandemic. Between 2010 and 2021, enrollment in traditional teacher preparation programs dropped 45% (Education Week, 2024). I'm sure those of you reading this can name many factors that are contributing to teachers leaving the profession, including inadequate pay, high workload, burnout, lack of resources and the ongoing mental health challenges among youth.

Along with these tangible issues lies a more subtle but pervasive problem: the waning respect and value attributed to teaching as a profession. Teachers named this problem in the 2022 MNSPIRE Report, a PELSB-funded comprehensive survey of over 15,000 Minnesota teachers. When asked the question,

"WHAT CHALLENGES DO YOU FACE THAT COULD LEAD YOU TO LEAVE THE TEACHING PROFESSION?"

a full 55% of respondents cited the public view of the profession. This was followed by parental issues (negative, disengaged, or overly engaged parents) at 53% and unsupportive school climate at 52%.

An October 2024 teacher survey by the nonprofit Ed Choice, found an increase in optimism about the education landscape. Still, only 21% of respondents said they would recommend teaching as a profession.

Imagine a future where teaching is a revered profession in our society.



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The decline in the esteem for teaching has far-reaching implications. A career that is undervalued in society is less likely to attract talented individuals, particularly when competing with more lucrative professions that offer greater respect and career growth. Current educators, feeling underappreciated and misunderstood, become discouraged, leading to higher attrition rates.

Changing the Narrative

Elevate Teaching is a movement in Minnesota designed specifically to change the story being told about the teaching profession. Elevate Teaching was started by a group of educators passionate about the profession. Recognizing that there are many things that need to change to attract and retain teachers, Elevate Teaching believes that there is power in changing the story we tell ourselves and that the community believes about the profession. We agree. Stories are powerful and can change systems.

Elevate Teaching is working to take back the story of the profession and shift the perception of teaching to what we know as the core of the profession, that:

Teaching is creative, Teaching is legacy
Teaching is opportunity, Teaching is teamwork.
Teaching is community building,
Teaching is opportunity,
Teaching is evolving.

Imagine

That young people, particularly from diverse communities, are drawn towards and look at teaching as a viable career option. That teachers feel their stories are shared and feel they are a part of something bigger than themselves.



The teacher shortage crisis cannot be solved overnight, nor can it be resolved through salary increases and better funding alone (though these are critical). We at Lakes Country Service Cooperative are working on several fronts to make it easier to recruit and retain teachers. As one of the first education organizations approved to provide an alternative pathway to licensure, making licensure easier and affordable. With grants from MDE and PELSB, LCSC staff are implementing mentoring programs for CTE and SPED teachers using proven methods for teacher retention in the first five years.

We are excited to join Elevate Teaching to lift our voices as champions of educators. We need a cultural shift that reinvigorates the respect for teaching as a cornerstone profession essential to the health and future of society. Teachers must be viewed, not just as employees who deliver content, but as the skilled professionals they are—leaders, innovators, and changemakers. We invite you to join us in the Elevate Teaching movement and look forward to hosting opportunities in the next few months.

You can find a rich trove of resources on the Elevate Teaching site, www.elevateteaching.us/ .

Lakes Country Academy

Alexandria Site Moves to a Larger Location

Author: Mary Phillipe, LCSC Communications Coordinator

Lakes Country Service Cooperative is excited to announce its relocation of the Alexandria Lakes Country Academy (LCA) to a larger facility that offers enhanced space and opportunities for growth.

This move allows LCA to expand their programming and better serve the students and schools in our region. While the previous location provided a functional space, it was initially not designed as a school, which presented ongoing challenges in meeting the diverse needs of the students. The new location, however, has always been intended for educational purposes, giving LCA an ideal environment to create a supportive and well-equipped space.

"We are excited to offer a better, more spacious instructional space for our Setting IV students. We are grateful to the Alexandria Economic Development Authority, the City of Alexandria, and Alexandria Public Schools for their partnership. This building and space are a perfect fit for our current students and provide us the opportunity to expand our program into the future," stated Jeremy Kovash, Executive Director of Lakes Country Service Cooperative.

With this move to 1204 34th Avenue West, LCA can now offer even more tailored programming that aligns with LCA's mission to help students make the necessary behavioral, social, and academic gains.

The additional space enables LCA to better address individual needs and provide a nurturing environment where students can thrive. Our goal remains the same: to prepare students for a successful transition back to their resident districts, equipped with the skills and confidence they need to succeed.

To learn more about Lakes Country Academy and our programming for Setting IV students, visit our website at LCSC.org and click on the Lakes Country Academy tab.











MINNESOTA SERVICE COOPERATIVE
KNOWLEDGE BOWL

Exciting Start to the 5th and 6th Grade Knowledge Bowl Program!

Author: Monica Thompson, Coordinator of Technology Integration and Academic Challenges



From Left: Monica Thompson, Coordinator of Technology Integration and Academic Challenges, and Jolene King, Education Services Assistant

The air was filled with excitement as we kicked off the very first-ever 5th and 6th Grade Knowledge Bowl meet in Region 4 on October 22, hosted by Lakes Country Service Cooperative!

Teams from Browns Valley, Clinton-Graceville-Beardsley, Hawley, Hillcrest Lutheran Academy, Minnewaska, and Morris gathered for a day filled with spirited competition and a passion for learning.

Being the inaugural year, the anticipation was high as history was made. The students worked together answering questions across a wide range of subjects with quick thinking and excellent teamwork. The meet consisted of a written test of 45 multiple choice questions and 4 oral rounds of 30 question each. The sense of camaraderie between schools and the support from their coaches added to the day's success.

With such an exciting and promising start to this new program, we can't wait to see how the rest of the season unfolds with remarkable students! It's clear that Region 4's 5th and 6th Grade Knowledge Bowl is on track for an incredible future.

Visit our events calendar for the 2024-2025 schedule of Academic Challenges



Math Masters



Register your 4th, 5th and 6th graders now for 2025 Math Masters competitions! Math Masters challenges competitors to use critical thinking and problem-solving skills in mathematics. Students compete as individuals and on teams in 7–8 rounds of competition, with their academic effort and achievement recognized with plaques, medals and ribbons. All competitors receive a free t-shirt; top statewide winners are invited to a Minnesota Twins baseball game to celebrate their achievement.

View 2025 competition sites and dates.





Minnesota Spellers Travel to Washington

Author: Monica Thompson, LCSC Coordinator of Technology Integration and Academic Challenges

Through the sponsorship from The Minnesota Service Cooperatives, nine spellers from the state traveled to Washington, D.C. for the 99th Scripps National Spelling Bee "Bee Week." These students had previously won their local school bee and their regional service cooperative bee. The students included Yupeng Chen (Northeast Service Cooperative), Elijah Elledge (South Central Service Cooperative), Jaden Go (Northwest Service Cooperative), Leyla Jacobson (Resource Training & Solutions), Kai Riedner (BrightWorks/SparkPath), William Rausch (Sourcewell), Roberto Villasboas (Southeast Service Cooperative), Holland Vogel (SWWC Service Cooperative) and Jacob Warner (Lakes Country Service Cooperative).

Prior to travelling together with their chaperones and two representatives from The Minnesota Service Cooperatives, students and families joined for an ice breaker virtual meet-up where they were able to meet and play some spelling themed, "Would you rather?" By the time they boarded the plane, where they were welcomed by the flight crew over the aircraft speakers, fast friendships had already formed.

"It was so nice to have met each other in advance," said a speller's parent. "When we were here last year, the students hadn't met each other until they were seated on the stage during competition."

Although individual service cooperatives had been hosting bees in the past, the new sponsorship under The Minnesota Service Cooperatives allowed for central coordination of the travel details and activity coordination.

Bee Week did not disappoint in comradery for the Minnesota contingency and 236 other spellers from across the U.S., territories and international schools. Students enjoyed a puzzle scavenger hunt (Elijah was on the winning team), a Memorial Day picnic at Audi Field, a D.C. trolley tour, a presentation by Merriam-Webster chief editor on the history of the modern dictionary and of course bee spelling and vocabulary!

After the first three rounds of spelling and vocabulary, Yupeng, Kai, Jaden and William advanced to the quarterfinals. William then advanced to the semifinals. Although he did not advance, he was seated on stage during the final rounds of the competition to cheer for the remaining contestants.

As the week wrapped up, our Minnesota students were already discussing how they were going to prepare to ensure they could come back for the Bee's 100th year! Thank you to The Minnesota Service Cooperatives and additional sponsors Lathrop GPM, Medica, and WEX.

Registration for the 2024-25 school year is open! Visit spellingbee.com to register your school with Scripps and then register with Lakes County Service Cooperative at www.lcsc.org. Give your students the opportunity to be the next spelling bee champion!





Unforgettable Experience at the National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C.

Author: Monica Thompson, LCSC Coordinator of Technology Integration and Academic Challenges

Last May, Jacob Warner, from Fergus Falls, had the opportunity of a lifetime: participating in the National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C. This incredible experience was filled with unforgettable moments, from the excitement of the competition to the camaraderie he found with other spellers.

The adventure began with the flight to Washington, D.C., a thrilling experience that set the tone for an unforgettable week. Once they landed, Jacob and his family took a shuttle to their accommodation—an incredible resort. The resort's beautiful surroundings and luxurious amenities made it feel like a vacation, adding to the excitement of the Bee.

Jacob couldn't stop talking about how amazing the entire experience was, and while the resort was incredible, the highlight of his week was the competition itself. Standing on that stage, facing off against some of the best spellers in the country, was both nerve-wracking and exhilarating.

But it wasn't just about winning for Jacob. One of the most meaningful takeaways from Bee Week was a message that was repeated throughout: the spellers were not competing against one another but instead were trying to "beat" the dictionary. This mindset fostered a sense of unity among the participants, transforming what could have been a high-pressure event into an atmosphere of shared achievement.

In fact, Jacob made a lifelong friend in Kai, the speller who competed right before him, from Excelsior, Minnesota. Their bond extended beyond the stage as they spent time together throughout the week, turning a competition into a memorable friendship.

Reflecting on his time at the Bee, Jacob calls it "Bee Week! Best Week!" The experience has left him eager for next year's competition, and he already set a goal to return to Washington, D.C., with high hopes of making new friends and conquering even more challenging words.

For Jacob, the National Spelling Bee was about more than just spelling words—it was about personal growth, friendship, and the thrill of a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

POETRY OUT LOUD

National Poetry Recitation Competition for High School Students

Poetry Out Loud is FREE!

Open to students in grades 9–12.

Local, regional, state and national competitions.

No registration or participation fees!

SCAN TO LEARN MORE



2023 MN Poetry Out Loud Champion, Stella Wright

Visit www.mnscsc.org/poetry-out-loud or contact poetry@mnscsc.org

Grants provided by the MN State Arts Board through the MN State Legislature and the National Endowment of the Arts.

LOCAL SUPPORT HELPS BRANDON-EVANSVILLE'S

Raising a Reader Program

Author: Deb Berry, LCSC Early Childhood Teacher

With the start of a new school year, the Brandon-Evansville School district is starting the 4th year of the Raising a Reader pilot program through Lakes Country Service Cooperative (LCSC).

Monday, September 16, during the Early Education Advisory Council and the Brandon-Evansville school board meeting, Innovative Partnership awards were given out by LCSC's Raising a Reader Coordinator and Early Childhood Teacher, Deb Berry.

Innovative Partnership Awards were presented to:

- **West Central Community Action - Head Start,**
- **Jill Mogensen's Family Childcare**
- **Brandon -Evansville school Early Education - 2nd Grade Staff and Administration**
- **The Douglas County Recorder**

Follow this link to read the full article: Raising a Reader



Recognized for their support of the Raising A Reader Program.
From left front: Brandon-Evansville School Board Chair, Jana Anderson and Brandon-Evansville Superintendent, Louisa Glenetske accepting for the district.
Back row left: Deb Berry, and Dave Bedore accepting for the Douglas County Record

BRANDON-EVANSVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOL LAUNCHES THEIR FOURTH YEAR OF RAISING A READER!

On the evening of Tuesday, October 22, the Brandon-Evansville School cafeteria echoed with jubilant shouts of "BINGO!" Approximately 100 children and their families came together to launch the fourth year of the Raising A Reader program by participating in BINGO for Books.

Teachers and staff from Brandon-Evansville generously donated gently used books for attendees of all ages. A special bingo card was designed to educate families about brain development and the Raising A Reader program while everyone enjoyed the game. Whenever someone called out "BINGO," they had the chance to select a "new to them" book to take home. By the end of the night, both children and adults had learned more about brain synapses and how to foster connections that strengthen them throughout a child's life. The joy on each child's face was evident as they chose their book, adding something new to their home library. Families appreciated the opportunity to spend quality time with their teachers and administrators while enjoying snacks and playing Bingo. Since this event marked the kickoff for the year, children began bringing home their book bags this week.



Brandon-Evansville Public School is piloting the Lakes Country Service Cooperative's Raising A Reader program. This year, students from birth to second grade and their families will engage in "book cuddling" routines, receiving different books in red bags to share each week. "Thank you to the local, county, and state support for enhancing our Raising A Reader program this year. We recognize that our families and communities are becoming more literate thanks to this initiative," stated Deb Berry, LCSC Raising A Reader Coordinator. The program is anticipated to involve around 170 families this year.

Would you like to find out more about Brandon-Evansville's Raising a Reader Program? Reach out to Deb Berry at dberry@b-e.k12.mn.us.

Ulen-Hitterdal
Public Schools Introduces Two New Elementary Educators

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

Ulen-Hitterdal staff and administration are excited to welcome two new elementary teachers to their staff, Emily Jacobson and Hailey Swiers.

Emily earned her Elementary Education degree from Minnesota State University Moorhead. She has recently worked as a paraprofessional at Ulen-Hitterdal mainly with the elementary students, but also did substitute teaching at both the elementary and high school grades. Working with the elementary reading intervention program, Emily was able to become acquainted with many of the students. She is excited to be a part of the 5th-6th grade team this year.

"I am looking forward to learning more about the students and building relationships with them. I have had tremendous support from staff and coworkers. I'm excited to learn and grow with the 5th and 6th grades in Math and Science!" Living nearby in rural Ulen, Emily enjoys being outdoors, reading, and spending time with her two daughters and family. "Quiet time is my favorite time!"



Emily Jacobson – 5th Grade

After earning her Child Development and Family Science Elementary Education degree from Valley City State University, Hailey completed a Masters in Curriculum and Instruction with a Literacy Emphasis. For the last eight years she has taught 4th grade at Roosevelt Elementary in Detroit Lakes.

Hailey is happy to secure this position at UH, "I am looking forward to working in this small-town atmosphere and being able to teach in the district where I reside." In her free time, she enjoys spending time with her husband, Ty, her two children, and her family. She especially loves visiting Minnesota State Parks and just spending time outside. Hailey (Brevik) is a Norman County East graduate who grew up in Twin Valley.



Hailey Swiers – 3rd Grade



CENTER FOR POLICY DESIGN

Source/Author: Troy Haugen, LCSC's Director of Career and College Readiness

The Minnesota Education Policy Fellowship's trip to Washington, D.C., provided a comprehensive exploration of educational policy development and advocacy, featuring a packed schedule from September 24-27, 2024. The fellowship commenced with a full day of meetings with Minnesota's congressional delegation.

During this day, the group engaged in discussions about critical education issues with Meghan Plotz from Representative Michelle Fischbach's office and Max Hurst, Senator Amy Klobuchar's legislative assistant. The day concluded with a session focused on shaping the education agenda alongside Senator Tina Smith. The following days were filled with a blend of educational and cultural activities.

Fellows had the opportunity to visit important landmarks such as the National Museum of African American History & Culture, the U.S. Capitol, and the Library of Congress. They participated in discussions regarding ed-tech, student privacy, early childhood education, and federal education policy with various experts, including representatives from the American Library Association, TeachAI, Public Interest Privacy Center, New America, First Five Years Fund, and Save the Children.

Networking continued with events at the American Enterprise Institute and the Center for American Progress, where fellows examined policy pathways and exchanged insights.

The fellowship wrapped up with updates on federal education regulations and reflections on the influence of education in the 2024 election, equipping participants with valuable perspectives and advocacy skills to take back to Minnesota.

MNEPF is a collaboration between Lakes Country Service Cooperative and Bright Works, in partnership with the Center for Policy Design. Over the past 47 years, the Fellowship has built a distinctive public policy network of over 600 Fellows, sponsors, and guests, focusing on state and federal public policy development and the leadership needed to effect policies that positively influence the educational experiences of Minnesota's students.

This year-long fellowship includes monthly seminars (both in-person and virtual), a day at the Minnesota Capitol, and a Washington D.C. Policy Experience. District and school leaders, educators, and school board members are encouraged to apply. Applications for the 2025-2026 cohort will be available in March.

Learn more about the Minnesota Education Policy Fellowship here.

MNEPF
MINNESOTA EDUCATION POLICY FELLOWSHIP





Jill Skarvold, who previously served as the Regional Low Incidence Facilitator at Lakes Country Service Cooperative, has been honored with the 2024 MASE (Minnesota Administrators for Special Education) Legacy Award. This award celebrates her remarkable 48 years of commitment to education and administration.

Source/Author: Dr. Lori Zimmerman, Director of Professional Learning, MASA

Prior to her time at LCSC, Skarvold was the Executive Director of Learner Support Services for Moorhead Area Public Schools for 14 years. Before her work in Minnesota, Skarvold held several positions in North Dakota, including Director of Student Services, Assistant Director of Special Education, Principal, and State Assistant Director of Special Education. She began her career as a Special Education Teacher and Department Chair in the St. Mary's County Public Schools in Leonardtown, MD. In addition, Skarvold served as an adjunct professor for the Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM) Educational Leadership graduate program.

"Jill has set a high standard of excellence in our field. Her unwavering dedication, commitment to training and mentoring, and empathetic approach to problem-solving have created a lasting impact on special education in our region and across the state," wrote Shannon Erickson, Director of Special Education for the Fergus Falls Area Special Education Cooperative, in her letter of support. "Jill's contributions have been invaluable, and she is more than deserving of the MASE Legacy Award."

As a member of MASE, Skarvold has served as Board President, Area Representative, and Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) Liaison. She has also served on numerous committees, including Professional Development, Nominations, Legislative, Strategic Planning, Federal Advocacy, the Stenwick Benson Scholarship Review Committee, and the Minnesota Special Education Leaders Foundation Board.

Skarvold has represented MASE on the Minnesota Department of Education Task Force on Recruitment Issues for Special Education, the Mild Disabilities Advisory Committee, the State Advisory Committee on RtI, and the Restrictive Procedures Workgroup. Beyond Minnesota, she also served on the executive boards for special education administrators' associations in Maryland and North Dakota.

Skarvold has served on the Dean's Advisory Committee, Speech Language Hearing Services Advisory Board, and the Special Education Advisory Committee at Minnesota State University Moorhead. She has also been actively involved with various community organizations, such as the Children's Services Coordinating Council and the United Way Board of Directors in North Dakota, as well as the Children's Mental Health Advisory Board of Clay County and the HOPE Board of Directors in Minnesota.

Skarvold was the recipient of the 2018 CASE National Special Education Administrator of the Year and the 2017 MASE Special Education Administrator of the Year.

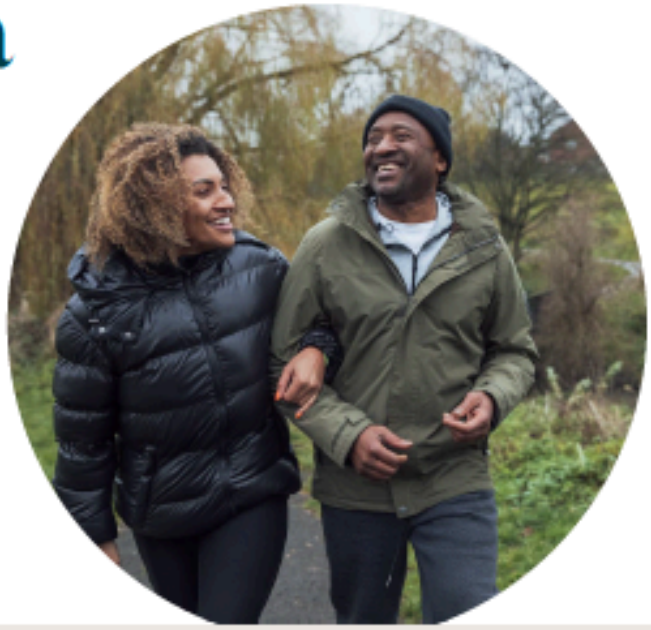
Skarvold earned her master's and specialist degrees in Curriculum & Instruction and Administration from the University of Maryland. She received her bachelor's degree in Elementary and Special Education from the University of North Dakota.

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CONTACT US

Phone: (218) 739-3273
(800)739-3273 (toll free)
Fax: (218) 739-2459
Email: communicator@lcsc.org
Executive Director: Jeremy Kovash

COMMUNICATOR STAFF

Editors: Jane Eastes: jeastes@lcsc.org
Mary Phillipe: mphillipe@lcsc.org
Address:
Lakes Country Service Cooperative
1001 E. Mount Faith
Fergus Falls, MN 56537
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