November 2023

LCSC Communicator

Regional News, Views, and Information

LAKES COUNTRY Service Cooperative

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EDUCATION-

Electronic Edition

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Cultural Exchange EDUCATORS



From Left: Moorhead Public School Special Education Teachers: Romella Verdeflor, Krissa Cajurao, Junalyn Zaragosa, Josieran Galacio, and Junnalie Ang

Teacher shortages and low numbers of applicants in candidate pools are a challenge for schools in Minnesota. With fewer applicants, public schools in LCSC's region have looked to the Cultural Exchange Educator programs to help fill vacant positions. Traveling around our region, I learned how some of our local schools are adapting and filling open positions with experienced Cultural Exchange Educators.

Campbell-Tintah, Moorhead, Rothsay, and other Public Schools in our region are beginning to utilize the Cultural Exchange Educator program and have welcomed teachers from the Philippines to fill open teaching positions in Science and Special Education.

Author: Mary Phillipe, LCSC's Communications Generalist



RizzaMae Serino
Science Teacher
Campbell-Tintah Public School

This program is an excellent opportunity for students, parents, and educators to learn from teachers with experience from all over the world. The diverse backgrounds and exposure to various cultures and learning environments can provide insights and perspectives that would otherwise be unattainable. Sharing the culture of the educators' country of origin may be part of the program requirement, depending on the organization the educator chooses to use to relocate to teach in the U.S.

To participate in the program, a school must complete an application and sign an agreement that outlines several requirements. These requirements include providing a salary and benefits equivalent to full-time teachers for a visiting teacher position, offering mentorship, coaching, and additional support to ensure their success, and providing support to identify housing, transportation, and other basic needs.

Campbell-Tintah Public School is located in Campbell, a small, rural community with a population of 161 residents and a student enrollment of 140 students, enrolled in Pre-K through 12th grade. The school faced a challenge when they had a vacant Science Teacher position in April of 2023. Despite receiving no applicants to fill the role, they discovered they could utilize a Cultural Exchange Educator program to hire a teacher to fill the position.

It was May 2023 when RizzaMae Serino was browsing Facebook and came across an ad about the need for teachers in the U.S. RizzaMae, a resident of Mindanao Island in the Philippines, where she taught Science for eight years, had always dreamed of living in the U.S. She quickly applied for the Cultural Exchange program IAG (International Alliance Group) offered. RizzaMae participated in an interview with Campbell-Tintah School Superintendent Kyle Edgerton on June 26, 2023, and was invited to start employment at Campbell-Tintah Public School. On August 31, RizzaMae booked her flight and went to Minnesota. She arrived on September 1 and is now three months into her role as a Science Teacher for seventh through twelfth-grade students. RizzaMae shared there were many obstacles to overcome to receive her J-1 Visa in a short period, which included several trips to Manilla, the capital of the Philippines, and connecting with the many individuals who needed to approve the paperwork required for her to resign from her current teaching position and to allow her to leave the Philippines.

RizzaMae received a J-1 classification (exchange visitors)VISA to participate in this program. This classification of VISA is authorized for those who intend to participate in an approved program for teaching, instructing, or lecturing, studying, observing, conducting research, consulting, demonstrating special skills, receiving training, or receiving graduate medical education or training.

In Campbell-Tintah, class sizes range from 4 to 12 students. RizzaMae has taught Science to seventh through twelfth-grade students for three months and loves the smaller class sizes. She appreciates being able to provide individual attention to each student. In the Philippines, RizzaMae was used to teaching classes with an average of 50 students, so the smaller class size in the U.S. is a welcome change for her. She mentioned that U.S. students are more advanced in Science curriculum.

When asked about her decision to leave the Philippines for this opportunity, RizzaMae shared that she feels very welcome at her school and in the community of Breckenridge, where she lives and commutes daily. She has made several new friends outside of work, and they are helping her learn how to drive and prepare for the upcoming cold winter weather.

Moorhead Public Schools had openings to fill for Special Education Teachers, and on April 14, 2023, five women with Master of Special Education degrees arrived in Moorhead following a snowstorm. Romella Verdeflor, Junalyn Zaragosa, Josieren Galacio, Junnalie Ang, and Junalyn Zaragoso chuckled when I asked if they enjoyed the snow, greeting them upon arrival. They agreed it is quite an adjustment getting used to the cold temperatures.

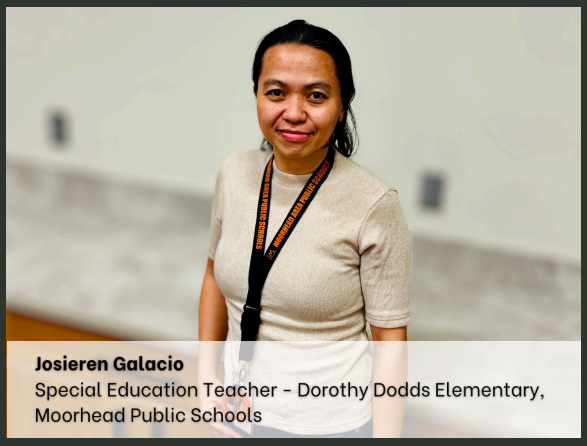
Romella Verdeflor works at the Horizon Middle School East building. She shared that she has dreamed of coming to the US since elementary school. She was thrilled to learn of the opportunities available to teach as a Special Education Teacher in the US. This is not Romella's first teaching assignment outside of the Philippines. Romella shared that during the recession in 2008, she was self-supporting and had the opportunity to live and teach in the United Arab Emirates for a year. She then returned to the Philippines and worked as a secondary teacher for nine years. Romella had her first interview with the MAPS Cultural Education Exchange program in November 2022. Through the MAPS program, teaching in Minnesota was the only option available to Romella. Romella shared that the Moorhead Public School system is very organized. She had a mentor assigned to her immediately. "I appreciate the administrative support and the mentoring program. It makes us feel good about ourselves. If you have a need to address, you just need to go to the right person, and they will help you," said Verdeflor.



Romella Verdeflor
Special Education Teacher - Horizon Middle School East, Moorhead Public Schools



Junalyn Zaragosa & Son, Axel Zaragosa
Special Education Teacher - Ellen Hopkins Elementary, Moorhead Public Schools



Josieren Galacio
Special Education Teacher - Dorothy Dodds Elementary, Moorhead Public Schools



Junnalie Ang
Special Education Teacher - S.G. Reinertsen Elementary, Moorhead Public Schools

> **In the Philippines, you don't always have all the resources you need.**

Junalyn Zaragosa

Junalyn Zaragosa works at Ellen Hopkins Elementary. "I hoped to come to the United States (U.S.) as I have always heard that it is the land of dreams and opportunities and greener pastures," said Junalyn. Junalyn was an elementary teacher for Kindergarten, second, and third-grade students in the Philippines. She didn't choose Minnesota as her first option but is now happy to be here. Junalyn would like to remain in the U.S. and continue teaching. She wants her son, Axel, to receive his education in the U.S. Junalyn shared that this decision has been life-changing for her family. She also stated that all the resources she needed to succeed in the classroom were there for her on the first day. "In the Philippines, you don't always have all the resources you need," said Zaragosa.

Josieren Galacio works at Dorothy Dodds Elementary. She did not expect this opportunity to come to her in her teaching journey. Josieren has been teaching for 17 years as a Special Education Teacher and was looking for something new in her teaching career. Josieren also saw an ad on Facebook for a Special Education Teacher position in the U.S. and clicked on it. After filling out the inquiry, she was called and interviewed on November 18 by the MAPS program. Josieren accepted the offer and brought her family to Minnesota for a three-year commitment. When asked about teaching in the Moorhead Public School, Josieren said she appreciates the special services of Occupational, Physical, and Speech Therapists available for students with special needs. Programs for Special Education students were less available in her previous school in the Philippines. "Here, you name it, you have all of the services for the kids, and that is good for the students," said Galacio. She is excited to return to the Philippines after her time in Moorhead Public Schools to open a Special Education school.

Junnalie Ang – Junnalie Ang's longtime dream has been to travel or work abroad. She initially hoped to receive a scholarship and her master's degree in the U.S. At the time; it was not financially wise for her to pursue this option. Five years ago, she learned about the Cultural Exchange program from friends and colleagues. Junnalie was already licensed as a teacher in the Philippines and felt that this was her opportunity to make her dream come true. She waited until she completed her Master of Special Education degree, and then a chance to teach in the U.S. became available. Her interview was on November 20, 2022. It was perfect timing for Junnalie. She did not have a specific state in the U.S. that she wanted to teach in, but she researched where there may be a good quality of life in the U.S. with low crime rates. She felt comfortable choosing Minnesota but knew adjusting to a different culture would be challenging. "My biggest challenge has been how to run the room, how to communicate with my Paraprofessionals, how to communicate to the persons providing all of the services, and always thinking ahead of what can be better support I could give to my students," said Ang. Junnalie looks forward to returning to the Philippines and sharing what she has learned at S.G. Reinertsen Elementary.

Krissa Cajurao also works at Ellen Hopkins Elementary and found the teaching opportunity in the U.S. through Facebook. Cajurao has a Bachelor of Special Education and a Master of Educational Management degree. “Teaching at Ellen Hopkins Elementary is a very different setting than in the Philippines. In the Philippines, we are the only ones managing the kids and do not have Paraprofessionals assigned to the classroom,” said Cajurao. “I have been adapting to the varying degrees of behaviors and the different cultures in the classroom. The people here are welcoming and approachable. The district is helping us new teachers by providing coaches and mentors to help us complete IEPs and other forms,” Cajurao added.



Krissa Cajurao
Special Education Teacher - Ellen Hopkins Elementary, Moorhead Public Schools



Royalty Osena
Science Teacher
Rothsay Public Schools

Just a few miles east of Moorhead, on Interstate 94, there was also an opening for a High School Science Teacher at Rothsay Public School. Royalty Osena utilized the QUEST USA service to acquire a U.S. Cultural Exchange Educator position. Royalty mentioned resigning as a public teacher in the Philippines means resigning from the government. This requires many documents, approvals, and signatures from around ten people, making the process time-consuming. Royalty relocated from Manila, the capital of the Philippines.

She first heard about the opportunity from her uncle, who resides in Arizona. Royalty is proficient in English, Korean, Japanese, and Spanish, and her initial consideration was to teach in Japan. In the Philippines, her classes had an average of 50 students, but she now teaches classes with a size ranging from 7 to 29 students. Royalty has more than 15 years of experience in teaching, and she holds a Master of Science degree.

Royalty has been challenged to adapt to U.S. cultural norms in the classroom. Although language has not been a hindrance, there exist differences in the expected behavior of children in the U.S. compared to what she was accustomed to in Manila.

Royalty conveyed her love for the community of Rothsay. She has mentioned that the people are very kind and helpful.



Do you want to learn more about the Cultural Exchange Educator programs? You can search online for various worldwide services – Keywords = Cultural Exchange Educators.

Osena admitted that she likes to be independent and self-sufficient, making it hard to ask for help or a ride. However, she is creating friendships in the community, and they are helping her learn how to drive.

During a conversation with Rothsay Superintendent Wade Johnson regarding the Cultural Exchange Educator program, he expressed his delight in having found an outstanding teacher through the program. "We're lucky to have Ms. Osena as our Science Teacher. She is truly an exceptional educator," said Johnson.

When asked what advice she would give new applicants about enrolling in the Cultural Exchange Educator program, Royalty Osena said, "Be brave!"

The seven Cultural Exchange Educators we interviewed all shared the same dream to live and teach in the U.S. to have a better life and more opportunity. Each community where they are currently based continues to provide a unique experience for everyone. For the students in each school, it provides an opportunity to bring an international feel, new experiences, and approaches to learning to the classroom.

Source: Minnesota Department of Education Website, Kyle Edgerton, Campbell-Tintah Superintendent, RizzaMae Serino, Campbell-Tintah Cultural Exchange Science Teacher, Junnalie Ang, Josieren Galacio, Junalyn Zaragosa, Romella Verdeflor Krissa Cajurao, Moorhead Special Education Cultural Exchange Teachers, Royalty Osena, Rothsay Cultural Exchange Highschool Science Teacher



FROM THE

Executive Director

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



Jeremy Kovash
Executive Director

This month, I had the opportunity to visit with educational leaders from the Midwest in Madison, Wisconsin. We all brought stories about teacher and workforce shortages to share. We discussed the limited scope of international teachers and regional endeavors to support these shortages. After much examination of the issues and symptoms, we decided to get to the root of the problem.

We began to discuss immigration policy and visas and their role in adding to our workforce. My additional research led me to a recent article in "The Atlantic" titled "The Hard Truth About Immigration" by David Leonhart. In this article, Leonhart identifies the long-help policy in immigration and the significant impact of the bill shepherded by Senator Ted Kennedy and signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson simply titled the Immigration and Nationality act of 1965 which says that immigrants shall be admitted based on their skills and close relationship to those already here in the United States. The events in Ukraine and Israel are opening new dialogue regarding immigration policy. I believe they are much needed and years late. Leonart states the fundamental issue with discussion on immigration:

"Immigration policy presents a distillation of the tensions between the two worldviews. To communalists, a government should limit arrivals and prioritize its own citizens. To universalists, national loyalties can be dangerous, and immigration can lift global living standards by allowing more people to share in a rich country's prosperity. In recent decades, this debate has become part of the growing political polarization in many Western countries, including the United States. Surveys show that liberals tend to be universalists who support higher levels of immigration, and conservatives tend to be communalists who favor less immigration."

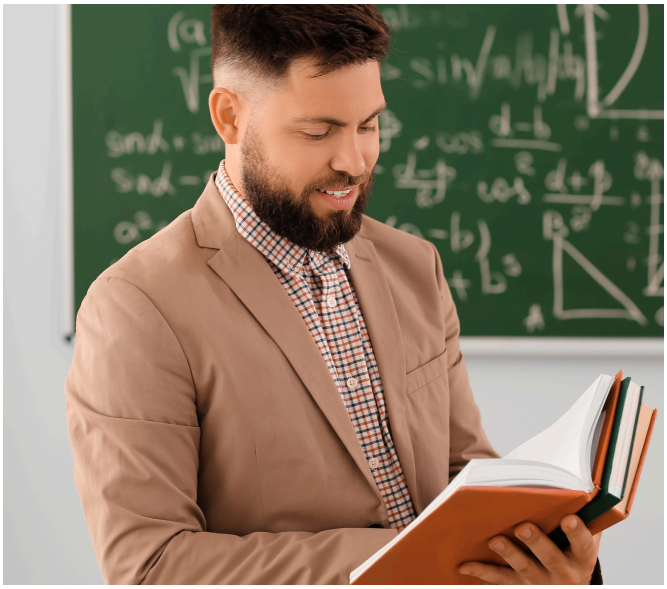
I hope that we can continue to explore and perhaps even impact future policy on immigration. AESA, the Association of Educational Service Agencies, of which I am a proud Executive Council member, is exploring this issue. One of our members from Connecticut, ACES, has an outstanding international program that involves global learning and research which might provide some insights. As we continue to explore innovative education, let's continue to examine root social and political causes that might lead us to improvement for all our students and communities.

Jeremy Kovash

18 ONLINE

MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY MOORHEAD

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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

Technology Integration

Lakes Country Service Cooperative offers a diverse array of technology integration services and tailor-made training programs designed to assist your school district in seamlessly integrating technology into its educational framework. Our sessions provide an array of topics, including Google apps, interactive whiteboards, web tools, and artificial intelligence (AI).

Educators who share a passion for technology integration or hold positions in technology integration roles within their district are encouraged to attend our quarterly networking sessions.

These sessions provide a valuable platform to engage in discussions surrounding current trends, pertinent topics, and strategies pertaining to technology integration within classroom instruction. The next upcoming Technology Integration Networking meeting is scheduled to take place on December 14th at the Lakes Country Service Cooperative.

For more information on having technology integration training at your district or attending the Technology Integration Networking meeting, please get in touch with **Monica Thompson** or visit the LCSC website: **TECH INTEGRATION**

CENTER FOR POLICY DESIGN

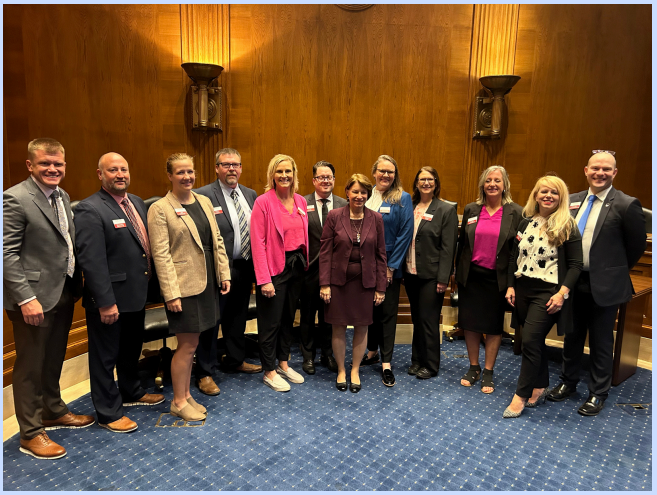
MINNESOTA EDUCATION POLICY FELLOWSHIP



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

In early October, the 2024 cohort of the Minnesota Education Policy Fellowship (MN EPF) attended the AESA Call to Action Conference in Washington, DC. The main objective of the conference was to learn about federal policy and experience advocacy in action. During the conference, the fellows had the opportunity to meet with both Minnesota Senators, Smith and Klobuchar, as well as the staff from Congresswoman Fishbach's office. Additionally, they heard from house and senate staffers from the education committees, along with many policy experts from various aspects of education policy.



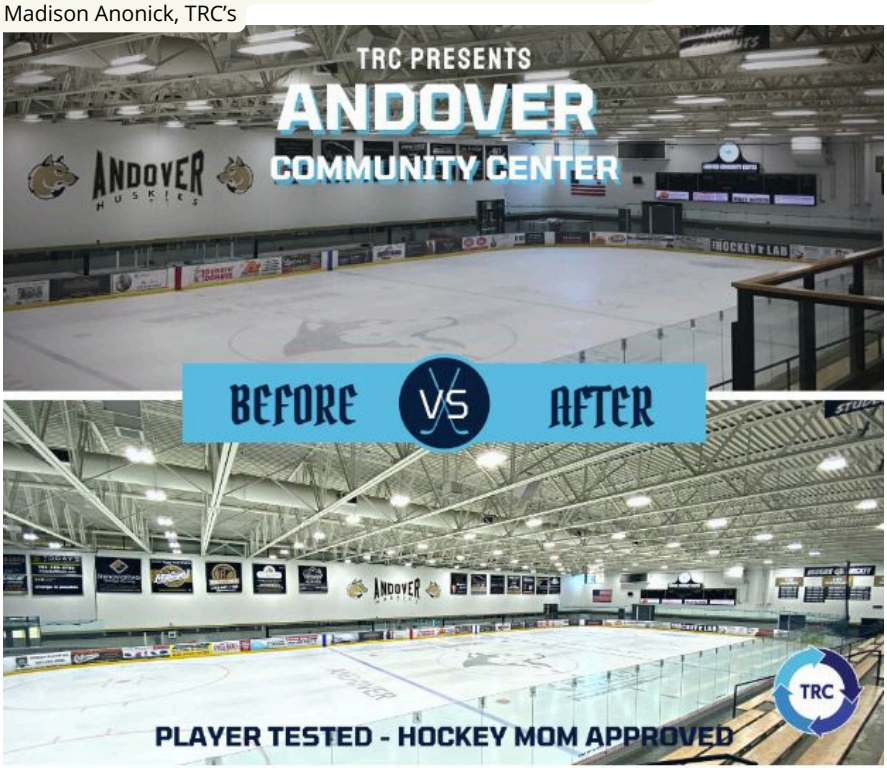


> *The DC experience was a powerful tool in enhancing my capacity to support the students we serve. It provided a broader understanding of the legislative process, we built connection with our legislators and their staffers, and we collaborated with regional colleagues from a variety of settings.*

SCOTT MASTEN,
Special Education Director
Lake Agassiz Education Cooperative

Player Tested, Hockey Mom Approved!

Source/Author: Jerome Evans, CPC Program Representative and Madison Anonick, TRC's



COOPERATIVE Purchasing CONNECTION

Andover Community Center Lighting Upgrade - The Retrofit Companies

Andover Community Center had a problem. Their facility contained an ice area and an additional rink, but the lights in the ice arena had different light levels from those in the additional rink. Community center staff also lacked the ability to adjust the lighting for different events.

That's where The Retrofit Companies (TRC) came in. They listened to the outcomes and improved functions that community center staff wanted and then submitted a project proposal designed to meet those needs. The proposal included updating the ice arena to new LED fixtures, updating the existing LED lights to match the light levels in the adjacent rink, and implementing lighting controls in order to set scenes for different activities happening at the rink.

TRC got right to work after their proposal was accepted, handling every aspect of the project from start to finish. And because Cooperative Purchasing Connection (CPC) had already gone out to bid for lighting solutions and already awarded a contract to TRC - administrative staff did not have to secure multiple quotes or run a bid themselves.

They just put the project on the CPC Contract and, assured of competitive pricing, got right to work!

The result? The arena manager "absolutely loved" the transformation! The rink now has a noticeable improvement in light levels, staff now has the ability to control the lighting as needed in an efficient manner, and pricing was not an issue. Staff can even preset scenes to easily switch over lighting for all the different community center events and activities.

Reach out to CPC and The Retrofit Companies when you're ready to update or upgrade your LED lighting! And to learn more about all of the ways that CPC vendors can help you upgrade your facilities, just go to PurchasingConnection.org and click on Meet Our Vendors.

Ulen-Hitterdal School

HAS TWO NEW TEACHERS

Source/Author: Therese M. Vogel Ulen-Hitterdal Public School



Sarah Mendis

Art Teacher

After earning a Bachelor of Fine Arts with an emphasis in painting and a Bachelor's degree in K-12 Art Education, Sarah has worked as an art teacher at Park Christian School and a substitute teacher and Art Club Advisor for the West Fargo Public Schools. Sarah looks forward to connecting with students and encouraging their creativity and artistry. She states, "I am excited to get to know the community better and be a part of all the wonderful things happening here at Ulen-Hitterdal." When not creating her own art, Sarah enjoys traveling, spending time with family and friends, singing, and drinking coffee! She also volunteers as a worship leader at her church and has become part of their songwriting team. She and her husband currently live in Fargo. However, Sarah grew up on a dairy farm in central Minnesota, "I am looking forward to being part of a school in a small-town community once again."



Amanda McCraven

5th Grade Teacher

Amanda has many years of experience in the classroom. She worked as a ten-year paraprofessional and long-term and short-term substitute teacher. She received her degree from Mayville State University in Elementary Education, Special Education, and Psychology. Currently living in Ada, she is excited to work at Ulen-Hitterdal, "I am looking forward to meeting new families and getting to know community members." Amanda is married with three teenage children, so she is very busy watching her children in their activities and sports. She also loves to garden and spend weekends at the lake.

Voyaging in Barrett



Source/Author: Kari Kreft, West Central Area Schools

The West Central Area (WCA) 6th graders have been working very hard on learning about the Dakota and Ojibway people. In the past week, they have learned about the Fur Trade and the voyagers who brought trade goods to what is now Minnesota by canoes. They have also been learning about a 13 year old boy named Pierre who became a voyager and the tough battles he faced. The students had the opportunity to gain a small insight into what these voyagers endured by learning how to canoe, with some getting to portage a canoe from the school to Barrett Lake. The students also got to pretend to be fur traders and learned the trading process and its economic impact for the fur traders and the region.



Intergenerational Opportunities

West Central Area (WCA) Schools recently received an Age Friendly grant from the State of Minnesota. As part of this initiative, the school has teamed up with the Region 4 South Mental Health Consortium and the Community Health Auxiliary to offer weekly intergenerational activities to WCA students and seniors. The primary goals of these activities are to foster connections, promote better mental health, and break down generational barriers. By participating in these activities, children and seniors preserve traditions, learn about each other's backgrounds, and create a safe space for networking. Some activities they do together include crafting, reading to each other, decorating cookies, playing games, and more.

Welcoming Week

Welcoming Week is a national movement where organizations and communities bring together neighbors of all backgrounds to build strong connections and foster a welcoming environment. West Central Area (WCA) Schools hosted the five communities of WCA and all Grant County communities this fall. Great fun was had with fourteen different communities in attendance. Mini golf, bouncy houses, Bingo, resource tables, carnival games, big trucks, crafts, ice cream floats, beautiful weather, and visiting made for a great evening for all.



ACADEMIC CHALLENGES

LAKES COUNTRY Service Cooperative



WE ARE SO EXCITED FOR ANOTHER GREAT SPELLING BEE YEAR!

As our Bee season begins, here are some updates and important dates. School enrollment on the Scripps' Bee website is open. New this year, all nine Minnesota Service Cooperatives are collaborating as one regional partner. This allows Minnesota to send NINE Regional Bee Champions to the Scripps National Bee. That means the champion from the Region IV Spelling Bee held at Lakes County Service Cooperative will advance to the National Bee in Washington, D.C. We are all excited by this amazing opportunity for so many students in Minnesota! Below are the important dates for our Regional Bee:

October 31, 2023 - Last day to register with Scripps before the price increases.
November 17, 2023 - Last day to register with LCSC.
January 31, 2024 - Scripps School Bee registration closes.
February 6, 2024 - Region IV Spelling Bee at Lakes Country Service Cooperative, 12:00 Registration, 12:30 Bee.
May 26 – June 1, 2024 - Scripps National Spelling Bee Week, Washington, D.C.
Visit our website at LCSC.org to learn more information.

Source/Author: Monica Thompson, Coordinator of Academic Challenges

2023/2024 Knowledge Bowl Season

Minnesota Service Cooperatives' Knowledge Bowl competitions are interdisciplinary academic contests designed for students in grades 7-12. During the contest, teams of students compete in written and oral rounds by answering questions related to all areas of learning typical of secondary education programs. Questions test students' recall, problem solving, and critical thinking skills. Currently over 800 teams from 290 Minnesota school districts participate in senior high knowledge bowl competitions.
For a schedule of the 2023/2024 Season
CLICK HERE.

Do you have questions? Contact Monica Thompson
Knowledge Bowl Coordinator
218-737-6540
mthompson@lcsc.org

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The Life Time Digital membership is not available with all Medica plans. If your coverage with Medica ends, you have the option to cancel or continue your Life Time Digital membership. If you continue, you are responsible for the monthly membership cost.

New year, new journey

Beginning January 1, 2024, follow these four simple steps to enroll:

1. Log in to your member account at **Medica.com/SignIn**
2. Select "**Programs + Tools**" under the "**Wellness**" section in the navigation menu
3. Under "**Life Time Digital**," click "**Sign up**"
4. Once you've signed up for your Life Time Digital account, download the Life Time Digital app from the Apple Store or Google Play to begin your journey

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Have questions? We're here to help.

Call Member Services at the number on the back of your Medica ID card **(TTY: 711)** or find answers to commonly asked questions in your member account at **Medica.com/SignIn**.

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LCSC Curriculum Leaders Network



Lakes Country Service Cooperative is offering an opportunity to collaborate with other curriculum leaders from the area throughout the upcoming school year. The purpose of the Curriculum Leaders Network is three-fold:

- to discuss current curriculum and resources
- to examine emerging innovations in education
- to develop connections and relationships with leaders around the region as a means of ongoing support throughout the year

The network is open to anyone in the region that has a role in leading curriculum, instruction and assessment in their district. The group plans to meet from 8:30 to 10:30 am at LCSC on October 11, December 13, February 14 and April 10.

There is no cost, but we'd love to know if you are planning to attend.

Please register at https://reg.lcsc.org/#/view-event/295 or contact Jolene King at jking@lcsc.org if you would like to be involved in the network.

RAISING a Reader

Source/Author: Deb Berry, LCSC Early Childhood Educator

The Raising A Reader team of Brandon-Evansville had a three-week training and planning session for the upcoming year.

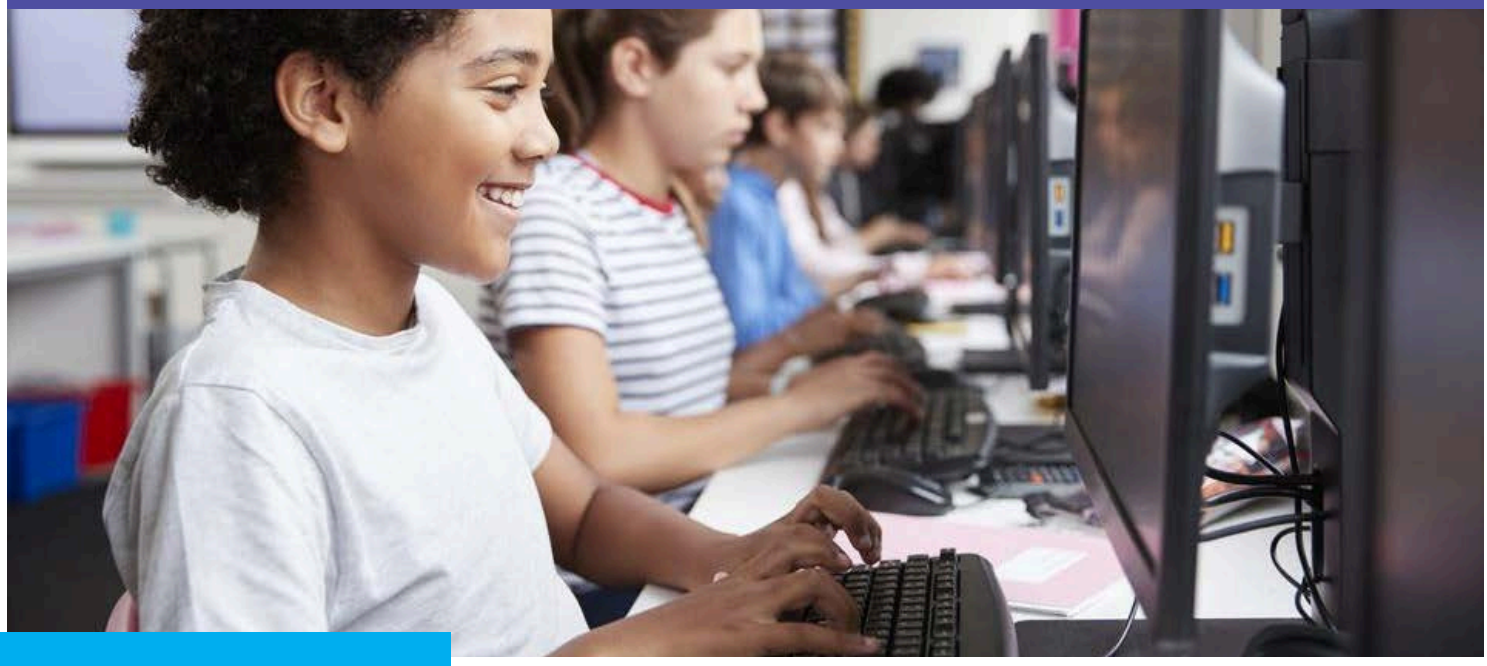
This year's program will involve 160 students in pre-kindergarten through first-grade at Brandon Evansville Public School. The program will run for 20 weeks.

In early November, there was a Raising a Reader launch, where families used a QR code to watch a program video with their children to create excitement about the program.

Deb Berry, one of Brandon-Evansville's Early Childhood Educators and the Raising a Reader Coordinator, will visit each classroom participating in the program. Ms. Berry will help to prepare the children, get them ready to read, and help them take ownership of the program.



Services for Educators



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Studio Tours
Take a guided tour of Prairie Public's studio and building and learn more about media production and how you can use it in the classroom.

Digital Resources
Our digital resources include PBS LearningMedia, PBS NewsHour Student Reporting Labs, Prairie Public produced media, and much more.

Youth Media Workshops
Our education professionals can assist your students in the media creation process.

Professional Development
We're proud to offer a multitude of PD courses, ranging from how to use PBS LearningMedia's database of free, standards-based resources, to certifications in media that can count towards PD hours.

School Visits
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