March 2025

LCSC Communicator

LAKES COUNTRY Service Cooperative
Together we achieve

Regional News, Views, and Information

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PaY Students interviewing Hospice of the Red River Valley.

Fergus Falls Public Schools:

Where Learning Meets Service

Innovative Programs Empowering Students to Become Active, Engaged Citizens

At Fergus Falls Public High School, classrooms offer more than just academic lessons; they also promote empathy and responsibility. Students have the chance to learn not only from textbooks but also through community service, discovering the deep joy that comes from giving back.

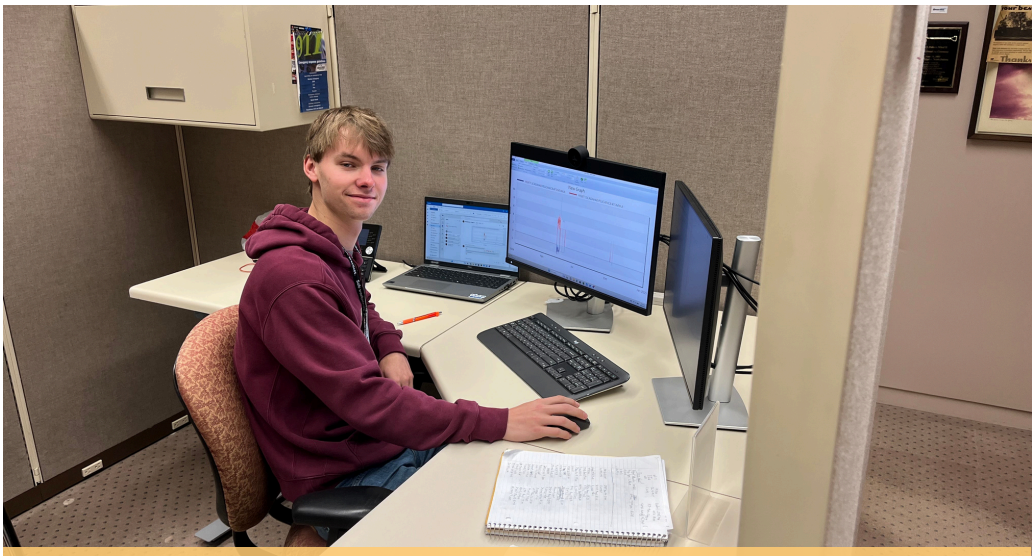
Superintendent Jeff Drake shared that the district's strategic plan includes a focus on connecting students to their community while fostering their leadership skills, service, volunteerism, and pride in both their school and community.

Two key programs supporting the district's plan are the Work-based Learning (WBL) and Philanthropy and Youth (PaY) programs, which are thriving and transforming high school students into not just learners but also active contributors to their community.

Continued on next page

Source: Fergus Falls Public School Superintendent, Jeff Drake; Fergus Falls Public School Work-Based Coordinator, Eli Hill; Fergus Falls Public School Language Arts Teacher and PaY Advisor, Mindy Christianson, www.fergusotters.org

Author: Mary Phillipe, LCSC Communications Generalist



WBL Student Mentoring at Otter Tail Power Company

Work-Based Learning Program

When Drake took on the role of superintendent in 2019, the Work-Based Learning (WBL) program was just starting out. Kathryn Enderson was the coordinator and did an outstanding job of laying the groundwork by creating a handbook that would guide the program and build many positive relationships with area businesses.

The program began with about fifteen students and now serves over one hundred.

The current WBL Coordinator, Eli Hill, noted that Enderson established a strong foundation for the program, providing an excellent roadmap for future coordinators.



Fergus Falls Public Schools WBL Coordinator
Eli Hill

Today, the program has grown to over 100 participants, with Hill responsible for overseeing it and coordinating placements within the Fergus Falls community.

Drake emphasized the variety of opportunities available to students, mentioning a student aspiring to become a surgeon who has had the chance to observe over 40 surgeries at Lake Region Healthcare. He noted, “What a great experience for her to be in the operating room and witness the work taking place.”

The WBL program is particularly popular in manufacturing, with local businesses eager to engage students. Companies such as Titan, ShoreMaster, West Tool and Die, and SCR Solutions offer valuable placements.

Students who attend two-year programs following graduation are often quickly hired by local manufacturers, especially if they demonstrate promise and a willingness to learn. Sometimes, these employers may even cover tuition costs for students they plan to hire after graduation.

The overarching aim of the WBL program is to connect students to their community, raise awareness of local career opportunities, and help students develop essential life skills.

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Drake mentioned, “If you go through this Work-Based program and discover what you don’t want to do, that is a success.” This aspect of the program saves students time and money in the long run by steering them away from unsuitable career paths.

The program also promotes the development of interpersonal skills as students create resumes, interact with employers, and discuss their skills and interests. Drake emphasized that "work-based learning encourages personal connections and relationship-building." He also mentioned that Eli Hill, the WBL Coordinator, has formed a strong partnership with the Fergus Falls Chamber of Commerce.

“If you go through this program and discover what you don’t want to do, that is a success.”

Fergus Falls Public Schools Superintendent - Jeff Drake

In this partnership, Executive Director Lisa Workman collaborates with Chamber members to promote the WBL program to potential employers interested in mentoring students.

Drake expressed gratitude for the local businesses that invest their time in students, stating, “The businesses’ upfront costs for the employee might outpace the work they are receiving. For them to take a student on and allow them to learn is very gracious. We are very appreciative of the businesses that allow our students these opportunities.” Fortunately, grant funds are available from local chambers of commerce and universities to help cover the internship costs for the participating business.

WBL’s Coordinator Hill’s goal is to help his students develop into safe, respectful, and responsible citizens by encouraging them to be creative, resourceful problem solvers with the technical skills, knowledge, and employability skills necessary to succeed in today’s workforce.

In his second year as the WBL Coordinator, Hill is witnessing significant growth in the program. He initially studied manufacturing and held positions at several companies in northern Minnesota. Inspired by his former teachers, he decided to pursue a career in education, focusing on a degree in Industrial Technology and Manufacturing. This led him to become a Technical Education Teacher, commonly known as a "Shop Teacher," as he shared with a smile.

Hill taught Tech Ed for 17 years and enjoyed working with students, helping them learn to use power tools to create projects they could keep and cherish as reminders of their acquired skills. He started implementing WBL on a small scale at Henning Public Schools, and now, at Fergus Falls Public Schools, he is working with over 100 students.

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WBL Student Mentoring at Ringdahl Ambulance

Hill begins the WBL program with a two-week seminar that focuses on developing employability skills for each new group of students. During this seminar, students learn essential skills, such as arriving on time, putting away their phones, working diligently until the end of their shifts, and asking their boss if they are unsure about what to do.

After completing the seminar, students are placed in various positions within the community.
When asked whether businesses should pay interns, Hill responds that it depends on the value of the service provided by the intern. If the intern's work generates revenue for the business, they should be compensated. However, suppose the intern is only shadowing, and their presence is considered an additional expense without contributing to revenue; payment may not be necessary, as the experience gained can still be valuable.

Hill stated, “I always keep my eyes and ears open for opportunities to place students.” A large part of his job is making phone calls and emailing to seek out internships. Once students are placed in their internships, Hill meets with them weekly at various locations in the community, such as Greater Fergus Falls, the YMCA, MState, or the library. During these meetings, he incorporates guest speakers and facility tours. “There are many great careers in this area that our students don’t get to experience,” Hill explained. He makes it his mission to expose them to these opportunities. He finds that many students initially want to leave Fergus Falls and explore the world after graduation. However, as life unfolds, they begin to appreciate the slower pace of Fergus Falls and realize what a wonderful community it is to live in. As a result, many students consider returning to the area.

> **“Students must realize that they need to be teachable and be prepared for lifelong learning.”**
>
> **Work-based Learning Coordinator - Eli Hill**

When Hill meets with businesses before the internship begins, he often encounters the question, “What does this really involve?” To address this, he encourages business owners to meet with the students to assess whether they would be a good fit and to establish the internship schedule. Hill ensures the arrangement works well for the students and the business. Hill is dedicated to creating internships that cater to the needs of students. Over ten weeks, students can gain experience by working within the community, and some choose to intern at three or four different locations.

When students meet with Hill off-campus, they discuss their work experiences from the previous week. After the trimester ends, they reserve the Bigwood Event Center, where students can showcase their digital portfolios on a large screen for everyone to see. Hill mentioned that, for some students, this can be intimidating; however, they all perform well.

The program also emphasizes the importance of good citizenship among students. Fergus Falls Public Schools is dedicated to helping students become active community members, problem solvers, effective communicators, and individuals of strong character.

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WBL Student Mentoring at Ziegler

Today's youth are often criticized for lacking a work ethic, being perceived as lazy, and spending excessive time on their phones as they transition into the workforce. While some of these criticisms may be valid, many students simply don't know where to begin. Hill is teaching students that the key phrase to remember is, "What can I do to help?" This phrase lets potential employers know that while they may feel uncertain about what to do, they are eager to learn and take direction. Hill smiled as he shared, "I'm receiving feedback from businesses that the interns are working harder than some adults."

While working as a shop teacher, Hill encouraged all his students to attend college. Now, through his years of experience, he knows that some students are not college-bound and instead thrive greatly with two-year programs in the trades. Even more so, some are not choosing to attend further education, and Hill works to help students find a career and not just a job. "Students must realize that they need to be teachable and be prepared for lifelong learning," said Hill.

Another part of the WBL program is the Senior Mentorship Program, which is for students thinking of going into teaching or just wanting to help inspire the younger generations. It's not about being a Teacher's Assistant. It's about helping the kids struggling with reading, math, or socialization. Hill shared that the mentors have great stories about the experiences they have had in the classroom. Students can mentor at the Fergus Falls Elementary Schools, Our Lady of Victory, Hillcrest Academy, and the Area Learning Center with older adolescents. Kids are getting the extra help they need from peers.

"The Work-Based Learning program works, and it is so fun to hear about the experiences our students are having," said Hill



PaY Students Attending Castaway Leadership

Philanthropy and Youth

Philanthropy and Youth (PaY) is an extracurricular program supported by Fergus Falls Public Schools that has been running for the past three years. The program aims to teach local high school students about the importance of leadership and service through interning at local nonprofits and grantmaking. Over 30 schools in Minnesota and North Dakota participate in this program.

This year, Mindy Christianson, a Language Arts Teacher at Fergus Falls High School, is serving as the advisor for the program, following former advisor Derek Abrahms, now the co-advisor. The program includes a committee where students can sign up for leadership sessions at Castaway in Detroit Lakes, Minnesota. Before the students' retreat at Castaway, they complete the CliftonStrengths Assessment. This assessment helps them identify their strengths, which informs their group discussions as they establish a mission statement, core values, and focus areas to guide their future funding decisions for local nonprofits.

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PaY Students interviewing the Humane Society of Otter Tail County

VALUES AND FOCUS AREAS

The current committee has chosen the following as their program values:

- **Impact**
- **Community**
- **Leadership**
- **Service**
- **Innovation**

Focus areas for the group include:

- **Education**
- **Mental Health**
- **Parks/Land Preservation**
- **Philanthropy/Volunteerism**
- **Youth Development**

The committee then works to identify eight nonprofits in the Fergus Falls area that meet their focus areas and submit these selections to PaY for approval. After receiving approval from PaY, committee members visit these organizations to conduct site evaluations and collaborate on how best to support them through their philanthropic efforts. PaY allocates $6,000 to each group to distribute among at least five organizations where they have conducted an evaluation. Allocations range from $800 to $1,500 and are designated for specific projects, excluding the nonprofit's general fund. Christianson mentioned that the site evaluations are very time-intensive, and students spend much of their program time on this component.

She explained that they must prepare a presentation outlining their accomplishments and the criteria they used to select the funded programs and provide this information to a professional board of ten women. After this presentation, all participating schools, including the funded nonprofits, will be invited to a celebration. This experience offers participants a comprehensive understanding of their impact on philanthropy for regional nonprofits.

PaY also allows students to seek local nonprofits needing interns as part of the program. Students apply for internships, and PaY matches them with these organizations, covering their $15-an-hour pay.

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Fergus Falls Public School Language Arts Teacher and PaY Advisor
Mindy Christianson

> **"The students are lovely, and it's fun to spend time with them and see what they care about and are interested in accomplishing."**
>
> **Fergus Falls Public School Language Arts Teacher and PaY Advisor - Mindy Christianson**

This arrangement ensures that nonprofits do not incur expenses. Throughout the summer, PaY aims to engage students in projects that align with their strengths and interests, fostering their growth in leadership and service.

Additionally, PaY offers a scholarship program for participants. Christianson reported that the four core leadership team members have applied for this scholarship and are currently undergoing interviews. Each member could receive up to a $20,000 scholarship, with additional matching scholarships from NDSU and the University of North Dakota (UND). Last year, PaY participant Shane Zierden received a $20,000 scholarship from PaY and a matching scholarship of $20,000 from UND.

"The younger generation is not accustomed to making phone calls," said Christianson. "They're also not used to responding to an email."

She admitted she has her own ideas about what she thinks is important in her community but feels the best outcome for this program is to let the students drive. "I just make sure they stay on the road," she said.

The WBL and PaY programs at Fergus Falls Public High School foster more than academic success; they nurture a generation of engaged and responsible citizens. By providing hands-on experiences and opportunities within their community, students are discovering their potential and learning the significant value of contributing to the well-being of others. By bridging the gap between classroom learning and real-world application, Fergus Falls Public School demonstrates that education is not only about acquiring knowledge but also about building a stronger and more compassionate community for everyone.

Interested in learning more about the WBL and PaY programs at Fergus Falls Public Schools?

Visit their website at www.fergusotters.org for program information and contact WBL Coordinator Eli Hill, and PaY Advisor Mindy Christianson with questions.

FROM THE

Executive Director

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



Jeremy Kovash
Executive Director

Investing in Educators

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR TEACHING

As we navigate the ever-evolving landscape of education, it is imperative that we take time to reflect on the challenges and opportunities that shape the teaching profession. Education Week's recent report, The State of Teaching, sheds light on the realities educators face today—highlighting issues such as teacher morale, burnout, and the increasing pressures to meet the deepening needs of students.

Teachers are the foundation of our schools, playing a critical role in shaping the future of our students and communities. However, many are experiencing unprecedented levels of stress and fatigue. The expectations placed on educators continue to grow, requiring them to balance instructional excellence with social-emotional support, evolving curriculum demands, and ever-changing student needs. This strain has led to growing concerns regarding teacher retention, well-being, and overall effectiveness in the classroom.

As leaders and stakeholders in education, we must take proactive steps to support our teachers and ensure that they have the resources, respect, and reinforcement necessary to thrive. The findings from The State of Teaching report should be carefully considered and studied by school systems and communities alike. We encourage collaborative discussions on ways to enhance professional development, improve working conditions, and promote policies that prioritize teacher wellness and sustainability.

Investing in our educators means investing in the success of our students. By fostering an environment that values and supports teachers, we can create stronger, more resilient schools that uplift our entire community.

Thank you for your continued dedication to education and for recognizing the vital role of our teachers. Let us work together to build a system where our educators feel valued, empowered, and equipped to inspire the next generation. Together We Achieve…



Classroom TO COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

JANE EASTES
Deputy Executive Director

Youth in Civic Life:

Building a Pipeline of Community Leaders

"By its very definition, civic responsibility means taking a healthy role in the life of one's community." - Senator and Astronaut John Glenn

Last month, several diverse organizations across Minnesota came together to host a Civics Summit, asking an important and timely question: **What has Minnesota done—and what is it doing—to prepare the next generation of citizens?**

The Summit was especially relevant in light of a 2023 law passed by the Minnesota Legislature requiring students to complete a for-credit civics course in 11th or 12th grade.

This moment presents an opportunity to reflect: What are we truly teaching when we teach civics? And how will this generation—and the next—see themselves as participants in civic life?

As educators, schools, and communities, we lead the way in inviting all young people to find their role as a community leader.

While classroom instruction lays the foundation, deeper learning happens when students have an opportunity for hands-on civic experiences. When students present to a local board—or even better, to serve as ex officio members of school boards, city councils, planning commissions, or nonprofit boards—they gain invaluable insights into governance, leadership, and public service. At the same time, boards benefit from the fresh perspectives and voices of youth in their communities. It's a win-win—and it's how we build a lifelong habit of civic engagement.

That's the learning journey we're embarking on together. Lakes Country is excited to bring new opportunities for schools and communities to explore youth civic leadership.

We invite you to join us on **May 7 from 9:30 AM to 2:00 PM,** when our **Youth and Community Leadership team** will host the **Minnesota School Boards Association**, in partnership with **Civic Bridgers**, for a workshop designed for students, administrators, and school board members. Together, we'll explore how to support and sustain student representation in school board governance. Invitations will be sent out soon!

Is your board already including youth members? We'd love to hear about your experience. Reach out to me, **Jane Eastes**, at jeastes@lcsc.org—we're learning together.

Announcements & Recognition



Linda Saari

Congratulations to Linda Saari, ECFE Coordinator, ECFE Educator, and ECFE Parent Educator, on reaching an impressive milestone of 30 years of service at Lakes Country Service Cooperative.

"For over 30 years, Linda has been committed to serving families in Brandon-Evansville. The impact she has had on the surrounding communities through the years is immeasurable. I feel lucky to call her a colleague." - LCSC Executive Deputy Director of Education Programs, Josh Nelson

Dustin Steenblock

Receives the 2025 Minnesota Association for Career and Technical Education (MnACTE) Administrator of the Year award!

Congratulations to Dustin Steenblock, Program Director of Licensure Content at Lakes Country Service Cooperative.

Dustin was honored with the Administrator of the Year award at the 2025 Minnesota Association for Career and Technical Education Annual Conference, held in St. Cloud, MN, on February 17, 2025.

In the past three years, Dustin has assisted over **180** teachers in obtaining the Work-Based Learning (WBL) endorsement through the licensure program. In addition to working directly with teachers, he serves as a program mentor, developer, and advocate for new WBL programs throughout the state.



Leading Education

through Global Partnerships

Congratulations to Jeremy Kovash for being chosen to serve on the AESA Global Advisory Council!

The Association of Educational Service Agencies (AESA) Global Advisory Council was established to connect members with other countries and support ESAs in becoming leaders in global education. This Council aims to build partnerships, encourage cultural exchanges, and bring the best educational ideas from around the world to the ESA community. By working with Area Cooperative Educational Services (ACES) International, the Global Advisory Council hopes to create opportunities for collaboration in Europe, Asia, and other regions from around the world.





Congratulations to Dr. Kristen Dehmer of Moorhead Public Schools for completing her EdD from Moorhead State University, and for winning the Richard Green Research Award from the Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA).

Dr. Dehmer has been with the Moorhead Public Schools for over 12 years. She started as the Executive Director of Human Resources and is currently the Assistant Superintendent of Business and Administrative Services. MASA's Richard Green Scholars Program honors the scholarly work and professional development of Minnesota school leaders through the award of an annual recognition for the research, writing, and presentation of one paper reflecting the practice of excellent school leadership.

Her dissertation is titled, "The Relationship Between Mentorship, Career Pathways and Success in the Superintendency: A Comparative Study of Men and Women Educational Leaders in Minnesota." Her full study is accessible here.

Announces New Executive Director

Region 1 is excited to announce their new Executive Director, Taylor Jones. He has replaced Bob Wheeler, who retired in December. Taylor was the Executive Director of the Northeast Wyoming BOCES in Gillette, WY, a provider of special education services and cooperative purchasing for their members. His familiarity in working with school districts will be a big plus during this transition. Please extend a warm welcome to Taylor and his family as they make northwest Minnesota their new home.





Join us in congratulating Alexandria Public Schools' Superintendent Rick Sansted, who has received the 2025 Region 4 Administrators of Excellence Award!

This prestigious award is given annually to one administrator from each of the nine MASA regions. Recipients are recognized for their leadership, commitment to students, and active participation in both professional and community affairs.

"Rick is a leader among leaders. His thoughtfulness and student-centered approach greatly benefit the Alexandria community, as well as our region and state. We are grateful for his contributions, service, and leadership."
-LCSC Executive Director Jeremy Kovash.

The award recipients will be honored during the 2025 MASA/MASE Spring Conference.



YEARS OF THE BEE
Scripps National Spelling Bee®

Eli Schlosser

Wins Region 4 Spelling Bee, Heads to Washington, D.C.

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

It was a day filled with excitement, nerves, and incredible spelling skills as 25 of the region's top spellers took the stage at the Region 4 Spelling Bee, sponsored by Minnesota Service Cooperatives. After several intense rounds, Eli Schlosser from Fergus Falls emerged victorious, correctly spelling the championship word, abominable, to secure his place as the region's top speller.

The competition was fierce, with spellers demonstrating impressive vocabulary and composure. Elsie Beyer from Hancock finished as the 1st runner-up, while Elizabeth Tuper from Perham-Dent claimed the 2nd runner-up spot. The event, held on February 11 at Lakes Country Service Cooperative, brought together students from 20 area schools, all vying for a chance to advance.

Spelling Bee Coordinator Monica Thompson praised the students for their dedication and bravery. "All the spellers did fantastic," she said. "It takes courage, poise, and skill to stand in front of a room full of people and spell words under pressure. Every student here should be incredibly proud of their efforts."

Competitors spent months preparing by studying the Words of the Champions, a rigorous list of 4,000 words provided by the Scripps National Spelling Bee. The event was made possible by the support of dedicated officials, including pronouncer Cris Oehler and judges Dee Johnson, Phyllis Rossow, and Dustin Steenblock, who carefully tracked each word and ensured accuracy throughout the competition.

Eli's journey isn't over yet. He will now represent Region 4 at the 2025 Scripps National Spelling Bee, held at the Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center in the Washington, D.C. area during Bee Week, which takes place over Memorial Day week.

The opportunity to compete at the national level is surreal for Eli, who credits his success to hard work and family support. "I prepared for the bee by practicing words with the help of my family" Eli shared.

For years, Lakes Country Service Cooperative has proudly hosted the Region 4 Spelling Bee, fostering a love of learning and encouraging students to challenge themselves. The bee not only builds vocabulary and language skills but also helps students gain confidence in public speaking and develop resilience under pressure.

Congratulations to Eli and all of the talented spellers who participated! We wish Eli the best of luck as he represents our region at the national bee!





YOUNG WRITERS' AND OTHER ARTISTS' CONFERENCE

May 13, 2025
Students in Grades 3-7
MState in Fergus Falls



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

The 2025 Young Writers' and Artists' Conference is set to take place on May 13, 2025, at Minnesota State Community & Technical College in Fergus Falls.

This annual spring event offers students in grades 3-7 a valuable opportunity to participate in engaging classes led by Minnesota authors, storytellers, illustrators, and other talented artists.

Last year, approximately 255 students took part in this event. Everyone enjoyed a performance by Nick Bretz, a magician with a 4th-degree black belt in Taekwondo. Participants also attended sessions with a storyteller, a writer, and an artist, where they explored the art of storytelling, practiced their writing skills, and created their own artwork.

Online registration for the 2025 Young Writers' and Artists' Conference will be available soon at www.lcsc.org.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please feel free to reach out to:

Monica Thompson, Academic Challenges Coordinator: mthompson@lcsc.org or
Jolene King, Program Assistant: jking@lcsc.org

We look forward to another year filled with creativity and inspiration!

March 13, 2025 - 6th Grade Math Masters

Fourteen teams brought their math skills to the 6th Grade Math Masters competition at Lakes Country! Students competed in five individual rounds and three team rounds, putting their critical thinking and problem-solving abilities to the test.

Teams competing included: Battle Lake, Browerville, Chokio-Alberta, Fergus Falls (5), Glacial Hills, Hillcrest (2), Morris, Rothsay and St. Mary's.

Math Masters has been challenging young mathematicians since 1989, growing to include 4th, 5th and 6th graders across Minnesota and Wisconsin, with over 6,000 students competing at 60+ sites!

A huge congratulations to all participants for their hard work and dedication!

Rankings:

Team Placements
1. Fergus Falls Otters
2. Fergus Falls White
3. Fergus Falls Black
4. Morris

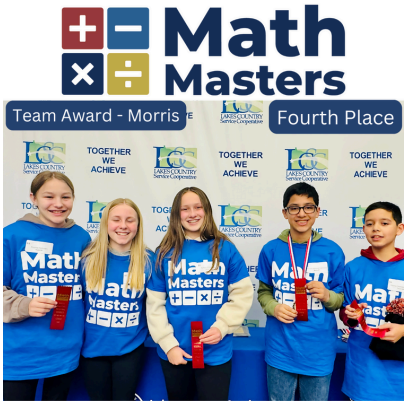
Individual
1. Kayden Karst – Fergus Falls Otters
2. Jared Stich – Fergus Falls Black
3. Oliver Blashill – Fergus Falls White
4. Max Sanchez – Browerville
5. Oliver Fix – Battle Lake
6. Gustavo Vazquez Carmona – Morris
7. Ray Weiss – Fergus Falls White
8. Keylan Tanberg – Battle Lake
9. Zeke Kummrow – Fergus Falls White
10. Annie Fleugel – Morris

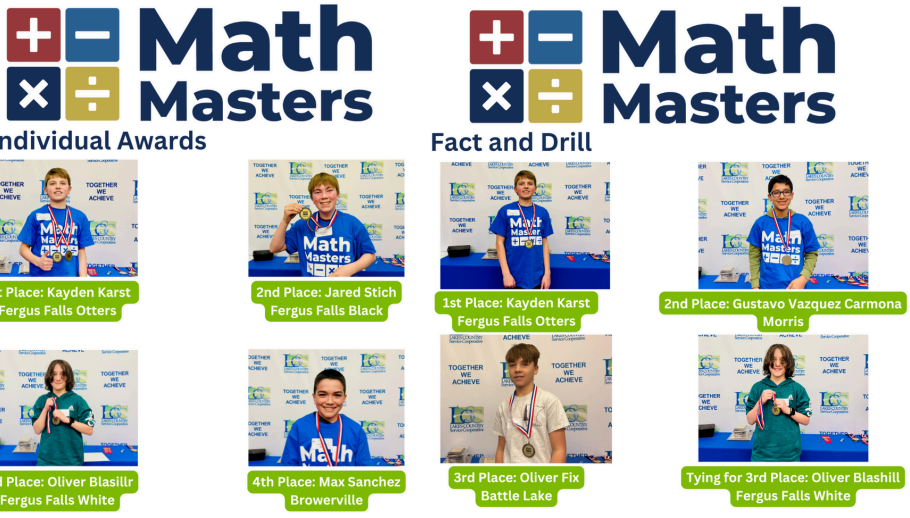
Fact Drill
1. Kayden Karst – Fergus Falls Otters
2. Gustavo Vazquez Carmona – Morris
3. Oliver Fix – Battle Lake
3. Oliver Blashill – Fergus Falls White
5. Jared Stich – Fergus Falls Black
6. Elvin Redden – Chokio Alberta
7. Samuel Caldow – Fergus Falls White
8. Annie Fleugel – Morris
8. Ray Weiss – Fergus Falls White
10. Kaylee Kerzman – Battle Lake











Region Knowledge Bowl Meet

MINNESOTA SERVICE COOPERATIVE
KNOWLEDGE BOWL

March 18, 2025 - What an incredible day of competition!

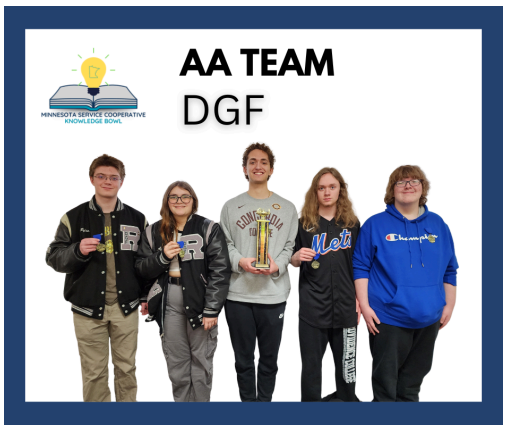
The top 18 teams from over 150 in Region 4 came together, all vying for a spot at the State Knowledge Bowl Meet in April. Every round was filled with energy, excitement, and intense competition as teams showcased their quick thinking, strategy, and teamwork.

Rankings:

After a full day of challenging questions and tough competition, we're excited to announce the teams advancing to state:

AAA: Fergus Falls, Moorhead
AA: DGF, Park Christian
A: Ashby, Wheaton













Congratulations to all the teams for your hard work and dedication! Best of luck at State in April!

BETTER TOGETHER



This year, we're happy to have David Larochelle and Mike Wohnoutka join us to discuss their children's books. See:

- See the Cat
- On the Road with Dave and Mike
- MOO

In addition, Louie Lauer will be back to present recent amazing children and young adult titles.

Participants will also be introduced to Artificial Intelligence (AI) and how it relates to Information Literacy. Minitex will be on hand to discuss new initiatives there, along with Electronic Library of Minnesota (ELM).

June 11, 2025
Registration
Begins at 8:30 a.m.

If you'd like to attend, send an email to Kathy Enger at: Kathy.Enger@nlln.org

You are invited once again to Lakes Country Service Cooperative for our "Better Together" workshop on June 11, 2025, starting at 9 a.m. (coffee, tea, and caramel rolls at 8:30 a.m.). There is no charge for the workshop and librarians of all types are invited, along with educators.

Lunch is also provided and 6 CEUs will be given to participants.

We meet to support each other in our work. Sometimes, we find ourselves as one of the few library workers in our respective systems. Conversations take place throughout the day and we come together at "Better Together" to learn from one another and to create an ongoing community of professionals who love all things "library", including our collective love of literature!

For Participating Insurance Members





Lakes Country Service Cooperative Members

vsp vision care

Join the Minnesota Healthcare Consortium (MHC) on March 27, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. for an informative session on Vision coverage with VSP.

We will provide an overview of VSP and the various programs available to Service Cooperative and MHC members. Alongside discussing the plan options, we'll emphasize the significance of regular eye exams and overall eye care. Information about our network, other offerings from VSP, and tips for successfully implementing a new plan will also be included.

The presentation will last 20 minutes, followed by a 10-minute Q&A session.

Want to learn more and attend? Please RSVP to Melissa Walvatne at mwalvatne@lcsc.org.

LAKES COUNTRY Service Cooperative — Together we achieve

Minnesota Healthcare Consortium

Medica

Kaffeeklatsch



At LCSC, we value the opportunity to host and facilitate events that foster meaningful conversations within our community.

Many thanks to our community partner, West Central Initiative, for working together to host a successful event.

Participating Legislators:

- Senator Jordan Rasmusson
- Senator Robert Kupec
- Representative Jim Joy
- Representative Paul Anderson
- Representative Heather Keeler
- Representative Tom Murphy

18 Online

Statewide Concurrent Enrollment Teacher Training Program

Report to the Legislature January 15, 2025

Source: 18 Online Report to the Legislature, LCSC Executive Director, Jeremy Kovash
Author: Mary Phillipe, LCSC Communications Generalist

"18 Online was borne out of a true spirit of collaboration," said LCSC Executive Director, Jeremy Kovash. "Two entities, Minnesota State University- Moorhead (MSUM) and Lakes Country Service Cooperative, came together to fulfill the mission of each organization. The collaboration has had long term positive impacts on communities across Minnesota assisting school districts, teachers, students and families. We are very proud of our partnership and commitment to strong communities and schools."

The Statewide Concurrent Enrollment Teacher Training Program – 18 Online began as a pilot initiative in 2016 in Northwest Minnesota, supporting concurrent enrollment instructors in the Lakes Country Service Cooperative (LCSC) and Northwest Service Cooperative regions. In data collection from member school districts, we learned that of our 300+ concurrent enrollment teachers, approximately 75% needed additional graduate coursework to comply with Higher Learning Commission requirements.

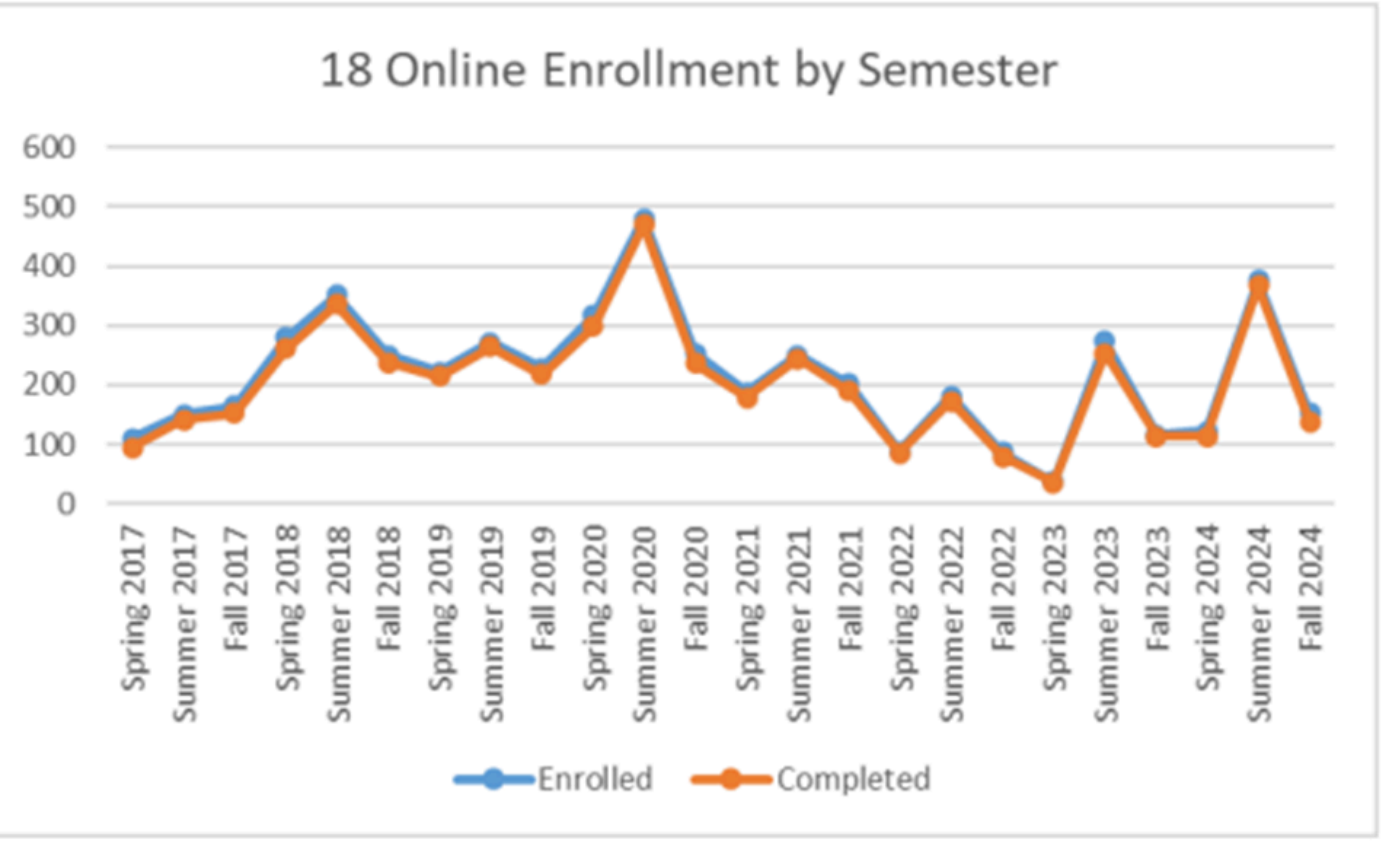
It has since developed into a statewide partnership that, according to the latest report, has served 2,058 concurrent enrollment teachers from around 300 school districts across Minnesota.

Ten Subject Areas Now Offered

Initial offerings focused on high-need areas: Math, History, and English. Subsequent additions include Communications and Biology (Summer 2017), Political Science (Fall 2017), Business and Chemistry (Spring 2018), Art (Spring 2019), and most recently, Psychology (Summer 2023).

MSUM has also increased its mathematics staffing to accommodate program demand. Additional courses are continually under development. All asynchronous coursework adheres to the standards set by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), and MSUM handles instructor support, manages enrollment, and oversees the program.

Continued on next page



Summer courses have proven most popular, and the Summer 2025 offerings are expected to be a strong array of offerings that are promoted through the Minnesota Service Cooperatives (MSC), the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP), and the Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA).

Why this program matters for Minnesota Teachers and Students

This program has significantly contributed to the nearly 15,000 master's-level credits earned by concurrent enrollment instructors in Minnesota.

Concurrent enrollment allows students to advance their education without the financial, social, and emotional burdens of transitioning to a new environment.

Particularly in our region, this program promotes equity and inclusion by enabling students to learn in familiar surroundings from established educators, removing barriers to higher education access.

If you would like to learn more about enrollment in the Statewide Concurrent Enrollment Teacher Training Program – 18 Online, contact Josh Nelson, Deputy Executive Director of Educational Programs, or visit our website at www.lcsc.org and click on Educational Programs.

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Simple, Low-Cost Ways to Protect Your Organization from Cyber Attacks

Authors: Scott Wendorff, LCSC Program Director of Information Technology & Matt Holtberg, LCSC Assistant Program Director of Information Technology

Cybersecurity isn't just a concern for big corporations—it's a real threat to local governments and nonprofits, too. A single cyber-attack can compromise sensitive data, disrupt services, and lead to costly consequences. The good news? You don't need a big budget or an IT department to improve your organization's security. Here are some simple, low-cost steps you can take today:

1. Use Strong, Unique Passwords
One of the easiest ways hackers get in is through weak or reused passwords. Use long, unique passwords for each account and consider a password manager to keep them secure. If remembering complex passwords is difficult, try using a passphrase, like "FergusFallsWinter2024!", or something with spaces such as "My Dog Abby Is 7 Years Old".

2. Enable Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA)
MFA adds an extra layer of security by requiring a second form of verification, such as a code sent to your phone, or more modern methods such as a rolling code on an app or a hardware key. This simple step can prevent most hacking attempts, even if your password gets stolen.

3. Keep Software and Devices Updated
Hackers exploit outdated software to access systems. Regularly update your operating system, antivirus software, applications, and network devices to stay protected. Most devices offer automatic updates—turn this feature on to stay ahead.

4. Beware of Phishing Emails
Phishing emails are designed to trick you into clicking malicious links or giving away sensitive information. Think before you click—verify unexpected emails, check for spelling errors, and be cautious of urgent requests for personal or financial information. When in doubt, check with the sender through different method of communication, such as a phone call or in person if you can.

5. Limit Access to Sensitive Data
Not everyone in your organization needs access to everything. Restrict access to sensitive information based on job roles. This reduces the chances of accidental leaks or intentional breaches.

6. Back Up Your Data Regularly
Ransomware attacks can lock you out of important files. Keep secure backups of your data on an external hard drive or cloud service. Test your backups occasionally to make sure they work.

7. Train Your Team
Cybersecurity isn't just an IT issue—it's a people issue. A quick training session on recognizing threats and following best practices can go a long way. Encourage staff to report anything suspicious right away.

Stay Vigilant, Stay Secure
You don't need a big budget to protect your organization from cyber threats. Implementing these simple, cost-effective measures can significantly reduce your risk. Start today—because a little prevention now can save a lot of trouble later.

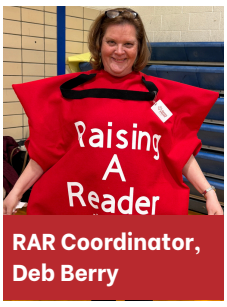


BRANDON-EVANSVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOL'S 2ND ANNUAL RAISING A READER BIRTHDAY BASH

The 2nd Annual Big Birthday Bash for the Raising a Reader (RAR) program brought together families from the Brandon-Evansville Public School, focusing on children from birth to eight years old. Over 120 participants, including infants, students, parents, and grandparents, gathered to celebrate the RAR Program.







RAR Coordinator, Deb Berry

Teachers participating in the RAR Program chose a book from their collection, created a corresponding activity, and arranged a specific table or space for families. Their commitment plays a crucial role in the program's success. The main objective of the event was to help parents and children uncover questions they could ask one another while enjoying books together, as well as to offer suggestions for family activities that encourage shared reading experiences.

This event was generously supported by the Alexandria Area Community Foundation and Lakes Country Service Cooperative.

Society for Women Educational Leaders Invites you to attend the 2025 SWEL Symposium

Join us for an empowering experience at the Society of Women Educational Leaders (SWEL) 2025 Symposium in St. Cloud, Minnesota, on Thursday, April 24, and Friday, April 25!

Keynote speakers: Dr. Laurie Putnam, the MN Superintendent of the Year and Superintendent of St. Cloud Public Schools, and Kate Gladdin, a motivational speaker, author, and coach.

Help us spread the word by sharing this event with your friends and colleagues!

To learn more and register, visit www.swelofmn.org





Lakes Country Service Cooperative will once again serve as a host site for Annual Calibration of audiometers, tympanometers, and otoacoustic emissions (OAE) screening equipment; with Midwest Special Instruments being the service provider.

Calibration dates are scheduled for Wednesday, May 7th, Thursday, May 8th, and Friday, May 9th. Please see the attached flyer for all the information for this year's school calibration, and the links to forms needed.



Join us in Fergus Falls on May 1!

THE VIEW FROM HERE:

TELLING THE STORIES OF OUR REGION



West Central Initiative

May 1, 2025
Bigwood Event Center
11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.

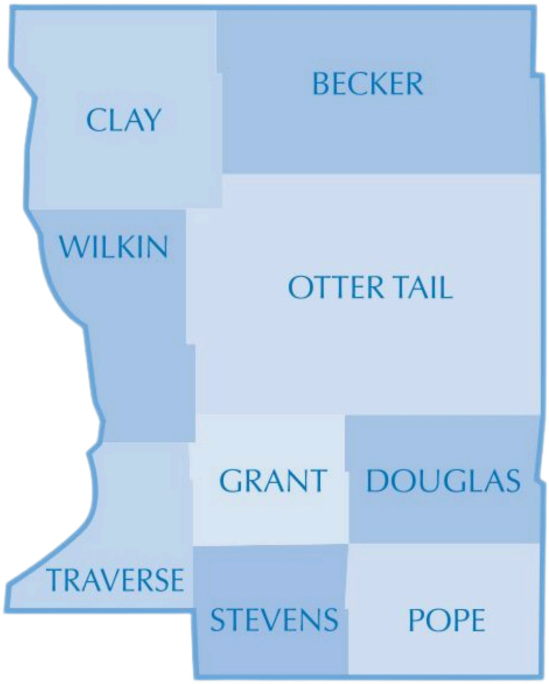
Join us for The View from Here:

Telling the Stories of Our Region

Join us for The View from Here: Telling the Stories of Our Region, a dynamic event exploring the power of local journalism in shaping our communities. The keynote address will be delivered by Steve Grove, the CEO and Publisher of the Minnesota Star Tribune, offering insights into the evolving media landscape.

A panel of regional newspaper representatives will discuss the challenges and opportunities of regional news and storytelling. Don't miss this opportunity to engage with industry leaders and celebrate the vital role of local news in our region.
Lunch is provided. Space is limited, so be sure to register below to save your spot.
Event Timeline

- 11:30 a.m. – Doors Open & Lunch is Served
- 11:45 a.m. – Program Begins
- 1:00 p.m. – Event Concludes



REGISTER NOW

2025 LCSC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

"We Advocate for Strong Communities Through Service and Leadership."

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Vice Chair	Suzanne Wing	Board Member - Ashby Public Schools
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Director	David Meyer	Board Member - Becker County
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