August 2026

LCSC Communicator

Regional News, Views, and Information

LAKES COUNTRY Service Cooperative
Together we achieve

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

FROM OSAKIS GRADUATE TO SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT LOUISA GLENETSKE BRINGS EXPERIENCE, VISION, AND HEART TO HER HOMETOWN DISTRICT

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JEREMY KOVASH

JANE EASTES CLASSROOM TO COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

2026 BARBARA HEXUM AWARD DR. LYNNE KOVASH

WELCOME TO THE NEW SUPERINTENDENTS AND DIRECTORS IN OUR REGION

2026 OUTSTANDING SERVICE AWARD RECIPIENT - PHIL JENSEN

BEYOND EXIT TICKETS: FROM ASSESSMENT TO AGENCY HELPING STUDENTS UNDERSTAND, MONITOR, AND DIRECT THEIR OWN LEARNING

STEM DAY BRINGS HANDS-ON LEARNING TO THE WEST OTTER TAIL COUNTY FAIR

RED ROCK CENTRAL TEACHER CLAYTON HUBERT BRINGS STEAM ART LESSONS TO CHINA

2026/27 RURAL EDUCATION POLICY FELLOWSHIP COHORT KICK OFF

PLEASE VISIT OUR CALENDAR FOR IMPORTANT DATES.

CLICK HERE FOR A LISTING OF OUR CURRENT JOB POSTINGS

An equal opportunity employer

PDF

www.lcsc.org



From Osakis Graduate to School Superintendent

Louisa Glenetske's connection to Osakis runs deep. She graduated from Osakis Public Schools in 2000, returned to live in the community in 2008, and raised her children there. For 18 years, however, she commuted to Brandon-Evansville Public Schools, where she began her career as a teacher.

When Glenetske accepted the superintendent position at Brandon-Evansville four years ago, she did so on a waiver, having finished her internship while still completing her administrative coursework. During her interview, she expressed that she would only lead a district aligned with her values, and noted that if the superintendent role at Osakis ever opened, she would apply.

Source: Louisa Glenetske, Superintendent, Osakis Public School;
Author: Mary Phillipe, LCSC Communications Coordinator



Louisa Glenetske

Brings Experience, Vision, and Heart to Her Hometown District

> **Maybe this is not true for everyone, but it is a really exciting time where you get to learn so much.**

-Louisa Glenetske
Superintendent, Osakis Public School

Working far from home presented an ongoing struggle: balancing her official duties with spending time with her children. "I felt that I was invested more in the Brandon-Evansville community than the Osakis community where I lived and my kids went to school," said Glenetske. Now back in Osakis, she looks forward to enjoying attending her children's events more frequently and allowing her professional role in the community to fit well with her family life.

Though passionate about the staff, students, and success of Brandon-Evansville, Glenetske is happy with her decision to move. She brings diverse educational experience to her new post, having served as a math teacher, union negotiator, principal, and superintendent.

"Change is hard, but I feel like change is good because the more perspectives and experiences I gain, the better I will be at my job," Glenetske said.

Now 30 days into her role at Osakis Public Schools, Glenetske is focusing on onboarding and relationship-building.She has taken tours with the custodial staff to understand the infrastructure, met with administrative staff to review teacher placements, and held planning sessions with principals. "They are the keepers of the knowledge," she noted.

To establish her foundation, Glenetske outlined clear priorities for her tenure:

- **Listen, Learn, and Build Relationships:** "My first-year goal is to listen, learn, and build relationships—to get to know the staff, students, and community," said Glenetske. "I don't know if you can look beyond that scope because you don't know what is going to come at you, including the internal culture you can't see from the outside."
- **Lead the Upcoming Capital Improvement Project:** Her second major focus is guiding a roughly $20 million building project slated to begin in the summer of 2027, following a referendum passed by Osakis voters in February. The expansion will feature enhanced Career and Technical Education (CTE) programming, a new elementary office, updated locker rooms, a fitness center, and a multi-purpose "Gymnatorium" for large community fine arts and sporting events.

Glenetske feels well-equipped for the task, having overseen a major referendum-backed construction project at Brandon-Evansville that began on her very first day as superintendent.

As a problem solver at heart, Glenetske looks forward to identifying inefficiencies and refining operational processes while respecting the time it takes to implement change successfully. Above all, she values the strong support of the local community.

"We have a small-town feel, and I really see the residents wanting to see this community thrive," said Glenetske. "Osakis is a place people come to live because of the lake and all the amenities that make it a great place to be."

For Glenetske, returning to Osakis Public School is a homecoming that brings her personal and professional lives into alignment. As she settles into the superintendent role, she remains focused on offering the district the same anchor it has provided her family for years.

Learn more about Osakis Public School by visiting their website.



Join us on Thursday, September 10, 2026, for refreshments and a brief program commemorating 50 years of service to the region.

Program 4:00 - 6:00 PM
4:00 PM: Open House Begins - Enjoy food and refreshments.
4:30 PM: Official Program (Conference Center)

- Welcome from Board Chair, Jon Karger
- Special message from Executive Director, Jeremy Kovash
- A 50th Anniversary commemorative video featuring messages from former board members, LCSC members, and regional partners

5:00 PM – 6:00 PM: Socializing & Refreshments
Stay after the presentation to catch up, or drop in later to enjoy food, refreshments, and conversation! We hope you can join us to celebrate 50 years of collaboration, service, and community support!





Are you being PHISHED?

Educate and engage employees with security awareness training content that empowers



INFOSEC IQ
Security Awareness Training & Phishing Simulations

- Reduce cybersecurity events with simulations and phishing templates.
- Reinforce cyber secure behaviors with industry-and role-based training.
- Strengthen cybersecurity culture while meeting compliance requirements.



Program Cost

- An annual fee of $7.50 per email account covers phishing detection and monthly training.
- An initial setup fee is necessary to activate the service, which varies depending on the size of the organization.



CONTACT

Matt Holtberg
Information Technology Department
218-737-6525
mholtberg@lcsc.org

LAKES COUNTRY Service Cooperative

This program is provided by Lakes Country Service Cooperative through a partnership with Southwest West Central Service Cooperative

LCSC.org | 218-739-3273 | 1001 E. Mount Faith Fergus Falls, MN 56537

FROM THE

Executive Director

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



Jeremy Kovash
Executive Director

THE TEACHERS WE REMEMBER

As another school year begins, I find myself thinking about teachers. Not necessarily the classes we took, the grades we earned, or even the assignments we completed. I think about the teachers who, years later, somehow remain with us. My wife, Deanna, a teacher, and I had a wonderful summer and even took in our first movie in many years: The Odyssey.

More than 30 years ago, I sat in a classroom at Concordia College in Moorhead and learned about The Iliad and The Odyssey by Homer from one of my favorite professors, Dr. Bruce Stuart. At the time, I was a college student reading about Achilles, Hector, Odysseus, the Trojan War, the Cyclops, the Sirens, and a seemingly endless collection of Greek gods and goddesses. I certainly wasn't thinking about whether I would remember any of it 30-plus years later. **I remembered them.** Not just a little bit. I remembered an amazing amount of the stories, the characters, the adventures, and the lessons woven throughout them. I certainly don't remember everything I studied in college. I probably don't remember everything I studied last week!

But I remember Dr. Stuart's class. And I think I know why. He wasn't simply teaching us about Homer, Greek mythology, or two of the greatest works in Western literature. He was teaching us how to think. He challenged us to look beneath the story. To ask questions. To consider why people made the choices they made. To think about courage, leadership, loyalty, pride, perseverance, relationships, and the consequences of our decisions. Those lessons stuck. The Iliad and the Odyssey have endured for thousands of years in part because they ask questions about the human experience that remain relevant today. But I don't believe I remember them simply because they are great stories. I remember them because I had a great teacher.

As our schools across Lakes Country open their doors for another year, I think that's worth remembering.
Our teachers and school staff may never know which lesson will stay with a student for 30 years. It might be something from a textbook. It might be a conversation in the hallway. It might be the encouragement offered after a difficult day.

It might be a coach believing in a young person, a paraprofessional showing patience, a bus driver offering a smile, or a teacher asking one more question that causes a student to think differently. Education isn't simply about what our students know when they leave our classrooms. It is about helping them learn **how to think, how to grow, how to treat others, and how to make their way through the world.**

Thirty-plus years later, I can still remember sitting in Dr. Stuart's classroom learning about Odysseus trying to find his way home.
Maybe that's one of the great gifts of education. The lesson doesn't always end when the class does. To all our educators, leaders, support staff, students, families, and communities across Lakes Country—welcome back. Keep teaching. Keep learning. Keep asking good questions. Keep helping young people think.

You never know what they will remember 30 years from now.
Have a great school year!
Together We Achieve.



Classroom TO COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

JANE EASTES
Deputy
Executive Director

ROOTED IN EDUCATION, GROWING COMMUNITY

The Service Cooperatives in Minnesota are celebrating 50 years of service. As we look back at our early years, it's amazing to see the change and growth in our services. Almost fifty years ago we bought all manner of supplies in bulk; pens, pencils, paper, staplers, bulletin boards - you name it, and delivering orders to our members. We regularly ran vans to deliver shared media resources between schools. On-site professional development was our forte. Large groups of teachers, administrators, and specialists were in our building daily for the latest learning.

Today, Lakes Country has 128 employees, three buildings, and programs offered throughout Minnesota and beyond that we couldn't even dream about 50 years ago.



We are offering teacher licensure, early teacher mentoring programs, "grow your own" teacher programs, AI Institutes, network and cloud technical services, mental health and direct service Setting IV school programs, career, and tech ed programs, STEM programs. This is in addition to those long-standing shared services, insurance pools, cooperative purchasing, environmental health & safety consulting, and academic challenges (so excited to add the Nature conference to the Knowledge Bowl and Young Writers opportunities!).

Services come and go or evolve over time, but our fundamental charge is the same. Lakes Country is vital and growing because we have never lost sight that we are here to champion and support the success of the organizations, schools, government, agencies, and nonprofits who are the backbone of healthy and thriving communities.

Focusing on people and relationships that make up our community is at the heart of each and every thing we do for now and for the next 50 + years.

As we start another school year, we must not lose sight of the fundamental fact that teachers and educators are transformational in the lives of our youth and communities. They are growing the youth that will become our next teachers, principals, superintendents, city council members, county administrators, social workers, water treatment operators, electricians, and business owners. We're here to work with you to make sure that everyone, youth and adults, feel they belong, have purpose and voice in community life in order to live and grow together in healthy communities. Here's to the next 50 years together!

2026 Barbara Hexum Award

Source: (Content)Minnesota Service Cooperative, (Photo, Dr. Lynne Kovash)Moorhead Public School



The Barbara Hexum Outstanding Service Award was established in 2011 to honor the legacy of Barbara Hexum, a longtime Lakes Country Service Cooperative staff member whose career in education service and leadership impacted thousands across Minnesota. Barbara was known for her dedication to the regional service model and her work as a facilitator, coordinator, and mentor. This prestigious award is presented to individuals nominated and selected by the Minnesota Service Cooperative's Executive Council, making it a meaningful recognition of exceptional service and lasting contributions to the cooperative community.

Dr. Lynne Kovash

It is with great honor that we recognize Dr. Lynne Kovash as this year's recipient of the Barbara Hexum Award. This recognition is especially meaningful as Lynne and Barbara shared a deep friendship, professional respect, and a commitment to education and community through many years together. Their shared passion for serving children, families, and schools left a lasting impact on countless lives.

Dr. Lynne Kovash passed away on February 14, 2019, following a courageous battle with cancer. This award was accepted in her memory by her children: Jeremy (Deanna) Kovash; Seth (Jennifer) Moland-Kovash; and Jennifer (Jason) Spitzner; along with her beloved grandchildren Jace, Maddux, Sydnie, Evan, Carl, and Rylie.



From Left: Jennifer (Kovash) Spitzner, Jason Spitzner, Deanna Kovash, Jeremy Kovash, Jordan O'Kane, Sarah (Hexum) O'Kane, Jennifer Moland-Kovash, Seth Moland-Kovash.

Her entire professional career was devoted to education and the students of Moorhead Public Schools, serving as a special education teacher, administrator, assistant superintendent, and ultimately superintendent from 2008 until her retirement in 2017, following her cancer diagnosis. She led with compassion, integrity, and an unwavering commitment to students and families.

A respected voice in educational leadership across Minnesota and the nation, Lynne served as President of the Minnesota Association of School Administrators in 2014 and received the Polaris Leadership Award in 2018 for her lifetime of achievement in education. She also served on many local, state, and national advisory committees, always advocating for excellence, opportunity, and innovation in schools. Dr. Lynne Kovash's legacy lives on through the students she championed, the educators she mentored, the community she strengthened, and the family she cherished.

This recognition serves not only as a celebration of her extraordinary career but also as a tribute to a life dedicated to making a difference for others every single day.

2-1-1: Your Community's Connection to Help.

211

Get Connected. Get Help.™



When residents face challenges like job loss or need senior support, 2-1-1 is a free, confidential service that provides 24/7 access to essential health and human services programs via phone, text, and online chat.

For schools, 2-1-1 streamlines access to your vital resources, making it easier for you to find the help you need.

By promoting 2-1-1, you empower your community with a single point of contact for food, housing, healthcare, employment, and more. Let's amplify this lifeline together.

UNITED WAY | 211 Get Connected. Get Help.™

Welcome

To the New Superintendents and Directors in Our Region



Paul Brownlow
Director
Freshwater Education District



Louisa Glenetske
Superintendent
Osakis Public School



Brad Johnson
Superintendent
Wadena-Deer Creek Public Schools



Eric Koep
Superintendent
West Central Area Schools



JJ Lamb
Superintendent
Brandon-Evansville Public Schools



Scott Lempka
Superintendent
Minnewaska Area Schools



Art Meyer
Superintendent
Rothsay Public School



Jordan Spaeth
Superintendent
Hawley Public Schools

2026 MSC Outstanding Service Award Recipient

The Minnesota Service Cooperatives
Agile • Local • Impactful

Phil Jensen

Phil Jensen joined the Lakes Country Service Cooperative (LCSC) board as an ex officio member in 2008 while serving as superintendent at Hawley Public Schools since 2005. He has been involved in LCSC's Administrator's Advisory Council and multiple committees for the Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA). In 2013, he was named Region 4 MASA Regional Administrator of Excellence.

As a self-motivated leader, Phil is viewed by his peers as a valuable resource, known for his innovative ideas and problem-solving skills. Outside of work, he enjoys fishing and attending school events.

His leadership has led to numerous successes at Hawley Public Schools, including passing referendum votes that improved facilities, finances, and test scores. He also mentors area administrators and initiated a regional fishing league for youth.

As a non-voting board member, Phil has provided valuable feedback and advocacy for his and other districts. LCSC appreciates his years of service and wishes him well in retirement.



From Left: Jeremy Kovash, Lakes Country Service Cooperative Executive Director; Phil Jensen, Retired Superintendent of Hawley Public Schools and Lakes Country Service Cooperative former ex-officio board member; Jon Karger, Lakes Country Service Cooperative Board Chair

CPC Cooperative Purchasing Connection

Cooperative Purchasing Connection offers a range of furniture vendors for government offices and nonprofits, providing solutions for various spaces, such as break rooms and libraries.

Key partners include:

- **Innovative Office Solutions:** Ideal for large and small projects with in-person support.
- **National Business Furniture:** A large vendor with a strong online presence for convenient shopping.
- **Demco:** Specializes in library interior design and furnishings.
- **Mackin:** Supplies high-quality materials for public libraries.

Explore all available vendors for contract pricing and services.

CPC VENDOR LIST





Beyond Exit Tickets: From Assessment to Agency

Helping students understand, monitor, and direct their own learning

Author: Erin Potter, COMPASS Statewide Data and Assessment Literacy Lead

Take a moment and reflect: What do you hope for your students? Jot down some thoughts. Common responses tend to be something like developing critical thinking skills, graduating as productive citizens, becoming lifelong learners, feeling loved, finding joy, building confidence, and developing strong communication skills.

Now, picture this. A quality teacher is at the front of the room lecturing on an interesting topic. Students are seated in rows and are engaged, taking notes. Pretty typical classroom scene, right? What kinds of skills are students gaining in this scenario? Do they match with what you hope for students? Often educators find that there is a mismatch between the learning environments we construct and the outcomes for which we truly hope.

I had a friend in college who was earning a 4.0. One day she had just finished taking a huge test she'd been studying for all weekend. I asked her what her test was about (business majors were full of intrigue for me). Her response shocked me and has stuck with me all this time. She said, "I don't really remember." She memorized the content, and when she no longer needed it to perform for her test… POOF! Gone. You see, she owned her grade, but did not yet own her learning.

We Shift.

There are three critical shifts that can help us get there:

1. Making learning explicit
2. Fostering learner autonomy
3. Focusing on learning, not just performance

We make learning explicit through clarity. John Hattie is famously known for his Visible Learning research, which synthesizes the findings from hundreds of meta-analyses examining the factors that influence student achievement. In their book, Clarity for Learning, Almarode & Vandas (2019) indicate that Hattie describes clarity as "communicating the learning intentions and success criteria for the learning intentions so that students can identify where they are going in their learning, how they are progressing, and where they will go next, thus providing students enough clarity to own their own learning." According to Visible Learning, teacher clarity has an effect size of 0.75, which is about 2x typical year's growth. Teacher clarity is not the most powerful of the factors found in Hattie's Visible Learning work, but it is foundational to many of the other factors that also positively impact student growth.

The next shift is fostering learner autonomy, which we can center around an incredibly impactful factor in the Visible Learning work: assessment-capable learners. With an average effect size (ES) of 1.33, assessment-capable learners understand what they are learning, how they are progressing in their learning, and can identify what they need to do next in order to continue their learning. In order to accomplish this, the role of the teacher needs to shift from being responsible for assessment of learning and delivery of content to designing experiences where students are able to increasingly assess, regulate, and advance their own learning. An ES of 1.33 is more than triple what we would expect in a single year, but the impact extends to the teachers as well. In the age of burnout, teachers are carrying enormous cognitive loads, and it can feel, and be, unsustainable. As a school psychologist, there have been innumerable times where I've been on the receiving end of a statement that goes something like, "I can't keep caring more about Adam's learning than he does." This shift grants teachers permission to release that load and put it where it belongs - on the shoulders of the learner. Check out **this video** with students describing their experiences with taking ownership of their learning through formative assessment.

WestEd developed a professional learning course called SAIL (Student Agency in Learning) to help educators use formative assessment to center student agency. Their course emphasizes the importance of eliciting and responding to evidence. This happens during learning to make learning visible and is used by the teacher and student together to decide how to move learning forward. Can you find all of the ways this teacher is eliciting evidence in her Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) class as they learn about **roller coaster physics**?

The final shift: focusing on learning rather than performance. Remember my college roommate who was motivated by grades? She is not alone. Motivational psychology has much to offer us as we think about how formative assessment can create classrooms where students are motivated to learn and not just perform. But motivation doesn't exist in isolation; it is shaped by classroom culture. Effective formative assessment only works if students are willing to make their thinking visible. They must feel safe enough to do so. Listen to **these students** describe how classroom culture matters. When classrooms value mistakes, students can start to see feedback, struggle, and revision as part of the learning process and not as threats to their performance.

If we want students to be lifelong learners, capable of critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration, we need to create classrooms where they have authentic opportunities to practice those skills. The COMPASS Data & Assessment Literacy (DAL) team has opportunities to help Lakes Country school districts move forward in this work through two professional learning series: Student Agency in Learning by WestEd and Leadership for Effective Formative Assessment.

These offerings can be brought to the Lakes Country Region in-person, if there is sufficient interest. Read more about these opportunities in the **COMPASS Catalog**, and if interested, please complete this **interest survey**, and one of the DAL members will be in touch!



The Fall Knowledge Bowl Coaches Meeting will be held on Friday, September 18 at noon at Lakes Country Service Cooperative. This meeting kicks off the Knowledge Bowl season and gives coaches an opportunity to connect and network with fellow coaches.

Coaches will receive important season updates, schedule information, competition details, and resources to help prepare their teams for the upcoming season. It's a great opportunity to ask questions, share ideas, and get ready for another exciting year of Knowledge Bowl!

STEM Day

Brings Hands-On Learning to the West Otter Tail County Fair

By: Monica Thompson, Lakes Country Service CooperativeCoordinator of Technology Integration and Academic Challenges

Despite hot temperatures and sticky humidity, families, along with several local day camps and daycare groups, turned out on July 17, 2026, for Science, Technology. Engineering and Math (STEM) Day at the West Otter Tail County Fair in Fergus Falls. Curiosity and creativity were on full display throughout the day.

STEM Day provides children and families with opportunities to explore science, technology, engineering, and math through hands-on activities led by community organizations dedicated to making learning fun. Visitors learned about caring for the environment through interactive activities with Otter Tail County Recycling, where children watched recycled plastic chips transformed into molded plastic shapes and discovered how everyday materials can be given a second life. Otter Cove Children's Museum encouraged young learners to explore, create, and imagine through hands-on play. The University of Minnesota CREST STEM team welcomed visitors into their STEM trailer, filled with artifacts, rocks, microscopes, and engaging science activities that inspired problem-solving and critical thinking.

The Ham Radio Club introduced fairgoers to the fascinating world of amateur radio, giving many their first opportunity to see how people can communicate across great distances using radio technology. Home Depot helped young builders assemble woodworking kits, while Fleet Farm led a hands-on project that taught children about weight distribution and balance. There was something to spark every child's interest.

Although the weather was hot and humid, the enthusiasm of the volunteers, presenters, and families never slowed. Laughter, teamwork, and plenty of "aha!" moments filled the fairgrounds as children eagerly experimented, asked questions, built projects, and discovered something new.





STEM Day continues to highlight the importance of hands-on learning and the incredible community partners who make these experiences possible. A sincere thank you goes to all of the organizations and volunteers who shared their time and expertise to inspire the next generation of scientists, engineers, builders, and innovators. Their dedication helped make STEM Day a memorable success at the county fair.

Through partnerships like the Minnesota STEM Ecosystem and Lakes Country Service Cooperative, STEM Day provides engaging learning experiences that inspire curiosity, encourage exploration, and help students discover future opportunities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Together with our community partners, we are building the next generation of innovators, problem-solvers, and lifelong learners.







Red Rock Central Teacher
Clayton Hubert

Brings STEAM Art Lessons to China

By: Clayton Hubert

If someone had told me a year ago that I would spend part of my summer teaching in China, I probably would have laughed.

Yet this summer I found myself standing in front of a classroom in Shandong Province, introducing myself to 39 students, many who do not speak English, while several Chinese educators watched from the back of the room. At one point I was even told that top education officials from China had stopped in to observe my lesson. It was one of those moments where you just have to smile and think, "How in the world did a guy from Lamberton end up here?"

It all started months earlier when I was selected as one of only five educators from across the United States to participate in the AESA Global Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math (STEAM) Project-Based Learning Program, an experience made possible through the SWWC Service Cooperative [and Lakes Country Service Cooperative through our partnership with AESA].

It was an incredible honor, but I don't think it really hit me until the plane landed. The first thing that struck me wasn't the size of the cities or the incredible food. It was the people. The hosts, other American teachers, and students were amazing.

The other four American teachers were some of the most talented educators I've ever had the chance to work with. We were introduced to Chinese teachers and students as education experts, which was humbling enough, but then one student, at the opening ceremony, welcomed us by calling us "very wise and cute." That became a running joke for the rest of the trip. The first week of the experience was spent together with the other American educators, learning from one another and sharing ideas before we each traveled to different locations for the second week. I was fortunate to teach in three different cities across Shandong Province. In two of those cities, I continued the experience on my own with the help of amazing hosts who welcomed me, helped translate, and made the whole experience possible.

My lesson was an automata project where students built small moving sculptures out of cardboard, dowels, and wire. The project was about making a sculpture that moved, but it was really about much more than that. It was about learning to solve problems when things didn't work the first time. That's something I tell my own students all the time: the learning begins when things get challenging.

The amazing part was realizing that students in China weren't much different than students at Red Rock Central. There may have been a language barrier, but they got excited when something finally worked. They helped each other. They laughed when something fell apart. They wanted to figure things out. Just like my students back home.

One of my favorite memories started with a joke from home. My students at Red Rock Central always say, "Mr. Hubert, what are you doing here?" whenever they run into me outside of school. I taught my Chinese students to say it too.







Pretty soon I'd hear it across the classroom. "Mr. Hubert... what are you doing here?" Standing in China hearing that familiar phrase was one of the most surreal moments of my life.
What surprised me even more was how interested everyone was in what life is like in Lamberton. Many of the students and teachers came from cities with 8 million people or more. They couldn't imagine living in a town of about 800. They wanted to know what our school was like, what our community was like, and whether everyone really knew everyone else. I realized I wasn't just teaching about art. I was representing Red Rock Central, Lamberton, and a small-town Minnesota way of life.

There were plenty of unforgettable moments along the way. Students from Russia joined one of my classes for the day. A typhoon canceled school for two days; China's version of a Minnesota snow day. Students gave me thoughtful gifts before I left, and one even asked if he could come home in my suitcase. Everywhere we went, our hosts treated us with unbelievable kindness and care.

When people ask me what my favorite part of the trip was, I honestly can't pick just one. It was the students. It was the friendships with the other teachers and the way the hosts made us feel at home. It was realizing that a classroom feels a lot like a classroom no matter where you are in the world.

Most of all, the experience reminded me that while Lamberton may seem like a small dot on the map, it has a story worth sharing. I went to China hoping to share a lesson about art, creativity, and the positives of perseverance. I came home realizing I had also shared a little piece of home. I got to share the way we believe students learn best: through curiosity, hands-on discovery, and the opportunity to solve problems for themselves. I also shared what makes a small-town community special and formed friendships that crossed cultures and continents. It was an experience of a lifetime.



Science and Nature Conference to Inspire Young Explorers

By: Monica Thompson, Lakes Country Service CooperativeCoordinator of Technology Integration and Academic Challenges

Students in grades 4–5 will have the opportunity to discover the wonders of science and nature at the first-ever Science and Nature Conference, taking place on Friday, September 25, at the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center.

Hosted by Lakes Country Service Cooperative (LCSC) and the Minnesota Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Ecosystem, this conference is designed to spark curiosity through hands-on learning experiences that connect students with science, technology, engineering, and the natural world.

Throughout the day, students will rotate through interactive breakout sessions led by experts from the Science Museum of Minnesota, the University of Minnesota CREST STEM Program, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and other community partners. Each session will provide engaging, age-appropriate activities that encourage students to explore, ask questions, solve problems, and discover how science and nature shape the world around them.

Teachers will accompany their students throughout the day while presenters guide each activity, creating an exciting and supportive learning environment for everyone involved.

The conference is free to attend, but space is limited to 240 students, and registration will be available on a first-come, first-served basis. Schools interested in attending are encouraged to register early when registration opens on August 17 at lcsc.org.

The Science and Nature Conference is a new opportunity for students to learn from scientists, educators, and environmental professionals while experiencing science beyond the classroom. Organizers hope the event will inspire a lifelong appreciation for discovery, exploration, and the natural world.

For more information and to register beginning August 17th, visit www.lcsc.org .



2026/27 Rural Education Policy Fellowship Cohort Kick Off

Source:Troy Haugen, Director of Career & College Readiness
Author: Mary Phillipe, LCSC Communications Coordinator

On Friday, August 7, 2026, past and current members of the Education Policy Fellowship (EPF) gathered at Lakes Country Service Cooperative (LCSC) for their annual one-day summer residency.
The energizing session was led by Troy Haugen, LCSC's Director of Career and College Readiness, with support from Siri Livdahl, Program Coordinator of Admissions and Advising.

This year's residency officially launched a yearlong learning and action strand centered on a compelling topic: Youth Agency in Action. Throughout the day, fellows wrestled with a core question that challenges traditional educational frameworks:

- *What changes when young people help define the problem, not just respond to adult-designed solutions?*

Rather than treating student input as a box to check, participants explored how rural schools, communities, and public systems can move beyond simply collecting data about young people.

The focus shifted toward true collaboration—partnering with youth to interpret data, co-design solutions, and actively improve local systems.

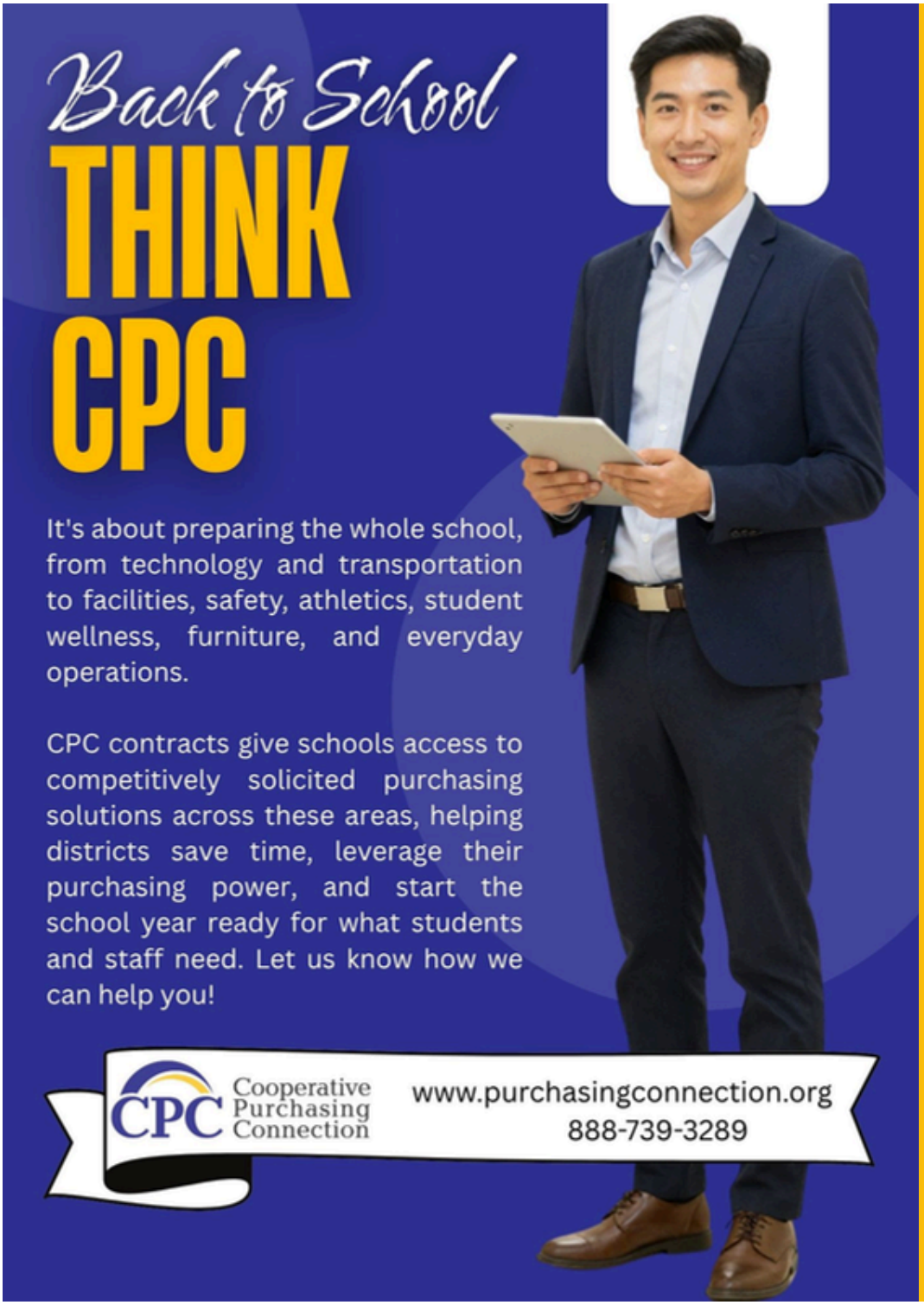
The goal of this initiative isn't to build another isolated project. Instead, it aims to:

- Connect the impactful work already taking place across our region.
- Identify practical, actionable pilot opportunities.
- Clarify how Minnesota EPF alumni can leverage their leadership to advance meaningful youth-adult partnerships.

It was a powerful discussion and connection, setting a visionary tone for the year ahead as our regional educators continue to lead the way in empowering the next generation.



Panel Discussion: From Youth Voice to Public Leadership
From Left: Matt Shaver, moderator; Representative Bianca Virning (52B); Celeste Koppe, Roots & Reach, LLC; Kristin Dehmer, Moorhead Public Schools



CPC Cooperative Purchasing Connection

The New Catalog is Here!

The CPC Contract Catalog contains roughly 75+ vendors listing contract numbers, contacts, and member discounts, making it easy for schools, cities, counties, and nonprofits to purchase from awarded contracts without starting a procurement process from scratch.





Career and Technical Education Educators Build Skills and Connections at DELTA and Instructional Excellence Institute



Author: Troy Haugen, Director of Career & College Readiness

Early-career and technical education teachers from across Minnesota gathered in St. Cloud in mid-August for two professional learning experiences designed to strengthen classroom instruction and support educators entering Career and Technical Education (CTE) through nontraditional pathways.

The four-day DELTA Conference held August 10–13, brought together 47 educators for focused learning, collaboration, and reflection. The CTE Instructional Excellence Institute (IEI) held August 11–12, engaged an additional 16 educators in practical strategies for bringing inquiry-based learning into CTE classrooms.

Both events were coordinated by Lakes Country Service Cooperative (LCSC) through CTE Teacher Induction Program (TIP), with support from Minnesota State. The work reflects LCSC's broader commitment to helping teachers translate their industry knowledge and experience into effective classroom practice.

Supporting Early-Career CTE Teachers Through DELTA

DELTA was developed specifically for early-career CTE teachers, including educators holding Tier 1 or Tier 2 licenses and those completing their first teacher preparation program. Many participants entered education after successful careers in business and industry, bringing valuable technical expertise while continuing to develop the instructional skills needed to lead a classroom.

Throughout the conference, participants explored evidence-based practices related to student engagement, classroom management, assessment, cultural competency, equity, program management, and teacher well-being. Sessions provided educators with practical tools they could use immediately, while also creating space to examine their own teaching, learn from colleagues, and build professional connections.

Facilitators Dr. Zane Sheehan and Ethan Dado helped participants connect instructional practices to the realities of CTE classrooms, where teachers must balance technical skill development, student safety, hands-on learning, employability skills, and the day-to-day responsibilities of managing a CTE program.

One participant described the experience this way: *"The majority of this conference was all brand new information to me. This was an incredibly valuable experience, and I would recommend it to anyone."*

Another emphasized the importance of having dedicated time to put the learning into practice: *"The most valuable part was having the time to develop lesson plans and class content I can use in my class in the future. The peer reviews were helpful as well."*

The four-day format allowed participants to move beyond one-time training and spend meaningful time applying new ideas, discussing common challenges, developing lessons, and preparing strategies they can bring into the coming school year.



Moving From Answers to Inquiry

The CTE Instructional Excellence Institute (IEI), led by Dr. Laura Hasselquist, focused on helping CTE teachers design learning experiences that encourage students to ask questions, investigate authentic problems, think critically, and apply technical knowledge in real-world settings.

Participants worked with inquiry-based instructional strategies, lesson and laboratory resources, literacy integration practices, and approaches for connecting classroom content to industry-relevant challenges. The emphasis was not simply on adding another activity to a course. Teachers examined how inquiry can shift students from following directions toward making decisions, explaining their reasoning, testing solutions, and learning from the results.

One participant captured the value of the experience for established CTE educators:
"IEI was exactly what an established CTE teacher needs. We already have the fundamentals, and this learning opportunity allowed us to dive deeper into our strengths and let them work for our students. We also had time to strengthen the skills that challenge us in a safe space with other educators who want to strengthen our future workforce. I am grateful I got to be part of this event, and I am still collaborating with the network of CTE teacher friends I made that week!"

Because CTE classrooms naturally combine academic knowledge, technical skills, and hands-on application, inquiry-based learning offers a strong fit. It can help students understand not only how to complete a task, but why a process works and how they might adapt it when conditions change.

Building a Stronger CTE Teacher Workforce

Together, DELTA and the CTE Instructional Excellence Institute addressed an important need within Minnesota's CTE system. As professionals move from industry into education, they need access to relevant preparation, experienced facilitators, and peers who understand both the opportunities and challenges of teaching technical content.

For many DELTA participants, that combination of practical learning and connection with other CTE educators was especially valuable.
"I was so happy to be in the company of wonderful CTE educators who are facing the same challenges that I am, and to have the time and space to work through them was priceless."

Participants left St. Cloud with new instructional strategies, classroom resources, professional relationships, and a clearer sense of how they want students to experience learning in their programs.

As another DELTA participant reflected, the experience *"made me a better educator, a more confident teacher, and has me excited to implement my learning into the upcoming school year."*

By investing in the educators who lead CTE programs, LCSC and its partners are also investing in the students, schools, communities, and industries those programs serve.



Celebrating the teachers who give their all.
Teachers do more than teach. They inspire, encourage, challenge and make a difference that lasts far beyond the classroom. That's why Innovative and the St. Paul Saints are teaming up to celebrate the teachers who go ALL IN for their students, their schools and their communities.

Trauma Informed Care, Restraint Free Approach - Ukeru Systems®



Ukeru Training Supports Region IV Schools

Author: Mandy Almquist, Special Education Assistant

Lakes Country Service Cooperative hosted Ukeru training this August for schools throughout our Region IV area. The training provided an opportunity for school staff to strengthen their skills in trauma-informed behavioral intervention and crisis prevention. As part of the training, nine new Ukeru trainers received their certification, while twenty-six existing trainers completed their recertification, allowing them to return to their respective districts and provide Ukeru training to their staff.

Rooted in principles like trauma-informed care, conflict resolution, and physical techniques, Ukeru reduces the need for restraint and seclusion. It encourages a new perspective on behavioral intervention, guiding staff to understand the reasons behind behaviors and respond with effective, supportive interventions.

Through Ukeru training, educators and support staff gain strategies to recognize the needs behind challenging behaviors and provide safe alternatives to restraint. By equipping trainers to bring this knowledge back to their districts, Lakes Country Service Cooperative is helping Region IV schools build safer, more supportive environments for both students and staff.

The Growing Impact

of Lakes Country Academy

Author: Angela Doll, LCSC Special Education Director



In early 2017, Lakes Country Service Cooperative (LCSC) leadership and member district Special Education Directors and Superintendents entered into agreements to start a separate-site special education program for regional school districts, providing more options to serve students in special education with a high need for a "different" educational placement. Rather than spend large amounts of district resources to staff and program for a special education separate site program in each of their individual districts, Region IV Special Education Directors and Superintendents met with LCSC leadership to create a regional program for students in special education needing an intensive, highly individualized, and separate site program which meets requirements as a federal setting program. Lakes Country Academy (LCA) was conceptualized from this, with early efforts located in Moorhead, Fergus Falls, and Alexandria. The need for more district space in early 2019 led to the closure of the Moorhead site, but the Alexandria and Fergus Falls sites have been operating since the program's early implementation.

This winter, LCA will again open a site in Moorhead to serve students referred from the western side of the Region, reducing transportation time (and costs) for school districts in that part of the Region.

LCA is a member-referral-based special education program that can serve students in grades K-12 in Region 4. Students are referred to LCA by their districts through their Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams, but because of the highly restrictive setting and specialized programming characteristics (and the high cost associated with that restriction and specialization), each referral must be approved by the district's Special Education Director. IEP teams typically must demonstrate that all other least restrictive settings and programming options within and around their home district have not had a positive impact on the student's progress toward IEP goals and objectives.



While a student is enrolled at LCA, their school day is reduced to 5 hours long and typically begins at 9:30 am. This late start serves a few purposes. LCA shares staffing between its sites, and staff travel time must be planned for. In addition, transportation from a student's school district can often take an hour or more, and districts usually aren't able to provide transportation until after most of their buildings have already started. Dismissal is typically by 2:30 pm, though LCA is flexible if a student needs a shorter day. This end-of-day time is again due to traveling LCA staff and district transportation scheduling needs.

Instruction at LCA focuses on skills that the referring IEP team identified as barriers to success in their home school district. Some of these barriers can include extreme behavioral outbursts (physical and sometimes verbal), repeated inability to stay in their classroom area, frequent intolerance of academic environments, and difficulty regulating their nervous systems to the point that their home school environment has run out of its interventions.

Students who successfully complete the LCA program are those who can apply the skills they have learned while in LCA programming and demonstrate that growth by doing well in LCA. Most students begin a gradual transition back to their school districts once their skills have been demonstrated well, but some students might end their school year with LCA and start the next school year back at their home school district. Since all students are approached with individuality in mind, both the time at LCA and the transition back to their school district might look different for each student. In addition, the students' IEP teams in their home district are kept in the loop so that district teams are aware of the students' progress.

Since LCA began in 2017, we have served many students each year. The following is a breakdown of how many students attended the LCA program each year (this does include students who repeated more than one year).

2017-2018 16 Students
2018-2019 22 Students
2019-2020 35 Students
2020-2021 35 Students
2021-2022 36 Students
2022-2023 40 Students
2023-2024 32 Students
2024-2025 35 Students
2025-2026 43 Students
Total Students Served: 294

Districts Served: 25 Total
Alexandria, Barnesville, Battle Lake, Bertha-Hewitt, Brandon-Evansville, Breckenridge, Browerville, Detroit Lakes, DGF, Fergus Falls, Frazee, Hawley, Henning, LPA, Minnewaska, Moorhead, Onamia, Osakis, Parkers Prairie, Pelican Rapids, Perham, Rothsay, Sauk Centre, Underwood, West Central Area



Therapy Dog Kilo Visits Students at LCA Alexandria Site



LCA expects to start the 2026-2027 school year with about 45 students, which is a new record for number of students served in a school year. We are thankful for the trust our school districts put into the LCA program; from these numbers, it is a needed program for students in our region.

With new opportunities on the horizon—including the reopening of the Moorhead site—LCA continues to build brighter futures for Region 4 students, one success story at a time. To learn more about Lakes Country Academy's referral process and specialized programming, contact LCSC's Special Education Director, Angela Doll or visit the LCA website.

ROOTS

GROWING LEADERS
STRENGTHENING SYSTEMS
TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES

Author: Tamara Uselman, LCSC Associate Director of Collaborative Programs

More than two dozen people from across the region participated in the first three days of the Rural Outcomes via Organizational & Transformational Systems leadership (ROOTS) Professional Development series held in August at West Central Initiative in Fergus Falls.

ROOTS professional development was facilitated by a team from the Science Museum of Minnesota.

Throughout the three days, participants engaged with colleagues to develop even stronger skills and strategies to foster respectful civil dialogue.

Through shared learning, continuous practice, and conversation, participants explored systems thinking, forces at work in complex systems, development of high-functioning teams, and more.

The ROOTS professional development series is spread across the 2026 -2027 year, culminating in January 2027.

While the 2026-2027 cohort is currently full, there may be an opportunity for another cohort in the future if there is sufficient interest in participating in ROOTS.



LCSC COMMUNICATOR

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
An equal opportunity employer

CONTACT US
Executive Director: Jeremy Kovash
Phone: (218) 739-3273
Email: communicator@lcsc.org

Follow Us For More

The LCSC Communicator is a publication of Lakes Country Service Cooperative.

Views and ideas expressed in the LCSC Communicator by its contributors or advertisers do not necessarily reflect views or policies of Lakes Country Service Cooperative and should not be considered an endorsement thereof.

Lakes Country Service Cooperative retains the right to accept, reject or edit any submitted material and requires all submissions to be signed and dated.



2026 LCSC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chair	Jon Karger	Board Member - Pelican Rapids Public Schools
Vice Chair	Suzanne Wing	Board Member - Ashby Public Schools
Clerk	Paul Ness	Board Member - Battle Lake Public Schools
Treasurer	Marc Hasbargen	Board Member - Breckenridge Public Schools
Director	David Meyer	Board Member - Becker County
Director	Maureen Eigen	Board Member - Alexandria Public Schools
Director	Kevin Campbell	Board Member - Clay County
Director	Kurt Mortenson	Board Member - Otter Tail County
Director	Judith Moeller	Board Member - Parkers Prairie Public Schools
Director	Scott Steffes	Board Member - Moorhead Public Schools
Director	Melissa Burgard	Board Member - Moorhead Public Schools
Ex-Officio	Supt. Phil Jensen	Hawley Public Schools
Ex-Officio	Todd Travis	Midwest Special Education Cooperative

CONNECT WITH PROGRAMS & SERVICES AT LCSC!

- Communications & Professional Development
- Cooperative Purchasing
- Education
- Finance
- Health & Safety
- Insurance & Wellness
- Lakes Country Academy
- Special Education
- Information Technology