Southeast Service Cooperative

Connections

October 2026

Project Momentum Course Opportunity P3



Communications Support P4



Pitch Contest Returns P12





Partners in Progress



McGrath Training Solutions

NOVEMBER 3, 2026, from 9am-4pm

$495 per participant
(includes lunch)

Register at https://bit.ly/4sa5kkG

Use promo code **SESC2026!** to receive a 20% discount!



Document, Discipline, Dismiss Course

Easy-to-use tools and communication framework for the safest ways to minimize risk when disciplining and/or terminating employees

Participants will learn:

- how to address employee performance issues with legally fit and educationally sound documentation.
- skills needed to effectively deal with difficult performance-related issues.
- tools for consistent compliance with due process and just cause standards.
- how to distinguish between management rights and employee rights.
- ways to effectively communicate verbally and in writing.

"This has been one of the most informative and purposeful trainings I have attended as a School Administrator. The subject matter and the content is very useful and relative to the day to day work in education." -- JD Johnson

"Outstanding course, and certainly worth the investment. Would highly recommend this course to all managers and HR professionals. Very organized, easy to follow, reference guide provided, and the facilitator was top notch!" -- Laura McDonald

"Every administrator needs this training. It provides a very clear template to support administrators for common difficult conversations and the necessary documentation that follows." -- Chris Jensen

Southeast Service Cooperative

Wood Lake Meeting Center
210 Woodlake Drive SE, Rochester

Professional Learning ... *Customized for you*



Christine Gregory
Artificial Intelligence, Data Analysis, Data Visualization, Curriculum Development



Dustin Dean, PMHNP-BC
Mental Health, Brain Fitness, Educator Resiliency and Morale, De-Escalation, Wellness Retreats



Nicole LaChapelle-Strumski
Worksite Wellness, Stress Reduction, Employee Health Promotion



Cheryl Wendt, EdD, LSW
Mental Health First Aid, Suicide Prevention, Trauma and Resilience, Digital Wellbeing



Angie Ellsworth, MS, LSW, LSC
Behavior Management, Mental Health, Cultural Competency, Coaching, Crisis Prevention, Trauma-Informed Practices

Call Christi

Christi Fosland
507-281-6684
cfosland@ssc.coop

SSC's trusted faculty consultants and presenters travel to the location of your choice to facilitate professional development designed to meet your specific needs. SSC takes care of all the logistical details so that you can focus on the learning!

PROJECT MOMENTUM | MICRO-CREDENTIAL | 7-Course Series

Multilingual Learners with Disabilities

Understanding the intersection. Supporting the whole learner.

The new **Project Momentum Multilingual Learners with Disabilities Courses and Micro-Credential** provide educators with knowledge, tools, and strategies to support multilingual learners with suspected or identified disabilities through culturally and linguistically responsive decision-making, evaluation, and instruction.

WHY THIS TRAINING MATTERS

✓ Helps reduce disproportionate referral and identification rates for multilingual learners.
✓ Builds shared understanding across ELD, general education, and special education teams.
✓ Strengthens compliance with IDEA, ESSA, and civil rights requirements for multilingual learners with disabilities.
✓ Improves coordination of instruction, services, and supports across departments.
✓ Equips leaders to identify and address systemic barriers affecting multilingual learners.

DISTRICT BENEFITS

✓ Cohort-based enrollment options for whole teams or departments.
✓ Helps build internal capacity and consistent, district-wide practices.
✓ Encourages cross-department collaboration and breaks down organizational silos.
✓ Flexible, self-paced online format minimizes disruption to staff schedules.
✓ Teachers can earn continuing education hours and optional micro-credential that recognizes demonstrated competency

Courses 1–3 are now available. Courses 1 and 2 are free with registration, and additional courses will be released throughout fall 2026.
Complete individual courses or the full micro-credential.
Practical application activities in every course.
Flexible learning | Self-paced | Online

LEARN MORE
www.projectmomentum.org



PROJECT MOMENTUM

SSCProjectMOMENTUM www.projectmomentum.org sscprojectmomentum

Do You Need Another Communications Employee — or Just the Right Communications Support?

Schools are expected to communicate more than ever, but most are not adding communications staff at the same pace.

That is where **Creative Media Solutions from SSC** can provide added support.

Creative Media Solutions focuses on professional video and photography services that schools can use to strengthen their branding, social media, communications, and referendum messaging.

Rather than committing to another salary, benefits package, and permanent position, schools can bring in professional visual support when they need it. That might mean producing a recruitment video, capturing updated photography, documenting an event, developing visual content for social media, or creating video and photography assets to support referendum communications.

Why professional video and photography can be worth the investment

For schools, communications work can sometimes be difficult to justify because the return on investment is not always immediate or easy to measure. A video does not come with a guaranteed enrollment number. Updated photography does not instantly solve a staffing shortage.

But strong visual communication can support many of the outcomes schools already care about.

Professional video and photography can help districts tell their story more clearly, show prospective families and employees what makes their schools distinctive, and create stronger content for websites, social media, presentations, recruitment efforts, and community communications.

For referendum and levy messaging, clear and professional visual content can also help schools explain needs, highlight facilities and programs, and provide community members with a more complete picture of what is being proposed.

Protecting staff time has value too

There is also a hidden cost when video and photography work is simply added to someone else's job.

A superintendent trying to film and edit a recruitment video, a principal taking photos during an event, or a staff member trying to create visual content for social media



may all be getting the task done, but that does not mean it is the most efficient use of their time.

Using Creative Media Solutions allows schools to bring in professional video and photography support while keeping internal staff focused on the responsibilities only they can do.

That can be especially valuable for smaller districts that may never need a full-time communications employee but still need professional visual content throughout the year.

Support that can scale with the need

Creative Media Solutions is designed to be flexible. Schools can use the service for a single project or for multiple video and photography needs throughout the year.

Supporting the communications work schools are already doing

Most schools are not deciding between "great communications" and "no communications." They are deciding how much staff time they can spare, what work they can handle internally, and where professional support would improve the final product.

Learn more about Creative Media Solutions and how SSC can support your next video or photography project.

For questions or to discuss a project, contact Katie Hendrickson, Creative Media Solutions Coordinator, at (507) 281-6687 or khendrickson@ssc.coop.

Southeast Service Cooperative

CREATIVE MEDIA SOLUTIONS

PROFESSIONAL CREATIVE SUPPORT. POWERFUL RESULTS.

Professional creative support without adding staff.



Creative Media Solutions helps schools and public organizations create professional videos and digital photography that help to engage your audience and tell your story.

One trusted SSC partner.
Added capacity. Greater impact.

HOW WE CAN HELP

VIDEO

Video production
Interviews
Facility tours
Instructional videos
Testimonials
CEO messaging

AN EXTENSION OF YOUR TEAM

CMS provides professional expertise and added capacity without requiring another staff position.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Event coverage
Storytelling
Drone photography
Product photography
Leadership portraits
Workplace settings

HAVE A PROJECT IN MIND? LET'S TALK.

We'll listen to your goals and recommend a customized plan that fits your needs and budget.

CREATIVE MEDIA SOLUTIONS



CONTACT SSC

Katie Hendrickson
507-281-6687
khendrickson@ssc.coop
www.ssc.coop/cms

Serving schools, government agencies and public-serving organizations across Southeast Minnesota and beyond.

Welcome to SSC!



Eric Christians

Career-Connected Learning and STEM Coordinator

Technology has been at the forefront of Eric's life and it has led to a rather unique career path. Eric earned his AAS degree in TV Production from Riverland Community College in Austin, Minnesota, and applied his skills to both the News and Production Departments at KAAL-TV and later KTTC-TV/FOX 47. His passion for technology led to utilizing early non-linear editing with computers for station promotions and local business commercials and incorporating technology into morning and evening newscasts. During his tenure in television, Eric was bitten with the "teaching bug" while being a den leader of his son's Cub Scout den. He enrolled at Winona State University - Rochester and earned his bachelor's degree in elementary education. Utilizing his passion for technology, Eric became a technology specialist teacher at Triton Elementary. It was there that he revamped the K-5th grade technology curriculum by adding STEAM activities, coding, robotics and Google apps lesson plans for upper elementary. Eric also developed a technology scope and sequence for K-5th grade, led professional development for colleagues for various education apps and supervised device deployment during Covid. Eric parlayed his technology and education expertise into the Austin Public Library with expanding the Digital Navigator program, leading tech classes for both students and adults and introducing an after-school coding club. Eric and his wife live in Kasson and enjoy getting together with friends, visiting with family, and going on mini-adventures throughout Minnesota. Eric also enjoys spending time hunting, fishing and embarking on railroading expeditions with his son, Ethan.



Lane Dowell

Career-Connected Learning Specialist

Lane is passionate about helping students, educators, employers, and communities build meaningful connections that strengthen both individual career pathways and the regional workforce. His career has uniquely spanned education, business, strategic marketing, communications, business development, and workforce development, giving him the opportunity to view career-connected learning from multiple perspectives. Lane began his professional career as a music educator and band director, spending 22 years teaching, coaching, mentoring, and building relationships with students, families, and communities. Following his career in education, he spent nearly a decade with Harmony Enterprises leading strategic marketing, communications, branding, business development, and employer engagement initiatives that connected manufacturers, schools, workforce organizations, and community partners throughout the region. Throughout his career, Lane has remained actively involved in workforce development through regional partnerships, serving in leadership roles with the Workforce Development Board and the FORGE Advisory Committee. Those experiences reinforced his belief that the strongest communities are built when education and industry work together to create clear, meaningful pathways for students. As a Career-Connected Learning Specialist, Lane enjoys bringing together schools, employers, postsecondary institutions, and workforce partners to create experiences that help students discover careers, develop workplace skills, and prepare for successful futures. Outside of work, Lane enjoys spending time with his wife, Jessie, and their two dogs, Ricky and Rex. He also enjoys golf, woodworking, painting, traveling, and cheering on the Iowa Hawkeyes.

Minnesota Kids Rise: Help Tell the Story of Minnesota's Public Schools

Minnesota Kids Rise (MKR) is a new statewide initiative bringing together education organizations, businesses, parents, and community leaders around a shared belief: strong public schools are essential to Minnesota's future. The campaign aims to broaden the conversation about public education by highlighting the relationships, opportunities, innovation, and achievement happening in schools every day.

Every teacher, principal, staff member, parent, graduate, and community member has a public school story. Here's how you can help share them:

- **Learn more** at minnesotakidsrise.org and sign up for the toolkit.
- **Follow MKR** on Facebook, Instagram, X, Threads, and YouTube, and share its content.
- **Watch and share the launch video** with your friends, family, and colleagues.

Steve Sallee Joins AESA Executive Council



SSC Executive Director Steve Sallee has been approved to serve a four-year term on the Executive Council of the Association of Educational Service Agencies (AESA).

AESA works on behalf of regional educational service agencies across the country, and Steve's service on the Council will give SSC and our member schools a voice at the national level.

AESA strengthens regional educational service agencies nationwide by advocating for impactful policies, providing professional development, and fostering collaboration through networks and research. Learn more **here**.

Welcome to Our New Members!

We are proud to welcome the following organizations as SSC Members:

Bethlehem Academy
City of Chatfield
City of Lanesboro
City of Lonsdale
City of Pine Island
City of Whalan
Dodge County Soil and Water Conservation District
Wabasha County Soil and Water Conservation District

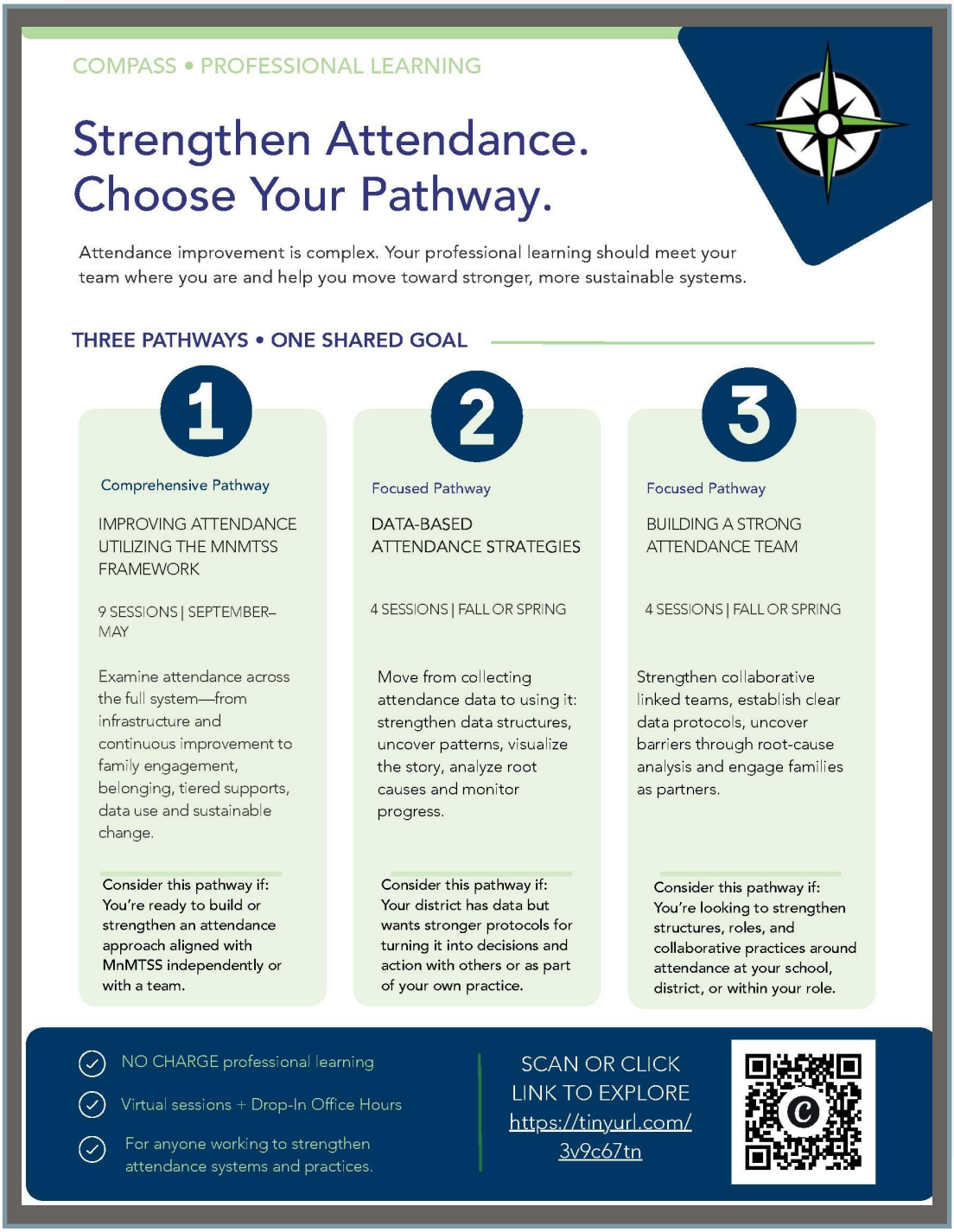
Southeast Service Cooperative

No-Cost, Virtual Attendance Pathways Available

Strengthen your school or district's attendance efforts with COMPASS Professional Learning.

Three no-cost, virtual Attendance Pathways are available for the 2026–27 school year, including a comprehensive MnMTSS-aligned pathway and focused four-session options on data-based attendance strategies and building strong attendance teams.

Can't attend yourself? Consider sending a counselor, social worker, liaison, attendance staff member, teacher leader, or anyone who supports attendance efforts.



COMPASS
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Choose the pathway that meets your team where you are and build capacity for stronger, more sustainable attendance practices.

Meet Kayla: Equitable Access Specialist – Special Education

Hi! I'm Kayla Blomme, the Equitable Access Specialist – Special Education with COMPASS. In this role, I support schools and districts in strengthening access to high-quality Tier 1 instruction for students with disabilities. My work focuses on inclusive practices, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), data-informed decision-making, and creating systems where all learners are considered from the start.



Email: Kayla.Blomme@swwc.org

Phone: 507-706-3233

COMPASS Pathways Upcoming!

This year, COMPASS is offering opportunities to engage in our UDL Pathway and Data Pathway. These pathways provide opportunities to dig deeper into practices, tools, and systems that support more inclusive and responsive instruction.

Pathway registration and upcoming dates:

Registration link for Universal Design for Learning

UDL Sessions
Wednesdays | 8:30–10:00 a.m.

Fall 2026
Oct 7 | Nov 4 | Dec 2

Winter 2027
Jan 6 | Feb 3 | Mar 3

Registration link for Data Informed Approach

Data Sessions
Wednesdays | 8:30–10:00 a.m.

Winter 2027
Jan 27 | Feb 24

Spring 2027
Mar 24 | April 28

I'm excited to connect with educators and leaders throughout our cooperative! If you're wondering, *"Who is missing from instruction right now—and why?"*, I'd love to partner with you in exploring that question.

MindMaxED Institute is a program built for developing communities of leaders working towards joy optimization and maximized mental wellness outcomes.

MINDMAXED
A HEALTHY PLACE TO GROW YOUR MIND

TRAIN YOUR BRAIN
Science-backed courses to build mental strength.

AI GUIDANCE
Meet Dean of Zen AI, your personal mindset mentor.

EXPERT COACHING
Work with Dustin and Rashida to break through and grow.

LEARN MORE AT WWW.MINDMAXED.COM
Interested in trying a course at a reduced rate for staff or students?
Contact dustin@mindmaxed.com

We'd like to remind you of our partnership with TalkPath Live, which offers a variety of services for students, including:

- Speech therapy
- Occupational and physical therapy
- DAPE
- Behavioral and mental health counseling
- LCSW services
- Psychoeducational assessments
- Assistive technology
- Early intervention services
- Preschool RTI services

Click here to learn more.



SE Minnesota School Crisis Response Team - Help is Available

The SE Minnesota School Crisis Response Team is a group of specially trained professionals that are ready to assist districts and schools when they experience an event such as a student or staff death. The team recognizes that each district has a crisis emergency plan in place. The school crisis response team functions in a different capacity, as they are unattached to the district and do not have strong emotional ties to the students or staff. There are currently 27 professionals (school social workers, counselors,) who serve on the team.

Southeast Minnesota School Crisis Response Team
Proudly Coordinated by Southeast Service Cooperative

View this brief video to learn more.

Contact Nicole LaChapelle-Strumski to learn more or in the event of a crisis at your district.

Mental Health Community of Practice

Southeast Service Cooperative



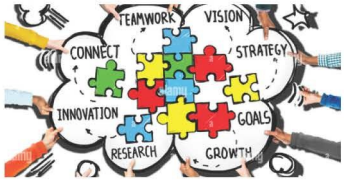
Our Purpose

We are excited to once again offer an opportunity to virtually gather as job-alike professionals in southeast MN schools to collaborate, share information, improve our skills, advocate for our needs, and celebrate our work!

Remaining Dates for the School Year

Thursday, January 14, 2:00 - 3:00 PM
Thursday, March 18, 2:00 - 3:00 PM

Questions?
Contact
Nicole LaChapelle-Strumski
nlachapelle@ssc.coop
507-696-9476





Unity is strength...when there is teamwork and collaboration, wonderful things can be achieved.
Mattie Stepanek

We mobilize *resources*, add *value*, and promote continuous improvement through member-focused *solutions*.



Miss our latest SSC wellness newsletter? It's filled with useful information to help you live your best, healthiest life!

Click here to access it.



From Pitch to Possibility: Two Educator Ideas Creating Real-World Opportunities for Students

Sometimes the best ideas for career-connected learning begin with a simple question: What could students do if they had the right tools, the right partners, and an opportunity to put their learning into action?

Two southeast Minnesota educators are getting the chance to answer that question through projects selected during the 2026 Future*Forward*[R] Pitch Competition.

The competition brought educators together to share innovative ideas designed to connect students with careers, workplace skills, industry partners, and real-world learning. Finalists presented their ideas live during the STEM Educator Forum, where attendees helped select the projects that would move forward with funding.

This year's winning projects from Wabasha-Kellogg and Byron show just how different career-connected learning can look, while sharing a common goal: giving students meaningful experiences that reach well beyond the classroom.

Building a Business at Wabasha-Kellogg



At Wabasha-Kellogg, educator Tyler Heimermann is developing a School Based Enterprise program designed to immerse students in the process of building and operating a real business.

The concept combines entrepreneurship, business planning, technical skills, customer service, and connections with local industry and the community. Students will help develop a business plan and then put that plan into action, using professional equipment and software to create products and services.

The project is intended to give students experience with the same kinds of tools, expectations, decisions, and challenges they may encounter in the workplace.

For Heimermann, that means more than simply teaching students how a piece of equipment works. The broader goal is to give students the opportunity to develop career-ready skills while learning firsthand how a business grows, serves customers, builds community relationships, and sustains itself.

The initial equipment priority is a laser engraver that would allow students to expand the products and services they can offer. Heimermann also sees the enterprise itself as part of the program's long-term sustainability. Revenue generated through student projects could be reinvested in new resources and experiences.

Community connections are already beginning to develop. Heimermann reported conversations with the local chamber of commerce and plans to expand outreach to area businesses and industry partners.

B-Town Meats Gives Byron Students a Taste of the Real World



At Byron High School, Isaac Jestus has already taken the school-based business model in a very different direction.

B-Town Meats operates as a state-licensed butcher shop from the school's FACS kitchen, giving students direct experience in meat processing while helping introduce them to a career field Jestus believes needs a new generation of workers.

Pitch Competition continued on the next page...

Pitch Contest continued from page 12...

During the 2025–26 school year, students helped process 23 deer, three elk, one antelope, and one black bear. The program is now looking to expand its capacity with additional equipment, including smokers, a grinder, and a stuffer.

For students, the result is much more than observing how an industry works. They are helping operate an actual business.

The experience exposes them to production, food preparation, customer needs, business operations, and the expectations that come with providing a real product or service. It also creates a natural connection between classroom learning and potential employment.

B-Town Meats has already developed relationships with Fareway, Bear Country Meats, and Wildwood Sports Bar and Grill. Jestus specifically identified the partnership with Bear Country Meats as an opportunity to make the transition from classroom experience to the workforce easier for interested students.

Jestus said the partnership with Bear Country Meats is continuing to grow, with plans for students to visit the facility and compare its venison-processing methods with their own. “Jon, the owner, is excited to get involved in education and knows his profession is in need,” Jestus said. He also said the new equipment is expected to help B-Town Meats expand capacity after a busy 2025–26 season. “We were swamped and had to turn away a ton of business in town,” he said. The goal is to better serve students bringing in their own deer while also providing more service to community members. Students have not yet begun using the new equipment, since the next quarter begins in the first week of November.

Ideas That Can Grow

Although the two winning projects look very different, both demonstrate one of the strengths of career-connected learning: it does not have to follow a single model.

One program may introduce students to entrepreneurship, design, technology, and customer relationships. Another may place students inside a functioning meat-processing business. In both cases, students are learning by doing and interacting with the same kinds of equipment, partners, expectations, and decisions they may encounter after graduation.

That is also what the Future*Forward* Pitch Competition is designed to encourage: innovative, student-centered ideas that strengthen career pathways, build technical and workplace skills, and create stronger connections among classrooms, employers, and communities.

For Wabasha-Kellogg and Byron, winning the pitch was an important moment.

Could Your Idea Be Next?



The Future*Forward* Pitch Competition gives educators an opportunity to turn promising ideas for career-connected learning into reality. Participants bring forward concepts that can strengthen student experiences, build connections with employers and community partners, and create new ways for students to explore careers and develop real-world skills.

Educators do not need to have every detail finalized before considering an idea. The competition provides a pathway for strong concepts to develop through partnerships, planning, and funding.

Whether your idea involves a new program, equipment, an industry partnership, work-based learning, or another creative way to connect students with their futures, the Pitch Competition provides a place to share that vision.

The momentum continues in February when the STEM Forward Educator Forum returns on February 24. The Future*Forward* Pitch Competition will once again give educators the chance to bring forward bold ideas that can create new career-connected learning opportunities for students. Can you see yourself pitching an idea worth up to $10,000? Start thinking now about the program, partnership, or experience you would build if you had the resources to make it happen. Watch for 2027 Pitch Competition updates, application information, and deadlines at ssc.coop/ccls/pitch.

FutureForward®

PITCH COMPETITION

AT THE ANNUAL STEM EDUCATOR FORUM



The FutureForward® Pitch Competition is your chance to bring a bold idea to life! Educators pitch innovative STEM projects that inspire students, strengthen career readiness, and build connections with industry.

Finalists present their ideas live at the annual STEM Educator Forum, where winners receive funding and resources to turn their vision into reality.



WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

K–12 educators, school teams, and community partners across Southeast Minnesota.

HOW IT WORKS

1. **Submit Your Idea** – Share your innovative STEM project proposal.
2. **Finalists Selected** – Top ideas are invited to pitch live at the annual STEM Educator Forum.
3. **Pitch & Inspire** – Present your idea to a panel of educators, industry partners, and community leaders.
4. **Winners Receive Support** – Awarded funding and resources to implement their project.

HAPPENS ANNUALLY AT THE STEM EDUCATOR FORUM

Connect, collaborate, and help shape the future of STEM education in Southeast Minnesota.

WHY PARTICIPATE?

FUND INNOVATION
Access funding and resources to bring your STEM ideas to life.

BUILD CONNECTIONS
Network with educators, industry partners, and community leaders.

STRENGTHEN IMPACT
Create meaningful, real-world experiences that empower students.

GAIN RECOGNITION
Showcase your ideas and inspire others across the region.

Ready To Pitch?

Southeast Service Cooperative

Manufacturing Month Opens Doors to Careers Across Southeast Minnesota

Every October, Manufacturing Month provides an opportunity to celebrate one of Minnesota's most important industries. For students, though, the month can offer something even more valuable: the chance to step inside a workplace, meet the people doing the work, and begin imagining themselves in careers they may never have considered before.

Across Southeast Minnesota, SSC and its partners are helping turn that opportunity into meaningful experiences through manufacturing tours, employer partnerships, and Future*Forward*[R].

Today's manufacturing environments combine advanced technology, automation, engineering, skilled trades, problem solving, teamwork, and innovation. When students visit local manufacturers, they have the opportunity to see that work firsthand and discover the wide range of careers required to design, produce, maintain, manage, and move the products created in their own communities.

For many students, choosing a pathway begins long before they submit a college application or apply for their first full-time job. It begins when they are given the opportunity to see what is possible and understand how their interests, strengths, and classroom learning can connect to the world of work.

Seeing Careers in Action

Manufacturing Month tours give students the opportunity to move beyond career descriptions and experience real workplaces firsthand. During these visits, students can tour manufacturing facilities, meet employers and skilled professionals, see modern technology in action, and explore careers in areas such as welding, automation, engineering, machining, maintenance, logistics, quality, information technology, and business.

These experiences also help students make stronger connections between what they learn in school and how those skills are used in the workplace. Math, technology, communication, teamwork, and problem solving all take on greater meaning when students can see how they are applied in real careers. Career-connected learning helps make those connections visible.

Connecting Schools and Employers Through Future*Forward*

Future*Forward* is another resource that helps students, educators, and parents explore careers and connect with employers across Southeast Minnesota and beyond. The free, publicly accessible platform allows users to discover businesses, learn about industries, and find career-connected learning opportunities without needing to create an account.

For employers, Future*Forward* provides a way to introduce their organizations to young people and share opportunities such as job shadows, internships, workplace tours, and other experiences. For educators, it can help identify businesses and opportunities that connect classroom learning with the world of work. Students and parents can also use the platform to explore careers and learn more about employers in their communities.

Bus on Us: Removing a Very Real Barrier



Transportation costs can prevent schools from participating in field trips, employer tours, and other career-connected learning opportunities, particularly when budgets and transportation resources are limited. That is where Bus on Us can make a difference.

Through Future*Forward*, transportation assistance may be available to help schools access qualifying career-connected learning experiences. The concept is simple: transportation should not be the reason students miss an opportunity to see a career firsthand.

A Regional Effort

Career-connected learning is strongest when it is built through partnership. Schools understand their students. Employers understand their industries and workforce needs. Workforce and community partners bring additional expertise, resources, and connections.

SSC works with schools, employers, and other regional partners to help make these experiences possible. That includes connecting schools with participating manufacturers, helping coordinate tour opportunities, and working through barriers that might otherwise prevent students from participating. Each partner brings something different to the effort, and those relationships help create opportunities that individual schools or employers may not be able to provide on their own.

Manufacturing Month provides a visible example of what can happen when those partners work together. Southeast Minnesota is home to manufacturers representing a wide range of products, technologies, and occupations. Opening

Manufacturing Month continued on the next page...

Manufacturing Month continued from page 15...

those doors gives students an opportunity to understand not only what companies make, but also who works there, what skills those careers require, and what pathways can lead to them.

For employers, those conversations matter as well. Workforce development is a long-term effort, and a student visiting a manufacturing facility today may become tomorrow's intern, apprentice, technician, engineer, supervisor, or business owner.

Manufacturing Day Tours

This fall, students will once again have opportunities to experience manufacturing careers firsthand through **FORGE MN Manufacturing Day Tours**.

The Southeast Minnesota Manufacturing Day Tours are scheduled for **October 28,** and will bring students into real manufacturing environments to meet employers, explore modern technology, and see careers in action.



In Southeast Minnesota, the Manufacturing Day Tours are coordinated in conjunction with **Construct Tomorrow**, giving schools an opportunity to participate in both experiences on the same day, with qualifying transportation costs covered through Bus on Us. Students can explore careers in the skilled trades through Construct Tomorrow and visit local manufacturers to see the people, technology, and career opportunities available in manufacturing.

Together, the experiences give students an even broader look at the career pathways available across Southeast Minnesota and help connect classroom learning with real workplaces and industries.

Schools interested in Southeast Minnesota Manufacturing Day Tours can **contact** Mike Schnell.

Manufacturing Month Resources

Schools, educators, and partners can find additional Manufacturing Month resources at MM Resources, including the School Interest Form, Future*Forward* Manufacturing Month and Activity Guides, and the Minnesota Tour of Manufacturing Resource Kit. Additional resources, including information for submitting qualifying transportation invoices, will be added as they become available.



Building Awareness Today, Building Minnesota's Workforce Tomorrow

Manufacturing Month is a celebration, but its lasting value comes from the connections it creates. When students have meaningful opportunities to explore careers, talk with professionals, and experience workplaces firsthand, career possibilities become more tangible. When employers open their doors, they help students understand the opportunities available close to home. When schools, employers, and regional partners work together to remove barriers to those experiences, career-connected learning becomes accessible to more students.

Through manufacturing tours, Future*Forward*, Bus on Us, Construct Tomorrow, and partnerships across the region, Southeast Service Cooperative is helping create those connections and expand opportunities for students across Southeast Minnesota.

Sometimes, the most important step toward a future career is simply getting a student through the door.

Workforce Development Takes Partnership Across Southeast Minnesota

Workforce development is about the people, organizations, employers, and partnerships that help individuals explore careers, build skills, and connect with meaningful employment opportunities. In Southeast Minnesota, that work is strongest when education, workforce development, employers, and community partners work together toward shared regional goals.

SSC is proud to be part of that workforce ecosystem through Career-Connected Learning Solutions and partnerships with organizations such as Workforce Development, Inc. While SSC and WDI approach workforce development from different perspectives, our work often intersects around the same broader goal: *helping people understand opportunities, make informed decisions, build relevant skills and connect education with the world of work.*

Connecting Education and Workforce Development



For SSC, workforce development often begins early through career awareness, exploration and real-world experiences for students. Career-connected learning helps young people better understand industries, meet employers, experience workplaces and see how classroom learning connects to future careers.

Through employer partnerships, work-based learning, career exploration, regional events and other Career-Connected Learning Solutions initiatives, SSC helps schools create more opportunities for students to learn about pathways available throughout Southeast Minnesota.

WDI brings another important piece to that regional system by supporting job seekers, youth, adults, dislocated workers and employers through career planning, training and workforce services. Those efforts complement one another by helping create a stronger continuum from early career awareness through preparation, training and employment.

A student may first discover an industry through a school-based experience, employer tour or career exploration activity. As that student moves closer to employment, workforce organizations can provide additional guidance, training and support. Employers benefit when education and workforce partners work together to strengthen awareness of careers, expand talent pipelines and connect people with opportunities throughout the region.

Building Stronger Systems Through Partnership

Regional workforce challenges are too complex for any one organization to solve alone. Employers need workers with the right skills, schools want students to graduate prepared for college and careers, job seekers need access to information and training, and communities depend on strong employers and sustainable career pathways.

SSC believes strong workforce systems are built when schools, employers, workforce organizations and community partners bring their individual strengths together.

That collaboration is especially important in Southeast Minnesota, where industries including healthcare, manufacturing, agriculture, skilled trades, technology and others continue to compete for talent. Building a strong workforce pipeline is not simply about filling today's openings. It is about helping people understand the opportunities available, prepare for those opportunities and see a future for themselves within the region.

Stronger Connections, Stronger Communities



Workforce development is strongest when students, workers, employers and communities can move through a connected system rather than a collection of separate programs. SSC's role is to help strengthen those connections from the education side through career-connected learning, employer engagement and regional collaboration, while WDI brings deep experience in career services, workforce development and employer support.

SSC is proud to work alongside Workforce Development, Inc. and other regional partners helping strengthen those connections across Southeast Minnesota.

Borrow, Don't Buy: Bring More STEM Learning Into Your Classroom

Creating engaging, hands on learning experiences does not always require purchasing new equipment or building a program from scratch.

Through the **SSC STEM Lending Library**, educators across the region can access high- quality tools, materials, kits, and resources designed to enhance instruction and expand learning opportunities for students.

Whether you are introducing students to a new STEM concept, adding hands on learning to an existing lesson, or looking for a way to try something new without making a major investment, the Lending Library can help.

More Resources, Fewer Barriers

Great learning experiences often depend on having the right materials at the right time. But specialized STEM equipment can be expensive, difficult to store, or only needed for a particular unit or project.

That is where the SSC STEM Lending Library comes in.

Instead of purchasing resources that may only be used occasionally, educators can borrow available materials and put them directly into the hands of students. The goal is simple: make it easier for educators to provide meaningful, experiential learning without cost or access becoming unnecessary barriers.

The Lending Library is supported through SSC programs including Mobile Science Lab, STEM Forward, and FORGE, helping create a shared regional resource that can serve educators and students throughout southeast Minnesota.

Explore What Is Available

The Lending Library includes educational kits and resources that can support STEM exploration, classroom enrichment, and new learning experiences.

Educators can browse the online catalog to see available resources, review kit information, place reservations, and keep track of current loans.

That makes the library useful whether you already know exactly what you need or simply want to explore ideas for an upcoming lesson, unit, or student experience.

Access to Lending Library resources varies by membership type. SSC Members may check out Mobile Science Career Kits, while STEM Forward Members have access to the full range of SSC STEM Lending Library



resources, including the Mobile Science Career Kits. Educators can review individual resources and availability through the online catalog.

Borrowing Is Easy

New to the SSC STEM Lending Library? Getting started only takes a few steps.

Visit the online Lending Library and create an account using your school email address. During registration, users select the appropriate membership type, either **STEM Forward** for participating districts and organizations or **SSC** for other eligible Southeast Service Cooperative members.

Once your account is established, you can browse the catalog, view kit details, make reservations, and manage your loans online.

The process is designed to make finding and borrowing classroom resources as straightforward as possible.

Start Browsing Today

If there is a lesson you have wanted to expand or an experience you would like to bring into your classroom, the SSC STEM Lending Library may already have a resource that can help.

Explore the collection, create an account, and see what you could bring to your students next.

Visit the **SSC STEM Lending Library** to learn more and get started.

Questions? **Contact** Eric Christians for help accessing the library or getting started. See the next page for more information on the process.

Southeast Service Cooperative

SSC STEM Lending Library How to Borrow



A quick guide to reserving, picking up, using, and returning classroom resources.

Who Can Borrow?

SSC members may check out items listed under the Mobile Science Lab Kits. STEM Forward members may check out the entire library.

Follow These 7 Steps

1 Visit the Library Portal

Go to **stemforward.lend-engine-app.com.**

2 Register or Log In

Create an account using your school email, or log in if you already have one.

3 Select Your Membership Type

Choose SSC or STEM Forward based on your eligibility.

4 Browse Available Items

Review the collection and choose the resource you would like to borrow.

5 Submit Your Reservation

Complete your reservation request through the portal.



6 Pick Up and Use Your Item

After SSC receives your reservation, staff will send a confirmation email and a calendar invite for pickup at:
Southeast Service Cooperative and Wood Lake Meeting Center
210 Wood Lake Drive SE, Rochester, MN 55904
Items may be checked out for 21 days.

7 Return Your Item After 21 Days

To schedule a return, contact Eric Christians at **echristians@ssc.coop.**
SSC will send a calendar invite for the return date and time.
Returned items are checked in to ensure all contents are present and undamaged.
Please allow 72 hours before items are available for recirculation.

Scan to access the SSC STEM Lending Library portal.

Questions? Contact Eric Christians | echristians@ssc.coop

Celebrate an Educator Who Moves STEM Forward

Nominations Open for the 2026–27 STEM Forward Outstanding Educator Award

Every school has educators whose impact reaches well beyond a single lesson, classroom, or school year. The STEM Forward Outstanding Educator Award recognizes K–12 professionals who demonstrate excellence, initiative, leadership, and a commitment to continuous improvement in their schools and communities.

Nominations are now open for the 2026–27 award cycle. Nominees should reflect the core aims of STEM Forward by fostering high student achievement, demonstrating leadership, promoting STEM careers, and building collaboration among K–12 schools, businesses, and higher education partners.

This award is an opportunity to recognize the educators who help students see new possibilities, connect learning with future careers, and create meaningful STEM experiences that can have a lasting impact.



The nomination form asks nominators to share information about the educator's background, experience, teaching responsibilities, and evidence of their impact. Nominations are due December 7, 2026, at midnight.

Award recipients will be recognized during the annual STEM Forward gathering in February.

Know an educator whose work deserves to be celebrated?

Nominate them today.

- Submit a nomination
- Learn more about the Outstanding Educator Award

Share Your Expertise at the 2027 STEM Forward Educator Forum

STEM Forward is inviting educators, leaders, and partners to help shape the 2027 STEM Forward Educator Forum by submitting a session proposal.

The forum will take place on **February 24**, at SSC and will focus on **AI in Education**. The event will bring educators and regional partners together to explore practical ideas, emerging practices, and thoughtful approaches to how artificial intelligence is influencing teaching and learning.

The Call for Proposals is an opportunity to share experiences, strategies, resources, and lessons learned with educators from across the region.

Whether you are already using AI in your classroom or organization, exploring new tools and approaches, or helping others think critically about the opportunities and challenges AI presents, your perspective can help make the day more useful and relevant for participants.



What Could You Share?
Strong session ideas might include practical classroom applications, instructional strategies, professional learning, student engagement, responsible AI use, workforce and career connections, or examples of how educators and organizations are navigating this rapidly changing landscape.

Presentations do not need to have all the answers. The forum is designed to create opportunities for educators to learn from one another, ask questions, exchange ideas, and leave with approaches they can continue exploring in their own settings.

Submit a Proposal

If you have an idea, experience, or resource that could benefit other educators, consider **submitting a proposal** for the 2027 STEM Forward Educator Forum.

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Sign up today

Follow these easy steps to create an account once your plan year starts. Already have an account? Sign in on the Personify Health app (formerly Virgin Pulse) or at **Medica.com/MHC**.

Contract Holders:

1. Download the free Personify Health app (formerly Virgin Pulse) from the App Store or Google Play.
2. Open the app and click on "Create Account" under the "Sign In" button.
3. Search for and choose **Minnesota Healthcare Consortium** on the sponsor organization list.
4. Follow the steps to sign up. Enter your name exactly as it appears on your Medica ID card.

Prefer to sign up online? Go to **Medica.com/MHC** to create your account.

Spouses and dependents ages 18+:

1. Download the free Personify Health app (formerly Virgin Pulse) from the App Store or Google Play.
2. Open the app and click on "Create Account" under the "Sign In" button.
3. Search for and choose **Medica My Health Rewards** on the sponsor organization list.
4. Follow the steps to sign up. Enter your name exactly as it appears on your Medica ID card.

Prefer to sign up online?
Go to **Medica.com/MHC** to create your account.

Assess your health

Keeping up with preventive care keeps you feeling your best. First, go to the "Health" tab to complete your health assessment. Then, "My Care Checklist" gives you personalized, friendly reminders that let you know when you're due to see your health care provider. Earn points by tracking your preventive care screenings and visits. You'll even earn a bonus $5 reward each year when you complete your annual health checkup (just enter the date in "My Care Checklist").

Connect your fitness tracker

Earn points by connecting your fitness tracker and apps to track your activity, sleep, calories, and more. For a full list of compatible trackers, go to "Devices & Apps" in the "More" section. To connect a fitness tracker:

1. Go to "Devices & Apps" in the "More" section
2. Choose the device or app you'd like to connect
3. Follow the on-screen instructions

Personalize your health journey

Go to "Topics of Interest" under the "More" section to choose topics you're interested in: eating healthy, sleeping well, reducing stress, and more. You'll get daily learning cards with helpful tips. Do some of them, and you'll earn points toward rewards!

$345 in potential rewards per year (Contract Holders)

$225 in potential rewards per year (Spouses/dependents ages 18+)

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Classroom Safety Reminders

By Chris Berry
Senior Environmental Technician, IEA, Inc.



Creating and maintaining a safe classroom is essential for supporting student learning and staff well-being. Taking a few preventative measures can help reduce accidents, injuries, and property damage.

Electrical Safety

- Inspect electrical cords regularly for damage. Do not use cords or equipment with a missing ground prong.
- Use extension cords and power strips only temporarily, plug them directly into outlets, avoid running through doors, rugs, or walls, and ensure GFCI protection in wet areas; do NOT connect power strips or staple cords.
- Unplug appliances when not in use, avoid overloading outlets, ensure appliances are UL-rated, and keep electrical panels clear.
- Holiday lights must be temporary (90 days or less) and should be unplugged when not in use.

Preventing Falls

- Do not use chairs, especially those with caster wheels, to reach objects; use a proper ladder instead.
- Keep walkways clear of clutter and obstacles, including computer chargers, to prevent tripping hazards.

Fire Safety

- Do not block emergency exits; ensure they always remain easily accessible and unobstructed.
- Space heaters are required to have a tip-over safety shut-off feature that automatically turns off the heater if it tips over, reducing the risk of fire.
- Wax warmers and fragrance wax melters are prohibited in the classroom.

Chemical Safety

- Clearly label all chemicals, including spray bottles containing water or cleaning solutions.
- Follow manufacturer instructions and applicable safety requirements.
- Consult school administration before bringing non-school-approved chemicals into the classroom.

For inquires, email or call **Angie Radel** (507) 281-6682 at IEA.

Free Training and Planning Help from the Minnesota School Safety Center

The Minnesota School Safety Center (MnSSC) is a **free** ongoing resource for all MN K-12 public, private, public charter and tribal schools. Our mission is to assist schools to prepare for, respond to, and recover from all-hazard emergencies by providing information, guidance, training, and technical assistance for best practices in all-hazard safety planning for schools.

The MnSSC services include site assessments, emergency operation plan reviews, tabletop exercises, as well as training in behavioral threat assessment and management, emergency response protocols, multi-hazard school preparedness, and crisis communications. Training is customized to fit individual needs of the school community. The MnSSC also provides the state mandated school resource officer training. A free school safety conference covering a variety of school safety topics is held each year. The 2027 conference will be at the Mystic Lake Center in Prior Lake on April 6-7.

At the MnSSC, we believe that building strong relationships between schools, students, families, public safety partners, and communities is essential to creating a safe and supportive learning environment. We are committed to walking alongside schools and their public safety partners to promote a culture of preparedness and resilience.

For more information or to schedule a visit, reach out to us at MNSchoolSafetyCenter.DPS@state.mn.us or visit our website.



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Member Benefits

- 20% discount on products and services for your HVAC Water Treatment needs.
- Free consulting services on engineering and design work for water-bound HVAC systems for new buildings and building renovations.

To discuss your needs or schedule a call, please email or call (952) 381-1606 Andy Morcomb and mention CPC.

SSC Board Actions and Information

In addition to routine fiscal and business actions, the Board took the following actions in recent meetings. Complete SSC Board of Directors meeting minutes are available on the SSC website at www.ssc.coop.

May

- Accepted the donation of two electric welders from Linvold Electric of Euclid, OH.
- Accepted donations of $500 from Lexia Learning and $500 from Voyager Sopris Learning to sponsor the May 12 Reading Intervention Vendor Showcase.
- Approved staff increases for FY 26-27 as recommended by the personnel committee.
- Approved an increase in 5% to pay ranges as recommended by the personnel committee.
- Approved the posting of the Career Connected Learning Specialist Admin Coordinator Position.
- Approved membership of the City of Pine Island.
- Approved the three year contract with Abdo for SSC auditing services.
- Approved the discontinuation of the SEMNET audit starting with FY 2026.
- Approved the contract with IEA for July 2026 to June 2029.
- Approved the acceptance of the Teacher Mentorship and Retention Grant for FY 27.

June

- Approved the resignation of Nick Wobig, Career Connected Learning Specialist.
- Approved the posting of the Career Connected Learning Specialist position.
- Approved the 2026-2027 SSC Budget.
- Approved the SciMathMN partnership agreement for 2026-2027.

August

- Accepted $1,000 from ISG and $1,000 from Knutson construction to support the Summer Leadership Event at SSC held on August 17.
- Accepted $5,000 from the Carl and Verna Schmidt Foundation to support Student Academic Programs.
- Approved the merger agreement with Southeastern Minnesota League of Municipalities.
- Approved the hiring of Eric Christians as Career-Connected Learning and STEM Support Coordinator.
- Approved the hiring of Lane Powell as Career-Connected Learning Specialist.
- Approved the Executive Director contract for July 1, 2027, to June 30, 2030.
- Approved an increase in Sarah Joyner's hours from 36 hours to 40 hours per week.
- Approved membership of Bethany Academy.
- Approved membership of Dodge County Soil and Water District.

September

- Approved the Executive Director job description, goals and objectives.
- Approved the contract with Claudia Tabini.
- Approved membership of the city of Lonsdale.
- Approved the 2027 employee health insurance rates and contributions.
- Approved the 2026-2027 Official Election Calendar and Call for Nominations.

Please **visit our website** for more information.

The information listed here is only a summary.
The full text is available for public inspection at SSC's administrative offices.

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Shaping the Future
for communities of leaders and learners

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