Southeast Service Cooperative

Connections

May 2026

Student Academics Winners P2



FORGE Welding Competition Re-Cap P7



SSC Wins Gold! P16





Partners in Progress

Northfield Gold Named State Knowledge Bowl Champions!

Out of more than 1,000 teams across Minnesota, Northfield Gold rose to the top at the Minnesota Service Cooperatives' State Knowledge Bowl Meet, earning the title of AAA State Champion after one written round and five oral rounds of competition.

Teams competing from southeast Minnesota were:

A Division – Rushford-Peterson (10th place), and Spring Grove (14th place)

AA Division – Byron (11th place), and Bethlehem Academy (15th place)

AAA Division – Northfield Gold (1st place), and Northfield Maroon (6th place)



Please **visit our website** for more information

We're so proud of these students!

MINNESOTA SERVICE COOPERATIVE
KNOWLEDGE BOWL | SENIOR HIGH

Rochester Public Schools 8th grader is the Southeast Minnesota Spelling Bee Champion

Twelve spellers competed in the recent Final Spelling Bee. These twelve students were narrowed down from fifty students from twenty-eight districts in Southeast Minnesota who participated in the two Regional Spelling Bees on February 10, coordinated by SSC.

Riddhi Patel (pictured at right) an 8th grade student from Rochester Public Schools was declared the champion after correctly spelling the word *corm.*

Riddhi advances to the Scripps National Spelling Bee that takes place May 24 – May 30 in Washington, D.C. Riddhi also received a first-place trophy, A one-year subscription to Merriam-Webster Unabridged Online, a one-year subscription to News-O-Matic, and a one-year subscription to Britannica Online Premium.

Zebedee Alford, an 7th grade student from Lewiston-Altura, was the 1st Runner-Up. Zebedee received a trophy, and *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary* (donated by Merriam-Webster).



MINNESOTA SERVICE COOPERATIVES
REGIONAL SPELLING BEE

K-12 ESL Additional License

PROJECT MOMENTUM

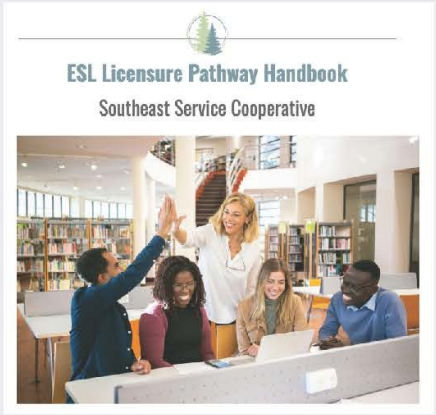
Become an ESL Teacher in One Year.

Designed for currently licensed Minnesota teachers (Tier 3 or 4), this PELSB-approved pathway lets you earn your additional K–12 ESL license in just one year.

Develop the skills to deliver evidence-based instruction for multilingual learners—all while balancing your teaching career.

- Six-week terms with asynchronous coursework so you can learn on your schedule
- Seven live seminars for collaborative, cohort-based learning
- Personalized ESL practicum with hands-on experience and mentor support

For full details on eligibility, costs, course requirements, and policies, review the Southeast Service **Cooperative's Comprehensive Licensure Pathway Handbook.**



Questions? Email us at ctabini@ssc.coop

Applications open May 1 to May 31,2026!

SSCProjectMOMENTUM www.projectmomentum.org sscprojectmomentum

Partnership in Action: A Teletherapy Success Story in Caledonia Area Public Schools

Providing consistent, high-quality services aligned to students' IEPs is at the core of every special education program. Sustaining this level of service is essential not only for student progress but also for compliance and supporting educators. Even with thoughtful planning, maintaining continuity during staff absences, such as family leave, can present challenges for districts.

Caledonia Area Public Schools took a proactive approach by preparing in advance for a team member's absence. The district partnered with TalkPath Live, a teletherapy provider supporting schools nationwide, delivering speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, mental health services and other solutions needed to help fulfill IEP needs. Since the start of the 2025-2026 school year, TalkPath Live has delivered direct virtual speech language services, evaluations, and case management for 75 students across grades K through 12.

Positive Impact

From the outset, the focus of the partnership was to ensure that students continued to receive services without interruption while also supporting the district's special education staff during a period of transition. Through close collaboration and consistent communication, services were smoothly integrated into the district's existing processes.

While the initial plan was to provide short-term support, unexpected staffing circumstances created a need for services to continue beyond the original timeline. This level of flexibility, responsiveness, and collaboration resulted in high praise from district leadership. Caledonia's Superintendent, Craig Ihrke, shared:

TalkPath Live
Caledonia Area Public Schools
Serving the communities of Brownsville, Caledonia, Eitzen and Freeburg

"TalkPath Live has been great to work with. They have not only provided great service but have been very flexible in working with us and finding solutions that met our needs in Caledonia."

These sentiments were also echoed by Angie Uhlendorf, Special Education Coordinator at Hiawatha Valley Education District, who expressed appreciation on behalf of the special education team for the evaluation support and overall performance.

Supporting Your Students

Experiences like the partnership with Caledonia Area Public Schools highlight how teletherapy can serve as a reliable extension of a district's team, helping to maintain consistency while adapting to changing needs.

If your district is exploring additional support for IEP or related services, TalkPath Live is available as a resource. To learn more, please contact Hannah Hobby, Director of Clinical Affairs, at partnerships@talkpathlive.com.

SSC Executive Director Steve Sallee Joins MREA Board

Steve Sallee has been appointed as the MREA (Minnesota Rural Education Association) South Zone Agency representative for a 4-year term. As Executive Director of Southeast Service Cooperative, Sallee leads the coop in providing exceptional services to school districts in Southeast Minnesota. He has been a leader in rural education for decades and is eager to help MREA advance their mission and bring equitable funding to Greater Minnesota.

Congratulations Steve!



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
- APE
- Behavioral and mental health counseling
- LCSW services
- Physchoeducational assessments
- Assistive technology
- Early intervention services
- Preschool RTI services

Click here to learn more.



Southeast 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 15 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.

Interested in becoming a member of the team? Attend a free two-day training at SSC this summer. (August 18 & 19 in Rochester) Click here to register or learn more.

Need Help Communicating During a Referendum?

RAPP STRATEGIES

Rapp Strategies, Inc. (RSI) partners with Southeast Service Cooperative to bring high-quality public information and community engagement plans for your use during referenda, as well as developing a long-term communications plan for your district.

Dispelling Two Common Referendum Myths

MYTH: "A successful referendum is all about tax impact — there is only so much that our community will accept and we have to focus on finding the right number."

TRUTH: There is no magic number that all community members will agree on. A referendum is about finding value for a majority of voters — is the tax increase you are asking a resident to support appropriate for the needs you have identified? That is why building trust needs to be a year-round goal for school leaders. The more you have established a record of listening to your community and investing their tax dollars wisely, the closer they will listen to a more ambitious approach for a future levy.

MYTH: "We will only get one shot at passing our referendum."

TRUTH: We all hope it only takes one attempt, but over the last decade rural MN districts passed their lead questions only 57% of the time. You can improve those odds, but since a referendum question is approved months before the voting begins, there are too many factors that can't be controlled. However, even if a district is unsuccessful the first time, the effort you make helps during a second attempt. In November 2025, 17 rural districts went out for the second time in two years and 15 succeeded.

Rapp Strategies is a full-service strategy and communications firm with extensive experience working with school districts across Minnesota on local referenda. We have a **68% success rate** for our clients, mostly in Greater Minnesota. As of April 2026, we have provided communications support for **145 local referendum elections.**

Our Communication Servies include:

- Strategic planning
- Ballot question support
- Voter messaging
- Research oversight
- Communications planning through Election Day
- Design services

The standard program costs $4,800/month (ideally June-Nov 2026), with billing through Southeast Service Cooperative.

CONTACT

Todd Rapp at 651-270-1071
or toddrapp@rappstrategies.com

Southeast Service Cooperative
Steve Sallee at 507-281-6673
or ssallee@ssc.coop

FORGE Welding Competition Delivers Record Performance, Recognition, and Results

The 2026 FORGE Welding Competition marked a significant step forward for career-connected learning in Southeast Minnesota, showcasing not only student talent but measurable growth in skill development and industry alignment.

This year's event brought together hundreds of students, educators, and industry partners for a day centered on hands-on competition, career exploration, and real-world connection. The results speak for themselves.

One of the most notable outcomes was a dramatic increase in student performance. The average competition score rose by nearly 20 points compared to previous years, a clear indicator that students are arriving better prepared and that classroom instruction is aligning more closely with industry expectations. This kind of improvement doesn't happen by accident. It reflects stronger partnerships, better access to training resources, and a growing understanding of what success looks like in the welding field.



The event also drew statewide attention with a visit from Governor Tim Walz. His presence underscored the importance of programs like FORGE and highlighted the role they play in addressing workforce needs across Minnesota. Bringing this level of visibility to the work being done in Southeast Minnesota helps validate the model and positions it for continued growth and expansion.

Recognition was a central part of the day, with 23 trophies awarded to top-performing students. The top 10 competitors in both Class A and Class AA were honored, along with individual and team champions.

In **Class A**, the top three finishers were:

- Colten Jenkins, Rushford-Peterson High School (1st
- Sean Stelpflug, Fillmore Central High School (2nd)
- Landon Volkman, Rushford-Peterson High School (3rd)

In **Class AA**, the top three finishers were:

- Theodore Bowman, Albert Lea High School (1st)
- Breckin Wacholz, Albert Lea High School (2nd)
- Ty Severson, Austin High School (3rd)



Team honors reflected strong program depth and consistency. Rushford-Peterson claimed the Class A team title, while Albert Lea earned the top spot in Class AA.

While the competition itself is a focal point, it represents just one piece of a larger system designed to connect students to meaningful career pathways. FORGE continues to build on a model that integrates exploration, exposure, and real-world experience, aligning education with the needs of industry partners across the region .

None of this would be possible without the support of industry leaders who invest their time, expertise, and resources into the event. The 2026 competition was made possible through the commitment of Platinum Sponsors:
Rochester Community and Technical College
Lincoln Electric
Local 6 Plumbers & Pipefitters
Emcor Enclosures
Harmony Enterprises
Mississippi Welders Supply
Airgas
Minnesota Mechanical Contractors Association
Crenlo Engineered Cabs
Southeast Minnesota Building and Construction Trades Council
Mayo Clinic

Their involvement goes far beyond sponsorship. These partners help shape the experience, ensuring that students are not only competing, but engaging with the tools, standards, and expectations they will encounter in the workforce.

As the FORGE program continues to grow, this year's competition stands as a clear example of what's possible when education and industry work together with purpose. The gains in student performance, the level of engagement, and the attention from state leadership all point in the same direction: this model is working, and it's building momentum.

FORGE Welding Competition Experience Leads Student to SpaceX Opportunity



A student's experience at the FORGE Welding Competition is highlighting the impact of career-connected learning in Southeast Minnesota.

Ty, a student from Lake City, attended the 2025 event as a non-competitor after his school chose not to enter students in the competition. While there, he engaged with industry partners at the career fair, including Mississippi Welders Supply.

Following the event, Ty took initiative to build his skills, teaching himself welding techniques and how to read weld symbols. He later reached back out to industry contact Elvis Mitchell for guidance and materials as he continued developing his abilities.

Ty now plans to return to his school's program to help support future students. He has also accepted a welding position with SpaceX in Texas, where he will begin work this fall in an advanced manufacturing environment.

Industry partners point to this story as an example of how exposure to career pathways, combined with direct industry connections, can influence student outcomes. The FORGE Welding Competition is designed to create those opportunities, giving students access to hands-on experiences and meaningful career exploration in the trades.

Redefining Ready: Moving from Vision to Practice

During the 2025–2026 school year, SSC partnered with regional districts through the Redefining Ready cohort to expand how student success is defined. The work focused on moving beyond standardized test scores toward a more comprehensive, multi-metric approach that reflects academic, career, and life readiness.

Districts made strong progress implementing this shift. Middle and high school scorecards were developed to track indicators such as GPA, advanced coursework, and "life-ready" skills like resilience and leadership. Schools also began integrating service-learning into student experiences and aligning efforts with existing "Profile of a Graduate" frameworks. Some districts led the way in tracking these metrics, while others focused on building systems and communication strategies to support long-term adoption.

The cohort also introduced early readiness efforts at the middle school level and developed tools to better communicate progress with staff, school boards, and families. While challenges such as staffing capacity and data access remain, the work has clearly moved from planning into implementation.

A year-end survey is being distributed to help determine next steps for the 2026–2027 school year. For more information or to get involved, please reach out to Jeannie Meidlinger at jmeidlinger@ssc.coop.



Free Hands-On STEM Training for Elementary Educators

Bring advanced manufacturing and hands-on STEM to your classroom — at no cost.

SSC is excited to share an outstanding professional learning opportunity for elementary educators! The InnoCrate STEM Teacher Workshops, hosted at Winona State University, are designed to equip K–5 teachers with the tools, training, and confidence to bring real-world STEM and advanced manufacturing concepts directly into their classrooms.

What You'll Receive

- Expert-led InnoCrate training from WSU faculty
- Professional development credit for your learning hours
- A free InnoCrate kit valued at $2,000 to take back to your classroom
- Travel reimbursement to support your attendance
- Ongoing kit resupply support so your materials stay fresh and ready to use

Workshop Dates

June 10-12
August 5-7

Ready to Learn More?

Visit FutureForward to register and get all of the details.

FutureForward™



FREE Field Trip Alert: InnoCrate at Winona State University!

Calling all summer program leaders, elementary school staff, after-school coordinators, and anyone looking for an unforgettable field trip experience for students!

WSU is offering hands-on InnoCrate field trip sessions right on campus — and busing is FREE (paid for by WSU)!

Here's what you need to know:

- Interactive, hands-on STEM and advanced manufacturing experiences led by educators in InnoCrate professional development training.
- Groups of 30–60 students per session.
- Students get a fun, engaging day of discovery while educators test and refine innovative new lessons in a real-world setting.
- Ready to reserve your spot? **Email** Vic Dreier for more information. *Spots are limited!*

Join the Southeastern Minnesota AI/CS Literacy Taskforce



Complete the Taskforce Application Here

We're bringing together 15–20 visionary educators, administrators, and industry partners to help shape the future of AI and Computer Science Literacy across Southeastern Minnesota.

Over the next 12 months, this taskforce will collaborate to create a K–12 regional framework supported by practical, connected resources that ensure every learner in our region is prepared for a world transformed by innovation, automation, and AI.

This is your opportunity to:

- Influence how our region approaches AI and CS education
- Build meaningful connections across schools and industry
- Contribute to tools and guidance that will support educators and students for years to come

If you're passionate about forward-thinking education and want to help lead this regional effort, we'd love to have you on the team.

Be part of shaping the future. Be part of the Southeastern Minnesota AI/CS Literacy Taskforce.

STEM in Motion: Autonomous Drone Education June 22



SSC is launching an exciting new initiative that brings autonomous drone technology directly into grade 5–12 classrooms. Join us for a hands-on experience designed to equip you with everything you need to inspire the next generation of innovators.

What You'll Explore

- **Basic Coding and Program Design** — Learn beginner-friendly programming skills to operate autonomous drones.
- **Physics of Drone Movement** — Dive into the real-world physics that power drone navigation and maneuverability.
- **Standards-Aligned Content** — Access fully integrated, curriculum-ready materials designed for immediate classroom use.
- **Flexible Implementation** — Choose from a 3-day module or a comprehensive 9-week unit to fit your teaching schedule.

Why Attend?

This isn't your typical PD session. STEM in Motion is a high-engagement, real-world learning experience built through the collaborative, cross-sector partnerships that SSC is known for. You'll walk away with:

- **Teacher Stipends/CEUs** — Compensation for your time and commitment to professional growth
- **Industry Connections** — Build relationships with drone-technology professionals and business partners
- **Authentic Classroom Experiences** — Gain access to hands-on drone technology your students will love
- **Drones for your classroom**

Register NOW! | Contact **Vic Dreier** with for questions



Calling all Middle and High School Teachers in SE Minnesota!

Join us August 10 and 11 at SSC for the **We Share Solar Suitcase** Professional Development workshop!

Build a working solar power system, explore classroom-ready STEM lessons aligned to state standards, and learn how to lead students in global energy access projects.

Empower your students with STEM skills and purpose—while growing your own toolkit for high-impact, project-based learning.

Sign up now!



STEM Forward is excited to return for the 2nd Annual STEM Day at the Olmsted County Fair—and we're inviting our SSC members and partners to join us!

After a hugely successful first year, we've been invited back—with room for even more interactive booths. Let's make this year even bigger and better for youth and families across our region.

- Date: Wednesday, July 29
- Time: 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM
- Location: Toyota Arena (Graham 4 Building), Olmsted County Fairground
- Environment: Air-conditioned indoor space

We're inviting the following folks to host hands-on, interactive STEM booths that engage youth and families:

- School districts and teachers
- Student organizations (CTSOs, robotics teams, STEM clubs, etc.)
- Cities and counties
- Nonprofit organizations
- Industry and workforce partners
- Community organizations

Why Participate?

- Inspire the next generation of STEM leaders
- Showcase your programs, careers, and community impact
- Connect directly with families from across the region
- Strengthen regional STEM and workforce partnerships
- Support equitable access to STEM learning opportunities

Let's work together to make STEM Day at the Fair an unforgettable experience for our region's youth and families!

Interested in hosting a booth?

Contact Vic Dreier to learn more!

Ready, Set, Race! Nitro-X in Rochester this June



Does your student have a need for speed? The Minnesota State Transportation Center of Excellence (TCOE), in partnership with Southeast Service Cooperative, is thrilled to host the Nitro-X Summer Camp in Rochester from June 23 to June 25.

What is Nitro-X?
Nitro-X is more than just a summer camp; it's a career exploration journey. Middle school students get under the hood of the automotive and transportation world.

Over three days, participants will:

- **Build and Customize**: Work in teams to assemble and customize a hobby-grade RC car.
- **Learn from Pros**: Engage with industry experts and explore local dealerships and shops.
- Race for the Podium: Put their mechanical skills to the test in a final race-day competition.

How to Join
Spots for this popular camp fill up quickly. Families can register through the TCOE website to secure their student's place in the starting grid.

- When: June 23-25
- Where: Rochester Community and Technical College – Heintz Center
- Registration Link

For questions regarding registration, scholarships, or sponsorship opportunities, please **reach out** to Jeannie Meidlinger.

Data Rich, Plan Ready: Designing the Year Ahead Comprehensive Needs Assessment Regional Pathway

How would this pathway benefit your District?
A comprehensive needs assessment (CNA) is a process that enables school systems to continuously improve. By identifying areas of strength and areas for growth, a CNA helps leaders effectively allocate resources to meet the needs of all students and support their academic success. This pathway will guide teams through the full CNA process (including planning and data gathering, data analysis and reflection, and root cause analysis) so they are prepared to lead their site. Participants will learn how to use multiple sources of data to identify areas of need. Prioritized needs will be aligned to goal setting and action planning within a strategic planning process.

Aligned Support: All teams will receive coaching support during and/or after the series.
Target Audience: School or District Leadership Teams.
When/Where:
June 8 (9:00 AM - 3:00 PM)
August 12 (9:00 AM - 3:00 PM)

Session 1: By the end of this session, teams will have an action plan to gather the necessary data for the CNA, they will identify a time when larger stakeholder teams will come together to analyze prioritized data and review their local context in order to set the tone for future steps in the CNA process.

- Step 1: Establish a Team
- Step 2: Understand the local context
- Step 3: Data Review and Hypothesis Setting
- Action Planning for teams to do this work.

Session 2: By the end of this session, teams will know how to use the Evaluation Tool in step four. They will build a plan for completing the evaluation with their larger district team using consensus-building tools. Participants will also learn the process of root cause analysis in order to set the stage for effective solution-building. Finally, teams will end with a preview of Implementation Science grounded in the use of the Hexagon Tool to set the stage for implementation of an evidence-based practice following the CNA.

- Step 4: Evaluate the System
- Step 5: Explore and Identify Root Causes.
- Action Planning with support for teams to do the work.

Click here to register.

2026 STEM Day at the Capitol

By Emily Saed

On April 15, the Minnesota State Capitol was once again buzzing with energy and innovation as STEM Day at the Capitol brought together students, educators, industry leaders, and policymakers from across the state. Hosted by the Minnesota STEM Ecosystem in partnership with SciMathMN, the event highlighted the critical role of STEM education in preparing Minnesota's future workforce.

From 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM, the Capitol Rotunda and L'Etoile du Nord Vault were transformed into a vibrant, hands-on learning environment featuring interactive exhibits and STEM experiences – engaging young people, industry members and legislators alike!

Thanks to the generous support of Xcel Energy, this year's STEM Day at the Capitol showcased organizations including the Science Museum of Minnesota, The Bakken Museum, Twin Cities PBS (TPT), Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Centers of Excellence, Raspberry Pi Foundation, the University of Minnesota, High Tech Kids, and many more.

Attendees explored a wide range of activities and programs, including robotics demonstrations, engineering challenges, coding experiences, and career exploration designed to connect classroom learning with real-world applications. These experiences highlighted the importance of providing students with access to high-quality STEM learning opportunities both in and out of school.

To learn more about the programs and organizations funded through the Minnesota STEM Ecosystem Partnership Grant Program, visit **stemmn.org**.

MINNESOTA STEM ECOSYSTEM







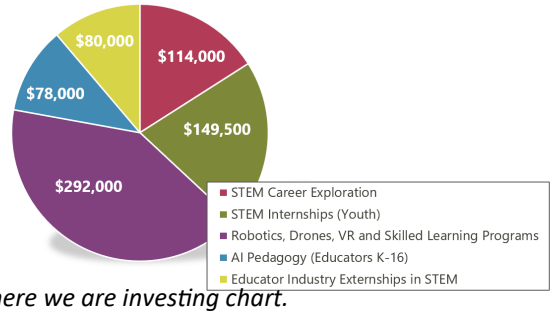
Building Minnesota's Future Through Public-Private STEM Partnerships

Minnesota's economy depends on a strong pipeline of talent prepared for careers in advanced manufacturing, engineering, energy, healthcare, agriculture, information technology, and other high-demand industries. Nearly 40% of job openings are in STEM-related occupations and fields, yet fewer than 40% of high school graduates meet STEM career readiness benchmarks. The Minnesota STEM Ecosystem was created to help meet that need by bringing together business and industry, K-12 education, higher education, out-of-school STEM learning programs, and public agencies to align learning opportunities with workforce demand across the state.

At the center of this work is a simple belief: no single sector can solve Minnesota's workforce challenges alone. Strong public-private partnerships are essential to preparing learners for the future economy. That is why the Minnesota STEM Ecosystem has prioritized building partnerships that blend financial resources, industry expertise, and shared leadership to create meaningful STEM opportunities for students and educators.

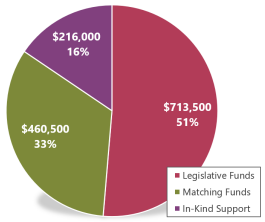
Leveraging Public Investment to Unlock Private Action

As part of a historic investment from the Minnesota Legislature in 2025, the Minnesota STEM Ecosystem awarded more than $700,000 in Partnership Grants supporting STEM education and workforce-focused initiatives across Minnesota. These grants are designed to expand access to high-quality STEM learning experiences aligned to in-demand career pathways and emerging technologies.



Where we are investing chart.

What makes this model unique is its braided funding approach. Public funding creates the stability needed for regional and private-sector partners to commit matching dollars, in-kind support, equipment, expertise, and staff time. This means public investment does not stand alone—it unlocks collective action and allows programs to reach more learners statewide, especially in communities where private investment alone may not be enough. Through the Partnership Grant Program, the Ecosystem is supporting and expanding initiatives such as:



Public/private funding

- STEM internships aligned to in-demand career pathways
- Robotics, drones, virtual reality, and emerging technology programs
- AI and computer science pedagogy for educators
- Educator externships in STEM industries
- Regional STEM coordination and lending libraries that expand access to tools and resources statewide

These investments are helping young people build technical skills, career awareness, and confidence while connecting classroom learning to real-world opportunities.

One of the most powerful examples of public-private partnership is the Ecosystem's support for educator externships. By partnering directly with Minnesota employers, educators spend time in real workplaces learning about current technologies, processes, and workforce expectations. They then bring those insights back into the classroom through updated lessons, hands-on projects, and career-connected instruction. This ensures students are learning skills that reflect today's industries—not yesterday's—and helps schools stay connected to the pace of innovation happening across Minnesota.

The Minnesota STEM Ecosystem is demonstrating that when public leadership and private partnership come together, Minnesota can build stronger pathways for students, stronger talent pipelines for employers, and a stronger economy for everyone.

For more information, contact Emily Saed, MN STEM Ecosystem Director.

SSC Staff Make a Difference for Local Seniors

SSC staff members recently spent an afternoon outdoors helping local seniors with yard work through Family Service of Rochester. Each year, SSC staff take part in this meaningful effort to support older adults who need a little extra help to remain safely and comfortably in their homes.



For SSC, this annual tradition is about more than seasonal chores — it is a chance to give back to the community, lend a hand where it is needed.

SSC is proud to partner in opportunities like this and values the chance to support neighbors in practical, caring ways. Helping seniors stay in their homes is one small way SSC staff can make a positive community impact, and the team is always grateful to be part of it.



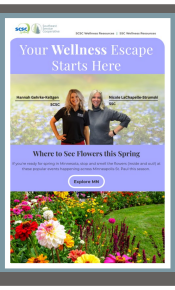
It's Gold for SSC Again!

We're thrilled to share that we've earned GOLD in the American Heart Association's Well-being Works Better Scorecard! We're also honored to be featured once again in an upcoming edition of Forbes and on the American Heart Association's website.

This recognition reflects something we care deeply about—creating a culture that supports, uplifts, and empowers our people every day.

Click **here** to learn more about the scorecard or apply at your own organization.





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

Click here to access it.



Have your insurance through MHC/Medica? Sign-up to feel better, have more energy, and live a healthier life!

My Health Rewards by Medica®



Your healthier future starts now

The My Health Rewards online tool and app lets you log healthy habits, track activity through a fitness tracker, and complete other healthy activities to earn rewards. Rewards can be redeemed for e-gift cards and health and fitness products. You can also choose to donate your rewards to a charitable cause.

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+)

Medica. | Minnesota Healthcare Consortium


ISG
Inspiring the
NEXT GENERATION
of STEAM Leaders
7225Z Borderbots
7226B Rebelbots
PUT ON
A Smile
HAPPY PEOPLE
ARE
SOUTHLAND
ROBOTICS
Southeast Minnesota's Partner of Choice
For Long-Range Facility + Referendum Planning
Architecture + Engineering + Environmental + Planning | ISGInc.com

Don't Forget to Submit!



Board-approved LTFM ten-year plans must be submitted to Minnesota Department of Education (mde.facilities@state.mn.us) by July 31.

Components include the following forms:

- Ten-Year Expenditure Plan Application (original excel spreadsheet, not pdf)
- A narrative describing scope and cost of any asbestos, fire safety, and indoor air quality projects costing $100,000 or more per project, per site for FY2025 or FY2026
- A Statement of Assurance (SOA) that the district reviewed the allowable uses of LTFM revenue
- Minutes showing approval of the ten-year expenditure plan signed by the school board clerk.

Be sure to download the most current documents from the **MDE website**.

For more information or assistance with completing your LTFM ten-year plan, contact Angie Radel, Regional Manager, IEA, at (507) 281-6664 or e-mail at angie.radel@ieasafety.com.

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 & Hannah Gehrke-Keltgen
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!

CPC has awarded contracts to 4 vendors under a new Technology Catalog solicitation!

This brand new solicitation allows for awarded vendors to sell their entire catalog on the CPC Contract. More details about each vendor's offering and associated member benefits are offered on their respective CPC Vendor Profile Pages.

Bluum Technology offers technology solutions to support the tech needs of schools, municipalities, other government agencies, and nonprofit organizations with:

- Interactive Classroom Displays
- Teacher and Student Device Solutions
- Bell and Paging Systems
- Cutting-edge STEM Labs for Schools
- Esports in Education

Learn more about CPC's contract with Bluum →

ByteSpeed offers a wide variety of technology products, including:

- Laptops
- Chromebooks
- Servers
- Networking equipment
- Aviation hardware

Learn more about CPC's contract with ByteSpeed →

CDW-G is a leading provider of technology solutions for education and government. When you work with CDW-G, you get an experienced account team dedicated to knowing and anticipating your needs.

Technology products include:

- Hardware
- Software
- Networking equipment
- Accessories
- Services (Installations, Configurations, Product Support, Assessment, Planning & Design)

Learn more about CPC's contract with CDW-G →

Find the tools for technology-enriched classrooms at **Trafera**. From student and teacher devices to STEM and eSports equipment (and everywhere in between), you'll get great tech at great prices and availability.

- Chromebooks
- Windows Desktops and Laptops
- Computer Lab & ESports Equipment
- STEM and Robotics Gear
- Classroom Audio/Visual

Learn more about CPC's contract with Trafera →

CPC's 2026 Paper Program is Now Live!

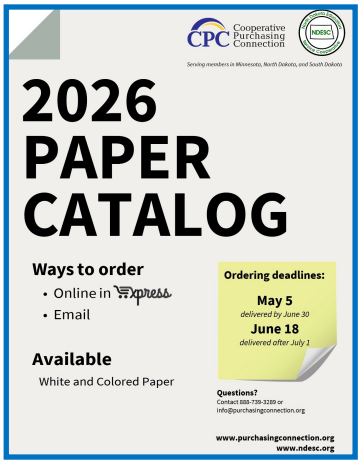
This year we're offering white copy paper, color paper, and miscellaneous white papers!

There are two ways to order:

- Order online through **Express (sign-in here)**.
- Download, fill-out, and email back a **2026 Cut Paper Order Form** (Excel), or **view the Full Catalog** (pdf). Order by **June 18,** - for delivery and invoicing after **July 1.**

All orders must be returned to CPC – whether through Express or by email – to guarantee pricing.

Click the image to the right of our **2026 Paper Catalog** to learn more. If you have any questions, we're happy to help at 888-739-3289.



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.

February

- Approved sponsorships of $10,000 from Minnesota Mechanical Contractors Association, $2,500 from Davis Mechanical Systems, $2,500 from Rochester Plumbing and Heating, and $500 from Ryan Mechanical to support the FORGE Welding program.
- Accepted sponsorship of $1,000 from Gemini, Inc. to support the FutureForward College, Career, and Job Fair.
- Approved two contracts with schools to pay SEMNET (SSC) for the period of July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2031.
- Approved contracts with SSC to pay vendors MetroNet, HBC and Chatfield Public Schools for lines, internet, and network management from July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2031.
- Approved posting and hiring for the Southeast Minnesota Transit Management Organization Manager position, funded by MnDOT through the City of Chatfield.
- Approved the contract with Heartland Business Systems for transition to a new accounting system. The contract is contingent on approval from MDE to proceed with the approval process.

March

- Approved the policies and bylaws.
- Accepted sponsorship of $2,500 from Mississippi Welding Supply, $1,000 from
- J.F. Ahern Co., $1,000 from McNeilus Trucking and Manufacturing, and $2,500 from Local 6 Plumbers and Fitters to support the FORGE Welding Program.
- Approved the agreement with the City of Chatfield to provide consulting services related to the Southeast Minnesota Transit Management Organization.
- Approved the 2026-2027 fee schedule.
- Approved the quote from Marco at a cost not to exceed $75,428.52 to replace equipment in the SSC building.

April

- Accepted $500 from 4Imprint's One by One program to be used for the purchase of signs for student academics.
- Accepted a grant for $31,080.78 from Minnesota State's State Leadership Activities Funding to support Nitro-X.
- Approved the RTS-SSC-SWWC Insurance Contract.

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.

SSC Service Consultants



Carli Bothun
MHC Account Manager
cbothun@mnhc.gov



Brittani Locke
Health Insurance Coordinator
blocke@mnhc.gov



Sue Peterson
ISG Strategy Specialist
Sue.Peterson@ISGInc.com



Angie Radel
Regional Manager, IEA
angie.radel@ieasafety.com

Connections is a publication of the Southeast Service Cooperative, published three times per year for members, associates, and the general public.
Editor: Nicole LaChapelle-Strumski, nlachapelle@ssc.coop

Southeast Service Cooperative
210 Wood Lake Drive SE
Rochester, MN 55904
Phone (507) 288-1282
Fax (507) 288-7663

Office Hours:
Monday - Friday
8:00 AM - 4:30 PM
www.ssc.coop

Shaping the Future
for communities of leaders and learners

About Southeast Service Cooperative

Southeast Service Cooperative Staff



Steve Sallee
Executive Director
ssallee@ssc.coop



Isabella Anderson Eggen
COMPASS Equitable Access Specialist (Multilingual Learners)
ieggen@ssc.coop



Alicia Bredesen
Meeting Center Coordinator
abredesen@ssc.coop



Jessica Denter
COMPASS Regional MnMTSS Lead
jdenter@ssc.coop



Vic Dreier
Regional STEM Specialist
vdreier@ssc.coop



Erik Durand
COMPASS Regional Math Lead
edurand@ssc.coop



Christi Fosland
Educational Support Coordinator
cfosland@ssc.coop



Amy Grover
Associate Director
agrover@ssc.coop



Chris Hancock
Manager of Accounting and Payroll
chancock@ssc.coop



Katie Hartman
Manager of Student Programs
khartman@ssc.coop



Katie Hendrickson
Creative Media Solutions Coordinator
khendrickson@ssc.coop



Joe Jezierski
COMPASS Climate and Culture Lead
jjezierski@ssc.coop



Sarah Joyner
Project Momentum Program Assistant
sjoyner@ssc.coop



Ashley Karlsson
Project Momentum Director
akarlsson@ssc.coop



Kendra Katnik
Project Momentum Implementation and Instructional Lead
kkatnik@ssc.coop



Kari Kubicek
Regional Funding Manager
kkubicek@ssc.coop



Nicole LaChapelle-Strumski
Manager of Wellness and Outreach
nlachapelle@ssc.coop



Melanie Lawrence
COMPASS Culturally Responsive Instructional Leadership Lead
mlawrence@ssc.coop



Jeannie Meidlinger
Career-Connected Learning Specialist
jmeidlinger@ssc.coop



Christine Meshak
COMPASS Regional Literacy Network Coach
cmeshak@ssc.coop



Sarah Mikkelson Zeigler
COMPASS Continuous Improvement Coach
szeigler@ssc.coop



Gina Morken
COMPASS Regional Supervisor
gmorken@ssc.coop



Cindy Mullins
COMPASS Continuous Improvement Lead
cmullins@ssc.coop



Sarah Ness
Manager of Strategic Partnerships
sness@ssc.coop



Merissa Russie
Project Momentum Licensure Pathways Specialist
mrussise@ssc.coop



Emily Saed
MN STEM Ecosystem Director
esaed@ssc.coop



Allison Schmidt
COMPASS Regional Literacy Network Coach
aschmidt@ssc.coop



Mike Schnell
Career-Connected Learning Specialist
mschnell@ssc.coop



Jami Schwickerath
Perkins Coordinator; Career-Connected Learning Specialist
jschwickerath@ssc.coop



Carol Swanson
COMPASS Regional Literacy Lead
cswanson@ssc.coop



Kim Swanson
Accounting Assistant
kswanson@ssc.coop



Claudia Tabini
Project Momentum Community Engagement Coordinator
ctabini@ssc.coop



Dale Walston
Director of Finance and Operations
dwalston@ssc.coop



Nick Wobig
Career-Connected Learning Specialist
nwobig@ssc.coop



Katie Wohlfiel
COMPASS Regional Literacy Network Coach
kwohlfiel@ssc.coop

SSC Board of Directors

Brein Maki, Chair
Lewiston-Altura Public Schools

Jean Roth, Vice-Chair
Zumbrota-Mazeppa Public Schools

Jason Marquardt, Treasurer
Mabel-Canton Public Schools

Brian Grudem, Clerk
City of Zumbrota

Don Leathers
Austin Public Schools

Mitch Lentz
Fillmore County

Al Roder
City of Byron

Monica Sveen-Ziebell
Plainview-Elgin-Millville Public Schools