

## Independent, personalized learning part of Concord 5th grade 'Choice Projects'

*Students research, write, design and consult with experts on topic of interest*



*Edina Communications Department*

So you don't know a Flying Squirrel Back Flip from a Bow and Arrow Grab? That's because Concord Elementary student, Rev,

hasn't finished his book yet. But he's working on it—every Friday afternoon from about 2:30 to 3 p.m. That is when it's Choice Project time in Emilee VanDeLaarschot's 5th grade classroom.

Her students are using their Choice Projects to explore an interest or something they have always wondered about.

"I had heard about this kind of project before and I thought it was a great way to personalize learning for my students," VanDeLaarschot said. "Their projects incorporate many things—research, planning, writing. But they are so into their topic that it makes all of that seem fun."

VanDeLaarschot told her students about the Choice Projects early in September and promised 30 to 45 minutes of class time each Friday to work on it. The students were excited but first comes the hard part—deciding what to study and focus on for their project.

Creating personalized learning experiences is one of the core strategies of the district's Next Generation of Edina Public Schools Strategic Plan. It fosters ownership of learning and supports the development of life skills and educational competencies that students need to thrive in their academic journey, career and life.

In VanDeLaarschot's classroom, the topics and types of projects that are being developed are as widely varied as the students themselves.

Once their plan is approved and the work is underway, VanDeLaarschot helps students find adult experts to consult with through the district's Curriculum Resource Center, family and friends, as well as teacher colleagues and their friends. "I don't know how to start a business or about finger nail design," she said, "but I can find people who do. And then the students end up getting real world experience."

One student is designing a track for his model train collection. He talked with an architect about the design for his project. Another student will visit a local salon to meet with a nail technician. The list goes on, but there is almost always a personal connection to why a student chose their particular project.

"I am a twin, so I have always been interested in genetics," said Jay, one of VanDeLaarschot's students. He has already learned a

**Continued on Page 17**

## Critical Thinking and Problem Solving Has Never Been So Fun

*Elementary students practicing a new set of skills in art classrooms across the Stillwater School District*

*Carissa Keister, APR  
Community Engagement Manager  
Stillwater Area Public Schools*

At first glance it might not look like much—stacks of colorful construction paper, some rulers and scissors, and a class of excited fifth graders. But what appears to be a simple art project is actually a complex lesson involving elements of science, mathematics, and history. A lesson designed by a trained art instructor to inspire creativity, critical thinking and problem solving in a fun and engaging way.

"Math is not taught so that we raise mathematicians, nor is art taught so students will grow up to be artists," said Jason Kehrer, one of four elementary art instructors in the district. "We teach art so that students will become creative and innovative—so they can become engineers, urban planners and surgeons."

For the first time in more than a decade, all elementary students across the district are taking part in weekly art classes. Art was added to the elementary schedule this fall as part of the district's Bridge to Excellence plan, which is designed to re-create our schools to better prepare our students for their future. Each art lesson is intended to spark students' curiosity and encourage them to see things in a different way, consider a new perspective, and communicate a new idea.

"It's a lot of fun but it's also a way to challenge yourself, too," said Timmy, a Lily Lake Elementary fifth grader. "It's sort of like a science lab. Art is all about trying new things and doing it over again if you don't get it the first time."

Elementary art teachers are introducing students to a variety of mediums, including painting, drawing, designing, and sculpting. Beyond creating works of art, teachers are also challenging students to think like



scientists, engineers and designers as they observe, consider, and solve problems through art and design. Experts refer to this integration of subjects as STEAM, which allows students to interpret science and

technology through engineering and the arts—all of which are based in mathematical elements.

**Continued on Page 17**

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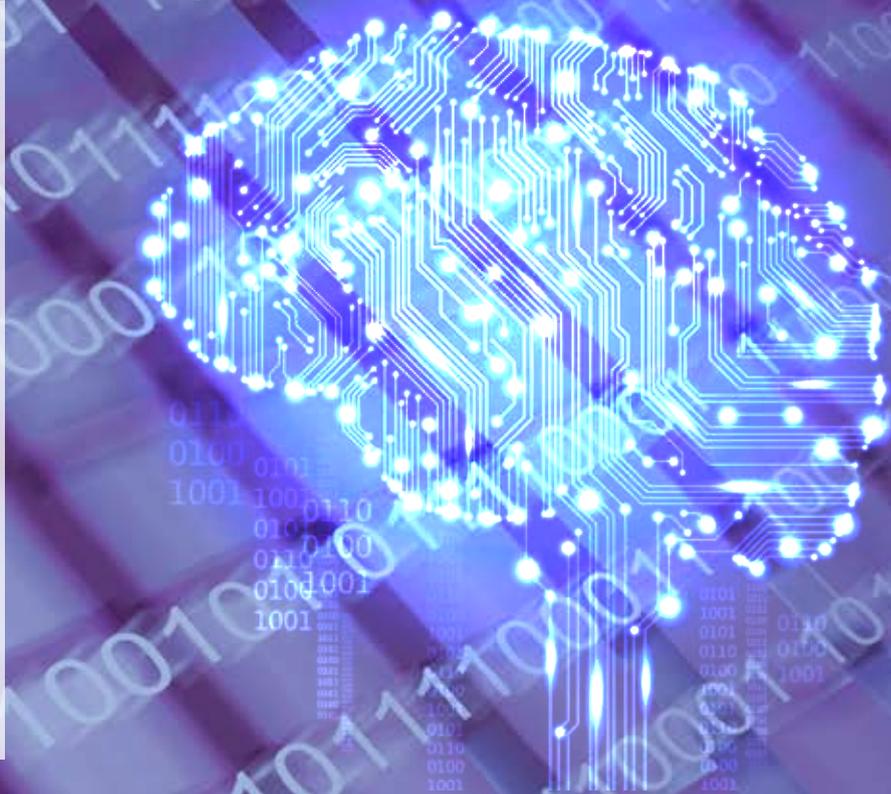
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## Headlines from the Teaching Today MN Educational Blog [teachingtodaymn.wordpress.com](http://teachingtodaymn.wordpress.com)

### Students learn about international culture by connecting with peers online

Illinois middle-schoolers in an international studies class connect with their peers in Norway, France and Canada through free videoconferencing software and social media.

### How gratitude journals can transform students' grades, lives

After experiencing the positive effects of gratitude in his personal and professional

life, fourth-grade teacher Owen Griffith introduced his students to gratitude journals, he shares in this blog post.

### Invite Community Guests to Your Classroom in the New Year!

Bringing special guests to the classroom is a great way to engage students by offering them a first-hand perspective in an "in-house field trip," notes Illinois fourth-grade teacher Lindsey Petlak. In this blog post, she offers several examples of how community guests have made a difference in her classroom.

## From our Website [www.teachingtodaymn.com](http://www.teachingtodaymn.com)

### Almost a Third Grader

Welcome to your site built exclusively for you. Your 2nd grade teachers want you to succeed in 3rd grade and hit the ground running on your first day of school. We have created this site to help you do just that.

Check out this website that was created by Megan Zachman, Second grade teacher at

Middleton Elementary School

### Wide Angle

These resources will enrich the study of Global History by using contemporary examples as jumping-off points to engage students with historical themes that were as relevant in the past as they are today.

## In this Issue

Grants ..... Page 4

Teen techies gain hands-on training in Westonka Tech Interns course .....Page 5

The Teaching Today MN Dream Career Essay Contest ..... Page 7

Co-op program director is Administrator of the Year ..... Page 8

Anoka-Hennepin Pathway's Deb Olson named top 'career and technical education' teacher of the year ..... Page 10

Talahi PTA: Changing the Conversation One Voice at a Time ..... Page 14

Art Club at Austin High School .... Page 15

AMSA eighth graders have art displayed at U.S. Department of Education ..... Page 16

Contests and Items of Interest ... Page 18

# Personalized Learning for Gifted Students

Conference Information at: [www.mnegt.org](http://www.mnegt.org)

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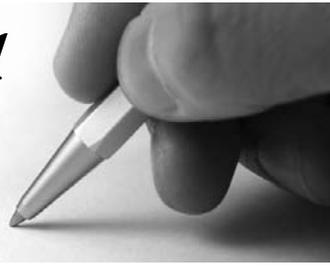
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## Japan Foundation Center Grants

The Japan Foundation's Center for Global Partnership (CGP) awards education grants for projects designed to increase awareness and understanding of Japan in the United States by students and teachers in kindergarten through grade 12. Grants may fund support of teacher training, curriculum development, and community outreach efforts. The program has generally funded projects such as lecture series about Japanese culture and society, and teacher workshops on how to teach Japanese culture and society. Cultural events such as performances, exhibitions, festivals, movie screenings, readings, and demonstrations of Japanese arts are eligible provided they include an educational outreach component.

Grants up to \$5,000 are awarded.

Grant applications are accepted year-round.

**Website:** [www.cgp.org/grassroots-exchange-and-education/education-grants](http://www.cgp.org/grassroots-exchange-and-education/education-grants)

## Instrumental Music Grants

The Fender Music Foundation awards instruments and equipment to eligible music instruction programs that are part of US public schools or qualified nonprofit organizations. The instruments and equipment are lightly used, blemished, or otherwise imperfect and have been collected from manufacturers and retailers. The foundation provides information on specific imperfections to programs that are selected to receive instruments.

Applications are accepted year-round.

**Website:** [www.fendermusicfoundation.org/grants/grants-info/](http://www.fendermusicfoundation.org/grants/grants-info/)

## Accessible Golf Program Grants

The National Alliance for Accessible Golf (Alliance) and the United States Golf Association (USGA) have formed a grant-making partnership to promote opportunities for individuals with disabilities to make the game of golf more accessible.

Grants up to \$20,000 will be awarded, with a matching grant requirement.

Applications are accepted year-round.

**Website:** [www.accessgolf.org/grants/alliance\\_grants.cfm](http://www.accessgolf.org/grants/alliance_grants.cfm)

## Sports-for-All Clinic Grant

VolunTEEN Nation is a group of teenagers and young adults engaged in volunteering and community service nationwide. Created and developed by youth, the Sports-for-All Clinic Grant can provide funding, support, and guidance to any event that aims to provide

youth-led sports programs for youth on the autism spectrum.

Applications are accepted year-round.

**Website:** [volunteennation.org/blog/categories/latest-news/436-sports-for-all-clinic](http://volunteennation.org/blog/categories/latest-news/436-sports-for-all-clinic)

## DuPont Pioneer Community Grants

DuPont Pioneer's Giving Program provides up to \$5,000 for a project or program that focuses on the following:

- Prekindergarten through grade 12 education: support of literacy programs, science fairs, supplies for science classrooms, teaching gardens and greenhouses, and support of local FFA and 4H programs.
- Food security: support of school-to-home backpack meal programs, food banks, rural meal delivery, congregate meal programs, meals on wheels programs, and community gardens.
- Community betterment: programs and projects that create sustainable infrastructure to benefit communities in which employees and customers live and work.

Grants of up to \$5,000 are awarded.

Interested applicants must contact their local DuPont Pioneer Representative for more information. A directory is available at [www.pioneer.com/home/site/us/contact-directory/#tabs-3](http://www.pioneer.com/home/site/us/contact-directory/#tabs-3).

**Website:** [www.pioneer.com/home/site/about/business/pioneer-giving/community-giving](http://www.pioneer.com/home/site/about/business/pioneer-giving/community-giving)

## CHS Foundation Mini-grants

The CHS Foundation is committed to investing in the future of rural America, agriculture, and cooperative business through education and leadership development. The CHS Foundation grants up to \$1,000 to innovative academic and leadership programs that strengthen student learning and enhance professional development. Examples include: leadership training opportunities, mentorship programs, professional development experiences, and student fundraising efforts.

Grants up to \$1,000 are awarded.

Applications are accepted year-round.

**Website:** [www.chsinc.com/stewardship/leadership-development#minigrants](http://www.chsinc.com/stewardship/leadership-development#minigrants)

## Waste Management, Inc. Grants

Waste Management, Inc. supports environmental and science education programs, such as science fairs and Earth Day projects targeting middle and high school students.

There is also interest in proposals to preserve and enhance natural resources. Local facilities may identify and support other causes that are important to the immediate community.

Applications are accepted and reviewed year-round.

**Website:** [www.wm.com/about/community/charitable-giving.jsp](http://www.wm.com/about/community/charitable-giving.jsp)

## Clif Bar Family Foundation's Small Grants

The Clif Bar Family Foundation's Small Grants are awarded for general organizational support or to fund specific projects in the foundation's priority areas: (1) protecting Earth's beauty and bounty; (2) creating a robust, healthy food system; (3) increasing opportunities for outdoor activity; (4) reducing environmental health hazards; and (5) building stronger communities.

The average grant awarded is \$8,000.

**Deadlines:** Applications are due February 15, May 15, August 15, and November 1, annually.

**Website:** [clifbarfamilyfoundation.org/Grants-Programs](http://clifbarfamilyfoundation.org/Grants-Programs)

## Environmental Advocacy Grants

The Cornell Douglas Foundation provides small grants to organizations that promote the foundation's vision: advocating for environmental health and justice, encouraging stewardship of the environment, and furthering respect for sustainability of resources.

Awards range from \$10,000 to \$15,000.

Applications are accepted on a rolling basis.

**Website:** [www.cornelldouglas.org/apply](http://www.cornelldouglas.org/apply)

## CPF EcoTech Grants

EcoTech grants are back! Sixteen (16) \$2500 grants will be awarded to schools or non-profits organizations for the purpose of engaging children in inquiry-based projects in STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) that use innovation, biomimicry/nature-based design, or new uses for technology to address environmental problems in their communities.

**Deadline:** Application opens January 1, 2015 with rolling deadline through April 30, 2015 (as funds allow).

**Website:** [captainplanetfoundation.org/ecotech-grants/](http://captainplanetfoundation.org/ecotech-grants/)

## Business Unit Grants

United Technologies (UTC) wants to inspire students to embrace science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). It supports the development of the next generation of engineers, scientists, and finance professionals by sponsoring primary school to university-level programs that spark students' interest and inspire innovation. The program also focuses on promoting opportunities for minorities and women to pursue careers in

engineering and research.

**Deadlines:** Business units accept online applications from January 1 to June 30, annually.

**Website:** [www.utc.com/Corporate-Responsibility/Community/Pages/Apply-For-A-Grant.aspx](http://www.utc.com/Corporate-Responsibility/Community/Pages/Apply-For-A-Grant.aspx)

## Saxena Family Foundation Grants

The Saxena Family Foundation, Inc. has a particular focus on initiatives that promote US science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education and the empowerment of girls, female children, and young women so that they have equal rights later in life. The foundation focuses on empowerment programs to include economic empowerment, educational empowerment, and political empowerment of women through literacy programs, jobs, and life-skills training.

Most awards range from \$5,000 to \$50,000.

Applications are accepted year-round, and are reviewed by the selection committee as they are received.

## Pathway to Financial Success Grant

The Pathway to Financial Success Grants are intended to bring financial education to classrooms to help children learn to make sensible financial decisions and reach their goals. US high schools are eligible to apply for a grant to incorporate financial education into the curriculum.

Applications are accepted year-round.

**Website:** [www.pathwaytofinancialsuccess.org/apply-for-a-grant/](http://www.pathwaytofinancialsuccess.org/apply-for-a-grant/)

## Calvin K. Kazanjian Economics Foundation Grants

The primary focus of the Kazanjian Foundation is to increase economic literacy. It gives special attention to proposals and projects with national impact, specifically programs that:

- Raise the public's participation in economic education or create a demand for greater economic literacy.
- Apply new strategies for teaching economics, including online and web-based instruction.
- Encourage measurement of economic understanding.
- Help otherwise disenfranchised youth and young adults with children learn to participate in the economic system.

Awards range from \$3,500 to \$150,000, with an average award of approximately \$22,000.

**Deadlines:** Applications are due February 15 for review in May/June, and September 15 for review in November/December, annually.

**Website:** [www.kazanjian.org/grants/apply](http://www.kazanjian.org/grants/apply)

# Teen techies gain hands-on training in Westonka Tech Interns course



By Becca Heistad Neuger  
Communications Coordinator  
Westonka Public Schools

"It's real-world problem solving at its finest." That's what teacher Sue Simonson said of the collaboration she has witnessed in the new Westonka Tech Interns class at Mound Westonka High School.

Beginning this fall, a class of MWHS students in grades 10-12 has been meeting during first hour to repair damaged Google Chromebooks as part of the new hands-on technology

course. The Westonka School District is in year two of its three-year Edge21 Technology Plan that includes 1:1 mobile device integration. This year, every student in grades 5-9 has a Chromebook to use at school and at home, and by next year grades 5-12 will be 1:1 with Chromebooks.

With thousands of devices and limited staff, Chromebook repairs would sometimes take weeks in years past, with students using replacement devices until theirs were returned. This year, the Westonka Tech Interns are helping to get damaged Chromebooks fixed and back into the hands of students quicker than ever before.

"We fix the Chromebooks and bring them back by the next day," junior WTI student Trenton Clark explained. "We email the student and/or teacher that sent us a Chromebook, and we tell them that we have received their Book and that we will be repairing it shortly."

## Launching WTI

The idea for the Westonka Tech Interns course came about in the spring of 2013, when about 10 Westonka employees toured East Leyden High School in Chicago. There, they visited a business education course in which students acted in tech support roles. Simonson's previous experience in IT and passion for business education motivated her to launch



a similar course at MWHS that would give students real, professional and innovative technology career experiences.

After one 48-minute training session with local businessperson Shane Johnson of GopherMods Education and a member of his staff, the MWHS students were repairing Chromebooks the very next day. The students have now repaired and replaced every part that is removable on the Chromebook.

"We have now acquired all the tools and organizational products that have our process down to a well-oiled machine," Simonson said.

WTI students said they enjoy working in teams to problem-solve. "Digging into the guts of the computer and finding the solutions to the problem is a good experience and is also a lot of fun," Clark said.

"The collaboration and troubleshooting is the truly greatest thing I've ever seen with students of this age," Simonson said. "If one student is struggling, he/she asks another to look at his/her device, and they step through the issue together."

## STEM Career Preparation

According to Simonson, 95 percent of WTI students are interested in pursuing technology education and/or technology careers. Junior WTI student Taran Besant said the class has allowed him to try out some of what he might want to pursue after high school.

"WTI presented a unique opportunity to be in a hands-on class, working with hardware and learning more about the technology being integrated into the education system," Besant said. "I have been working with hardware, software and programming, and each has been a pretty new experience for me."

"I don't have specific ideas of what exactly I want to have for a career, but while in high school I'll gladly accept any and all opportunities to experience as much as I can in fields I'm interested in," Besant said.

## Personalized Learning Experiences

With over 1,000 Chromebooks in the school district, the WTI students generally have devices to repair every day. With the addition of the three final grades to the 1:1 integration next year, the district will have close to 1,600 Chromebooks.

When they aren't repairing Chromebooks, the students have "20% Google Time," where they can explore fields of their interest. Examples of the students' WTI Pathway Proposals include: creating an app for the Westonka School District, learning Java Script, learning HTML, getting A+ Hardware Certification, getting Microsoft Office Certification and creating a social media presence for WTI.

The WTI students appreciate the freedom of the classroom. "It's not a lecture-based class; when we have computers to repair, we do; and when we don't, we work independently," Besant said.

Simonson is also working with Director of Technology Services Cory Wolf to explore ways that her students can assist Westonka's technology team. So far, the students have learned more about district technology servers and have had a lesson on creating network cables.

"WTI has taught me some about the inner workings of the technology department at our school, the hardware and software involved in the Chromebooks and ChromeOS, as well as giving me the opportunity to independently study a subject I'm interested in," Besant said. "By mixing the 20% time projects with actually repairing Chromebooks, WTI offers a diverse pool of information, which can be different for each student."

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*This contest is open to all high school students in Minnesota.* Essay entries are to be between 500 and 600 words in length. A Word document or PDF is preferred. Power point entries must be accompanied by a 175–225 word description to run in the print copies of *Teaching Today™ MN*. Links to power point entries will be posted on the *Teaching Today™ MN* website and blog site.

We will be featuring the five winners in our Spring Volume 1 issue which will be released in mid-March. The five honorable mentions will be presented in the following issue.

This contest begins on January 1st and the deadline for submissions is March 1st at 6:00 p.m.

**Whatever your dream career is *Teaching Today MN* wants to read about it!  
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### Please send entries to:

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Please include with your entry your contact information, the school you are currently attending and a teacher contact. Call Renee at 715-839-7074 or Andria at 715-360-4875 with any questions.



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By Patty Dexter

Cindy Walters has been involved in career and technical education for more than 30 years, and she's seen a lot of changes along the way.

Classes have come and gone. Her positions have changed over the years from teaching to administrative. She also believes career and technical education (CTE) is now seen as being more important than in the early days of her career.

"It at least appears there's more value being put on career and technical programming," she said. "There are higher paying jobs in those areas."

The Minnesota Association for Career and Technical Education (MnACTE) recently named Walters, director of alternative programs for

## Co-op program director is Administrator of the Year

SouthWest Metro Educational Cooperative, as Administrator of the Year. She was recognized on Nov. 13 during the annual CTE Works! Conference. More than 350 educators were present to honor her with the award.

"Cindy was selected above other candidates from Minnesota because of her leadership toward innovative, unique and novel programs in career and technical education," states an MnACTE news release. "Partnerships with local business/community partners are also one of her strengths." Walters said she is honored to have been recognized by MnACTE. "It's a big honor," she said.

According to the release, Walters serves as a national education team member for SkillsUSA, a board member for SkillsUSA Minnesota, and the coordinator of 500-plus adult volunteers at the annual SkillsUSA Minnesota Conference. She is also involved in the Chaska Lions Club and its Lions Youth Exchange.

"Cindy Walters is simply the glue that holds our career and technical education . . . programs together," said Darren Kermes, SouthWest Metro Cooperative executive director, in the news release.

### Real World Experience

Walters began her career with the co-op 31 years ago as a graphic arts teacher, and later

become a coordinator of career technical education programs. She was then a principal for the co-op's alternative school and in recent years became the director of alternative programs.

In her current role, she oversees various items including the CTE programs, the alternative school and adult education. "I deal with the staff and student issues like a principal does," she said.

The co-op still offers some CTE programs, such as construction and auto mechanics, which were around when she began her career. Over the years office skills were offered and eliminated as the needs of schools and businesses changed. In recent years the co-op has added photography and criminal justice. Cosmetology was popular for a while and now there's increased interest in criminal justice.

Today, the co-op offers criminal justice medical careers, computer repair, networking, cosmetology, auto mechanics, construction, agriculture, photography, graphic design and printing and intro to engineering in its CTE programs.

"Obviously 'CSI' and 'NCIS' and all those TV shows have increased [interest in] criminal justice right now," she said. "Another big one we're looking into is cyber security and those kinds of things because of the need. We're always trying to find the need where the jobs are."

The co-op gauges the needs in the CTE programs through meetings with superinten-

dents and principals. They also get information from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, Walters said.

Walters said their CTE programs depend on the co-op's business partnerships. This is an area that she's been working to strengthen because a benefit of CTE programs is the real-world experience they provide.

"In CTE you need to have advisory committees for every program so that the teachers in the program and the curriculum remains reliable and relevant for the time," she explained. "You need the business partners involved vetting the curriculum and coming and talking to students about what it's really like out there, allowing students to come into a place of business and learning opportunities."

Walters said now there is an increased focus at the high school level for students to be both college and career ready.

"They're trying to focus education to be relevant and that's just where we shine in CTE," she said.

*Reprinted with permission from the Chaska Herald*

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# Anoka-Hennepin Pathway's Deb Olson named top 'career and technical education' teacher of the year



Derrick Williams  
Communication Specialist  
Anoka-Hennepin School District

Deb Olson, an instructor in the Pathways Program is taking the idea of preparing students for life to a whole new level.

Olson was surprised and honored when

she found out she was named 2014 Outstanding Career and Technical Teacher of the Year by the Minnesota Association for Career and Technical Education/Special Needs Personnel.

"I was very surprised, honored and humbled by the realization that this was really happening to me," Olson said.

Olson, who has been with the district since 2000, went back to school herself to get her Work Experience Handicap Coordinator License, which led to her working with employment/post-secondary needs for transition students.

Olson has been working with the district's Pathways Program since it was developed in 2011. Pathways is one of the district's special education transition sites; it provides students ages 18 to 21 with opportunities to develop independent and competitive work skills and plan for a career.

"This is the fourth year I have worked with Deb at Pathways," Pathways supervisor Kathryn Ferguson said. "She has been instrumental in the development of the Pathways Program. She has an incredible ability to develop strong relationships and partnerships

with students, staff and community members. She is typically the first one to arrive at work and the last one to leave. Her dedication to the program is unending."

Ferguson said that it's a privilege to work with Olson and watch the development and continuous improvement of not just her, but the program as a whole.

"We are all proud of Deb's achievements and feel honored to work with such an incredible professional," Ferguson said. "She is a leader, team player and awesome educator."

Olson was recognized at the statewide MnACTE/SNP conference in Brooklyn Park during the awards luncheon. "I'm honored to be part of such an incredibly talented and dedicated group of professionals; each day I witness people coming to work with their focus being on what is best for the young adults we work with," Olson said.

A day in the life of Olson is one that involves being flexible, no matter how organized and prepared she is for the day.

"It's important to be flexible and 'catch' the teachable moments within the reality of the classroom," she explained. "Some of the most meaningful class discussions have come about

because of the 'unplanned' ideas that entered the environment."

As an educator, Olson enjoys being a 'seed planter' for her students. "We can plant seeds [ideas, thoughts], but we cannot make growth happen," she said. "Our young adults get to make that choice. My classic line is 'Change may not always happen on our watch.' As human beings, we all have the 'ah hah' moments when we are ready to hear, absorb and learn."

And besides planting seeds, she knows she is influencing students. "Teaching is an influential profession," she said. "We all remember teachers that positively or negatively impacted us. Course content is a building block for knowledge. Recognizing and acknowledging the gifts within people is life impacting."

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## CTE RESOURCES

### Ready, Set, Go MN

To support our state's commitment to prepare all youth for postsecondary opportunities, we have developed the Ready, Set, Go website for educators, families, and students. This site provides resources for college and career readiness and accelerated course options in Minnesota, including:

- Tools for students to be successful in high school and prepare them for their postsecondary experiences.
- Information for families on how to access these opportunities.
- An interactive curriculum resource area for educators to support these goals.

**Website:** [readyssetgo.state.mn.us/RSG/index.html](http://readyssetgo.state.mn.us/RSG/index.html)

### Planning for Students' Successful Transition to Postsecondary and Employment

Legislation requires all students starting in 9th grade to have a Personal Learning Plan. This plan should include academic scheduling, career exploration, career and employment-related skills, community partnerships, college

access, all forms of postsecondary training, and experiential learning opportunities. This guide provides resources in all eight required areas, as well as strategies and partnerships that can help implement this directive. Access the Planning for Students' Successful Transition to Postsecondary Education and Employment (120B.125) Toolkit at:

**Website:** [education.state.mn.us/MDE/StuSuc/CollReadi/index.html](http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/StuSuc/CollReadi/index.html)

### Shaping Your Future: Why Minnesota Families Choose College

This collection of high-quality videos promote career and college readiness is available on the Ready, Set, Go website. Stories come from students and parents; some are available in Hmong, Somali and Spanish. Schools and others may share these videos on their websites. View the Minnesota Department of Education's YouTube page and request a complimentary DVD.

**Website:** [education.state.mn.us/MDE/StuSuc/CollReadi/index.html](http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/StuSuc/CollReadi/index.html)

### Critical Skills Needs and Resources for the Changing Workforce

This "report is based on a survey that asked HR professionals and employees about the various skills, activities and content areas needed in today's workplace."—Society for

Human Resource Management (SHRM) and WSJ.com/Careers (The Wall Street Journal/Careers Journal)

**Website:** [tinyurl.com/yeabgny](http://tinyurl.com/yeabgny)

### Partnership for 21st Century Skills

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills is a national organization that advocates for 21st century readiness for every student.

**Website:** [www.p21.org/](http://www.p21.org/)

*Check out this blog!*

### Driving Question: What does it mean to teach all students 21st century skills?

My school, Two Rivers Public Charter School, in Washington, D.C. was recently named an Exemplar School by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills. This recognition is an acknowledgement that we have committed to building in all of our students the cognitive and social skills to have rich and varied options for their futures.

Implicit in this commitment is that just teaching our students the skills and knowledge associated with the core content in literacy, math, social studies, and science is not enough. For students to be successful in today's economy, they need the expert thinking skills to tackle new problems and continue

to learn, as well as the social skills associated with effective collaboration and strong independent work habits.

Read more at the following site:

**Website:** [www.p21.org/news-events/p21blog/1575-just-get-it-done-teaching-all-students-21st-century-skills](http://www.p21.org/news-events/p21blog/1575-just-get-it-done-teaching-all-students-21st-century-skills)

### Learning Environments: A 21st Century Skills Implementation Guide

A guide for state leaders, policymakers and/or district and school leaders with assessment tactics and examples to assist in statewide 21st century skills initiatives.

**Website:** [www.p21.org/our-work/resources/for-educators](http://www.p21.org/our-work/resources/for-educators)

### 21st Century Skills Map — Project Management for Learning (NEW!)

Created by the Project Management Institute Educational Foundation (PMIEF) and P21, this map illustrates the connection between 21st century skills, project management skills and career pathways, and provides educators with project-based learning examples for classroom use.

**Website:** [www.p21.org/our-work/resources/for-educators](http://www.p21.org/our-work/resources/for-educators)

## Bethel University Offers Two New Programs Connected to Special Education



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Bethel University in St. Paul, Minnesota, is offering two new programs that reach populations with special needs. The first, a two-year postsecondary program for students with intellectual disabilities, called Bethel University Inclusive Learning and Development (BUILD), will begin in fall 2015 with 12 students.

The residential BUILD program will focus on academic, vocational, residential, and social learning experiences, all influenced by the Christian faith. Bethel will provide students with the skills and education to live independently, maintain meaningful employment, and value lifelong learning. After successfully completing the program's requirements,

students will earn an applied skills certificate with an emphasis in health or human services, business, information technology, or education. "At the core of the BUILD program is the belief that all students can learn. BUILD students are provided individualized support through appropriate accommodations," says Pamela Erwin, Bethel's associate dean for professional programs.

BUILD program director Dawn Allen, who has a master's of education in special education from Bethel's Graduate School, has focused on the special education field throughout her career and education. Her passion is working with students, parents, and instructors to foster student success. "My mission is to build students' skills and help them reach independence," she says. "I always want to be in a position where I can advocate on behalf of others. This role will certainly help me do that."

Visit:

[bethel.edu/academics/build](http://bethel.edu/academics/build)

to learn more about the BUILD program.

A second program, recently launched by Bethel University's Graduate School, offers a teaching license tailored to another special needs population: those with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), the largest growing field in special education. Bethel's program is one of just a few accredited ASD programs in Minnesota, where it's in high demand due to a legislative change, effective in summer 2015, that mandates that all public schools in the state have at least one ASD-licensed teacher.

According to Autism Speaks, a leading autism science and advocacy organization, one in 68 children under age 18 in the U.S. has been diagnosed with ASD. Katie Bonawitz, Ed.D., program director of Bethel's special education graduate programs and associate professor of education, says the timing of the accreditation is crucial for the strategic, consistent training of teachers in this area of special education. Bonawitz describes Bethel's offering as an initial ASD license or an add-on to other special education licenses a teacher may already have. The ASD license, whether an initial or add-

on, allows teachers to work with children from birth to age 21 who have been identified as having mild to severe cases of autism. Teachers with the license will also help identify students they believe should be further evaluated. "Almost everyone knows someone who has autism," says Bonawitz. "At the graduate level, this is our way of serving a significant need in the field of special education."

Geared toward working adults looking to add the license to an existing special education degree, the program blends online course work with on-campus classes, and can be finished in six to nine months. Classes of approximately 25 students start twice a year.

Visit:

[gs.bethel.edu/academics/masters/special-education/license-options/asd](http://gs.bethel.edu/academics/masters/special-education/license-options/asd)

to find out more about the ASD license or to register for an online information session.

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# High Functioning Autism



What do you think of when you hear the word autism? If someone is familiar with the term at all they usually think of one of two scenarios. Either they picture someone who is profoundly retarded, staring blankly into space, totally uninterested in people, spinning things, or they picture Dustin Hoffman in the movie Rainman with his fantastic math abilities.

In reality autism runs the spectrum from mild to severe. People who are mildly affected are rarely thought of as being autistic. They are more likely labeled weird, eccentric, or strange. Even mental health professionals seem to have difficulty with diagnosing high functioning autism.

*What are the characteristics of autism?*

First and foremost it is characterized by deficits in communication and socialization or basically an abnormal way of relating to people and objects. Think of autism more as the way somebody is rather than something they have. A more positive view is rather than looking at it as a deficit think of it as a person who develops differently and looks at the world differently.

How does high functioning autism differ from classic autism? First, it is far more common. These people are usually found in main stream settings. Many near normals are never diagnosed. They are viewed as “odd” “eccentric”, or receive some other psychiatric diagnosis. Many have jobs, many, have chil-

dren. Here are some ways people with high functioning autism differ:

- They have higher cognitive abilities, usually normal to superior. Many read at a very early age. They usually do well in school academically. This can be a problem because teachers and others can be “blinded by their strengths” and fail to take their needs into account. One mother stated “the good news is he’s bright and the bad news is he’s bright.” They are often viewed as manipulative because they view the world differently.
- They have more normal language functioning. However, they continue to have trouble with the non-concrete. They often don’t “get” jokes. They have a harder time following abstract conversation and often have a difficult time taking turns in conversation. Often they revert to their areas of special interest. They can be hyperverbal (talk too much!).
- They have better social functioning but this usually remains the most problematic area throughout their lives. Often they relate much better to adults than to other children. They can’t “read” others and often have difficulty making and keeping friends.
- They often become fixated on a specific intellectual area and may gravitate towards this area for jobs as an adult. (This all-consuming interest may be of benefit to society) One helpful strategy is to take full advantage of their interest in managing their behavior.

- They have a better prognosis as functioning adults.

No single effective intervention exists for individuals with high-functioning autism. However, there are proactive strategies, such as self-management, designed to maintain or change one’s behavior to make living with high functioning autism easier. Self-management strategies aim to provide the individual with the skills necessary to self-regulate their own behavior, leading to greater levels of independence. Improving self-management skills allows the individual to be more self-reliant rather than having to rely on an external source for supervision or control. Self-monitoring is a framework, not a rigid structure, designed to encourage independence and self-control in the individual. Self-monitoring is not for everyone. It requires the attention and dedication of the individual with high-functioning autism as well as the individual overseeing the progress.

A framework for self-monitoring is provided below:

- Identify positive target behaviors
  - Establish an alternative behavior that is positive/constructive*
- Establish a self-recording sheet
  - Individuals can make sure to stay on track with intended goals*
- Set goals and keep them

The goal of self-monitoring is to have the individual obtain the self-monitoring skills independently without prompting.

*From: eric.ed.gov*

## Tips for working with autistic students

We are all individuals and we all require special help at some time in our lives, an Autistic pupil will grow and develop into an adult who suffers from Autism he/she needs to learn what appropriate behavior is and what is not, to enable them to move forward.

Imagine what it is like to be in a foreign country alone, not being able to speak the language, or not to be able to understand a directional sign, that is what it is like to an Autistic pupil. It can be a very frightening world.

Things to remember, the pupil may exhibit:

- Lack of communicating skills
- Finds making friends hard
- Lack of imaginative and creative play  
The pupil may be extremely
- Clever at something — music, art, math
- Knowledgeable about something, birds, dinosaurs
- Polite
- Good sense of humor

- Caring
  - Ask Yourself:
  - How am I speaking to this pupil?
  - Never use sarcasm or a metaphor, an Autistic pupil is very literal!
  - Does the pupil understand the instructions?
  - Am I being clear and precise, without being patronizing?

### Socializing

It is not automatic for an Autistic pupil to know how to talk to others; they need to be told, sometimes repeatedly. They may, when being introduced to someone, kiss them in greeting or touch the person. They need to know what is appropriate.

The other pupils in your class may find some of the Autistic pupils’ behavior disturbing; they need to be made aware that the classmate is not being deliberately rude or unkind, but that their friend has difficulty understanding the right way to behave, so you

need to tell the pupil that inappropriate behavior is upsetting the rest of the class. Their own peer group will help them in this, if they understand the situation.

It is a good idea to make a chart with some good opening lines:

- What do you like best at school?
- Do you have a hobby?
- Did you have a good weekend?
- Appoint a ‘buddy’ to help

### Structure

An Autistic pupil likes structure. They like to know what is going to happen and when, change can upset them greatly. They find it really hard to make choices.

Making it easier:

- Written tasks taped to pupil’s desk
- Give pupil a written timetable
- If you know that there is going to be a change, tell them

### Playtime

An Autistic pupil finds the playground a daunting place; he/she won’t understand that there are rules. They find it difficult to interact with other children; they may like their own company or to charge around making loud noises. If strategies aren’t put into place difficulties may arise with the other pupils.

Free mind at playtime:

- Talk to the pupil about how to behave towards others
- Allow them to take something to play with outside
- Allow them to go to the library or quiet place to read, if they feel more comfortable doing that
- Make sure that all other staff know any strategies that you are using

This is an excerpt from a very good article by Jane Jackson; called “The Autistic Pupil in Your Classroom” You can find the article at

**Website:** [www.teachingideas.co.uk/more/specialneeds/contents.htm](http://www.teachingideas.co.uk/more/specialneeds/contents.htm)



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# Talahi PTA: Changing the Conversation One Voice at a Time

By Tami DeLand

Listen in on a Talahi Community School PTA meeting, and you will hear a recurring theme: parents love this school and send their children to it with pride.

“The moment we entered the school for Kindergarten open house, we felt a sense of community,” says PTA member Theresa Flinck. “My husband and I decided to send our son to Talahi through open enrollment . . . because of the unique opportunity for him to experience community through diversity in culture, language and religion.”

“Talahi has exceeded our expectations in so many ways,” she adds. “Our son’s academic progress has been phenomenal. We’ve seen his interest and love of learning take off through a variety of programs that are tailored to meet students’ needs. Our teachers and support staff go above and beyond for the children to engage them in the learning process.”

Yet when last spring’s Minnesota Multiple Measurement Ratings designated Talahi as a Priority school, resulting media attention negatively impacted many of those connected to the school. And that brings you to another recurring theme you will hear at a Talahi PTA meeting: the united goal to change the conversation about Talahi.

“My kid is not a number,” PTA Secretary Bonnie Zbaren emphatically reminds the group. “This school reflects they [the students] are so much more than that. Talking about the school this way does so much damage. My kid is not a poor test score.”

Jennifer Doom is a teacher within the district and has a current third grader at Talahi as well as a child who attended K–5th grade there. She supports the Talahi staff and admires their dedication and hard work.

She says the media reports are a “bad rap,” adding, “you need to look for growth, not just the score.”

Many students who attend Talahi are new to country. Eight Somali parents attended a recent PTA meeting and agreed that their children receive excellent instruction in language and the basics. With the help of an interpreter, they joined in the conversation.

Saido Abdipoor shared, “My son is in kindergarten here and loves his teacher. In just three months he is trying to write and speak good English. He wants to be at school. Even Sundays.”

Beth Huber is an eight year veteran as a Talahi parent and PTA member. The youngest of her children is in 5th grade this year, and she laughingly warns the group, “I am coming back.”



She advises all the parents and staff at the meeting, “Talk to everyone in community. Invite them here. That’s the job. Grab them.”

Assistant Principal Nicole Rafdal agrees. “Come and see,” she invites the community. “See what we see every day and you will be convinced to attend here.”

Principal Kate Flynn believes it is a privilege to sit as a new principal with all these dedicated people and to listen to the love they have for their school.

“What I tell people about Talahi,” she added, “is [that] we are rich in culture, language and diversity. Our children will be ready for the 21st Century.”

Fourth grade teacher Liz Hallermann says she wouldn’t take another job anywhere else, citing Talahi’s families and sense of community.

“Community is the best thing at Talahi,” agrees PTA Treasurer Cara Muniz.

One way the PTA is trying to bring atten-

tion and support to the school is through the “I ♥ Talahi” campaign. Children and parents colored graphic sheets with an explanation of their individual pride written below. The posters currently hang all throughout the Talahi halls.

“We wanted to see a visual of the pride, love, and commitment that we have for our school,” explained Flinck. “Through this campaign, students and parents alike have been able to share their story about why Talahi is so important to them.”

If you are interested in learning more about Talahi Community School or in volunteering, contact Principal Kate Flynn at [kate.flynn@isd742.org](mailto:kate.flynn@isd742.org) or PTA President Stacy McNab at [stacymcnab@gmail.com](mailto:stacymcnab@gmail.com).

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# Art Club at Austin High School



Ryan Mayers  
Technology Integration Specialist  
Austin Public Schools

Walk into Jake Levisen's classroom at Austin High School after school on a Tuesday afternoon, and you're likely to see students painting, drawing, or working with 3D art materials. In short, you'll see a group of students making Art.

"Art Club is an outlet for students who are interested in pursuing individual artistic growth," says Mr. Levisen. "It lets students explore different mediums and really focus on the one or ones they like."

In recent years, Art Club has become more of a studio style group, where students can choose what they'd like to explore in a collegial atmosphere with other students

while the advisors act as supports when necessary.

"What's great about Art Club is that while you typically only get to do one or two projects per medium in a class, in Art Club you can focus on your favorite and really challenge yourself."

According to Levisen, the success of Art Club is tied back into the concept of Project Based Learning, where students develop and work on projects to further their learning while the teacher becomes less of a guide and more of a support in the process. "When [students] get to focus on what they really want to do, they tend to excel quite a bit more."

For Levisen, the best part of Art Club is seeing the students develop their skills. "The community environment is great. Seeing students interact and critique each other's work is amazing and it definitely leads to some self-discovery."

The importance of self-discovery cannot be overstated. According to Levisen, developing your skill as an artist involves many of the same skills that are necessary in both core curriculum classes and in the professional world. "You need to be able to visualize your final product and the steps to get there. Then, along the way,

you're constantly having to problem solve and adjust. It really helps students to learn that there's more than one way to achieve your goal."

Art Club also provides opportunities for more students to be involved in art. "There's a large segment of students who aren't able to take an art class for various reasons, and this gives them the opportunity to be involved in the art shows and the art assembly throughout the year."

The Art Club is responsible for putting on the annual Art Awards at the end of the year, which draws on the results from two separate Art Shows throughout the year. The first Art Show is this week, January 7th and 8th from 8am to 5:30pm in Knowlton Auditorium, and it is open to the public. "Everyone is invited to come check out the art and vote on their favorite pieces."

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## AMSA eighth graders have art displayed at U.S. Department of Education



Britta Larson, who last year was Anoka Middle School for the Arts eighth-grader, shows off her artwork, which was displayed at the U.S. Department of Education building in Washington, D.C. over the summer.

*Derrick Williams*  
Communication Specialist  
Anoka-Hennepin School District

It's one thing for a student to have their artwork displayed in the halls of their school. Walk through either campus of Anoka Middle School for the Arts (AMSA), and one can see just that. Drawings, paintings, photos—artwork is everywhere.

But it's something else entirely to have that artwork displayed at the nerve center of public education in America: the U.S. Department of Education building in Washington, D.C.

But over the summer, the work of four distinguished AMSA students was a part of a 64-piece exhibit at the building in the nation's capital, according to AMSA

English Language Arts (ELA) teacher Kristen Gifford. The students, Katherine Andrews, Peyton Arndt, Britta Larson and Shea O'Brien are now freshmen at Anoka High School.

"I tell my students all the time — writing isn't about the classroom, it's about the real world," she said. "It's not just in the walls of the school that your writing matters — there's a whole world out there that want to hear what you have to say, and this is an example of that, and it inspires me and the kids."

Larson said she was surprised her piece, which was an artful, black and white bouquet of flowers, was even selected for the exhibit. "I'm proud, but it was surprising. I didn't think mine would get picked for it," she said.

Gifford said the opportunity to have artwork be a part of the Washington, D.C. exhibit sprang from the "Artful Writing Program" professional development workshop she was a part of a couple summers ago at the Weisman Art Museum at the University of Minnesota.

"The workshop discussed how to use art to inspire writing," she said. Following the workshop, she helped create a new lesson based off of what she learned. Then last year, as part of the new unit, Gifford's

eighth grade advanced ELA course went to the Minneapolis Institute of Art and students were asked to pick a piece of art that intrigued them. Based off their individual selections, they were then asked to develop a research topic based off of it and write a paper. "It could be anything — a symbol or a feeling evoked — so long as it was derived from the art they had seen," Gifford said.

The unit culminated in an art project at the end of the year where they created a piece of art of their own that speaks back to the artwork that initially intrigued them at the museum. "It's a bit of a circular process where the students see art and make art," Gifford said. "But it really develops some critical and deep thinking skills."

Around the same time the unit was finished, Gifford said she received word from Jamee Young, the facilitator of the workshop she had taken at the Weisman two years ago, that the Association of Museum Art Directors was looking for student artwork to be displayed in the U.S. Department of Education building in Washington, D.C.

"So we submitted some of the pieces of artwork created and were lucky enough

**Continued on Page 17**



## UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN River Falls

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UWRF Hudson Center  
Hudson, WI

8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

## 'Choice Projects' at Concord Elementary

Continued from Page 1

lot about chromosomes and even about some topics he didn't expect to study. "Evolution and genetic mutations that allow one species to survive while another one dies off — that is some pretty interesting stuff," he said.

For fellow student, Abby, her interest lies in helping young children. "When we lived in San Francisco we gave to the crisis nursery there, so I thought I would like to do something for the crisis nursery here," she said. Her project includes creating a fund drive where she will collect needed items, so she has been learning about marketing, making flyers, and creating her door-to-door pitch.

William's goal is to run faster. "I have a pretty good time now, but I would like to improve a little bit," he said. So far he's learned that "heel strikes" are not good and that the wind can impact your time quite a bit. He is also studying training techniques and a healthy lifestyle that will help him in his quest run to a mile in 6:30 minutes.

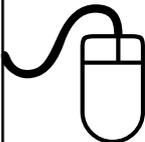
Recently, Christian worked with Jennifer Dewing, a children's picture book author and Edina parent. He is creating a picture book for his two-year-old sister. "What would happen if you heard a wolf howl at night?" Dewing chal-

lenged Christian during one of their mentor sessions. He is now working on his book, "Sponge Bob Scaredy Pants," and together they were working on using colorful adjectives and verbs.

Rev also received some expert advice on his book and presentation about freestyle snow skiing tricks, like the Flying Squirrel Back Flip. Andy Garske, an editor and videographer at Prairie Public Television in Fargo, N.D., happened to be visiting friends who knew about the project in VanDeLaarschot's classroom, and was happy to come in to consult with Rev. "He suggested that I take the slide show of my tricks and go step by step so that readers can see how I move my body," Rev said. Garske said it is fun to work with young, enthusiastic students. A bonus, he said, is that he also gets to learn — about freestyle ski tricks. "Not that I'll be using those skills in Fargo!" he laughed.

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## AMSA Art at U.S. Dept. of Education

Continued from Page 16



Anoka Middle School for the Arts (AMSA) English Language Arts teacher Kristen Gifford stands in front of a display of some of her student's artwork at the U.S. Department of Education building in Washington, D.C. over the summer. Four AMSA students had artwork in the ultra-exclusive exhibit.

to have four student pieces selected," she said.

While proud of her artwork that went on display, Larson said she was most happy with the writing she did in support of the artwork. "That was my favorite part about it," she said.

AMSA Curriculum Integrator Jolanda Dranchak said having students be a part of the display was a huge honor, not only for the students, but also for the school. "Our AMSA students — they were the only ones from the whole state to be a part of the exhibit," she said. "How cool is that?"

As for the display, Gifford said she did make time to go see it over the summer. "For me it was kind of abstract until I saw it. It's a really big honor, but it's in Washington, D.C. and it's there and we're here. But when I saw it — it was pretty cool."

[www.anoka.k12.mn.us/  
Domain/32](http://www.anoka.k12.mn.us/Domain/32)  
(763) 506-5000

## Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

Continued from Page 1

"There is vast research showing a link between art education and cognitive ability, reasoning and even verbal skills," said Malinda Lansfeldt, executive director of learning supports and elementary education. "We know that our world needs more creative and innovative thinkers, and a STEAM education is a great way to get kids to solve problems in unique ways."

Each art class features fun, hands-on projects that get kids excited and keep them engaged in their learning. One week students may be painting a tree-lined boulevard while learning about perspective, and the next they may be creating a 3-dimensional color wheel while exploring the many pigments in color. In just one session they may learn about Japanese culture and study geometric shapes and angles as they practice the art of origami. In another they may discuss

the geography and history of Afghanistan as they consider the lengths a person must go to in order to find a particular pigment for oil paint.

"Before we didn't get any art classes, we just did some art projects with our teachers," said Isbella, a fifth grader at Lily Lake. "Now we are learning more about art and have a lot more supplies we can use to create art. It's really fun."

[www.stillwater.k12.mn.us](http://www.stillwater.k12.mn.us)  
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# Student Contests and Awards



## InvenTeams

InvenTeams is a national grants initiative of the Lemelson-MIT program that is designed to excite high school students about invention, empower students to problem solve, and encourage an inventive culture in schools and communities. InvenTeams are composed of high school students, teachers, and industry mentors. Working collaboratively, InvenTeams identify a problem to be solved, conduct research on the problem, and develop a prototype invention as an in-class or extracurricular project with the purpose of inventing something of value for their school or local community. InvenTeam projects span many fields, such as assistive devices, environmental technologies, consumer goods, and experimental vehicles.

Grants up to \$10,000 are awarded annually, with approximately 15 grants available.

**Deadline:** Initial applications are due February 27, 2015. If selected to continue to the next step, final applications are due September 4, 2015.

**Website:** [lemelson.mit.edu/inventeams](http://lemelson.mit.edu/inventeams)

## Kids to Parks School Contest

The purpose of the Kids to Parks (KTP) School Contest is to help teachers engage their students with their local parks. The three main goals for the contest are: (1) to engage children with the health and wellness benefits of outdoor park recreation, (2) to teach students about the unique science and history of the park, and (3) to inspire a generation of conservation leaders and stewards that will take action to protect their parks.

This national contest is open to all schools across the country and in the US territories. Students can submit proposals for a KTP event

at a park in their community. Winners will use the scholarships to implement their KTP event during the month of May.

Scholarships of \$1,000 are awarded.

**Deadline:** March 2, 2015

**Website:** [parktrust.org/youthprograms/national-kids-to-parks-day/school-contest](http://parktrust.org/youthprograms/national-kids-to-parks-day/school-contest)

## World of 7 Billion Video Contest

Population Connection is sponsoring a video contest open to all high school students in grades 9 through 12. The contest theme is the over seven billion people sharing the planet and how population pressures can affect sustainably of earth's resources and the potential to improve living conditions worldwide. Contest entrants create a short video of 60 seconds or less that illustrates the connection between population growth and one of the three following global challenges:

- The world is in the midst of the sixth mass extinction.
- Most of the world's suitable farmland is already under cultivation.
- Worldwide, 1 in 10 primary school age children and 1 in 3 secondary age children are not enrolled in school.

All videos must include a) how population growth impacts the issue, b) why the issue is important, and c) at least one idea for a sustainable solution.

Cash prizes are awarded in the three topic areas: one first prize of \$1,000; one second prize of \$500; and two honorable mentions of \$250, for a total of 12 prizes.

**Deadline:** Entries are due February 19, 2015, at 5:00 p.m. (EST).

**Website:** [www.worldof7billion.org/student-video-contest/](http://www.worldof7billion.org/student-video-contest/)

## Clean Tech Competition

The Clean Tech Competition is a unique, worldwide research and design challenge for pre-college youth. The program encourages scientific understanding of real-world issues and the integration of environmentally responsible energy sources. Each year, the Clean Tech Competition addresses an issue that is grounded in core technological competency areas and focuses on the next great engineering challenges. The competition is designed to foster a deeper understanding of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) related concepts, recognize outstanding talent, and prepare the next generation of globally competitive innovators.

**Deadline:** Registration opens Nov. 17 and closes February 20.

**Website:** [www.cleantechcompetition.org/](http://www.cleantechcompetition.org/)

## Audubon Photography Contest

The annual Audubon Magazine Photography Awards is your chance to parlay your love of birds and photography into a trip to St. Lucia, Peru or Honduras . . . or another amazing prize. Winners' photos will also be displayed as part of a special year-long exhibit at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History beginning next fall.

The youth winner will spend a day working with National Geographic photographer Joel Sartore on his Photo Ark project.

**Deadline:** Submissions due February 23, 2015.

**Website:** [audubonphotoawards.org](http://audubonphotoawards.org)

## Plastic Film Recycling Contest

Teams of students in grades K-12 are invited to create a poster and presentation to convince fellow students, school and community to collect and recycle flexible plastic film. Teams may range in size from two to 32 students.

Entries will be judged in three grade bands: K-4, 5-8, and 9-12. Judges will select 1st-place, 2nd-place, and 3rd-place winners from each grade band and will award cash prizes of \$750 for 1st place, \$500 for 2nd place, and \$250 for 3rd place in each grade band.

**Deadline:** Entries due March 1, 2015.

**Website:** [www.jason.org/contest/2014-2015-plastic-film-recycling-contest](http://www.jason.org/contest/2014-2015-plastic-film-recycling-contest)

## Young Naturalist Awards

The American Museum of Natural History's Young Naturalist Awards program is for students in grades 7-12. The theme of the awards is the same each year, "Scientific Discovery Begins with Curiosity!"

Students are invited to plan and conduct their own scientific investigation, one that will include observations, questions, predictions, trips into the field to gather data, and analysis. They are not expected to make a new scientific discovery. However, their investigation should provide them with a new understanding about their question. They will submit an essay that includes tables, charts, or graphs and artwork or photographs that help illustrate their findings.

**Deadline:** Applications due March 1, 2015.

**Website:** [www.amnh.org/learn-teach/young-naturalist-awards](http://www.amnh.org/learn-teach/young-naturalist-awards)



## Healthy Playground Makeover Sweepstakes

The Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation and Discovery Education are sponsoring the Healthy Playground Makeover Sweepstakes, which is offering a variety of prizes to elementary schools. This year, there are 2 grand prizes: a \$30,000 grant and a new playground from Playworld Systems. One grand prize drawing will be chosen from among all eligible entries. The second grand prize drawing will be from among all eligible

entries whose schools qualify for the Title I Schoolwide Program. In addition to the 2 grand prizes, 3 schools will receive a \$5,000 grant to improve school wellness programs.

**Deadline:** March 19, 2015

**Website:** [www.togethercounts.com/at-school/win-for-your-school/sweepstakes](http://www.togethercounts.com/at-school/win-for-your-school/sweepstakes)

## UL Innovative Education Award

The North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE), in collaboration with Underwriters Laboratories (UL), is accepting applications for the UL Innovative Education Award, which supports the development of future leaders by awarding nonprofits for their work in environmental and STEM education for children. A total of \$250,000 will be awarded, in addition to professional mentorship opportunities and more.

This award aims to recognize and support the work of U.S. and Canadian non-

profits that embrace E-STEM to inspire school-aged children to be the next generation of game-changing scientists, business leaders, researchers, inventors, and engineers. The program supports E-STEM work that is:

- Advancing STEM learning through research and investigation
- Promoting social responsibility and citizenship
- Tackling environmental problems

One \$100,000 grant, two \$50,000 grants, and two \$25,000 grants will be awarded. In addition to the grants, UL employees, including science, engineering and technical experts, will work directly with the selected organizations to provide expertise, resources, and volunteer hours to help further their efforts in E-STEM education.

**Deadline:** Initial applications are due February 27, 2015.

**Website:** [ulinnovationeducation.naaee.net/](http://ulinnovationeducation.naaee.net/)

## Young Eco-Hero Awards

Action for Nature seeks applications from students ages 8-16 for its Eco-Hero Awards Program. This program recognizes the individual accomplishments of young people whose personal actions have significantly improved the environment.

**Deadline:** Apply by February 28, 2015.

**Website:** [www.actionfornature.org/home.aspx](http://www.actionfornature.org/home.aspx)



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## Friends of the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center



The Prairie Wetlands Learning Center, located in Fergus Falls, Minnesota, is a residential environmental education facility operated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Friends of the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center was developed to enhance and promote the understanding and conservation of the prairie pothole region, primarily through support of the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center.



The Center offers a variety of environmental education programs to learners of all ages, as well as teacher workshops and training sessions for wildlife professionals year-round.

Contact us to find out about opportunities for both students and educators!

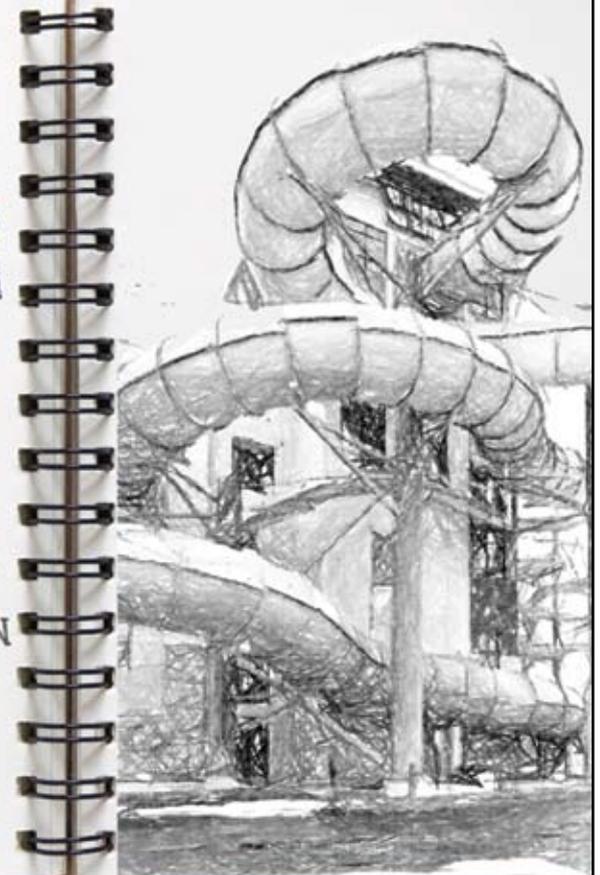
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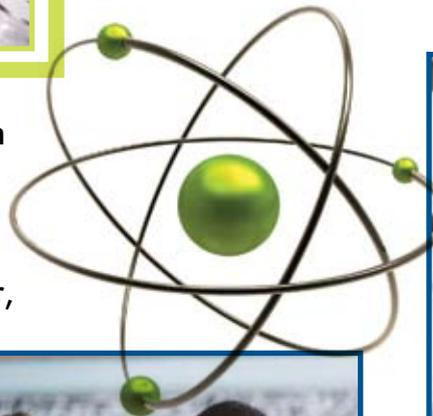


## YOUTH SCIENCE RETREAT



This year's i3@MTC Youth Science Retreat, which stands for, **"Inspire, Investigate, and Innovate at the MinnWest Technology Campus"** will include about 25 different demonstrators. The intention of each is to not only expose the students to real world applications of STEM but also to get them involved with hands on experiences.

The Youth Science Retreat is targeting children grades 3–8, is intended to expose students to STEM disciplines in the workplace (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math). However, all students, parents, and grandparents are invited to attend.



# SAVE THE DATE:

Saturday, April 18, 2015



[www.mnwesttechnology.com/i3mtc](http://www.mnwesttechnology.com/i3mtc)