

## 742! Where Learning Begins



Carissa Hopkins-Hoel  
Communications Coordinator  
St. Cloud Area School District 742

Venturing into school for the first time poses interesting questions — and answers.

During rest time, a little boy whispers to the girl next to him, “Will you marry me?” She flashes him a panicked look and responds, “No, thank you.”

Ask any 3-year-old how old he thinks you are, and he will say a number from one to 10.

Ask a 4- or 5-year-old, and she will guess the biggest number she knows, whether it is 72 or 103. And, of course, in answer to the question, where does chocolate milk from, the answer is always brown cows.

For St. Cloud Area School District preschoolers, school is about fun, playtime and friends. For parents, it’s a time to watch their children spread their wings: to play, learn and interact with others. For teachers, preschool is about social-emotional and

academic development, but most of all it’s about how their students’ faces light up when they walk in the room and the memories that are created.

“One day, I had a girl walk into the classroom,” laughs early childhood speech pathologist Melody Vachal at Oak Hill Community School. “She was all done up with her hair in a big, long braid. She sat down

at circle time and said, ‘You can call me Anna today.’ Disney really has a big influence on our students. We see characters all the time.”

What Vachal has loved most in her 30 plus years of teaching is that kids are so excited and genuine.

“There is no pretense,” she says, smiling. “Everything is fresh, new and exciting for them.”

When she began teaching back in 1988, all of the early childhood teachers were in one room. Now there are several classes at nine school sites in addition to servicing the Reach-Up Head Start locations for special education. There are over 600 students registered in District 742 preschool with an additional 100 or more, birth to three

years, with special needs.

As the program has grown, so have the

## North Junior High Builds Program That Helps All Students ‘Win’

**A restructure of North’s existing advisory time allows all students to participate in everything the school has to offer.**

Hopkins Public Schools

On Tuesday and Wednesday mornings, the school day at North Junior High looks and feels a lot like it does after school. Students engage in enrichment activities, participate in school clubs, and seek academic support from their teachers. It’s all part of a new program that started at North this February called WIN, which stands for What I Need. It creates equitable experiences for students, deepens school community, and allows teachers and students to build stronger bonds.

Debbie Hahn, a social studies teacher at North, along with 11 other teachers, came up with the concept of WIN this past summer when they were trying to find time in the day for ninth-grade students to work on a required International Baccalaureate (IB) service-learning project. By cutting just four minutes off each block, they created 30 minutes of time two days a week for ninth-grade students. They soon realized that if they opened up this time to the entire school, all students could benefit. It was a complex endeavor that involved reconfiguring advisory time, but from the beginning everyone was all in, including North leadership.



“This is a big change, but we knew it would be great for kids and for our school community,” said Hahn. “By deconstructing the traditional advisory time, we are building deeper experiences for students.”

“It’s my job as a leader to help break down barriers, access resources, and clear a path for innovation to be put into action,” said Becky Melville, North Junior High principal. “When there is passion for something that is grounded in research and possibilities all in one, how would it be possible not to support it?”

### Equitable solutions for students

WIN serves all students, but is especially beneficial for those who are not able to participate in after-school enrichment, clubs, or homework help opportunities. Assuming students are current on their homework, they can choose to spend their WIN time in a variety of ways. There are dozens of enrichment choices

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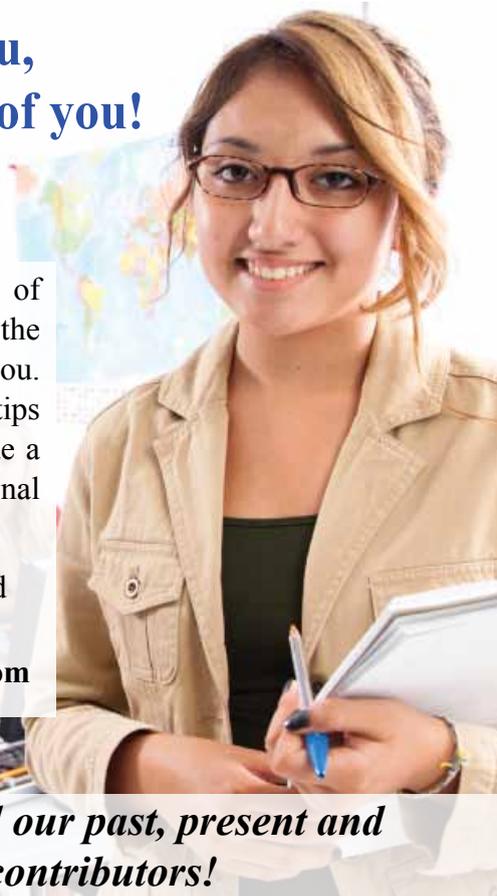
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## Where Learning Begins

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expectations of preschoolers to be prepared for kindergarten.

"There is so much to offer families and [so many] services to provide. It's so much larger than people imagine," explains Vachal. "There are the social-emotional aspects of learning, how to be with other children and self-advocate, as well as the academic piece of learning the ABCs and their sounds, colors, shapes and numbers."

Vachal has watched all three of her own children attend preschool through high school in District 742. With her son, Isaac, early childhood services began at 16-weeks-old. Isaac is blind and has cerebral palsy.

Vachal describes her son's experiences and so many more. "It's exciting to see preschoolers graduate, especially those in special education. You plant the seed and start to see the beginning stages of development. My own son [Isaac] started with saying the word 'pop.' Once he could say that word, he got to have a piece of popcorn. Now at 22, he sang happy birthday on his birthday. We may only see the dirt or a little sprout [when they are with us], but eventually, you get to see the whole garden."

Vachal recalls other stories of students thriving as they get older. One student who had articulation problems now flourishes in music in junior high. She giggles as she recalls another.

"One morning, I had two students that I was working with," she describes. "One boy was saying the word 'little.' However, it came out as 'yiddo.' The other boy said, 'Hey, Teacher Melody, he just said, 'yiddo' not 'yitto,' not realizing, of course, that he could hear the incorrect pronunciation in the other boy but not himself."

It's stories like these that really warm her heart. Of course, there are sometimes stories that can't be shared for fear of parent mortification. More than once, teachers have congratulated parents on new arrivals of little brothers and sisters that may not yet exist, but it always brings a smile.

"Sometimes, what happens in preschool, stays in preschool," says Vachal.

Preschoolers eventually learn they really need to wait a few years before asking for a hand in marriage or that chocolate milk really doesn't come from brown cows. Meanwhile, preschool is the place where imagination and early learning begin.

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## Aviation Taking Flight at Johnson Aerospace and Engineering High School



*Johnson Aerospace and Engineering High School, Saint Paul Public Schools*

It's a typical Tuesday morning in early December. Malik, A 10th grade student at Johnson Aerospace and Engineering High School in St. Paul, is flying across the San Francisco landscape in a small twin engine airplane. It's partly cloudy and the morning sun shines across the bay in spectacular fashion. His mission is to navigate a way,

together with his co-pilot, Mai Lia, an 11th grader, to the Golden Gate Bridge and Alcatraz Island to take the best possible photos of the famous landmarks. They'll shift their flight path towards wine country and end their flight at the Napa Valley airport.

Of course, these high school students were not actually flying, nor were they in San Francisco. They were in the school's ultra-realistic flight simulator lab. Their

class, Introduction to Flight, has introduced the duo, along with 20 other students, how to fly airplanes and get down the basics of air traffic control. The class is one of three different flight simulator classes, all built around a standard private pilot curriculum. It is part of the Aerospace career pathway at the school and will give students a head start in multiple careers of the aviation field — ranging from pilot, air traffic control, airport management and aircraft maintenance.

Within the school, the word has gotten out about the class. It's become a school favorite — not because everyone is interested in flying, but because it is the most unique educational experience a high schooler could ever imagine having. Students are immersed in a simulated environment to a level that they feel the motion of the airplane even though there are no moving parts to the simulators. Students also get to view the world from a different perspective (the air) going to all the corners of the world. One of their instructors, Scott Shaffer states, "Having such a diverse student body gives students the opportunities to fly around the various areas of their decedents, which is a very enlightening for them. Not only that, but students get an opportunity to see some of the world's greatest wonders of the world — like the Eiffel Tower, Sydney Opera House, Great Wall of China and the

Pyramids of Egypt to name only a few".

Of the 7 simulators in the classroom, students works in teams of 3 — all of whom rotate between pilot, co-pilot and as an air traffic controller. Teams need to work together to complete flight missions that correspond to a given learning objective. Each new flight mission builds on the previous missions learning objective and it isn't long before cheers of encouragement fill the classroom as students complete their first landing without crashing!

The school has become one most advanced high school aviation programs in the nation. As the school looks to the future, using sponsorships and grants, they hope to expand the program to the St. Paul airport where students can gain greater experiences in aircraft maintenance, airport management and even actual flight in obtaining their private pilot license.

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## What do you want to be when you grow up? Careers in Aviation

*Ken Polovitz  
Assistant Dean John D Odegard School for  
Aerospace Science*

"Since you were old enough to understand the question, you have been asked, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" And, like most, you probably blurted out something that seemed really exciting and glamorous but really didn't have the first clue what it really was or how you become a fireman, rock star, ballet dancer or pilot. Now that you are older and wiser and considering your options after high school, the question now goes like this: "Where are you going to college and what are you going to major in?" And, you may be like most — still clueless and confused! Determining a career and selecting a college can be some of the most difficult decisions we ever make.

For almost twenty years as Assistant Dean for Student Services within the Odegard School of Aerospace Sciences at the University of North Dakota, I've been advising young people who are considering a career in Aviation. And, when asked what specifically they would like to do in aviation the vast majority respond: "Airline Pilot"! That's certainly exciting and specific, but most have really no clue about how you become a professional pilot. Or, about the many other occupations

within the industry like air traffic controllers, maintenance and avionics technicians, airport managers, military options, helicopter pilots, corporate pilots, airline operations managers and the list can go on and on. Like many career fields, the aviation industry is so large and diverse that it can leave many clueless and confused — again!

When considering a career within the aviation industry, it's best, in my opinion, to first turn toward those colleges and universities that have the degree options covering all or most of the occupations you should explore. This approach can help determine the quality of the school but just as importantly, allow you to explore and become more knowledgeable about the many, many occupations within the aviation industry--including becoming an airline pilot!

It is very important that you find and explore degree options in professional flight--both airplane and helicopter, air traffic control, airport and aviation management, aviation systems management (maintenance/avionics/dispatch), engineering, ROTC programs and the newest degree option, unmanned aerial systems (UAS) operations.

Collegiate aviation has become the main avenue for individuals to follow to as they



consider establishing a career within the aviation industry.

Consequently, not only is it important to choose a school with comprehensive degree options, it's also very important to choose a university with a strong reputation within the aviation industry. This, of course, gives you an advantage with job placement upon graduation.

So, what do you want to be when you grow up? Well, if you are considering a career in aviation, don't limit yourself to any single occupation or university. Explore the vastness of the industry and the comprehensive collegiate aviation programs that can enable you to lay a foundation for success."

# Transportation and Logistics Management

The Transportation and Logistics Management bachelors' degree program was designed with the aid of business educators and industry leaders. The program is the only one its kind in Wisconsin and has been continuously growing since its inception in 1998. Students majoring in this program enjoy the benefits of UW-Superior's personal attention to students and its quality business programs. Students go on tours of five modes of transportation that serve the Twin Ports of Duluth-Superior which is as a Midwest transportation hub. Students with faculty also travel frequently to the Twin Cities for tours of distribution centers, warehouses and transportation facilities.

At UW-Superior, you'll learn the business of efficiently moving people, information and money. You will also learn business techniques, management skills and leadership. Through a major in transportation and logistics at UW-Superior, you will: Gain a sound background in business while specializing in your desired form of transportation or logistics

- Earn real-world experience
- Learn to plan, organize, and control procurement, manufacturing, logistics and supply chain management
- Gain an understanding of conducting business in different cultures

- Enhance your decision-making skills

Students start with a critical foundation of the liberal arts. They also take core business courses such as accounting, finance, marketing and business law. The T&L program build on these keystones with courses in; International Logistics, Transportation Economics, Environmental Law, Supply Chain Management, Economic Geography and three electives from our pool of six electives in the field. All T&L majors must also complete a two credit internship giving them with hands-on experience making them more valuable to companies upon graduation. This is a comprehensive major that does not require a minor but many students double major or take the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) minor along with the T&L degree.

T&L Student John Bergstrom says: "I'm really impressed with the program. There are so many opportunities. The instructors are great too, and I'm glad I joined the Transportation and Logistics Management program." To get even more out of his second major and make new connections, John recently joined the Transportation and Logistics Club. "It's a great group of people. There's a different mentality here," he said. "Everyone wants to be successful, and no one is ashamed of going after their dreams. They're not shy at



all, and it's motivated me to do the same." The Transportation and Logistics (T&L) Student Club is very active and travels across the nation attending EXPOS, tour facilities and winning intercollegiate case study competitions.

UW-Superior offers a very high quality T&L Degree at an affordable price. In 2016-2017, nearly 30% of all Transportation & Logistics Students were awarded some type of scholarship.

Graduates have tremendous job opportunities and upward mobility. Read more about the program, the students, the student club and scholarship opportunities by going to the UW-Superior Website [www.uwsuper.edu](http://www.uwsuper.edu) and search the word transportation. You can hear from students, see a video about the program and get more details about a very special opportunity. What can you do that does not incorporate transportation?

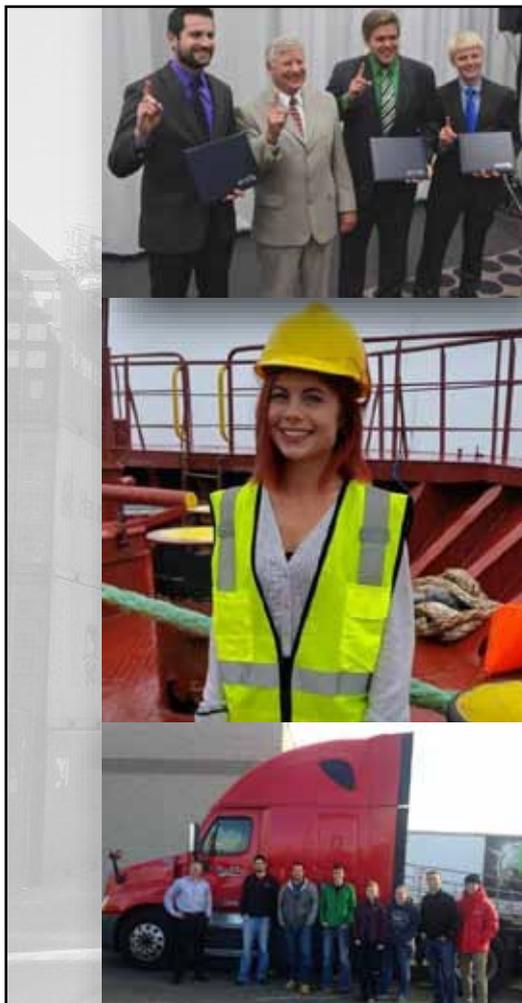
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# Saint Paul Automotive Programs Leads to High Wage, High Demand Jobs



*Kathy Kittel, Supervisor, Department of Post Secondary Partnerships  
Saint Paul Public Schools*

Saint Paul Public Schools Career and Technical Education programs have the tagline “We fill the skills gap.” This is where the automotive program comes into play for these high wage, high demand, non-outsourcable jobs. By having a full-fledged automotive center, an auto garage and several courses in other schools, students are being exposed to and trained for the Industry.

The flagship program takes place at the Saint Paul High School Automotive Center, located at the Linwood-Monroe school, where over 50 students attend one of two, three-hour classes. This 12 bay facility boasts the same high-tech tools and equipment that are currently found in industry, making this a real-world learning environment. For many of the students this is their first exposure to working with tools and on vehicles.

“What really sets our program apart is the ASE student certification,” said instructor Henry Velasquez. “Students are trained to national industry standards set by the Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) Foundation”. The Saint Paul High School Automotive Center has been accredited for 15 years.

Having this accreditation has meant working to maintain compliance. Every five years the Saint Paul

High School Automotive Center goes through a rigorous accreditation process where every aspect of the program is examined, from the curriculum, facility, tools, and safety protocols to instructor credentials. Instructor Ron Rybicka says he is constantly upgrading the curriculum as national standards

change. “We want our students to be held to these high industry standards.”

The latest change has been to modify the three ASE Foundation courses of Maintenance & Light Repair. In these courses, students train in the fundamental areas of Engine Mechanical, Drivetrain, Hybrid Vehicle, Electrical/Electronics, Suspension, Steering and Brakes. Jason Emrick, former technician turned college instructor and active Advisory Committee

Students experience what it is like to work with customers: taking a service order, communicating the vehicle problems or needs, and notifying them of work completion. Students must also place orders with vendors for parts or supplies. They also practice public speaking skills when they give presentations to district counselors and teach elementary students about the industry at career fairs.



member, adds that in these courses, “Students learn important problem solving skills and, even more importantly, perseverance and resilience.”

Former students have commented on the quality of the program. One says the courses are “experiential and well taught, giving me an early start [to my career].” Another student followed his passion to attain an Automotive Applied Associate Degree. He has since graduated from Dakota County Technical College and is happily working in the field—with no college debt.

Another automotive program with a series of courses is located at Central High School, where students train in a recently refurbished off-site garage. Community members and students bring in their vehicles for service. “One student bought a truck and is busy rebuilding it,” says instructor Matt Lijewski. These courses, along with courses at Harding and Humboldt

High Schools, bridge to the program at Saint Paul High School Automotive Center.

The automotive industry and school district see an increasing need for work-based learning and leadership opportunities. Working with the City of Saint Paul’s Right Track program, students are able to earn paid summer internships by working on Saint Paul Parks & Recreation vehicles. Participants are often asked to return the following summer or even to stay on during the school year.

Students experience what it is like to work with customers: taking a service order, communicating the vehicle problems or needs, and notifying them of work completion. Students must also place orders with vendors for parts

or supplies. They also practice public speaking skills when they give presentations to district counselors and teach elementary students about the industry at career fairs.

SPPS has made articulation agreements with the area’s community and technical colleges. This means students can earn high school credits and apply them to Dunwoody College of Technology, Saint Paul College or Dakota

County Technical College upon enrolling. This saves time and money.

Community support for the Auto programs is evident in the number of people who regularly attend Program Advisory Committee Meetings. Steve Reinarts, who chairs the committee (and also serves as a college dean of automotive programs), affirms, “The advisory committee represent a wide range of stakeholders such as employers, technicians, state organizations, school administration and post-secondary contacts. The committee supports curriculum development, recruitment, tools and equipment purchasing, automobile donations and career presentations to the students.” Tours in the field have included the Females in the Automotive Industry to grow this non-traditional career. Members also play a key role in the accreditation process by reviewing compliance prior to inspections. As the demand for automotive technicians continues to grow, Saint Paul Public Schools is striving to meet the industry’s needs by producing students who have a firm grasp of both the technical and soft skills needed to succeed.

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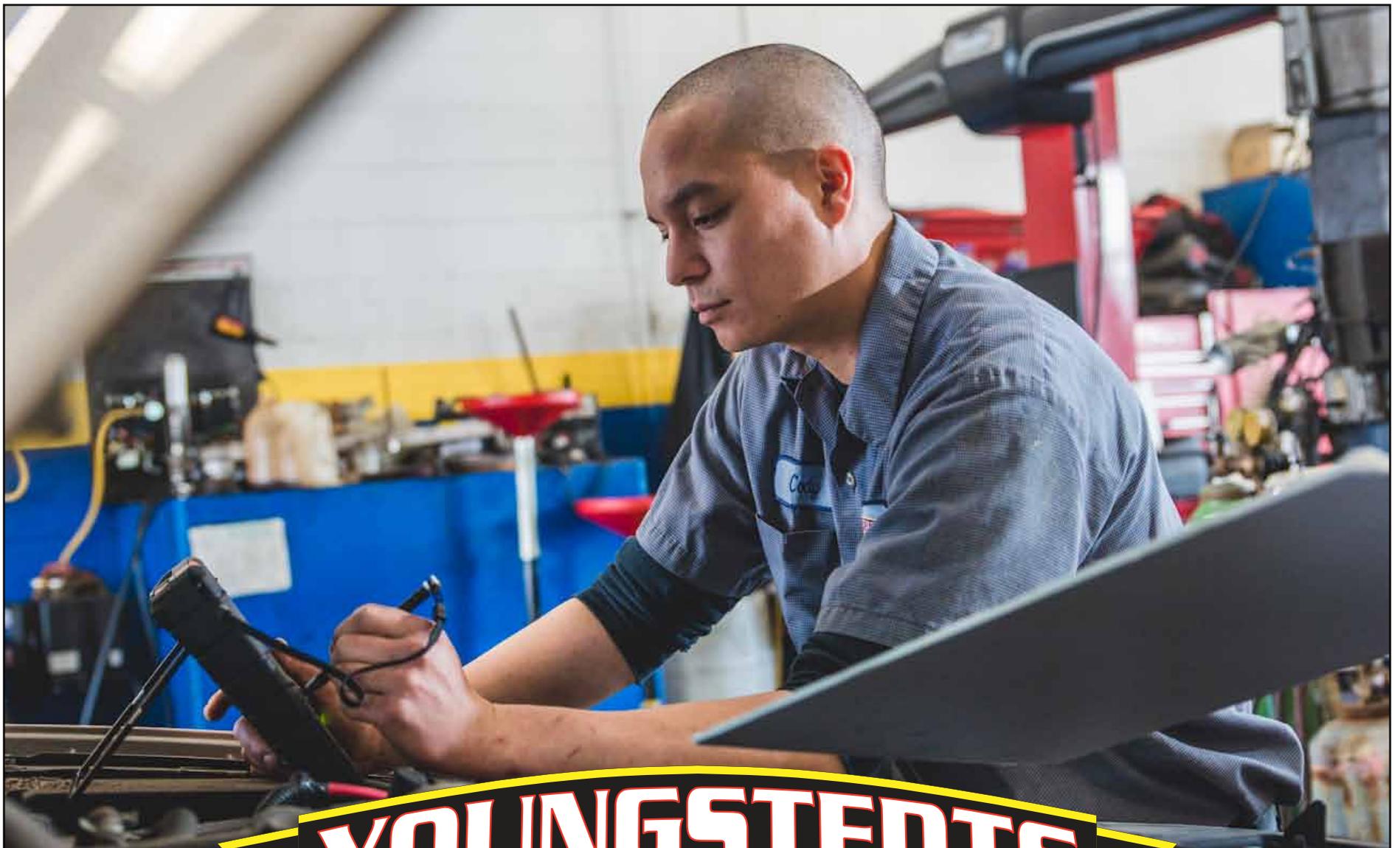


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# Nationally Accredited Vehicle Services Program Jump Starts Career Opportunities for Students



## District 196

In District 196, we are nationally recognized for providing boundless opportunities in which students can learn and grow. Whether they have an affinity for academics, the arts and/or athletics, whether they are college bound or want to pursue a career right after graduating, our goal is to expose students to the infinite possibilities within our district and throughout the communities we serve.

Opportunities in our district's Career Development Program are available to all high school students. Started in 1998, the program offers a variety of courses designed to expose students to career possibilities in animal science, aviation, computing, emergency services, forensic science, hospitality management, health care, music production and vehicle services. The courses incorporate strong academic preparation, unique field trip opportunities and partnerships within the community.

The vehicle services course actually dates back to 1968 at Rosemount High School. It was started by Rich Rabanus, who taught the course for 34 years before retiring and turning it over to his son, Ian Rabanus.

"I grew up coming to the shop on Saturdays with my dad," Rabanus said. "Since

that time, automotive industry equipment, technology and curriculum have transformed. There is a need, now more than ever, for automotive technicians in the marketplace."

For the past 50 years, the vehicle services program at Rosemount High has served thousands of District 196 students who have graduated and built careers in the automotive, mechanical and industrial industries, including servicing, repairing, buying/selling and engineering.

Earlier this year, the program achieved an impressive milestone, becoming one of just 11 high school programs in Minnesota to earn national accreditation for automotive service technology through the Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) Industry Education Alliance.

"For me and my dad, who have spent our careers helping students build skills in the automotive industry, meeting this industry standard is so rewarding because of what this means for our students," Rabanus said. "It provides them with increased career opportunities and pathways. Students have increased access to state-of-the-art equipment and training, which gives them essential technical skills right out of high school that employers are seeking."

Being an accredited program also

gives students the opportunity to achieve industry recognized credentials through certification exams. Through the accreditation process, Rabanus was able to establish articulation agreements for approximately one-fourth of the credits students need to graduate from an automotive service or mechanical program. For students pursuing a career in these fields, the agreements will save thousands of dollars in post-secondary education costs.

The accreditation process took two years to complete and included upgrades to the facilities, equipment and tools, modifications to curriculum and documentation of the ASE standards to ensure the program meets the industry's highest instructional standards.

"Students were critical in supporting this process," Rabanus said. "In addition to being part of the day-to-day facility transformation, students served on the advisory council to provide feedback and insights that they felt were essential to support their career-planning process."

Industry partners were also essential in supporting the accreditation process.

They include colleges, local independent service shops and dealers, as well as the Vehicle Services Advisory Council, which includes industry experts, educators and students.

"This accreditation recognizes the quality of our program, as well as the knowledge and dedication of our partners who are preparing students to be career and college ready," Rabanus said.

The program continues to seek to build industry partnerships in the automotive and mechanical fields. From equipment needs to mentorship opportunities, individuals and companies interested in learning more about partnership opportunities should contact Ian Rabanus at [ian.rabanus@District196.org](mailto:ian.rabanus@District196.org).

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## Anoka High School Trains Students for Automotive Careers



Dean Joslin, Anoka High School  
Career & Tech Ed Instructor

There are over 100,000 jobs available at US Auto Dealerships, this emphasizes the need for talented service technicians that

are looking for a career in the automotive industry.

The mission of the Career and Tech Ed department at Anoka High School is to educate, prepare and inspire a new kind of

Automotive / Transportation service workforce; one that embraces innovation and the critical thinking skills that today's workforce demands. The Career and Tech Ed department at Anoka High School encourages students to be career-ready, eager and committed lifelong learners.

In addition, Anoka HS is working with an Automotive/Transportation advisory committee that includes local businesses and education leaders. Anoka partners with local automotive dealerships that offer students an opportunity to do job-shadowing and work as interns while still going to school. The Anoka-Hennepin school district is very supportive of the program; they are involved in keeping the school supplied with updated tools, equipment and curriculum that are currently used in the automotive industry.

Students at Anoka can start out in the Transportation career field by taking classes in Outdoor Power Equipment, move to Auto Tech 1 & 2 and then finish with the Advanced Auto Tech 3 class. These classes will prepare students to be ready to continue Automotive training classes at the Technical

College level or give them enough skills to get an entry level position at a local dealership.

Anoka follows the ASE (Automotive Service Excellence) model for curriculum delivery and training for its students. ASE is nationally recognized as the leader in automotive training for high schools and colleges. We follow MLR (Maintenance & Lite Repair) classroom and shop activities that give the students the experience of being in a automotive repair shop.

It takes a great deal of work, compassion, and understanding to have a successful high school program. As a Tech-Ed teacher, I would like to thank Anoka High School principle Mr. Mike Farley, the director of Career & Technical Education Ms. Jessica Lipa and the school district superintendent Mr. David Law.

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## Duluth Automotive and Engines

Bradley Vieths,  
Vocational Program Coordinator  
ISD #709 Duluth Public Schools

The Duluth Public Schools automotive technician program is one of a handful of fully-accredited NATEF and ASE Educational Foundation programs in the state. Duluth Public Schools fully supports the program.

Duluth Automotive and Engines is offered to students attending Denfeld High School and Duluth East High School. The program is located at Denfeld and transportation is provided to Duluth East students.

Students enrolled in the program have the option to complete 10 of the NATEF and ASEEF certifications in automotive technician and medium light repair. These certifications provide a direct path toward a career or other post-secondary options in the mechanical field.

### ASE Certifications: Automobile

- Maintenance and Light Repair (MR)
- Automobile Service and Technology (AS)
- Engine Repair (ER)
- Automatic Transmission/Transaxle (AT)
- Manual Drive Train and Axles (MD)
- Suspension and Steering (SS)
- Brakes (BR)
- Electrical/Electronic Systems (EE)
- Heating and Air Conditioning (AC)
- Engine Performance (EP)

The hands-on course utilizes an online curriculum that provides students to self-pace their learning through the respective areas.

The program houses on average 16–18 vehicles in our fleet. The fleet is composed of vehicles donated from the community and industry partners. Students utilize these as learning tools to work through authentic and staged diagnostic issues. The program also opens its doors to perform Medium Light Repair for the public throughout the school year.

Students are encouraged to participate in a successful and active SkillsUSA team with industry partnerships, internships and an opportunity to earn scholarships. The program teaches the safety, environmental, technical and hands-on skills necessary for job shadowing, summer internships, entry-level employment, and college articulation. The Introductory courses in this program can be taken in either order. The content is transferable but not required to be successful. These two courses provide the baseline for the advanced courses that follow.

### **Automotive Basics: Engines and Brakes**

Allows students to learn how to repair properly automobile electrical and brake systems. Students will be challenged to diagnose problems in the electrical and brake systems using meters, analyzers, and computers.

### **Automotive Basics: Transmission and Suspension**

Covers basic engine theory, construction, diagnosis, as well as computer, fuel and ignition systems and steering and suspension systems. Students will learn how to service these various systems using proper technical skills.



### **Advanced Courses**

In order for students to be eligible for the advanced courses, he/she must have completed an introductory course in good standing. It is preferable that students have completed both introductory courses prior to enrolling in either of the advanced courses. If a student wants to enroll in an advanced course prior to completing both they must request instructor approval prior to enrollment.

### **Automotive Diagnostics and Electrical**

Students work at an advanced level in the automotive shop using test equipment and doing live on-car diagnostic and repair work on computer controlled electrical and brake systems. Students who meet specific criteria may participate in job shadowing and/or an internship at a local repair facility.

### **Automotive Engines and Performance**

Covers advanced engine theory, construction, diagnosis, as well as computer, fuel and ignition systems, steering and suspension systems, and wheel alignment. Students will learn how to service various systems using the proper technical skills and are encouraged to participate in job shadowing and/or an internship at a local repair facility.

The program has experienced great success with our job shadow, internship, and SkillsUSA club. Overall the program serves 50–75 students a year.

[www.isd709.org](http://www.isd709.org)  
(218) 336-8700



# Geometry in Construction at Park High School Continues to Find the Right Angle



By Megan Diediker  
South Washington County Schools

Since the 2014–2015 school year Geometry at Park High School has taken a different angle at teaching. The school offers their Geometry curriculum through the lens of construction.

Geometry in Construction was designed to provide students with the chance to apply geometry concepts through the construction of a number of different items including storage sheds, wooden folding chairs, cement stepping stones, and more. Technology Teacher Bonnie Thoe-Austin and Math Teacher Megan Diediker teach the class.

Over the last 4 years students have built over 15 playhouses, 10 sheds, 40 sets of stairs and 200 chairs. Students also learn how to wire an electrical outlet and light switch as well as pour concrete.

It's been extremely rewarding to watch students learn real world skills and problem solve. The curriculum is designed to continue to spiral back and review previous material. For example, if a student doesn't quite grasp the surface area concept in the first unit it will continue to come up in every unit following and eventually the light bulb comes on. One of the things I really appreciate about the class is I am never in front of the students lecturing for more than fifteen minutes. Students are discussing, analyzing, and working together through challenging problems. Students don't even realize they are using math in the shop and but when they come back to the classroom students start to put it all together.

The way the curriculum is arranged is amazing. The "book" is a problem bank of questions that correlates directly with building a house. I have already seen students catch on to material taught in the first unit, triangle similarity now as a result of learning right triangle trig because each unit includes material from the previous unit. Additionally, every quiz is a group quiz. Students are expected to

work together and then when they are done I will grade their quizzes right in front of them. This gives them immediate feedback and in some cases I ask them questions in order to catch where the misconceptions occurred. This immediate feedback makes it far more meaningful than when students turn it in and get it back a couple days later. It also allows me to change my lesson right away the next day if needed.

This is such a hands on course that students drive the lessons. Between the warm up of contextualized construction questions and the investigative activities I really don't have to do a lot of lectures.

## Making a difference!

1. Students gain confidence that carries over into other aspects of their life because for the first time they are having success in a math class and school is enjoyable again. Additionally, in the shop they are learning how to use power tools that they may never have learned how to use before which gives students a sense of accomplishment and confidence.
2. Students are forced to work with all different types of peers (especially in the shop). They learn how to communicate and appreciate different personalities and really become a family.
3. Most of our students don't particularly enjoy math and so having the hour of construction in the shop is a motivator to work and get the math done so they can go into the shop. We don't use NOT going in the shop as any sort of punishment... instead of telling a student they can't go in the shop to work I tell Bonnie "hey this kid is not getting their stuff done can you talk to them?" She finds a time while the student is working during the construction hour to talk to the student. It has really worked for us. She always finds a way to connect with students that I can't seem to reach at the moment. Which is a testimony not only to her being a fantastic educator, but also shows that kids' brains think differently and sometimes Bonnie's way of thinking works better for explaining things. At other times mine does the trick.
4. I truly believe that because our projects HAVE to be completed, in other words we have people counting on us that are buying our playhouses, sheds, chairs, and other projects students don't have the option not to do it. Having a deadline and not having the option to just "take a zero" is a huge piece to the success of this class and the confidence students feel after accomplishing their goal.

5. Bonnie and I are very energetic teachers. We love to tell stories and laugh a lot so the energy in our classroom is different than any other classroom. Students see not only a respectful and professional relationship but they also see two friends who truly enjoy what they do. This is so important for kids to watch and see.
6. Our students have used us as references when applying for jobs. This class functions much like a real-world job experience and we encourage them to put us on their applications as we can testify about work habits and skills that they possess.

The biggest thing we have taken away from teaching the class is how students become a family. They work through challenging situations and then develop friendships with students they may never had a chance to get to know. As a result of working on projects every day in the shop students are able to make connections to the material much sooner than in a regular classroom. Additionally, it has been extremely rewarding to see students who are not normally leaders be seen as leaders amongst all their classmates. After 9 months in this class students leave with a sense confidence that is hard to describe. It's not just confidence working with tools but



a sense of pride and motivation that he or she will be successful in high school. Students also leave with ideas and goals for post high school opportunities.

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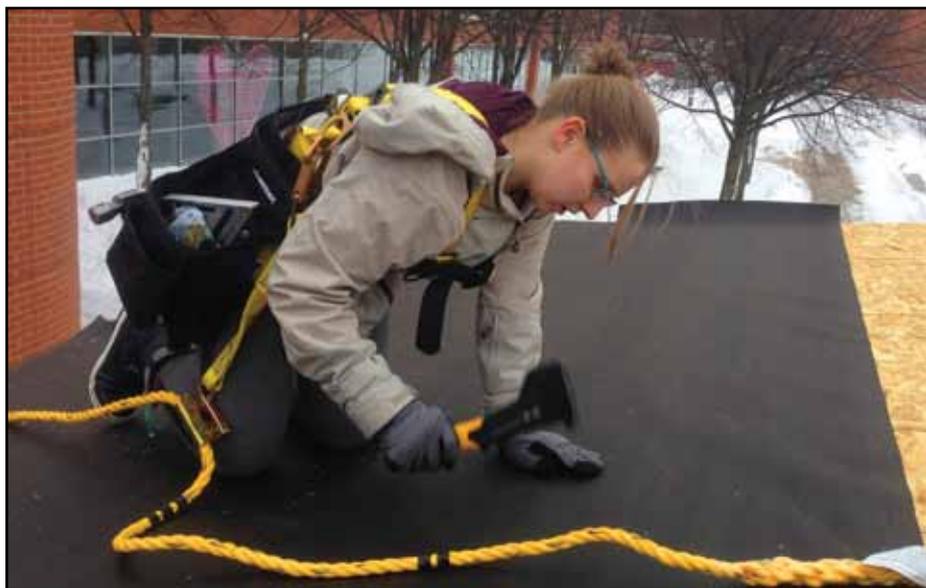
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## Eagan High School Program Teaches Teens Skilled Trades



By Bill Hudson, WCCO CBS

It has the sound of a residential construction site, complete with saws buzzing and pneumatic nailers hissing.

It is where Antonio Stepan and his Eagan High School classmates are learning a trade.

“It’s one of those things where you get schooled in it, get your education in it and you’re going to have a job right away,”

Stepan said. “They couldn’t have enough of them right now.”

The students are constructing a tiny house — all framed, sided, wired and plumbed.

“Completely building it from nothing, and it’s cool to see the progress we’ve made,” he said.

The program is also hoping to help solve a growing shortage of skilled construc-

tion workers, which trades unions say will only get worse in the coming years.

That is because the baby boomer generation is retiring at an alarming rate, and not enough younger workers have entered the field.

“When these kids graduate they have a path they’re ready for,” said program director Nick Johnson. “And by doing this project they’re exposed to different areas, and it will spark an interest and maybe they’ll want to go be an electrician.”

Trade careers pay well and are not burdened by huge college debt.

“It shows there are more options than just college and degrees like that,” said Emma Zellmer, a high school senior and program participant.

Still, Zellmer will go on to college after graduation, but she has bigger plans of someday owning her own all female construction company.

“I don’t want to depend on a man and make sure I don’t need to call up somebody



Work continues on siding, we installed the front door and started to work a little on the inside.

when I need to fix something on my house,” Zellmer said.

They are learning to take pride in their work, and staking out a solid future.

[www.eaganhs.portal.schooltoday.com](http://www.eaganhs.portal.schooltoday.com)  
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## Careers in the Construction Industry

### Construction Laborers

Perform tasks involving physical labor at construction sites. May operate hand and power tools of all types: air hammers, earth tampers, cement mixers, small mechanical hoists, surveying and measuring equipment, and a variety of other equipment and instruments. May clean and prepare sites, dig trenches, set braces to support the sides of excavations, erect scaffolding, and clean up rubble, debris and other waste materials. May assist other craft workers.

**Median wage (2016):**

\$16.07 hourly, \$33,430 annual

### Construction Managers

Plan, direct, or coordinate, usually through subordinate supervisory personnel, activities concerned with the construction and maintenance of structures, facilities, and systems. Participate in the conceptual development of a construction project and oversee its organization, scheduling, budgeting, and implementation. Includes managers in specialized construction fields, such as carpentry or plumbing.

**Median wage (2016):**

\$42.93 hourly, \$89,300 annual

### Construction and Building Inspectors

Inspect structures using engineering skills to determine structural soundness and compliance with specifications, building codes, and other regulations. Inspections may be general in nature or may be limited to a specific area, such as electrical systems or plumbing.

**Median wage (2016):**

\$28.12 hourly, \$58,480 annual

### Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators

Operate one or several types of power construction equipment, such as motor graders, bulldozers, scrapers, compressors, pumps, derricks, shovels, tractors, or front-end loaders to excavate, move, and grade earth, erect structures, or pour concrete or other hard surface pavement. May repair and maintain equipment in addition to other duties.

**Median wage (2016):**

\$22.06 hourly, \$45,890 annual

### Civil Engineers

Perform engineering duties in planning, designing, and overseeing construction and maintenance of building structures, and

Continued on Page 12

# Tiny House, Big Ideas at Saint Paul Public Schools

Anna Morawiecki  
CTE Coordinator  
Saint Paul Public Schools

Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) has invigorated its construction pathway at Central High School in recent years. While woodworking classes have been a mainstay elective course offering for decades, SPPS wanted to help students take advantage of the high-skill, high-wage jobs in the construction industry. Central High School now has a complete pathway that includes Woodworking, Electrical, Plumbing, and Carpentry courses.

Local businesses, along with grants from Greater Twin Cities United Way and the federal Department of Employment and Economic Development, have been instrumental in the implementation of Central's construction pathway program. When the teacher's position became a budget hurdle, the advisory committee that helps guide the program sought and received a grant for the position. Now that courses have been established and word is getting out, students at all levels are registering — and reaping the benefits.

An exciting project that has students more curious about construction is the tiny house they will build in the Construction Capstone course.

Students are using the skills they've learned in their previous courses because they are

involved in all aspects of building the tiny house. They have learned about the bidding process, supply orders, scheduling and budgets, and they are working with local industry experts along the way.

*The Capstone class is a great culmination of all the skills these kids have learned in their classes up to now. Besides honing their skills, they are helping guide the design, learning time management, and scheduling time with industry experts as needed. The kids have ownership of this project and should be proud of themselves so far. I'm excited to see what else they come up with.*

— Joe Mollner, Central HS  
Construction Instructor

The tiny house will be auctioned to the public at the end of the build. The students have worked as a team to make changes to the layout; they are exploring solar power options and researching market trends.

After completing the Construction Pathway at Central, students are making plans to go on to apprenticeships, two-year and four-year college programs. Whichever they choose, and whether their focus is construction, engineering, or project management in any field, these students are a step ahead. They are gaining skills far



beyond beginning construction to take with them to any job site.

*I'm excited be able to stand back and see a house that I helped build. This whole experience will help me be more knowledgeable and comfortable as I look to going into an apprenticeship program after graduation.*

—Javier '19

This program has turned into a true community build. Industry experts and Central High School have forged a relationship that helps not only students, but also local business and community. It has become a win-win operation of which St. Paul can be proud.

[www.spps.org](http://www.spps.org)  
(651) 767-8100



## Careers in the Construction Industry

### Continued from Page 11

facilities, such as roads, railroads, airports, bridges, harbors, channels, dams, irrigation projects, pipelines, power plants, and water and sewage systems.

#### Median wage (2016):

\$40.16 hourly, \$83,540 annual

### Cost Estimators

Prepare cost estimates for product manufacturing, construction projects, or services to aid management in bidding on or determining price of product or service. May specialize according to particular service performed or type of product manufactured.

#### Median wage (2016):

\$29.71 hourly, \$61,790 annual

### Cement Masons and Concrete Finishers

Smooth and finish surfaces of poured concrete, such as floors, walks, sidewalks, roads, or curbs using a variety of hand and power tools. Align forms for sidewalks, curbs, or gutters; patch voids; and use saws to cut expansion joints.

#### Median wage (2016):

\$18.84 hourly, \$39,180 annual

### Construction Carpenters

Construct, erect, install, and repair structures and fixtures of wood, plywood, and wallboard, using carpenter's hand tools and power tools.

#### Median wage (2016):

\$20.96 hourly, \$43,600 annual

### Electricians

Install, maintain, and repair electrical wiring, equipment, and fixtures. Ensure that work is in accordance with relevant codes. May install or service street lights, intercom systems, or electrical control systems.

#### Median wage (2016):

\$25.35 hourly, \$52,720 annual

### Plumbers

Assemble, install, or repair pipes, fittings, or fixtures of heating, water, or drainage systems, according to specifications or plumbing codes.

#### Median wage (2016):

\$24.74 hourly, \$51,450 annual

Source: O\*NET

## Construction Management AT MSU MOORHEAD

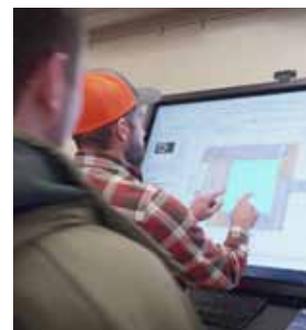
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## All About Awareness

Paul Downer  
Delano Public Schools

Sometimes talking about a problem can help a person in trouble find peace, and students in the Delano High School COMPASS class opened the door to that conversation this week.

After about six weeks of preparation, the group held its third annual suicide prevention and awareness day on Thursday, March 1.

“Our kids are doing more as far as getting the word out, and people are getting more comfortable talking about mental health in school,” said DHS social worker Marie Techam. “A huge part of it is to end the stigma around mental health issues and create awareness about what students can do if they have a friend they’re concerned about or if they themselves are having a problem.”

In two previous years the event, which includes speakers and the sharing of information about resources students can access for assistance, has encouraged a number of students to seek aid.

“I have ended up being really busy that day because we do get kids that come forward and want help,” Techam said.

Sophomore Emma Dahle said that being involved in the COMPASS program has made it easier to talk about such topics.

“Being surrounded by people who are open and willing to talk about it, it definitely opens your eyes to see how much people

are actually afraid to talk about it and how it needs to be talked about more,” she said. “I think talking about it makes people less afraid, because they see that there are people who are willing to listen. It’s not an inconvenience or a burden. It’s something we want to do.”

Senior Madeline Vig agreed.

“We all have different stories, and not everybody knows your story,” she said. “What COMPASS is trying to put forward is, ‘Tell your story. Talk about it. Speak up about your life. Maybe there are hard times going, but don’t be afraid to talk about it with people you trust.’”

Details of the day

During the day students from the COMPASS class (which stands for Character, Opportunity, Mentorship, Perseverance, Academics, Service and Success) made announcements about the signs and symptoms of suicidal behavior and thinking, where to go for help, and how to help a friend.

In addition, all high school students heard speakers from the Bounce Back Project, which focuses on resilience, and Txt4Life, which is a resource for mental health assistance that is designed to meet teens where they are at.

Other features of the day included a banner of hope reading “You’re Irreplaceable” for students to sign, T-shirts for the student body, snacks that came with contact information for trained counselors, and a “We Will” video that talked about things each individual could do to end the stigma surrounding mental



health issues. Students also received temporary semicolon tattoos to signify that where an author could have ended a sentence, they chose to continue it instead.

Junior Shianne Christensen said she could testify from experience that the COMPASS program holds value for those dealing with a difficult situation.

“This class helped me get through it and this day has helped me understand everything and keep going and not give up,” she said. “I hope that goes for other people too.”

Junior Andy Betzler said that while many people hide their problems, it is better to be transparent.

“Nobody is perfect. We all fight a battle at some point,” he said. “Talking about it helps.”

The students were aided in organizing the day by Techam and School Within a School

instructor Shallyn Tordeur.

“Kudos to Ms. Tordeur and Ms. Techam, because they honestly will never give up on us,” said Vig. “It’s just nice to have that. They’re like at-school mothers.”

Betzler said that description was apt.

“COMPASS is a family,” he said.

And it’s one that isn’t afraid to welcome others.

“We’re basically just trying to show everybody in the school that we love them and we care about them,” said Dahle.

[www.delano.k12.mn.us](http://www.delano.k12.mn.us)  
(763) 972-3365



## Writing Partners Become Friends



Carissa Hopkins-Hoel  
Communications Coordinator  
St. Cloud Area School District 742

“Let’s find our partners!” calls out Discovery Community School fifth-grade teacher, Pamela Holubetz.

The day has finally come when they get to meet their writing partners from Annandale face-to-face. Fifth-grade students from both schools have been working together in Google Presentations on a “get to know you” project

since the beginning of the school year.

The writing project is formed through a multi-district collaborative with the equity services department of both St. Cloud Area School District and Annandale School District.

“The collaborative exists with seven other districts,” describes Sebastian Wither- spoon, director of equity services. “Integration is a part of our equity plan. We look for opportunities for learning and integration. We bring together students with different backgrounds—

students that look different... They discover that they’re not really different.”

“One of the goals is to increase interracial contact...open students to the global world,” explains Jessica Murphy, literacy and diversity coach for Annandale. “Having done this [collaborative] for a number of years, if you can get them together on the front end [of the project], they’ve got some understanding and [it’s] not a mystery along the way. It’s pretty cool.”

In the beginning, students begin with simple questions by asking name, name pronunciation and gender. They eventually work into deeper questions like hobbies, family, languages spoken, favorite holidays, foods and traditions.

Many of the shy faces turn into bright smiles upon meeting their partners. The room buzzes with excitement during introductions.

“How do we greet our new friends?” asks Holubetz. “Don’t forget to shake hands.”

Kaden Scott from Annandale meets his writing partner Maya from St. Cloud. He shares how Maya loves to play with her two dogs in her spare time.

“I was a little nervous to meet him,” explains Maya. “But, now I feel better.”

The students move to the gym to play

games. It gives them an opportunity to meet other students. While playing “snowball,” a name introduction game, students demonstrate their manners by introducing themselves and shaking hands. Manners and etiquette are a part of the learning process.

Pairs then take turns sitting in another classroom while sipping cider and eating doughnuts. They get to talk about anything. Many discuss their weekend plans.

Maya plans to play with her dogs, Lily and Jewel. Scott hopes for a snowball fight with his neighbors.

It’s not just the students that meet for the first time. The teachers are just as excited about the collaborative.

“It’s just a wonderful program,” says Holubetz.

Smiles and hugs show that these students are more alike than different. New friendships and understanding take shape and grow in the wake of an inspiring program.

[www.isd742.org](http://www.isd742.org)  
(320) 253-9333



## Middle Schoolers Envision Ideal 22nd Century City



Lakeville Area Public Schools

At a time when it's tough to imagine what life might be like in 10 years, a group of middle school students are trying to envision life 100 years from now.

Ten McGuire Middle School students are creating their ideal city as part of Future City. The international project that challenges middle school students to brainstorm, design

and build a city.

Adviser Alesia Arlandson said the students have been working two mornings a week before classes start to research, design and build their model.

"Each year, Future City picks a different theme," Arlandson said. "This year, it's creating a city friendly for people who are aging."

That's prompted students to think about what amenities the elderly need. As part of

their research, the students talked with people at the Heritage Senior Center in Lakeville.

Alderville will be situated in Australia, just south of the equator and sufficiently inland to avoid hurricane damage, Arlandson said. It will be close to an existing national forest and be laid out in a circle with downtown in the center and neighborhoods on outer edges. Stores will be located throughout the city to make shopping accessible. Alderville will even include moving sidewalks to help those with disabilities easily get to where they need to go.

Among the advice from Lakeville senior citizens, students will make sure hospitals have comfortable beds and pillows, plenty of volunteer opportunities, affordable housing for all, plenty of coffee shops, restaurants and shops, and at-home care for pets and personal needs.

Alderville will have a world-class medical center known as Mustard Hospital, a nod to Minnesota's world-famous Mayo Clinic, Arlandson said.

"They're really clever," Arlandson said.

The project itself consists of designing their ideal city in the SimCity computer game. Students also will describe their ideal city in a 1,500-word essay and a 3D model measuring 25 inches by 50 inches built of recyclable materials and at least one movable part. Stu-

dents are trying to create a moving sidewalk that locks wheelchairs in place for an easy ride. The "smart sidewalk" will know when the rider is at the destination location and will unlatch the wheelchair.

Working to plan and build the model has been the most enjoyable part for sixth grader Sophie Liberty. She said she was most surprised by how small the model actually seemed once the team began construction.

This is the second year seventh grader Tally Hessian has been part of Future City. She said she'd enjoyed making new friends and loves the teamwork the project requires.

Arlandson credited Lakeville City Engineer Zach Johnson for helping students understand design and engineering. Jess Luce, program manager for Communities for a Lifetime Initiative, also provided information on sustainable living.

Arlandson said she is impressed with the students' teamwork and creativity.

"They're so uplifting," she said. "One student will offer an idea, which sparks another. They encourage each other."

[www.isd194.org](http://www.isd194.org)  
(952) 232-2000



## North Junior High Builds Program That Helps All Students 'Win' Continued from Page 1



including chess, knitting, coding, gamer club, and more. Many of the after-school clubs run sessions during WIN, giving all students a chance to be involved in Royal Records, North Speaks Out, or the North Gay Straight Alliance. This also means students can be involved in more than one club.

"This is a big change, but we knew it would be great for kids and for our school community," said Hahn. "By deconstructing the traditional advisory time, we are building deeper experiences for students."

### Academic support for all students

When building WIN, North teachers wanted to come up with solutions that gave

students access to academic support during the school day. Students are busy, and if they are not able to stay after school or come to school early, their options for accessing academic support are limited, and they can fall behind.

"We wanted to create an equitable solution where students could access enrichment activities, tutoring, or homework help without having to stay after school, which is not always an option for them," said Angela Wilcox, a language arts teacher at North.

With WIN, teachers are able to identify students who need extra support and schedule them into an academic session to catch up on their homework or improve their grade.

Students who were absent or who found

a lesson confusing can have it re-taught or re-explained by the teacher. The support is offered in a much smaller setting, giving the teacher the opportunity to work one-on-one with a student. Although the program is new, teachers are already reporting that they have been able to move students up an entire letter grade based on the work they were able to complete during WIN time.

"During B days, I work with a small group of students that need extra support in my global studies class," said Allegra Smisek, a social studies teacher at North. "It is so valuable to connect with students who need a re-teaching of a concept that was confusing to them."

### Building school community

Social time is important for junior high students. One of the benefits of WIN is that it allows seventh-, eighth-, and ninth-grade students the opportunity to interact with each other in meaningful ways because WIN activities are open to the entire school.

"We're starting to see more seventh- and ninth-grade students talk to each other," said Hahn. "It's challenging to build authentic relationships between these age groups."

Dana Sagedahl, a media para, is noticing that in her knitting session, students who know how to knit are assisting those who don't. These interactions give students easy inroads with each

other and help strengthen school community overall.

A similar trend is revealing itself in Smisek's North Speaks Out Club, a civic engagement group where students can speak out about issues they care about. Before WIN, the group was scheduled in the same way all clubs were — after school. But not all students were able to participate due to being involved in sports or other extra-curricular activities or having responsibilities at home. Now, once a week, she is able to hold club meetings during the school day, opening it up to more students. One of her first observations was that WIN brought together school leaders in each grade level.

"WIN is a great opportunity to create community and for students to broaden their social circles," she said. "At our first North Speaks Out meeting, four student leaders attended, but they had never really hung out together previously. I am seeing students engage and make positive change in our school community — it's incredible."

[www.hopkinsschools.org](http://www.hopkinsschools.org)  
(952) 988-4000



# 2018 Candidates for National Distinguished Principal

## Congratulations to our 2018 National Distinguished Principal Candidates!

*“So much of the work that elementary principals do goes unnoticed,” said Jon Millerhagen, MESPA executive director. “The National Distinguished Principal program provides us with an opportunity to recognize the huge impact that principals make on the lives and learning of every student who passes through their doors. The three finalists identified for this honor are a passionate group of people who are making a difference every day in their school communities.”*

*The National Distinguished Principals (NDP) program was established in 1984 to recognize elementary and middle level principals who set high standards for instruction, student achievement, character, and climate for the students, families, and staffs in their learning communities.*

*For more detail on the NDP process, visit National Distinguished Principal under Honors on MESPA’s website: [www.mespa.net/ndp](http://www.mespa.net/ndp)*



**Lisa Pikop**

**Garfield Elementary, Miltona Science Magnet School, and Carlos Elementary, Alexandria**

An Alexandria principal is one of three finalists for the Minnesota 2018 National Distinguished Principal.

Lisa Pikop, the principal of the elementaries in Garfield, Miltona and Carlos, says she was surprised upon finding out she was nominated.

“I am totally humbled by the honor,” she said. “It’s overwhelming. We have the most amazing administrative team here in Alexandria and they’re so supportive.”

Pikop has been a principal in the district for 13 years and spends her time between her three elementary schools.

“I wish I could spend more time in each, but I have amazing staff. Otherwise I don’t think it would run as smoothly as it does.”

Pikop was nominated by Lincoln Elementary Principal Brendan Bogart.

“With steadfast and unwavering focus, Lisa handles all the difficult situations and challenges with the highest degree of integrity,” Bogart wrote. “She has never compromised the principle of ‘doing what’s best for kids,’ or looked the other way. She sees the higher good and works with staff, families and students to achieve it. She does so with a growth mindset and positive spirit.”

Under Pikop’s leadership, Garfield Elementary was recognized as a Blue Ribbon School in 2013. Additionally, Miltona Science Magnet School has achieved Reward School status five times and Carlos Elementary twice. Carlos and Miltona are

also accredited by the Minnesota Elementary School Principals’ Association as Schools of Excellence.

[www.alexandria.k12.mn.us](http://www.alexandria.k12.mn.us)  
(320) 762-2141



**Darren Schuler**

**Delano Elementary, Delano**

Darren Schuler, principal of Delano Elementary in Delano Public Schools is one of three finalists for Minnesota 2018 National Distinguished Principal (NDP).

“It’s fun to be recognized. There are some amazing folks out there doing some amazing things,” Schuler said. “It’s neat to be part of the process any way it goes.”

Schuler was nominated for the honor by former Delano assistant principals Corey Lahr, now the principal at St. Michael Elementary, and John McDonald, now the principal of Albertville Primary, St. Michael-Albertville Schools.

“Throughout his tenure at Delano Elementary, Mr. Schuler has always had a vision for excellence,” Lahr and McDonald wrote in their nomination. “His goal is to make all staff better at their jobs by promoting best practices. Mr. Schuler not only strives to help the staff at Delano Elementary grow, but he is constantly working on making himself better too.”

Under Schuler’s leadership, Delano Elementary has been recognized as a National Blue

Ribbon School, a Senator’s School of Excellence, an Active Schools Award winner, a MAEF School Spotlight Award winner, and has been credentialed by MESPA as a Minnesota School of Excellence.

Schuler said his biggest focus as a leader has been to build a school culture that breeds success. At the front end of that effort is a relatively extensive hiring process that ensures a skilled teaching staff.

“I feel like we get really good, high-quality people that fit the Delano mold. I think we’re really proud of the people we bring here to teach,” Schuler said, adding that a strong work ethic, team spirit and a focus on doing what’s best for students are among the traits of staff members who are hired.

Schuler thanked Schoen and former Superintendent Dr. John Sweet, as well as school board members, for their support during his time in Delano. Those policymakers have created an environment that allows autonomy for building principals while setting high standards, and said that balanced approach can’t be taken for granted.

[www.delano.k12.mn.us](http://www.delano.k12.mn.us)  
(763) 972-3365



**Curtis Slater**

**Wyoming Elementary, Forest Lake**

Wyoming Elementary School Principal Curtis Slater has been named a finalist for

the Minnesota 2018 National Distinguished Principal award.

Slater has been the principal of Wyoming Elementary since July of 2015.

“Curtis is certainly deserving of this award,” said Forest Lake Area Schools’ Superintendent Steve Massey. “He has been an amazing asset to our district since his hiring three years ago, and the energy and dedication he brings to his job every day is an inspiration to us all.”

In addition to his outstanding work as an elementary school principal, Slater has been a statewide leader in training and promoting Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS). PBIS offers a framework for teachers and other school staff that allows them to provide better supports for all students, particularly those who struggle in academics or who exhibit social or behavior issues.

Slater has been a Metro Lead Trainer in PBIS since 2007 and has been an administrative representative with the state of Minnesota’s PBIS Leadership Team.

“[He] is one of the most passionate, conscientious, giving and nurturing educators who holds all, including himself to the highest standards measurable,” wrote Dr. Steven Geis, in a letter of reference in support of Slater’s nomination. “Curt is passionate about creating the best learning environment for his students and community of learners.”

Slater also has a long history of volunteerism and contributions to the communities in which he has worked. He has been active in coaching athletics, working with young people, and he currently serves as a school leader in the Wyoming Methodist Church Reading Buddy Program.

Prior to working in the Forest Lake district, he was a teacher at Coon Rapids Middle School, a dean at Anoka Middle School and served as an associate principal at both Princeton Middle School and Wayzata East Middle School.

[www.flaschools.org](http://www.flaschools.org)  
(651) 982-8100

## Superintendent Julia Espe Receives Kay E. Jacobs Memorial Award



*Minnesota Association of School Administrators*

The Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) has named Julia Espe, Superintendent of Princeton Public Schools, as the recipient of the 2018 Kay E. Jacobs Memorial Award. The award recognizes excellent leadership and involvement in MASA and other educational organizations by an administrator who is a woman. Dr. Espe was honored for her leadership, concern for students and active involvement in professional and community affairs at a statewide recognition ceremony during the MASA/MASE Spring Conference.

“Julia’s legacy in Princeton will be that she moved the district forward from being a small, rural, traditional district to a regional leader in innovative programming,” said Barb Muckenhirn, Princeton High School Principal. “She is absolutely determined and steadfast in

her pursuit of growth and achievement for the district, and the students have benefited greatly from her leadership.”

During Dr. Espe’s time at Princeton Public Schools, she spearheaded a grassroots campaign to begin rebuilding of bridges between the schools and the greater Princeton community. In 2014, Dr. Espe was able to successfully pass the first bond referendum in Princeton in more than 15 years. The more than \$29 million bond referendum provided the district with a much needed primary school, new high school gym, improved district security and technology, a family center for early childhood programs, and the ability to move district staff to a shared building with the city offices. Along with the 2014 referendum, Dr. Espe brought parents, staff and community members together to complete a five-year strategic plan.

When she began her role as superintendent, Dr. Espe was faced with declining enrollment and inadequate student achievement at the district level. She worked with the district’s cabinet, administrators, school staff, and community members to define the needs of the students and explore options for increasing enrollment while also improving student achievement. Dr. Espe worked systematically to establish a budget that supported significant advancements in the district including the establishment of a Spanish immersion program, online academy, area learning center, facilities improvements, and a 1:1 technology initiative. Consequently, student achievement has increased to exceed the state average in both reading and math. Overall district English Language Arts (ELA) achievement increased by 10%, and district-wide math achievement

increased by 8% with exceptional highlights in many areas. In addition to these successes, Dr. Espe relentlessly maintains urgency in the continued growth of student achievement for all students.

“There is no one I have worked with who shows the kind of dedication Julia shows towards improving teaching and learning,” said Princeton Middle School Principal Daniel Voce. “All of us at Princeton Public Schools appreciate the way Julia involves herself in every aspect of our school district.”

Dr. Espe is an active member and leader in many educational and community organizations. Her membership and involvement includes: MASA, Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) Task Forces in Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and Career and College Ready Initiatives, representative for Minnesota at the White House Summit, Midwestern Instructional Leadership Committee, co-founder of Math Masters of Minnesota, MN Educators of Gifted and Talented (MEGT), Lakeville Rotary Club, Rochester Phi Delta Kappa, Safe Schools of the United States, and the Blandin Community Leadership Program. She has received a number of awards such as the MASA Region 6 Professionalism Award and District Leadership Award; Influential Leadership Award from Resource, Training and Solutions; Leadership Award in Advanced Placement Programming from the St. Cloud Foundation (LEAF); Dakota County Technical College Technical Education Advocacy Award in Nanotechnology; MEGT State Award; Friend of Gifted; Austin Public Schools Distinguished Educator Award; and the Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition for Chal-

lenge to Change (Chemicals Prevention).

Dr. Espe holds a doctorate degree in Education, a master’s degree in Gifted Education, and a bachelor’s degree in Music Education.

The Memorial Award was established in 1983 in honor of Kay E. Jacobs, an outstanding young administrator of many achievements who died in a car accident in 1979. At the time of her death, Ms. Jacobs was the assistant superintendent for the Mahtomedi Schools and had just been nominated, through a national screening process, for membership in the 38th Annual Superintendents’ Work Conference at Teachers’ College, Columbia University. This was a distinct honor, because only forty-five outstanding chief school officers from school systems throughout the United States had been invited to participate. The Memorial Award recognizes women administrators who have demonstrated the attributes of leadership and involvement early in their careers as Kay Jacobs did.

Each year, MASA recognizes members for their contribution to public education. MASA is a professional organization of Minnesota’s school leaders, including superintendents, assistant superintendents, directors of special education, and other central office administrators, as well as state department administrators, college and university professors, and other educators throughout Minnesota dedicated to educational leadership for students.

[www.isd477.org](http://www.isd477.org)  
(763) 389-2422



## Cottage Grove Middle School Recognized for Excellence in Character Education



*South Washington County School District 833*

Cottage Grove Middle School was recently named a 2018 Emerging Minnesota School of Character by Synergy & Leadership Exchange.

Each year, Synergy works in collaboration with Character.org to select schools and

districts that demonstrate a dedicated focus on character development that has a positive effect on academic achievement, student behavior and school climate. The Schools of Character application process is also an opportunity for schools and districts to receive professional feedback for growth.

“We know students achieve more when they feel great about where they go to school, and we know staff perform at their best when they love where they work,” said Josh Eidem, Assistant Principal at Cottage Grove Middle School. “We’ve always had a great foundation here because of the positive character of our community and our families. As we embed our character education work deeper into what we do, we expect our students and staff to make an even greater positive contribution to the community.”

On the evaluation, Cottage Grove Middle was praised for its strong commitment to integrating character education, reinforcing basic core values through weekly calls and emails to parents, character development initiatives and fostering student leadership.

“I have been impressed with the positive changes I have seen over the past few years by the students and staff of Cottage Grove Middle School! I have seen students being more willing to work together and treating each other with respect, being inclusive and

inviting new students into the school,” said Cottage Grove mayor Myron Bailey.

Synergy will honor Cottage Grove Middle School Thursday, May 10 in St. Paul at the Character Recognition Awards.

Synergy & Leadership Exchange is a non-profit organization fostering collaboration to advance the development of ethical citizens, providing educational resources, and celebrating achievement and best practices in Minnesota schools, businesses and communities. Visit [www.synergyexchange.org](http://www.synergyexchange.org) to learn more.

Character.org is a national advocate and leader for the character education movement. Visit [www.character.org](http://www.character.org) to learn more about the Schools of Character program.

[cgms.sowashco.org](http://cgms.sowashco.org)  
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Abdul Wright, '16 MA-Education, 2016 Minnesota Teacher of the Year

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# Teacher of the Year Candidate Field Narrowed to 43 Semifinalists

The field of possible candidates for this year's Minnesota Teacher of the Year honor has been narrowed to 43. A selection panel of 23 community leaders chose the semifinalists from an initial field of 167 candidates from across the state.

The panel will review the semifinalists' portfolios again in late March and will select about 10 finalists from among the group. The current Minnesota Teacher of the Year, Corey Bulman, will announce his successor at a banquet May 6 at the Radisson Blu Mall of America in Bloomington, Minn.

Education Minnesota, the statewide educators union, organizes and underwrites the Teacher of the Year program. Candidates include pre-kindergarten through 12th-grade and Adult Basic Education teachers, from public or private schools.

Semifinalists for 2018 Minnesota Teacher of the Year are listed below, including the district, school, subject area and grade taught:

.....  
**Heather Anton**, Waconia Public Schools, Southview Elementary, elementary, 1  
**Courtney Bell**, Minneapolis Public Schools, North Academy of Arts and Communication, social studies, 9-12  
**Dani Berry**, Intermediate District 287, Epsilon, math, 7-12

**Holly Bowen-Bailey**, Duluth Public Schools, Ordean East Middle School, English, 6-8

**Eric Carlson**, Kelliher Public Schools, Kelliher Public School, visual arts, K-12

**Ethan Cherin**, Saint Paul Public Schools, St. Paul Central High School, social studies, 9-12

**Elizabeth Dorsing**, Anoka-Hennepin School District, Blaine High School, math, 9-12

**Kari Eloranta**, Mounds View Public Schools, Mounds View eALC, language arts 10-12+

**Amanda Gislason**, Owatonna Public Schools, McKinley Elementary, visual arts, K-5

**Scott Glew**, Elk River Area Schools, Salk Middle School, social studies, 8

**Laurie Halvorson**, Saint Paul Public Schools, Como Park Elementary, elementary, 5

**Kelly Holstine**, Shakopee Public Schools, Tokata Learning Center, English, 9-12

**Justin Hudalla**, Saint Paul Public Schools, Battle Creek Middle School, global studies, 8

**Angie Hurtig**, Bertha-Hewitt Public Schools, Bertha-Hewitt Public School, elementary, 2

## Minnesota TEACHER of the YEAR

**Molly Keenan**, Saint Paul Public Schools, Harding High School, social studies, 10-12

**Rebecca Kittelson**, Wayzata Public Schools, Sunset Hill Elementary, elementary, 2

**Adam Kuehnel**, State of Minnesota, Minnesota Correctional Facility-Faribault, English language arts, adult basic education

**Alyssa Kuhlman**, Minneapolis Public Schools, Burroughs Community School, elementary, 2

**Shirley Land**, Saint Paul Public Schools, Galtier Community School, Pre-K

**Alyssa Larsen**, Waconia Public Schools, Waconia High School, human geography and world history, 10-12

**Tim Leistikow**, Fridley Public Schools, Fridley High School, English, 11-12

**Kathryn Mackin**, Mahtomedi Public Schools, Mahtomedi Middle School, language arts, 6

**Stephanie Maybee**, Inver Grove Heights Community Schools, Salem Hills Elementary, music, K-5

**Shaylee McComb**, North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale Public Schools, Weaver Elementary, music, K-5

**Jay Meiners**, Lakeview Public Schools, Lakeview High School, science, 9-12

Continued on Page 19



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# Deb Henton is the 2018 Minnesota Superintendent of the Year



The Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) has named Dr. Deb Henton, Superintendent of North Branch Area Public Schools (NBAPS), as the 2018 Minnesota Superintendent of the Year.

Dr. Henton was selected for this honor by a panel of representatives from a variety of Minnesota education organizations. Nominees are evaluated on how each candidate demonstrates leadership for learning, communication skills, professionalism, and community involvement.

"It is undeniable that Dr. Henton is committed to excellence and it is truly a testament to her outstanding leadership and innovative spirit that we are honoring her with the 2018 Minnesota Superintendent of the Year Award," said MASA

Executive Director Dr. Gary Amoroso. "Not only is Dr. Henton an inspiration in her district and the surrounding North Branch community, but she has proven to be a true leader within MASA and across the state."

Dr. Henton has led NBAPS in the development and implementation of two five-year strategic plans, resulting in: new course offerings; updated buildings; the establishment of an education foundation; greater efficiency of systems; better support of students, staff, and families; a 1:1 digital device initiative for grades 5-12; all-day kindergarten; Spanish K-12; and early childhood programming beginning at age three. Data is maintained annually on the action items completed, standardized test scores, attendance of students and staff, graduation rates, and budget and finance information.

In 2014, Dr. Henton implemented a literacy change in NBAPS' primary and intermediate grades. The balanced literacy framework provides teachers with instructional methodologies that are observable and directly correlated to student achievement. This increase in student achievement is illustrated through the district's 2017 MCA III reading test results where 70.3% of NBAPS students receiving free and reduced lunches had medium to high growth from third to fourth grade compared to 56.8% in 2016, and 64.4% of NBAPS students receiving special education services had medium to high growth from third to fourth grade.

Under Dr. Henton's leadership, NBAPS enacted its current Community Engagement Plan to improve the district's overall community engagement. The plan included identifying "key communicators" within the community and sending them regular communications; creating the "Supe of the Day" blog; integrating Facebook and Twitter within daily communications; and creating and sharing podcasts and summaries of school board meetings with NBAPS staff. The district also implemented the use of a mass communication phone system, a weekly newspaper column to keep parents and community members informed, and an online engagement software system, Thoughtexchange, to bring diverse members of the community together to provide feedback to the district. The Thoughtexchange system provides staff, parents, and community members with an anonymous avenue to comment on the district's goals. The feedback is shared with the school board and decision makers in the district.

NBAPS has undertaken many innovative actions in response to cuts to education budgets, most notably the enactment of a four-day school week during 2010-2014, a move that saved the district an estimated \$250,000 a year. Prior to implementation, Dr. Henton held a series of public meetings to demonstrate the need, explain the problems with state funding that precipitated the schedule change, and describe how the district would implement the schedule efficiently and effectively. During the deliberation phase of the four-day school week, Dr. Henton maintained a website dedicated to four-day week research, news articles, district reporting, and committee information.

Dr. Henton created a budgeting process titled the "Budget Boot Camp" to get the most out of available resources and to enrich the district's opportunities even when reducing budgets. The Budget Boot Camp is a yearlong process where study topics are collected throughout the year from school board or administrative team members, staff, or community members. The ultimate result of the Budget Boot Camp is a budget recommendation that is presented to the school board for its consideration.

"In her tenure at North Branch, Dr. Henton has transformed and rebuilt the bond between the community and the school district," said NBAPS School Board Chair Kirby Ekstrom. "Her selection as the Minnesota Superintendent of the Year will certainly serve as an inspiration to her colleagues not only in the state, but across the nation."

Dr. Henton is an active MASA member currently serving as President-Elect to the MASA Board of Directors. She is also a member of

MASA's Professional Assistance Team, Legislative Committee, and Foundation Board. Dr. Henton presents annually at the Great Start Cohort workshop series for new administrators and has been a coach for the Aspiring Superintendent's Academy. She is also actively involved with Schools for Equity in Education (SEE), the Board of School Administrators (BOSA), Technology and Informational Services (TIES), and the American Association of School Administrators (AASA).

Dr. Henton received the 2015 Administrator of Excellence for MASA's Region 6 and the 2014 Kay E. Jacobs Memorial Award. She was named the 2011 eSchool News Tech-Savvy Superintendent and the 2013 Outstanding Service Award recipient from the Minnesota Service Cooperatives.

Dr. Henton is a member of various community organizations including the Chisago County Children's Collaborative, North Branch Rotary and Chamber of Commerce, and she was one of the founders of the North Branch Area Education Foundation. Previously, Dr. Henton has served as a member of the Executive Board for the Forest Lake YMCA.

Dr. Henton has served as a junior and senior high school social studies teacher and assistant principal in the South Washington County School District where she was named Woodbury's 1995 Teacher of the Year. She later served as an Assistant Principal at Stillwater Area High School and Principal at Harding High School, where she led for five years before being promoted to St. Paul's Executive Director of Alternative Learning Programs. While Principal of Harding, Dr. Henton was named the 2004 MASSP Capitol Division Principal of the Year. In 2006, she was appointed the Chief of Staff for Saint Paul Public Schools, where her primary responsibility was developing the district's five-year strategic plan. In 2007, Dr. Henton began serving as the Superintendent of North Branch Area Public Schools.

Dr. Henton has earned a doctorate degree in Educational Leadership, a master's degree in Education, and an Educational Administrative Licensure and she holds a bachelor's degree in Social Studies.

For more information on the AASA Superintendent of the Year Program, please visit [www.aasa.org](http://www.aasa.org).

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## 43 Semifinalists for Teacher of the Year Continued from Page 18

**Melissa Mills**, Lakeville Area Public Schools, Crystal Lake Education Center, early childhood special education, birth-3

**Jaquinetta Mitchell**, Osseo Area Schools, Osseo Senior High, English, 9-10

**Patrick Moriarty**, Roseville Area Schools, Roseville Area High School, band, 10-11

**Jennifer Naslund**, Westonka Public Schools, Shirley Hills Primary School, elementary, 4

**Malia Norton**, Medford Public Schools, Medford Elementary, elementary, 2

**Kathryn Oberg**, St. Louis Park Public Schools, Peter Hobart Elementary, elementary, 5

**Melissa Oberg**, Cook County Schools, Cook County School, special education, 6-12

**Claudia Powers**, Mounds View Public Schools, Irondale High School, special education, 9-12

**Sarah Ryan**, Rochester Public Schools, Century High School, language arts, 11-12

**Bill Sucha**, Mounds View Public Schools, Irondale High School, band, 9-12

**Renee Swanson**, High School for Recording Arts in St. Paul, biology, 9-12

**Lisa Thompson**, Osseo Area Schools, Basswood Elementary, elementary, 5

**Sheena Tisland**, Red Wing Public Schools, Red Wing High School, language arts, 9

**Ashley Topp**, Anoka-Hennepin School District, Blaine High School, English, 9-12

**Jacob Toufar**, Shakopee Public Schools, Shakopee East Junior High, technology education, 7-9

**Gregory Truso**, St. Anthony-New Brighton School District, Wilshire Park Elementary, elementary, 2

**Greg Ueland**, Roseville Area Schools, Roseville Area High School, social studies, 9 and 12

**Sara Windschitl**, Metro Deaf School in St. Paul, elementary, 1

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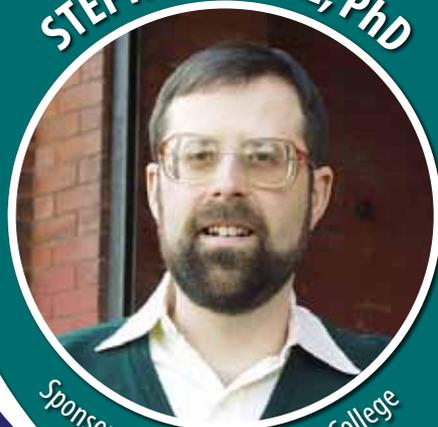
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## Moorhead High Teacher of the Year Works to Meet Needs Of Students

*Moorhead Area Public Schools*

Working with individuals with disabilities in a residential group home setting led Meagan Blake to her career as a special education teacher at Moorhead High School.

“The experiences I had while working with these individuals left an impact on my life, and I decided then that I wanted to continue to work with this population of individuals in the classroom,” said Blake, named this year’s Moorhead High Teacher of the Year.

According to Dave Lawrence, principal at Moorhead High School, Blake is an outstanding choice for the recognition.

“Meagan is always willing to go above and beyond what is expected to meet the needs of her students,” Lawrence said.

Blake believes in providing students with a safe, caring, nurturing environment where they are excited to learn and grow.

“I strive to teach my students the skills they need to be as independent as possible once they graduate from high school,” she said. “I work closely with their families, outside agency members, and all of their school staff to develop an educational plan that is most appropriate for their needs. I believe in the importance of open communication and working to create positive

relationships with not only my students, but also their families, caregivers, and the staff I work with each day.

Blake holds a degree in psychology and a developmental cognitive disability special education teaching degree. She completed her master’s degree in special education and recently obtained special education director and principal licenses.

Blake spent three years as an elementary DCD special education teacher in Detroit Lakes, Minn. She has been a DCD special education teacher at Moorhead High for the past eight years. Additionally, Blake has been the Moorhead High learner support services department chair for the last four years, and she is serving on the Moorhead High School Task Force.

“As a department chair Meagan is not only considered a leader in her department, but she is also a leader among our entire faculty and staff,” Lawrence said.

Blake has had the opportunity to be part of changes in the DCD area at Moorhead High, helping to create several classes that focus on the transition skill areas.

“I played a role in the development of an adapted arts class we now offer, and it has been incredible to observe the increased involvement of our students,” she said.



Blake continues to explore additional ways to get her students involved with their general education peers.

“Over the past few years, we’ve partnered with Key Club and Student Council to implement programs like Breakfast Buddies, a weekly program in which my students enjoy eating breakfast with classmates, and Chalk-a-Palooza, an art project that highlighted some amazing talents of our students,” Blake said.

Blake would like to believe that the

impact she has left on her students is comparable to the one they have left on her.

“I strive to create a classroom where my students feel they belong and want to come and learn each day,” she said. “I work closely with my colleagues to ensure we are doing everything possible to provide a positive influence.”

## Student Success



*Paul Downer  
Delano Public Schools*

Darren Schuler, principal of Delano Elementary in Delano Public Schools is one of three finalists for Minnesota 2018 National Distinguished Principal.



Among the highlights of Schuler’s work in Delano is the formation of the Student Success Team, which brings together a mix of classroom and special education teachers, along with administrators, to compare notes on students who are struggling academically, behaviorally, or otherwise. The group then considers that information and recommends the proper intervention.

“Our goal is to prevent kids from having to go down the special education route,” Schuler said. “If our building experts can give them the necessary tools, these kids can be successful in a regular ed. classroom.”

Another focus is integrating special education students into regular education wherever possible, an issue Schuler said is particularly important to him as the father of a child with special needs.

“I take a lot of pride in that because I live it every day as a dad,” Schuler said. “Seeing the opportunities my own son has had at Delano schools, I want other kids to have that same experience if they do have learning disabilities or they do have a disability that prevents them from doing everything another child would do. We want to be as inclusive as possible.”

Schuler said he makes a point of trying to connect with as many students as pos-



sible on a daily basis, greeting them in the hallways and learning as many names as possible.

“That hopefully creates an environment where they know the principal cares,” he said.

[www.delano.k12.mn.us](http://www.delano.k12.mn.us)  
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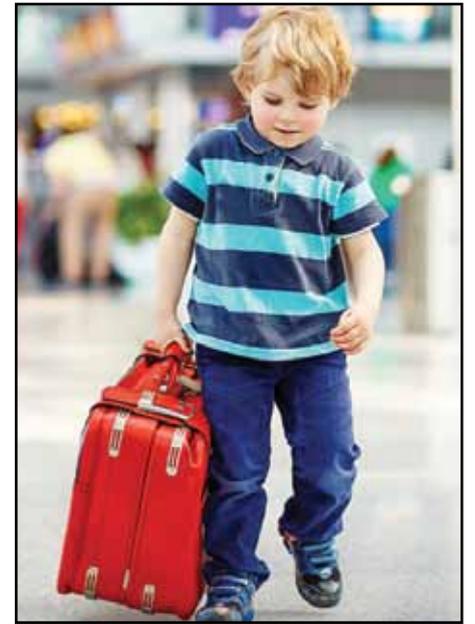


## Navigating MSP Program

Many families who have children with special needs avoid flying because they are unsure how their children will respond. In an effort to ease the anxiety associated with an airport visit and flying, the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC), Fraser and the Autism Society of Minnesota (AuSM) have teamed up to create the Navigating MSP program. The program includes several events, all designed specifically for individuals with special needs, that guide families through the steps of an airport visit, from walking in the door to finding their seats on a plane.

### What to Expect

- ➔ Upon registering for the program participants are emailed a children's social story, detailing what it's like to take a flight—from the airport experience to plane protocol to being in flight and landing. Parents and guardians are encouraged to read the story to their children to prepare them for the program and, ultimately, for their actual flight
- ➔ On the day of the tour, participants meet by the Information Booth on the Tram Level of MSP Airport to pick up their concourse passes. There, each family is assigned its own MSP Airport Travelers Assistant volunteer to guide them through the event.
- ➔ The group then heads to the Ticketing Level and moves through the TSA security line at Gate 6. This process is extremely realistic. Participants utilize MSP's family line, which tends to be shorter, but they must still wait in line, show a TSA agent their concourse pass, remove all items from their persons and pockets, as well as their shoes and winter coats and place them in bins. They move through the same security system as they would if taking a real flight. TSA agents are active partners in the Navigating MSP program and happily walk children and families through the process, ensuring their comfort.
- ➔ Once they move through security, the group is given a gate assignment and has approximately 30 minutes pre-“flight” to explore the terminal with their Travelers Assistant. Some families choose to have a bite to eat or to shop the many stores throughout the terminal. Others head to the children's play area on Concourse C, which features a mock airplane and air traffic control tower, slides, and a statue of Snoopy (whose creator is a native Minnesotan), as well as adult seating and electrical outlets. For those families who seek a quiet place to rest, MSP offers a Family Center, which has a family restroom, comfortable seating, a rocking chair and a crib. It is located near the entrance to Concourse E. A private Nursing Mothers room is located on Concourse C.
- ➔ After approximately 30 minutes of roaming the terminal, families head to their gate assignment where boarding is announced. The group follows the gate agent's instructions for boarding the plane and take their assigned seats. They buckle up and listen to safety instructions — just as they would on a real flight. Once everyone is settled, Delta Pilot Rich Kargel steps out and explains to the families what will happen on an actual flight, covering topics such as the sensation of liftoff and touchdown to pressurization in ears.
- ➔ Upon “touchdown” the group departs the plane and is directed out to Baggage Claim and then to Tram Level and



Parking. The program is offered monthly; those families who feel they need another practice run before their trip are welcome to sign up again.

[mspairport.com/passenger-services/Navigating-MSP.aspx](http://mspairport.com/passenger-services/Navigating-MSP.aspx)

## Comfort Zones and Hidden Abilities



By Courtney Hess

As a special education teacher working in an autism room, I always jump at the chance to hear Temple Grandin speak. One of my favorite quotes from her is, “I think sometimes parents and teachers fail to stretch kids. My mother had a very good sense of how to stretch me just slightly outside my comfort zone.” Temple Grandin

is a funny, motivated, hard-working speaker and she just happens to have autism. I was about 19 when I first heard Temple talk at a conference and this quote was what really stuck with me.

Going through my undergraduate to get my teaching license, professors routinely said, “stick with schedules, stick with this curriculum, and everything will

work for the best.” While we all know that routine is typically important to someone on the spectrum, we can lose sight of the importance of pushing students to be able to see where they are at and where they can be. If we are so stuck on following routines and structures we may never find out that a student is good at art, or being a friend, or a musical instrument. The list of talents can go on and on, but we have to give students a chance to discover them.

One story that sticks with me was from my first year of teaching high school. I was a young teacher, right out of college, and I thought I had it all figured out with my fancy, new, reading comprehension packets. I was stuck on having all of my students (all who happened to be on the spectrum) follow the rules exactly. However, one day, I gave the students three choices for our reading comprehension assignment and what I saw amazed me. One student drew something right out of a book, one student wrote a new creative alternative end for the book, and one student wrote a letter from the point of view of the main character. I was blown away at the talent that I saw unfold in my classroom just because I chose to be flexible in my thinking.

Moving forward, I think when being around an individual with autism we should



continue to find a balance between rigid schedules and flexible thinking.

No matter the path of life that we are in and in what ways we are impacted by autism, I think it is important to keep stretching our friends, family members, students with autism and they will continue to stretch us, in a positive way, as well.

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[www.ausm.org/index.php](http://www.ausm.org/index.php)

# NAVIGATING MSP AIRPORT



## PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT



Traveling with your child with special needs can seem intimidating. Navigating MSP helps ease the anxiety with practice runs through MSP Airport.

This FREE program is offered monthly and will allow you to:

- Experience TSA security
- Explore the terminal
- Board a plane and meet a pilot
- Prepare for takeoff
- Gather helpful tips, information and resources

To learn more or to register for a session, go to [MSPAairport.com](http://MSPAairport.com) and search for Navigating MSP.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**, contact Shelly Lopez at 612-726-5239 or [Shelly.Lopez@mspmac.org](mailto:Shelly.Lopez@mspmac.org).



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