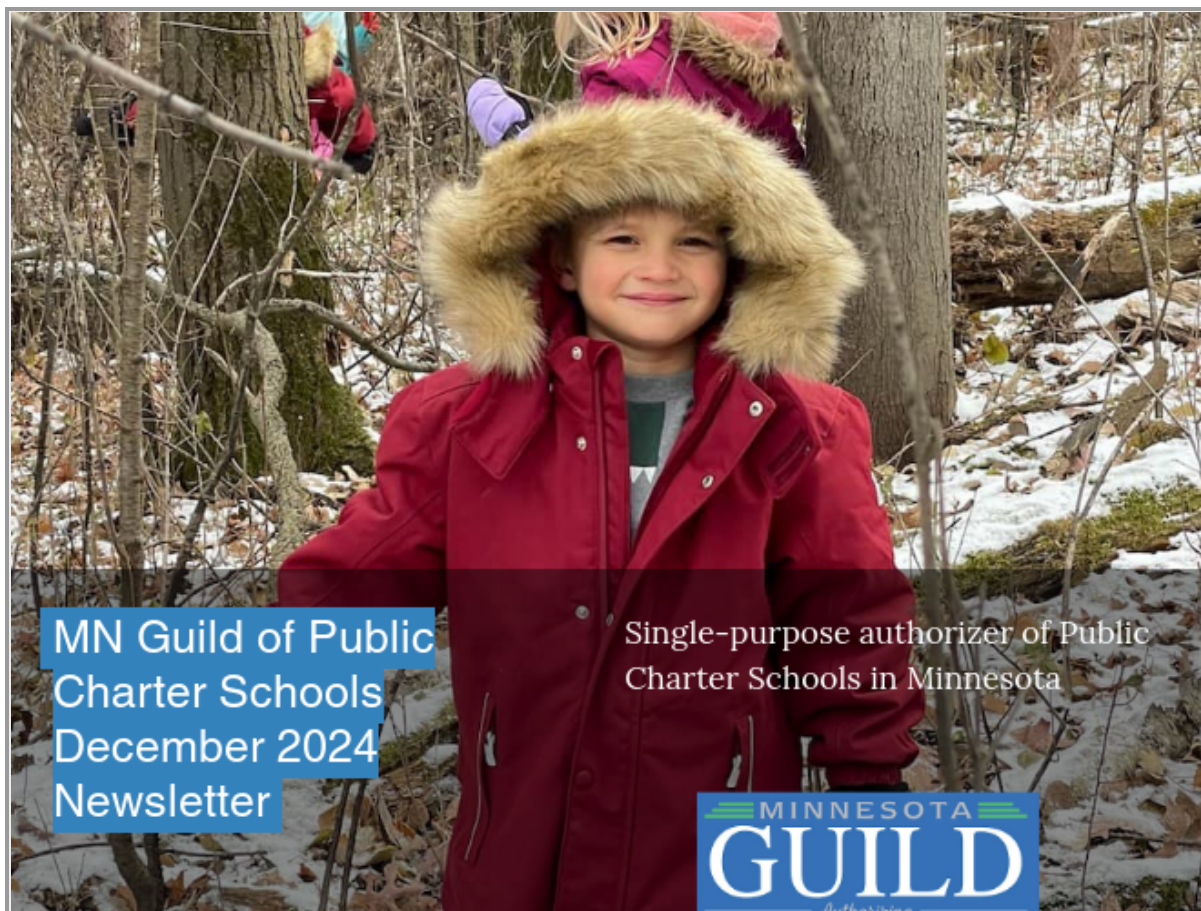
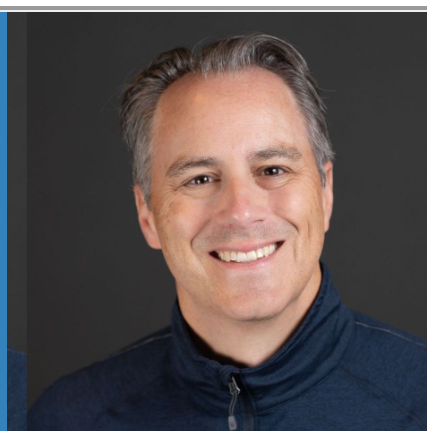




Director's Update

Jim Zacchini, Executive Director



Greetings,

How is it already December!?! Thank you to all who submitted their annual reports by the Guild's November 1st due date. For those that didn't you're definitely on the naughty list. Be on the lookout for that lump of coal ha ha (or Ho Ho)!

I wanted to give you a heads-up that our Board of Directors are going to be making site visits like in years past (pre-covid) over the next few months. These are not formal observations, rather, a way for our board to stay familiar and connected to all the wonderful things you do day in and day out. Fret not, these will not be of the dreaded "pop-in" variety. Each visiting board member will reach out to let you know about timing.

Finally, we are happy to recognize River Grove Elementary this month in our School Spotlight. Please take a moment to learn more about and celebrate another one of your collegial peers making a difference in students' lives. Their dedication and hard work contribute greatly to our community, and it's inspiring to see the positive impact they're having.

Wishing you and yours a happy holiday season.

With gratitude, Jim



 River Grove School. Come Grow with Us!

This month the MN Guild is proud to spotlight River Grove Elementary.

Mission

Our mission is to utilize the natural resources, history, arts, and civic stewardship of the community as a foundation for the study of language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, physical education, art, and other curriculum subjects. River Grove's place-based learning environments are student-centered, designed by teachers, and reinforced and supported by the local community.

Teacher-Powered Philosophy: At River Grove, teachers are responsible for the learning program and have the autonomy to develop curriculum and evaluation strategies to meet their students' needs. Teachers work in teams that integrate classroom lessons with art, music, physical education, and even field trips and teach in partnership with special education instructors and our licensed school counselor.

At River Grove, students learn through doing, with hands-on lessons and multidisciplinary

projects that promote collaboration and creative thinking. Studies show that project-based learning is linked to significant improvements in student test scores, attendance and classroom engagement.

About River Grove

River Grove is a K-5, tuition-free public charter school in the beautiful forest of May Township in Washington County, MN. Our community-supported structure, project and nature-based focus, and small school environment nurture students' social, developmental, and academic growth. Our talented teaching team creates unique learning experiences with hands-on, experiential curriculum that helps students to meet grade-level state standards while exploring and learning in amazing outdoor settings.

Founded in 2017, River Grove is committed to place-based and outdoor learning. In addition to exploring the forest around their school, students also enjoy visits to the 800-acre Manitou Fund Environmental Learning Center (Warner Nature Center), field trips, and special programs led by environmental education experts at Hamline University Center for Global Environmental Education, Earth Quest, and Wild Rivers Conservancy of the St. Croix and Namekagon.

NATURE COMES IN ALL SIZES!

Science topics for River Grove students include:

- Naturally occurring insect ecosystems, also “bug boxes” and “bucket ponds”
- Animal adaptations in suburban and urban areas
- Bees and their importance to local gardens
- The science and benefits of suburban and urban trees (photosynthesis, carbon cycle, effects on citywide temperatures)
- Growing cycles—utilizing garden spaces or windowsill planters
- Weather patterns right above our heads
- Time and sun angles—building a sundial!
- Everyday encounters with nature, even at home

CONNECTING THE CLASSROOM TO REAL WORLD MATH AND LITERACY

There's just something about it—children's curiosity is sparked when they learn in nature. Students develop essential numeracy skills based on natural and local community interactions and go beyond traditional classrooms to find hands-on strategies for math exploration:

- Developing basic number sense, such as number recognition in nature (both symbols and quantities) and counting, and using natural manipulatives to learn concepts like how many, which is more, grouping, and breaking apart
- Shapes, lines, and spatial relationships all around us
- Patterns and relationships, including sorting and categorizing
- Measuring, comparing, and estimating
- Understanding time and temperature right outside our doors
- Financial literacy and money—local stores and partners

River Grove also uses outdoor spaces and community partnerships to cultivate nature- and place-inspired literacy. Natural objects and settings of all types inspire children to explore and express themselves. Lessons are as simple as letter recognition in nature, reading outside, and writing signs for a garden or as comprehensive as nature journaling and poems or research essays based on observations and experiences outdoors.

Thank you, River Grove Elementary, for all you do.







m DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ↔ Authorizer ↔ Charter School

"An approved authorizer working in collaboration with the Minnesota Department of Education"



Charter School Board

Welcome to Minnesota Charter Board Training and Development!

Minnesota Statutes, section 124E.07, subdivision 7, states; "Every charter school board member shall attend annual training throughout the member's term. All new charter board members shall attend initial training on the board's role and responsibilities, employment policies and practices, and financial management. A new board member who does not begin the required initial training within six months after being seated and complete the training within 12 months after being seated is automatically ineligible to continue to serve as a board member. "Minnesota Statutes do not dictate how many hours, or minicourses, a board member must complete, but a board member is responsible for knowing all of the statutes reviewed in the minicourses in the three required areas: board role and responsibilities, financial management, and employment policies and practices. Ready to begin training? It's as easy as steps 1, 2, 3!

[Watch the introductory video below.](#)

MACS Board Training

BOARD TRAINING COURSE 200: REGISTER NOW!

Our online Board Training Course 200: Charter School Finance - A Public Trust has been scheduled each month throughout the fall. If you or someone you know is interested in, or needs to complete this training, please view our [calendar](#) for the upcoming trainings. Next board training . [Click here to register](#).



MN GUILD IMPORTANT DATES

[Minnesota District and Charter Data Reporting Calendar](#)

[Curriculum Director Leader Meetings](#), Academic Standards content specialists will be hosting Content Area Leader Meetings and Office Hours during the 2024–25 school year. These virtual meetings give district leaders an opportunity to learn about new resources in specific content areas and connect with other districts. Refer to the [Save the Dates for School Year 2024-25](#)



Districts and charters must adopt a School Cell Phone Policy by March 15, 2025.



ACRONYMS OF THE MONTH: MCA-IV, PLDs and Alt MCA

Science MCA-IV Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs) Overview The development of Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs) is a critical step in communicating student performance in terms of levels or categories of performance on any standardized assessment.

For the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs) and Alternate Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (Alt MCAs), PLDs were developed in collaboration with

educators after a revision of academic standards. The Science MCA-IV PLDs describe learning of the grade-level expectations set by benchmarks in the 2019 Academic Standards in Science.

The purpose of PLDs is to:

- promote equity for all students across the state by clarifying expected learning outcomes for instruction and local assessment of Minnesota Academic Standards in Science; and
- support teachers' analysis of the depth of their curriculum, instruction, and classroom assessments.

Using the PLDs, student performance on the MCA-IV or Alternate MCA is differentiated into four performance levels: Beginning, Intermediate, Meets and Advanced. At each performance level:

- Students are performing at a beginning level in learning the grade-level expectations of the Academic Standards in Science
- Students are performing at an intermediate level in learning the grade-level expectations of the Academic Standards in Science
- Students are performing at the meets level in learning the grade-level expectations of the Academic Standards in Science
- Students are performing at an advanced level in learning the grade-level expectations of the Academic Standards in Science

Students performing at the "Meets" and "Advanced" levels are considered proficient with regard to the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) described in the academic standards, or in the case of alternate assessments, the extended standards presented in the test specifications.

MN Guild Partners & Resources

Leading the way to excellence



An update from Academic Standards, Instruction and Assessment

- [Updates From MDE](#)
- [Upcoming Opportunities](#)
- [Important Ideas and Research](#)

Cell Phone Policy Deadline

Districts and charters must adopt a School Cell Phone Policy by March 15, 2025. The Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA) and the Minnesota

Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP) must collaborate to develop best practices

Clarifying the Connection Between English Language Arts Standards and Assessments

The 2020 Minnesota Academic Standards in English Language Arts (ELA) will reach full implementation in school year 2025–26. According to state statute, all students must receive instruction and classroom-level assessment in all standards and grade-level benchmarks.

In addition to classroom assessments, students in Minnesota take additional literacy assessments including the Reading Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) and literacy screeners. The first administration of the Reading MCA-IV will cover the 2020 Minnesota Academic Standards in ELA in Spring 2026 for students in grades 3–8 and 10. Literacy screeners are now administered to students in grades K–3 three times a year (see the [MDE READ Act Screening webpage](#) for more information about literacy screening).

Federal Charter Schools Program (CSP) Grant

There are two types of grants available to charter schools that meet eligibility requirements: start-up grants and expansion/replication grants. The start-up grant is available to new and developing charter schools for the planning, program design, and implementation of the new charter school. CSP start-up grant competitions are expected to be held each fall. The expansion/replication grant is available for the planning, program design, and implementation of the expanded or replicated charter school. CSP expansion/replication grant competitions are expected to be held each spring. Please see the [CSP Grant Competition page](#) for more information.

Please visit the [MDE Grants webpage](#) to view open competitive grant opportunities and an archive of previous grant competition documents.

- [General Overview Guidance](#) - 4/19/24
The Charter Schools Program (CSP) grant guidance document that outlines the processes, rules and regulations, and budget development guidance pertaining to the grant. All current Minnesota CSP grantees are held to these requirements.

Science, special education and multilingual learner educators are encouraged to apply to be part of these in-person committees to be held in Summer 2025:

- [Application for Science MCA-IV Standard Setting on July 8–10](#)
- [Application for Science Alternate MCA Standard Setting on July 14–16](#)

Applications will be open until Jan. 10. Committee members will be chosen based on grade-level and content-area needs, as well as experience with the 2019 Minnesota Science Standards.

MTAS/Alternate MCA Eligibility Requirements and the Assurance, Rationale and Context Process

Minnesota's alternate assessments, the Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (MTAS) and Alternate Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (Alt MCA), are the standards-based accountability assessments designed for, and limited to, students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. They are designed to measure student progress toward Minnesota's academic standards and meet the requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Students who receive special education services and meet the eligibility criteria may take the MTAS/Alt MCA. For 2024–25, the [Eligibility Requirements and Decision-Making Tool for Minnesota Alternate Assessments](#) has been updated for ease of use, clarity and to reflect other feedback from district staff.

U.S. Department of Education Letter on Arts Education

The U.S. Department of Education recently released a [Dear Colleague letter](#) regarding the importance of arts education. The letter clarifies federal funding opportunities for arts education within the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), including how Title I, II, III, IV-A and B funds can be used to support arts education. The letter further details how local educational agencies may use funds within the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V). The release of this Dear Colleague letter reflects the U.S. Department of Education's ongoing commitment to arts education. With this guidance, districts, schools, and administrators have the necessary clarity to fully realize the opportunity that ESSA presents to include the arts as a part of a well-rounded education.

Upcoming Opportunities

Empowering Underrepresented Gifted Learners: Book Study

Who: Classroom educators, administrators and gifted education specialists.

What: Empowering Underrepresented Gifted Students has been selected for a virtual five-part book study facilitated by Dr. Joy Lawson Davis. The study is intended to help educators, administrators and counselors move closer to ensuring equity, access and excellence in gifted education.

When: Second Tuesday of each month, noon–2 p.m., November through February.

Where/How: All sessions will be recorded and available to registrants following each session. There is a charge and registration is required. [Register for the Book Study](#).

MDE Boot Camp Schedule:

Wednesday, December 18, 2024, 8 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

[December Registration](#)

Wednesday, January 15, 2025, 8 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

[January Registration](#)

Wednesday, February 19, 2025, 8 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

[February Registration](#)

Wednesday, March 19, 2025, 8 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

[March Registration](#)

Wednesday, May 21, 2025, 8 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

[May Registration](#)

Wednesday, June 18, 2025, 8 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

[June Registration](#)

How: [Register for the Gifted Education Boot Camp](#). There is no fee. Contact [Wendy Behrens](#), Gifted and Talented education specialist, if you need assistance or prefer to register by phone.

Gifted Education Virtual Open Office Hours

Who: Educators, administrators, community members.

What: Office hours are an informal opportunity to ask any question related to Gifted Education.

When: Join MDE's Gifted Education office hours the second Wednesday of the month, from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m., during the school year.

How: Visit [the Gifted Education page of the MDE website](#) for session links

Important Ideas and Research

Paid Leave for School Closures. Districts required to pay full wages for school employees during full or partial day closures when the day is an instructional day. School-age care employees must be paid for closures if family fees are collected. Work from home may be allowed to the extent practicable.



MDE and Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI) required to:

Develop a coaching and mentorship program for certified trained facilitators. • Identify at least 15 evidence-based literacy intervention models by November 1, 2025. • Develop and provide training on interventions for unlicensed persons that regularly provide Tier 2 interventions in conjunction with the Regional Literacy Networks.

Starting in **SY 2024-25** district staff, contractors, and volunteers may only use screeners that have been approved by the Department of Education.

Tier 2 literacy interventions, beginning in the **SY 2026-27**, must be supervised by a teacher who has been trained in approved reading instruction.

Starting in SY 2025-26, the local literacy plan must include: • Plans and timelines for

adopting approved curricula and material. • The number of teachers and other staff proposed for training in structured literacy. • How the district used funding provided under the Read Act to implement the requirements of the Read Act.



Office of Governor Tim Walz & Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan

Governor Walz, Lieutenant Governor Flanagan Announce Minnesota Ranked a Top State for Children



Last week, Governor Walz and Lieutenant Governor Flanagan announced that SmileHub has ranked Minnesota as a top state for children. The scorecard ranked states across four areas: health and wellness, support system strength, education system, and family and working life.

"In Minnesota, we have been steadfast in our commitment to support children and families. From our nation-leading child tax credit to historic investments in education and child care, we're making an effort to help families where it matters the most," said Governor Walz. "The data shows that our efforts are paying off in working toward our goal of making Minnesota the best state in the nation for children."

"Children of all races, incomes, religions, and zip codes deserve equal opportunity to learn, play, and thrive. In Minnesota, we're making this a reality," said Lieutenant Governor Flanagan. "SmileHub's rankings reflect our work to strengthen resources for children, support middle class families, combat long-stand inequities, and build

a brighter future for Minnesota. I am proud of all we have done for our youngest Minnesotans."



INNOVATION AWARDS

The 2025 Innovation Awards application is now available. [Click here](#) to access the application. The submission window opens **Monday, January 6th, 2025**, but don't wait to get started! Consider what innovative practices, programs, and opportunities your school is offering to your staff and students that has created new value for your school community and apply for the 2025 Innovation Awards. To learn more about our Innovation Awards and to see past award recipients, [click here](#). Please contact [Michael](#) with questions.

OTHER UPDATES



CYBERSECURITY INCIDENT REPORTING LAW

Minnesota's cybersecurity incident reporting law begins on December 1, 2024. State law required Minnesota's public schools to use the online cybersecurity incident reporting tool located [here](#) if a cybersecurity incident affects them. The website includes the reporting form, instructions, FAQs, and more. The form is currently live and able to securely accept reports before the law moves into effect.

MDE EXTENDED TIME REVENUE FUNDING - DUE 12/13/24

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) has instructions and forms available for FY 2025 Extended Time Revenue (ETR) requests. These can be found on the [Charter School Resources webpage](#). The document entitled FY 25 General Education Revenue for Charter Schools' Extended Time Instructions contains information about program requirements and additional resources for schools before completing the FY 25 Charter School Extended Time Revenue Request Form. Schools may submit a request form for only one ETR program type (summer, extended day, extended week) each fiscal year.

The request form, necessary documents, and any questions can be sent directly to MDE's [Charter Center](#) no later than **December 13, 2024**.

MN MULTI-PURPOSE COMMUNITY FACILITY PROJECTS

Minnesota has been granted \$50 million from the U.S. Department of Treasury's Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund (CPF), a program established under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. This funding aims to address critical infrastructure needs that support work, education, and healthcare monitoring, ensuring long-term benefits for communities impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The CPF program focuses on:

- Supporting recovery from the pandemic by enhancing infrastructure for work, education, and healthcare access.
- Addressing inequities in access to essential services through targeted investments.
- Expanding modern infrastructure, including high-quality, affordable broadband internet.

Minnesota's allocation will fund Multi-Purpose Community Facility Projects designed to advance family economic stability, foster educational opportunities for children and youth, and improve connections in areas most affected by the pandemic.

[Click here](#) for detailed application instructions, timelines, and further information.

Additionally, MDE is seeking reviewers for this grant opportunity. Interested individuals can contact Lee Her at Lee.Her@state.mn.us or 651-785-4064 for more information.

CALENDAR

- * Friday, December 13th – [Legislative Information & Training](#)
- * Thursday, December 19th – [Government Affairs Committee](#)
- * Friday, December 20th – [Legislative Forum](#)
- * Friday, January 24th – [Virtual Q&A with MACS Relicensure Team & PELSB](#)
- * Sunday, January 26th-Saturday, February 1st – National School Choice Week
- * Wednesday, March 5th – [Charter School Day at the Capitol](#)

Click on an event or [visit our website](#) for details, registration, and other events.

"Unleashing Education from Convention" is more than the MACS motto, it is a reminder of our purpose, our goals, and it serves as a clarion Call To Action.



On behalf of the MN Guild of Public Charter Schools
we would like to wish you a Happy Holiday season
and prosperous New Year.

We Want to Hear from You

As your authorizer we want you to know we are here to support you. If you would like to bounce ideas off someone, or need a sounding board, we are happy to be that person. Please feel free to email us whenever you need additional support, we are here to listen.

Please send an email to one of the addresses listed below:

Jim Zacchini,

MN Guild Executive Director

jim.zacchini@guildschools.org

Debbie Weckman,

MN Guild Administrative Assistant

debbie.weckman@guildschools.org

Buddy Ferrari,

MN Guild Project Tech

buddy.ferrari@guildschools.org

Thank you and as always, we appreciate all you do.



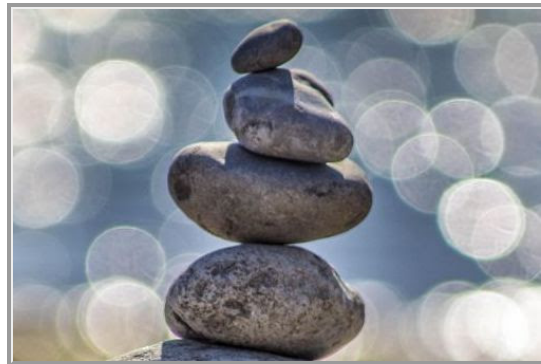
Our Vision:

The Minnesota Guild of Public Charter Schools advances positive educational outcomes for students that lead to success in life.

Our Mission:

The Guild advocates for teacher leadership, professional autonomy, and the creation of innovative schools for student engagement and the ownership of learning. The Guild strives to support students, families, and communities most affected by the achievement gap and low graduation rates.

"If you want
to go fast
go alone.
If you want
to go far
go together."
-African Proverb





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<https://www.guildschools.org>

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