



### Director's Update

Jim Zacchini, Executive Director



Greetings,

As our mercurial winter keeps us on our toes, it's a perfect time for reflection while we cozy up indoors to escape the chill. We should also think ahead to spring which as they say is "a lovely reminder of how beautiful change can truly be." With change being the only true constant these days, I am confident that we will endure and succeed as we stay in community and work together. By prioritizing empathy, adaptability, and open communication, we can overcome obstacles and emerge stronger collectively. This approach will help us ultimately benefit the people we care about most: our students.

In a spirit of celebration to offset these gray days, we want to acknowledge SciTech this month in our monthly school Spotlight. Please take a moment to learn about the wonderful things

happening at SciTech (see below) and join us in celebrating them as one of our communities.

With gratitude,

Jim



## [Spotlight on SciTech Academy](#)

**Vision:** Equip students with knowledge, character, and skills for a competitive global economy through STEM.

**Mission:** Deliver an all-inclusive STEM curriculum to engage, empower, and educate inner-city students, including immigrant children. Emphasize social responsibility and serving others.

About: K-8 STEM-focused public charter school in South Metro. Offers core content, Arabic, Somali, and Physical Education. Adaptive Learning Skills program for students with significant needs.

**Focus Areas:**

- Multi-Tiered Support System
- Effective classroom instruction
- Technology integration
- Positive Behavior and Academic Interventions
- Meeting students where they are

**Why Choose SciTech:** Caring and academic environment, low student-to-adult ratio, skilled teachers, and focus on STEM and critical thinking.

**Beliefs:** All children have the power to learn, are curious and creative, and can succeed. Individual learning plans for each student.

**Culture:** Rigorous curriculum, high expectations, and intellectual challenges create a culture of excellence and learning.

Message from Abdi Abdulle, Executive Director: \*"I am filled with profound gratitude and pride as I reflect on my journey as the Executive Director of SciTech Academy since 2018. Over the past few years, we have achieved remarkable milestones together, and I am truly honored to have had the opportunity to lead and serve this vibrant community."

Our most significant accomplishments are our students' consistent growth and development. By implementing a comprehensive and dynamic curriculum, we aim to meet the diverse needs of every learner. Our dedicated teachers and staff work tirelessly to create a positive, nurturing, and supportive environment where students thrive academically and are empowered to reach their full potential. As a result, we have observed remarkable academic progress and achievements across all grade levels."

Thank you, SciTech Academy, for all you do.

[Video link](#)





### **We Want to Celebrate with You, Your Students, and Staff!**

Let's celebrate each success—big or small—with all the flair, enthusiasm, and humor we can muster. Let's sprinkle a dose of fun into our everyday routine and remind ourselves that these moments are worthy of acknowledgement. When we celebrate, we amplify the drive, invigorate our spirits, and create an indestructible bond that propels us to tackle the next challenge, one vibrant celebration at a time. Cheers to leadership successes!

Kids are the true masters of life lessons and resilience. Let's celebrate their moments of perseverance. Along with focusing on student grades or outcomes, we could champion

emotional growth and stories of overcoming adversity. We will provide a safe environment for educators and students to share experiences, honor their journeys, and inspire others to follow.

In addition to boosting morale, celebrations foster a sense of belonging among students and staff. Imagine a school that routinely takes the time to acknowledge successes, where kids eagerly await the next spotlight on how they performed at difficult tasks. When students and staff feel recognized and valued, it cultivates a sense of community that is crucial in any educational setting. Everyone loves a place where they can be themselves.

Please feel free to send me your successes that you would like us to share in the new "In the Spotlight" section of the newsletter to [debbie.weckman@guildschools.org](mailto:debbie.weckman@guildschools.org).

Thank you for your time and consideration.



Google Classroom

**SAVE THE DATE: FEBRUARY 12, 2025**

[Technical Assistance Webinar](#)

11 a.m. to 12 p.m.

*A Google invitation with the Zoom link was sent to your email box.*



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.

1. Register for the next training session.

- Board Training Course 200: Charter School Finance - A Public Trust
- Scheduled each month throughout the fall.
- View our calendar for upcoming trainings.
- [Click here to register.](#)



**SAVE THE DATE: February 12, 2025, MN Guild Technical Assistance Webinar**

[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.**

“The man who doesn’t read good books has no advantage over the man who can’t read them.” - Mark Twain

## **MN Guild Partners & Resources**

Leading the way to excellence



### **Updates from MDE:**

#### **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.

#### **Federal Charter Schools Program (CSP) Grant**

There are two types of grants available:

- Start-up Grants: Available to new and developing charter schools for planning, program design, and implementation. CSP start-up grant competitions are expected to be held each fall.
- Expansion/Replication Grants: Available for 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: CSP Grant Competition page for more information. [Visit MDE Grants webpage](#)

### **Minnesota Kindergarten Fall Assessment from the Division of Early Education**

The Minnesota legislature tasked MDE with developing a [Minnesota Kindergarten Fall Assessment \(MnKFA\)](#) to create a statewide snapshot of what kindergarteners know and are able to do.

### **Curriculum Director Meetings**

MDE will host three virtual Curriculum Directors Meetings in 2024–25; there are two time slots for each session. The second upcoming 2024–25 Curriculum Director Meeting will take place in May. Please register to attend the meetings:

- [Curriculum Leaders Webinar Link May 13, 7:30–8:30 a.m.](#)
- [Curriculum Leaders Webinar Link May 13, 4–5 p.m.](#)

### **Alternate Assessment February Chat and Connect Series**

What: MTAS/Alt MCA test administrators and special education staff meeting.

Why: Learn about LCI revisions, MTAS/Alt MCA 2025 updates, and Field Audit overview. Share feedback and ask questions.

When: Feb. 18, 4–5 p.m. Monthly meetings on the third Tuesday. Upcoming dates: March 18, April 15, and May 20 at 4 p.m. Register once for the entire series.

How: [Register for the Alt Assessment Chat and Connect](#)

### **National Youth Science Camp**

What: Applications are now being accepted from high school juniors and seniors in the classes of 2025 and 2026 to represent Minnesota at the 2025 National Youth Science Camp (NYSCamp).

Who: High school juniors and seniors in the classes of 2025 and 2026

When: Applications open Jan. 27 and are due Feb. 28.

How: Applications must be submitted at the [NYSCamp website](#) by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on Feb. 28.

### **Performance Level Descriptors and Their Uses**

When a new assessment is developed, Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs), previously known as Achievement Level Descriptors (ALDs), are written by content specialists and educator committees. The new Science MCA-IV, which will first be taken by students in Spring 2025, has been developed to assess the 2019 Minnesota Academic Standards in Science. PLDs have been written for the Science MCA-IV and are [posted on the MDE website](#).

### **Upcoming Opportunities**

[MDE Boot Camp Schedule and Registration Link](#)

- Wednesday, February 19, 2025, 8 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, March 19, 2025, 8 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, May 21, 2025, 8 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, June 18, 2025, 8 a.m.-1:30 p.m.



### **Helping Kids Learn to Read with Reading Rockets**

Working with parents is key to helping kids learn to read. Reading Rockets is a national literacy initiative that provides parents and teachers with instructional support. It has a special Literacy at Home section and a [Reading 101: A Guide for Parents section](#) that helps parents understand how to support their child's reading journey.

### **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 the 2025–26 school year. 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. For more information, visit [MDE READ Act Screening webpage](#).

### **Professional Development Webpage Updates**

The [Professional Development webpage](#) has been updated to include steps to register for remaining Phase 1 educators.

### **Upcoming Virtual Open Office Hour**

Have a question about the Minnesota READ Act? Please email the [Minnesota READ Act](#) or join us for a virtual open office hour. Registration is required.

[Register for Friday, February 21, 2025, Office Hour 1-1:45 p.m.](#)

### **Unite for Literacy: Free Digital Picture Books**



[Unite for Literacy](#) is a website that offers free digital picture books for students from different cultures, backgrounds and languages. These books are available on the Unite for Literacy bookshelf, which makes the digital book available on any device – computer, tablet or smartphone.



Eligibility for SFSP Interested in participating in the SFSP? The Summer Food Service Program Fact Sheet—available in Hmong, Somali, and Spanish—provides a high-level summary of the program.

School Food Authorities, review the Summer Meal Options for Schools to determine which summer program works best for you.

[Important Application Information](#) and Due Dates Program application due dates are firm.

**All sponsors planning to apply to operate a RuralINC SFSP site this summer must complete an [Intent to Apply Form](#) by March 1.**



**Our very own Rollingstone Community School is featured in the MACS newsletter.**



**Rollingstone Community School Math Class Activity:** Students stepped outside for their math class to test their knowledge of shapes. Using the natural world around them, they created various shapes, which they then measured using their bodies. See photos above.

### **MACS Legislative Priorities 2025**

For the 2025 legislative session, we urge the legislature to address significant gaps in funding for chartered public-school students, establish a rational policy for charter school facilities, and continue to work proactively with the charter sector on policy issues that enhance accountability while protecting school autonomy.

#### **Fair and Equitable Funding for Charter School Students:**

- Increase General Revenue Formula Beyond Inflation
- Provide Equalized School Safety Revenue Aid Funding
- Provide Equalized Local Optional Revenue Aid Funding
- Provide Adequate Funding to Meet Transportation Costs
- Equalize Extended Time Revenue
- Provide Equitable Funding when State Shifts Program Financing from State Revenue to Local Property Taxes

#### **A Rational Policy for Charter School Facilities:**

- Allow Direct Ownership of School Facilities for Qualifying Schools
- Repeal Ban of Public Funds for Purchase of School Facilities
- Increase Lease Aid and Tie to General Formula
- Equalize Long-Term Facilities Maintenance Revenue

#### **Balancing Accountability vs. Autonomy:**

- Establish Working Group to Find Legislative Solutions that Enhance Authorizer Accountability while Protecting School Autonomy
- Establish Multiple-Measure Alternative Accountability Framework Differentiated to Match School Mission/Populations for Charter Contracts
- Establish a Centralized Trustee System to Strengthen School Closure Process
- Require MDE Establish Centralized Digital Backpack System for Public Student Records

The 2025 MACS Legislative Priorities can be found on our website.

## **Calendar**

[Register Now: Charter Day at the Capitol – March 5, 2025:](#) This event is an opportunity for the entire charter school community (administrators, board members, educators, and parents) to meet with legislators, share the story of Minnesota's charter schools, and advocate for the public policy legislative agenda ratified by MACS member schools. Register on the MACS website to schedule your meeting with legislators. Training and resources will be provided leading up to the event.

## **Upcoming Events and Registration Link:**

- Tuesday, February 11th – Charter School Administrators Meeting (Virtual)
- Charter School Administrators Meeting (Virtual)
- Thursday, February 13th – Legislative Forum
- Friday, February 14th – Board Training Course 200 Begins
- Friday, February 21st – Legislative Information & Training
- Friday, February 28th – Legislative Forum
- Wednesday, March 5th – Charter School Day at the Capitol



The pandemic did indeed spotlight innovation, but the charter sector had already been pioneering many innovative approaches. These efforts have yielded strong student outcomes and should be acknowledged.

[Commentary by Karega Rausch](#) (November 19, 2024) *Innovation in Schools During the Pandemic*

### **Innovation and Accountability**

Innovation should harness the unique ways students learn. To achieve strong academic outcomes and preparedness for future opportunities, schools need to focus on accountability. Setting high expectations, providing support, and rewarding success while addressing failures are key to tying innovation to the desired outcomes.



### **Summer Programs**

- [Summer Immersion Program \(SIP\)](#): Two-week virtual sessions where 9th-12th grade girls and non-binary students can design and build their own computer games, make new friends, and connect with mentors and industry professionals.
- Pathways: Flexible, self-paced learning options exploring AI, cybersecurity, and data science through video tutorials and real-world projects, along with access to an exclusive Discord community.

### **Girls Who Code Clubs**

- Benefits: Free resources, community activities, and coding skills for all 3rd-12th graders.
- Support: Personalized live support, webinar training, and facilitation guides to help launch and grow your club.
- Swag: T-shirts, notebooks, and stickers for club members.

### **Key Dates**

[Apply by February 26](#) for priority consideration or by April 11 for the final deadline.

Join Girls Who Code [TOMORROW, February 5th, at 4 PM PT / 7 PM ET](#) for our live Summer Programs webinar!

To get more information or to apply, visit Girls Who Code's website or email [summer@girlswhocode.com](mailto:summer@girlswhocode.com).

These programs seem like incredible opportunities to inspire and empower young students in tech! 🚀



"Uplifting the expertise of all educational partners in community schools through shared leadership"



Reclaiming language and culture for students through new teacher licensure pathway.

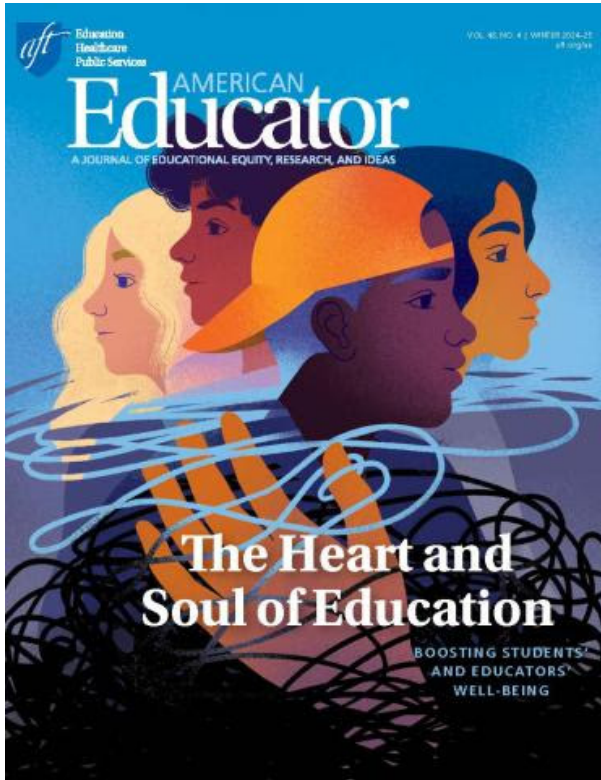
Heritage Language experts on helping students find belonging and reach deeper learning. [BLOG LINK:](#)



**Mission** - AFT is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students,

their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

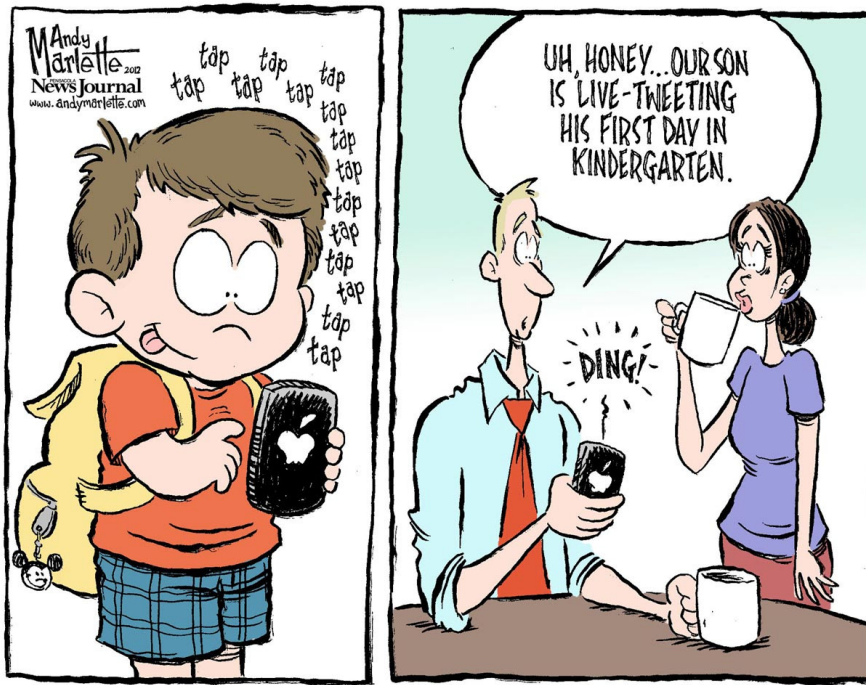
[American Educator, Winter 2024-2025](#) - ***Click here to read the many wonderful articles published by various authors***



**Embrace  
the grind.**

Welcome to the light side... this section has been added to bring a little light and levity to your

day. Enjoy!



## 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](mailto:jim.zacchini@guildschools.org)

Debbie Weckman,

MN Guild Administrative Assistant

[debbie.weckman@guildschools.org](mailto:debbie.weckman@guildschools.org)

Buddy Ferrari,

MN Guild Project Tech

[buddy.ferrari@guildschools.org](mailto:buddy.ferrari@guildschools.org)

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



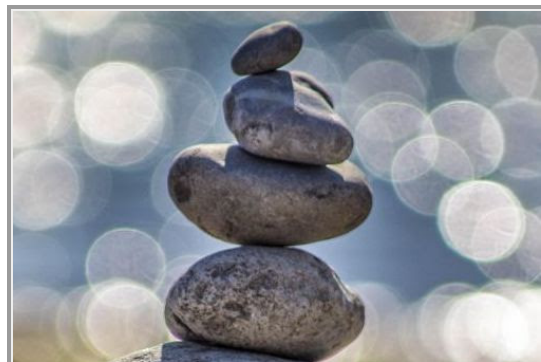
**Our Vision:**

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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