

Strengthening Minnesota's K-12 independent schools through
advocacy and advancement



Letter from the President

Dear MISF Member Schools, Staff, Colleagues, and Friends of Independent Schools:

We offer a warm welcome back from your holiday break and good wishes for a prosperous 2016!

On December 10, President Obama signed into law the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). ESSA includes important provisions championed by the private school community to improve equitable services to private school students and teachers. We have received inquiries about the timelines for implementation. Joe McTighe, Executive Director of CAPE notes, "Exactly when the new provisions of ESSA kick in depends on the provision in question. The law specifies different start dates for competitive programs, noncompetitive programs, and other components... Suffice it to say that ESSA will not be implemented overnight, and further clarity should emerge in coming weeks."

We offer a tremendous thanks to Rep. John Kline, who was a lead sponsor in the house. We also recognize and thank the entire Minnesota congressional delegation who voted in favor of the legislation. We will keep you updated on progress and important items of note for our schools. In the end, this is great for students - **every student**.

Thanks to a very generous grant from the Katherine B. Andersen Fund of the St. Paul Foundation, MISF will implement our next iteration of our SCOPE study. This research and data project is the premier document about the impact of private schools and the achievement of our students. We will provide more information in the coming months, but we highly encourage all schools to participate in the survey as we further articulate the educational footprint of private/independent schools in Minnesota.

School Choice Week is January 24-30, 2016. Look for more information on events being planned to celebrate and bring greater awareness to innovative choice program across the country. We want to show our strength and affirmation in providing authentic choice to families and students.

Please note several important updates on STEM and other events in the coming weeks. Please let us know how we can help you maximize your membership.

Tim Benz, CFRE
President

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National School Choice Week January 24-30, 2016



Started in 2011, NSCW has grown into the world's largest celebration of opportunity in education. The Week is a nonpartisan, nonpolitical public awareness effort to get all Americans involved and to have their voices heard. [Learn more here.](#)

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Every Student Succeeds Act Becomes Law

As noted in the President's Letter above, ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) was signed into law on December 10, 2015. To learn more about ESSA and its ramifications for private and independent schools, [click here.](#)

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President Barack Obama signs ESSA, December 10, 2015.
(Image from US Department of Education Web Site)

Your Pictures Needed

We enjoy sharing our member schools' pictures on our website, in eNewsletters, and in other marketing materials. If you have pictures from holiday programs, plays and concerts, STEM projects, or any great candid shots, please share them with us! Email them to photos@misf.org.



STEM Scoop

MISF STEM Grant Program



MISF has opened its annual STEM Grant opportunity for MISF member schools. We are pleased to offer this opportunity to our members in partnership with our funders, the 3M Foundation, Schott Foundation and Xcel Energy Foundation.

Letter of Interest - Due 12:00 midnight, Friday, January 15, 2016

Each school that intends to submit a STEM Grant Application must first submit a letter of Interest (LOI) that describes the preliminary idea and plan for the project that the school intends to develop with the STEM Grant that they are seeking. [Click here](#) to download a copy of the LOI Form. If you have not submitted an LOI by January 15th you will not be eligible to submit a full grant application this grant cycle.

Since the inception of the STEM Grant program MISF has awarded 127 grants totaling \$666,579 to schools across the state from Hibbing to Edgerton, Winona to Fergus Falls, and throughout the Twin Cities metropolitan area. These grants have supported the development of an integrated, three-year middle school STEM curriculum team taught by three teachers, a trebuchet and catapult design/build program culminating in an all-school (grades K-

6) punkin chunkin event, and a high school forensics science course, along with many others. STEM Grant guidelines and application forms along with additional information about the MISF STEM Program is available at www.misf.org.

For questions, please contact Michelle Ponsolle, MISF Director of Development & Programs, 651-297-6716 or mponsolle@misf.org; or Margo Berg, MISF STEM Program Manager, 612-720-2857 or mberg@misf.org.

PK-12 STEM teachers can take free engineering-education courses at St. Thomas thanks to \$100,000 from Google

Google is sponsoring full tuition for the full-credit courses taught this spring and summer by the university's engineering and education professors.

Pre-school, grade school and high school STEM teachers, along with educators from other disciplines, will be able to take full-credit engineering-education courses for free this spring and summer thanks to a \$100,000 sponsorship from Google Inc. to the University of St. Thomas School of Engineering.

"This is a wonderful opportunity for educators teaching throughout the PK-12 spectrum, as well as graduate students studying to become teachers," said [AnnMarie Thomas](#), Ph.D., an associate professor who co-founded St. Thomas' Center for Engineering Education. "The sponsorship from Google opens so many doors for us. We are now able to rapidly expand access to our engineering education program to many more current and future teachers."

St. Thomas' engineering-education courses, taught by faculty from the university's schools of engineering and education, are designed to give STEM teachers confidence in bringing engineering experiences and content to their students, Thomas said.

Deborah Besser, Ph.D., director of the Center for Engineering Education, said the support from Google is especially appreciated because many STEM teachers in elementary, middle and high school have never had the opportunity to take a course in how to teach engineering or have not been able to afford the \$1,200-per-course tuition.

One of the three-credit courses, "Engineering Design," will be offered four weekends on Friday evenings and Saturdays during the spring semester. The three-credit courses offered during the day in June are "Engineering in the P-12 Classroom," "Digital Electronics and Computing Systems" and "Material Science and Engineering."

For more information about the courses visit <http://www.stthomas.edu/cee/courses/> or contact Dr. Deb Besser at deb.besser@stthomas.edu.

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Education Award Nominations



Nominations for the 2016 Education Awards will be accepted from January 11th through February 15th. New this year is a revised and simplified nomination form, as well as a new award category honoring school leaders. Award categories include: Behind the Scenes, Community Champion, Leadership, and Honor Teacher. [Click here to read more](#), and watch your inbox for more information coming soon.

Member School Spotlight



The January spotlight shines on Christ Lutheran School in North St. Paul, an MISF member since 2010. [Click here](#) to learn more about this school, whose graduates have consistently excelled in high school and college.

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MISF | 651-297-6716 | info@misf.org | www.misf.org

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Minnesota Independent School Forum | 445 Minnesota Street | Suite 505 | St. Paul | MN | 55101-5000