2026–2027 CATALOGUE OF PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

Reach for the Stars

Your guide to 130 high-quality academic enrichment programs, competitions, events and activities.

Minnesota Academic League

Synergy & Leadership Exchange

The Minnesota Service Cooperatives

Nurture Your Students' Talents Through Programming in Reach for the Stars!

REACH FOR THE STARS is your guide to high-qa lity academic enrichment programs and activities that complement classroom learning and help students reach their full potential. Featured programs span a wide range of subjects and serve students from pre-kindergarten through post-secondary. All programs meet the approval criteria established by the Minnesota Academic League Council.

Offered during and outside the school day, these opportunities encourage students to explore their interests, discover new passions, develop their talents, build skills, and reach new heights in learning!

Find A Program

Programs are listed alphabetically, with each entry providing a brief description, grade or age level, skills developed, curricular area, and contact information. For participation information, schedules, and program updates, please contact the sponsoring organization directly using the information provided in each listing.

Accessing and Sharing Reach for the Stars

Reach for the Stars is available electronically in PDF and text-only Word formats at www.synergyexchange.org/reach-for-the-stars. Informational postcards are available to share with students, families, and staff. A limited number of print catalogues are also available. To reqe st materials, email reach@synergyexchange.org.

Supported By

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The information in the Reach for the Stars catalogue is provided by participating organizations for general informational purposes. While we strive to keep listings current and accurate, we cannot guarantee their completeness, accuracy, reliability, suitability, or availability. Please verify program details directly with the sponsoring organization before participating. Any reliance you place on such information is therefore strictly at your own risk; due diligence encouraged.

MINNESOTA ACADEMIC LEAGUE COUNCIL

Keem Anderson
Wendy Behrens
Patti Haasch
Mary Hillmann, chair
Carol Malueg
Melanie Schmidt
Bonnie Vagasky

Mission: To promote high-qa lity educational opportunities for students through academic challenges and academic enrichment activities.

Vision: A future in which all students have access to high-qa lity academic enrichment challenges and activities positively affecting achievement and growth.

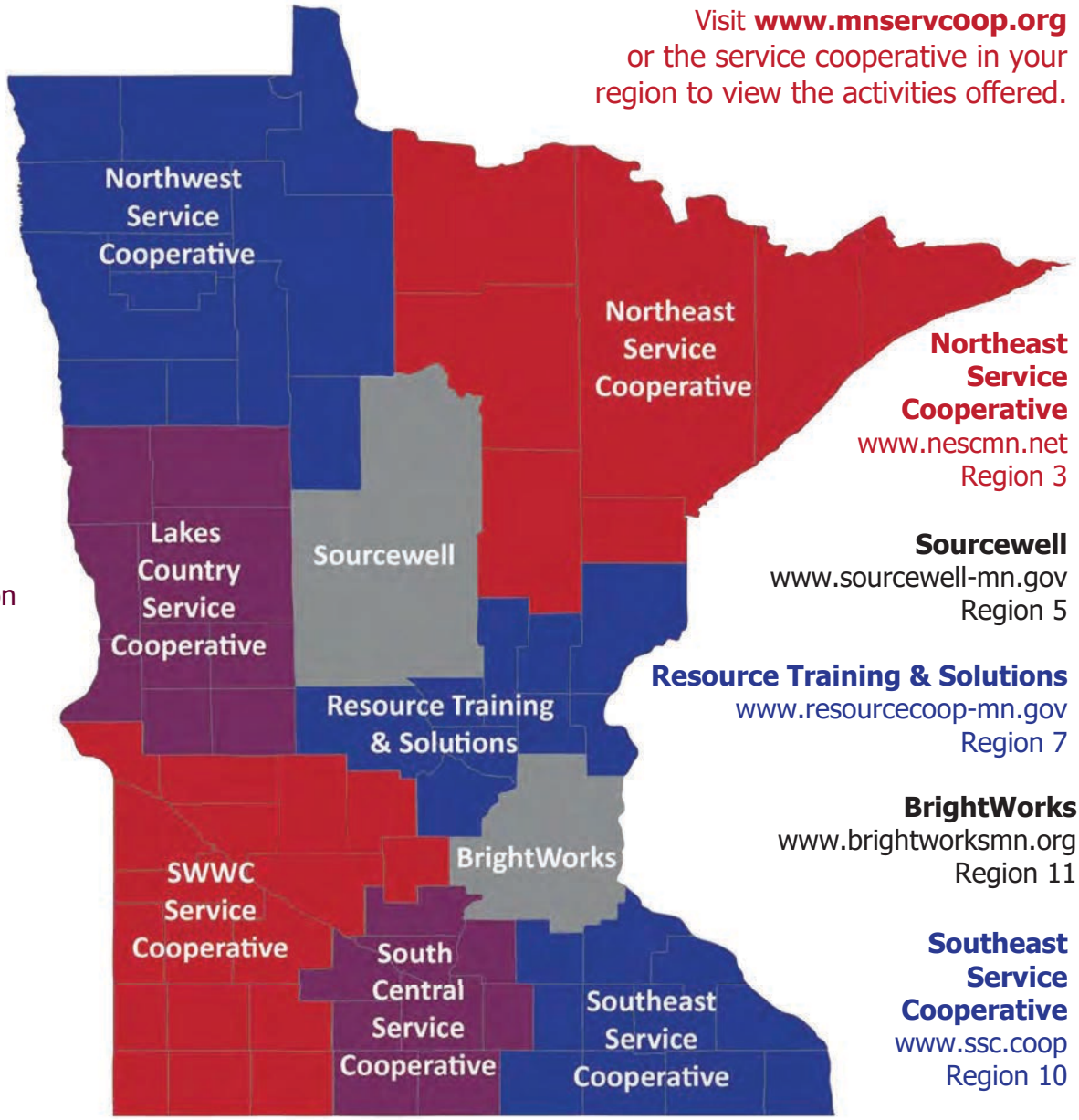
MINNESOTA ACADEMIC LEAGUE AFFILIATES

ARTEFFECT
BestPrep's The Stock Market Game
Bilingual Learning Center
Center for Interactive Learning and Collaboration
Code Savvy
Continental Mathematics League
FIRST LEGO League Challenge
Gathering of Champions
Knowledge Bowl
LifeSmarts
MAAP STARS
Math Masters
Minnesota Bilingual Seals Program
Minnesota Future City Competition
Minnesota Future Problem Solving Program
Minnesota Institute for Talented Youth (MITY)
National Geography Challenge
National History Day in Minnesota
National Language Arts League
National Science League
National Social Studies League
Poetry Out Loud
Reality Fair
Scholars of Distinction
Spelling Bee
WordMasters Challenge

Minnesota Academic League
Strategic Partners

We are proud to be Minnesota Academic League strategic partners, distributing **Reach for the Stars** to schools, educators & families.

Visit **www.mnservcoop.org** or the service cooperative in your region to view the activities offered.



Northwest Service Cooperative
www.nwservice.org
Regions 1 and 2

Lakes Country Service Cooperative
www.lcsc.org Region 4

SWWC Service Cooperative
www.swwc.org
Regions 6 and 8

Northeast Service Cooperative
www.nescmn.net
Region 3

Sourcewell
www.sourcewell-mn.gov
Region 5

Resource Training & Solutions
www.resourcecoop-mn.gov
Region 7

BrightWorks
www.brightworksmn.org
Region 11

Southeast Service Cooperative
www.ssc.coop
Region 10

South Central Service Cooperative
www.mnscsc.org
Region 9

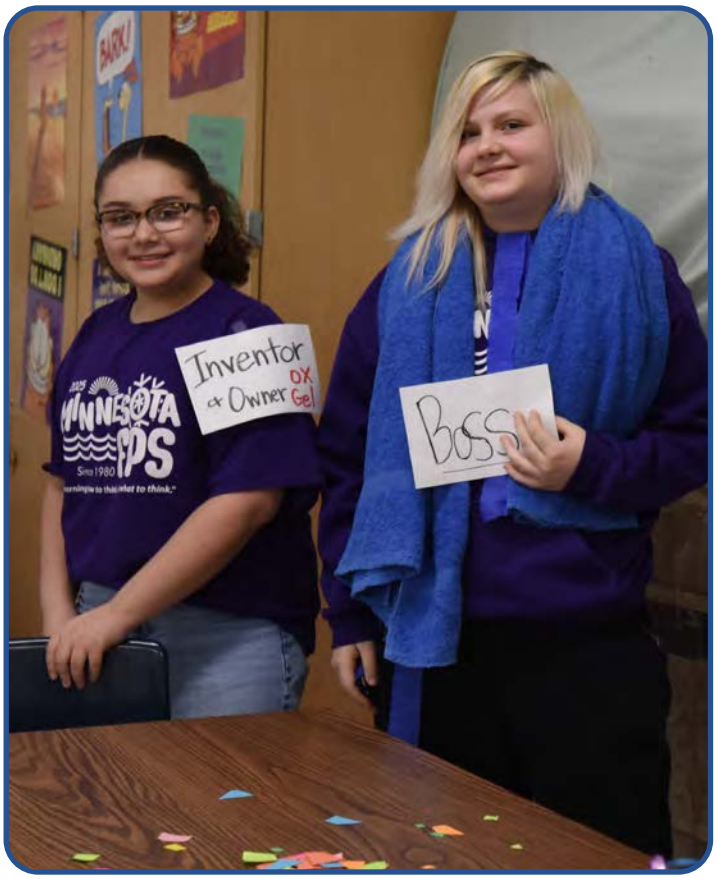
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LOCAL ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The focus of Reach for the Stars is academic enrichment opportunities offered statewide. For other opportunities, please check your local school district, community education program, city parks and recreation board, public library, university and college, after school regional network or regional service cooperative.

- **Lakes Country Service Cooperative**
  www.lcsc.org
- **Northeast Service Cooperative**
  www.nescmn.net
- **Northwest Service Cooperative**
  www.nwservice.org/students
- **Resource Training & Solutions**
  www.resourcecoop-mn.gov
- **Sourcewell**
  www.mn.sourcewell.org/education
- **South Central Service Cooperative**
  www.mnscsc.org/student
- **Southeast Service Cooperative**
  www.ssc.coop/student-programs
- **SparkPath/BrighWorks**
  www.sparkpath.org
- **SWWC Service Cooperative**
  www.swwc.org/Domain/104

Above-Grade-Level Assessment

Grades 2–9

Above-Grade-Level Assessment is an opportunity for students to take tests designed for older students and for parents and educators to better understand their students' educational needs. This research-based approach to assessment helps pinpoint strengths, indicate readiness for acceleration and guide long-term planning. Assessment tools include Cognitive Abilities Test, and practice (non-official) ACT, PreACT, PSAT and SAT.

Program Category: Classroom Activity, Out of School Time Enrichment
Academic Content: General
Academic Skills: Recall, problem solving, critical thinking and writing
Program Provider: Northwestern University Center for Talent Development
Fees and Deadlines: Visit website for details.
Website: https://www.ctd.northwestern.edu/above-grade-level-assessment
Email: ctd-assessment@northwestern.edu
Phone: (847) 491-3782, ext. 2

Academic Decathlon

Grades 9–12

A national scholastic competition designed to stimulate intellectual growth and encourage greater respect for knowledge. The format includes students from each GPA category, honor (3.80–4.0), scholastic (3.20–3.799) and varsity (0.0–3.199) competing in 10 curricular areas. Competitions range from local scrimmages to national contests.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions, Classroom Activity
Academic Content: Arts, Language Arts, Social Studies, STEM
Academic Skills: Artistic expression, creativity, critical thinking, factual recall, interdisciplinary, leadership development, problem solving, public speaking, research, teamwork, time/budget management and verbal reasoning
Fees and Deadlines: Contact Amy Dosch
Website: https://www.usad.org/
Email: amy@usad.org
Phone: (712) 326-9589
Contact: Amy Dosch

Academic Pentathlon

Grades 6–8

Academic Pentathlon, the premier national scholastic competition for middle school students, challenges students to rigorous team and individual competition. Using the USAD curriculum, which addresses several national education content and curriculum standards, students compete in five events: fine arts, literature, mathematics, science and social science.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions, Classroom Activity
Academic Content: Arts, Language Arts, Social Studies, STEM
Academic Skills: Artistic expression, creativity, critical thinking, factual recall, interdisciplinary, leadership development, problem solving, public speaking, research, teamwork, time/budget management and verbal reasoning
Fees and Deadlines: Contact Amy Dosch
Website: https://www.usad.org/pentathlon
Email: pentathlon@usad.org
Phone: (712) 326-9589
Contact: Amy Dosch

Academic WorldQuest

Grades 9–12

Passionate about global affairs? Join Academic WorldQuest, the only international knowledge competition of its kind in the state, and showcase your global knowledge and critical thinking skills. Compete with other teams answering pressing questions facing the U.S. and the world. The winning team earns a trip to Washington, D.C. to compete nationally — all travel and hotel expenses are covered!

Program Category: Awards & Recognitions, Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: Business/Career Education, Social Studies, World Languages & Cultures
Academic Skills: Critical thinking, factual recall, global citizenship, research and teamwork
Program Provider: Global Minnesota
Fees and Deadlines: Free to participate. Registration opens in October. Check website for competition details.
Website: https://globalminnesota.org/academic-worldqe st/
Email: ehart@globalminnesota.org
Phone: (612) 625-1662
Contact: Erin Hart

AMC 8

Grades 6–8

Dive into mathematics with the AMC 8, a 25-question, 40-minute competition designed for developing and enhancing problem-solving skills. The AMC 8 provides an opportunity for middle school students to develop positive attitudes towards analytical thinking and mathematics that can assist in future careers. Students apply classroom skills to unique problem-solving challenges in a low-stress and friendly environment.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: STEM
Academic Skills: Problem solving
Program Provider: Mathematical Association of America
Fees and Deadlines: Visit website for details.
Website: https://maa.org/student-programs/amc/
Email: amcinfo@maa.org
Phone: (800) 527-3690
Contact: MAA American Mathematics Competitions

AMC 10 & 12

Grades 9–12

AMC 10 & 12 are both 25-question, 75-minute, multiple-choice examinations in high school mathematics designed to promote the development and enhancement of problem-solving skills. The AMC 10 is for students in 10th grade and below and covers the high school curriculum up to 10th grade. The AMC 12 covers the entire high school curriculum including trigonometry, advanced algebra, and advanced geometry, but excluding calculus.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: STEM
Academic Skills: Problem solving
Program Provider: Mathematical Association of America
Fees and Deadlines: Visit website for details.
Website: https://maa.org/student-programs/amc/
Email: amcinfo@maa.org
Phone: (800) 527-3690
Contact: MAA American Mathematics Competitions

American Legion Auxiliary Girls State

Grade 11

American Legion Auxiliary Minnesota Girls State is a week-long experience of learning about Minnesota government at the local, county and state levels by their participation in the process.

Program Category: Conferences & Institutes, Leadership Development
Academic Content: Social Studies
Academic Skills: Cooperation, leadership, problem solving and critical thinking
Program Provider: American Legion Auxiliary
Fees and Deadlines: Fees paid by American Legion Auxiliary Units (local chapters). Visit website for details.
Website: https://www.mnala.org/girls-state/
Email: deptoffice@mnala.org
Phone: (651) 224-7634
Contact: MN American Legion Auxiliary

American Legion Boys State

Grade 11

American Legion Boys State is a week-long experience of learning about Minnesota government at the local, county and state levels by "doing." It is a week of intensive study and involvement. Highlights of the week include political speakers, mock trials, campaigning, elections, and announcement of the Boys State Governor and State Constitutional Officers.

Program Category: Conferences & Institutes, Leadership Development
Academic Content: Social Studies
Academic Skills: Critical thinking and creativity
Program Provider: American Legion Boys State
Fees and Deadlines: Fees paid by sponsoring American Legion Post. Applications accepted on first-come, first-serve basis if qualified.
Website: www.mnboysstate.org
Email: jkelley@mnlegion.org
Phone: (651) 291-1800
Contact: Jennifer Kelley

✳ ARTEFFECT

Grades 6–12

ARTEFFECT offers free art competition for grades 6–12, inviting young artists to spotlight Unsung Heroes through original artwork and reflective Impact Statements. Since 2016, participants from 40+ countries have earned exhibition features online and in person. With over $35,000 in prizes, ARTEFFECT inspires creativity, historical connection, and powerful storytelling that elevates voices and builds meaningful community impact. Visit our website to learn more!



Program Category: Awards & Recognitions, Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: Arts
Academic Skills: Artistic expression, creativity, critical thinking and interdisciplinary
Program Provider: ARTEFFECTlmc
Fees and Deadlines: Free to enter! Annual competition dates are October 2026 - April 2027. Check website for submission information and deadlines.
Website: www.arteffectlmc.org
Email: info@arteffectlmc.org
Phone: (310) 570-4859
Contact: Toni Guglielmo

Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes
ARTEFFECT

BestPrep's Classroom Plus

Grades 6–12

Program staff coordinate volunteer speakers, mock interviews and career days to supplement classroom curricula. More than 600 volunteers from across Minnesota bring their business and career expertise into the classroom. They help connect students' classroom learning with real world applications while serving as positive role models. Speakers are available virtually or in-person.

Program Category: Classroom Activity, Out of School Time Enrichment
Academic Content: Business/Career Education, General, STEM
Academic Skills: Critical thinking, leadership development, public speaking, teamwork and time/budget management
Program Provider: BestPrep
Fees and Deadlines: Program is free. Educators may request speakers for classes of 10 or more students.
Website: www.bestprep.org/classroom-plus
Email: cp@bestprep.org
Phone: (763) 233-6329
Contact: Emma Richards

BestPrep's eMentors

Grades 9–12

eMentors is an online mentoring program that offers high school students the opportunity to develop a relationship with a mentor in a professional field. Over the course of eight weeks, students and mentors discuss topics including college and career experience, interviewing skills, workplace etiquette and more. eMentors has curriculum specifically created for AVID, STEM and personal finance classes.

Program Category: Classroom Activity, Leadership Development
Academic Content: Business/Career Education, General, Language Arts, STEM
Academic Skills: Creativity, critical thinking, interdisciplinary, leadership development and time/budget management
Program Provider: BestPrep
Fees and Deadlines: No cost to participate. eMentors connections are available throughout the school year.
Website: https://bestprep.org/ementors/
Email: mentoring@bestprep.org
Phone: (763) 710-8984
Contact: Kim Graff

BestPrep's Financial Matters

Grades 6–12

BestPrep's Financial Matters program equips students with the tools necessary to develop sound money management skills through industry professionals who help develop and deliver presentations focused on financial literacy. From investing to credit, budgeting to housing, the program provides real-life lessons in money management. Speakers are available virtually or in-person.

Program Category: Classroom Activity, Out of School Time Enrichment
Academic Content: Business/Career Education, General, STEM
Academic Skills: Critical thinking, leadership development, problem solving, teamwork and time/budget management
Program Provider: BestPrep
Fees and Deadlines: Program is free. Educators may request speakers for classes of 10 or more students.
Website: www.bestprep.org/financial-matters
Email: fm@bestprep.org
Phone: (763) 233-6329
Contact: Emma Richards

BestPrep's Minnesota Business Venture

Grades 9–12

Minnesota Business Venture is for students dreaming of starting a business, searching for career direction, heading to college or just eager to get into the workforce. Students spend a week during the summer on a college campus developing leadership, teamwork and communication skills as well as gaining business experience from professionals.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions, Leadership Development
Academic Content: Business/Career Education, STEM
Academic Skills: Critical thinking, leadership development, problem solving, teamwork and time/budget management
Program Provider: BestPrep
Fees and Deadlines: Registration opens in January.
Website: www.bestprep.org/minnesota-business-venture
Email: mbv@bestprep.org
Phone: (763) 233-6325
Contact: Gemma Sprecher

BestPrep's Student Spotlight Competition

Grades 9–12

BestPrep's Student Spotlight Competition allows all students in grades 9–12 to respond to a prompt with any type of art form: written word, art, sculpture, music and other artforms. The competition prompt is announced in September and the deadline is November. BestPrep hopes for a wide variety of submissions and offers prizes for the top 20 winners and their teacher. This competition is held in conjunction with BestPrep's Educational Forum.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: Arts, Business/Career Education, General, Language Arts
Academic Skills: Artistic expression, creativity, critical thinking and research
Program Provider: BestPrep
Fees and Deadlines: No fee to participate; deadline is late November (typically the week of Thanksgiving).
Website: https://bestprep.org/educational-forum/
Email: xthomas@bestprep.org
Phone: (763) 710-8988
Contact: Xavier Thomas





✶ BestPrep's The Stock Market Game

Grades 4–12



Students work in teams to invest $100,000 in stocks, bonds and mutual funds using an online platform. The Stock Market Game is a flexible simulation that builds financial literacy, economics and teamwork skills. It can be used during or after school. No prior investing experience is needed—teachers receive full support. Students research real-world companies, make investment decisions and compete for awards, gaining practical experience in a fun, engaging way.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions, Classroom Activity
Academic Content: Business/Career Education, General, STEM
Academic Skills: Critical thinking, global citizenship, research and time/budget management
Program Provider: BestPrep
Fees and Deadlines: Registration is open immediately and there are no fees for Minnesota schools and students. When registering, select "Pay Later."
Website: https://www.stockmarketgame.org/
Email: smg@bestprep.org
Phone: (763) 233-6324
Contact: Tovin Sannes-Venhuizen

✶ Bilingual Learning Center NEW!

Grades PreK–5



Six weeks of bilingual enrichment activities aimed to make learning fun and engaging. Families can register on a weekly basis or attend all six. Students will practice their Spanish by listening and playing in an immersion environment, exploring cultures, foods, music, dance, theater and so much more! We welcome all Spanish levels, beginners to native speakers!

Program Category: Out of School Time Enrichment
Academic Content: Arts, Language Arts, World Languages
Academic Skills: Artistic expression, creativity, global citizenship, teamwork
Program Provider: Bilingual Learning Center
Fees and Deadlines: See website for details.
Website: https://www.blcenter.org/
Email: info@blcenter.org
Phone: (612) 249-3633
Contact: Alma Sanchez

Calendar in the Classroom

Grades K–5

Calendar in the Classroom provides a series of lessons utilizing information and principles contained in the Minnesota Weatherguide Environment Calendar. With the help of an informative video and complementary workshop, these lessons are presented in such a way that the generalist teacher can teach real science with confidence and ease.

Program Category: Classroom Activity
Academic Content: Arts, General, Language Arts, STEM
Academic Skills: Creativity, critical thinking, environmental stewardship, global citizenship and interdisciplinary
Program Provider: Jeffers Foundation
Fees and Deadlines: No cost. Program is ongoing.
Website: https://jeffersfoundation.org/programs/calendar-in-the-classroom/
Email: info@jeffersfoundation.org
Phone: (952) 226-7156

Cancer Unwrapped Teen Writing Contest

Grades 9–12

We invite you to write a 500–1500 word essay about your experiences, emotions and realities when dealing with cancer for the opportunity to win one of several $1,000 cash prizes. Essays can be about your own diagnosis or that of a loved one (e.g., a family member, teacher or friend). Winning essays from this national contest are shared on our website for others to read and know that they are not alone.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: Language Arts
Academic Skills: Artistic expression, creativity, critical thinking, factual recall and verbal reasoning
Program Provider: Cancer Pathways
Fees and Deadlines: No fees. Visit the website for contest information and deadline.
Website: www.cancerpathways.org/programs/cancer-unwrapped/
Email: info@cancerpathways.org
Phone: (206) 709-1400
Contact: Paige Hansen-Shankar

✶ Center for Interactive Learning and Collaboration

Grades K–6



Join the Center for Interactive Learning and Collaboration (CILC) for FieldED Live—a free, interactive virtual events series. These sessions connect classrooms and learners with experts from museums, science centers, zoos, and more around the world. Tune in Wednesdays and Thursdays at 12 p.m. to explore science, history, art and culture.

Program Category: Classroom Activity
Academic Content: Arts, General, Language Arts, Social Studies, STEM
Academic Skills: Creativity, critical thinking, environmental stewardship, global citizenship and interdisciplinary
Program Provider: Center for Interactive Learning and Collaboration
Fees and Deadlines: Register free for a simple, one-click link to join each event live.
Website: https://www.cilc.org/fieldedlive
Email: info@cilc.org
Phone: (507) 388-3672
Contact: Tami Moehring

Center for Talent Development at Northwestern University

PreK–Grade 12

Discover how your advanced learner can thrive at Northwestern University's Center for Talent Development. Serving PreK through grade 12, CTD offers a wide range of enrichment and accelerated programs—online, hybrid, and on-campus summer options included. Whether your child is curious about science, writing, math or more, CTD provides the challenge and support they need to grow, connect and reach their full potential.

Program Category: Leadership Development, Out of School Time Enrichment
Academic Content: Arts, Business/Career Education, Language Arts, Social Studies, STEM, World Languages & Cultures
Academic Skills: Creativity, critical thinking, global citizenship, leadership development and problem solving
Program Provider: Center for Talent Development at Northwestern University
Fees and Deadlines: Check website for fees and deadlines.
Website: www.ctd.northwestern.edu
Email: ctd-admissions@northwestern.edu
Phone: (847) 467-1575
Contact: Admissions and General

Classroom Connection

Grades 3–12

Classroom Connection brings the world to your school! It is an interactive program that brings students, teachers and international volunteers together for a series of cross-cultural lessons. It provides global perspectives, introduces positive role models, promotes understanding and respect and supports Minnesota education standards. Visits can be conducted either in-person or online.

Program Category: Classroom Activity
Academic Content: General, Language Arts, Social Studies, World Languages & Cultures
Academic Skills: Creativity, critical thinking, global citizenship, interdisciplinary and verbal reasoning
Program Provider: Global Minnesota
Fees and Deadlines: Free! Visit the website for registration details.
Website: https://globalminnesota.org/education/elementary-school-program/
Email: ehart@globalminnesota.org
Phone: (612) 625-1662
Contact: Erin Hart

Close Up Washington D.C.

Grades 6–12

Close Up offers transformative programs in Washington, D.C. for middle and high school students. Teacher incentives and free participation with a minimum number of students. Many of Close Up's curriculum components meet or exceed state and national history and social studies standards.

Program Category: Classroom Activity
Academic Content: Social Studies
Academic Skills: Critical thinking, creativity, cooperation, American history and governmental studies
Program Provider: Close Up Foundation
Fees and Deadlines: Registration is rolling; programs run year round. Call for fees.
Website: www.closeup.org
Email: info@closeup.org
Phone: (703) 706-3300 or (800) CLOSE UP

✳ Code Savvy: Technovation Girls Minnesota

Ages 8–18



Technovation Girls Minnesota is a free, 12-week technology entrepreneurship program for girls ages 8–18. Working in teams, students identify a real-world problem, build a mobile or web app, and develop a business around their idea. No prior coding or technical experience is required. If you have an idea, want to learn how to start a business or change the world - this is the place to start!

Code Savvy™
Inclusive Computer Science Programs

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions, Out of School Time Enrichment
Academic Content: Business/Career Education, STEM
Academic Skills: Creativity, critical thinking, leadership development, problem solving and teamwork
Program Provider: Code Savvy
Fees and Deadlines: The program is free to all girls and non-binary individuals. Registration opens in fall. Sign up for our Code Savvy newsletter to stay current with the latest information!
Website: https://www.codesavvy.org/for-students/technovation-girls-mn/
Email: contactus@codesavvy.org or technovation@codesavvy.org
Phone: (512) 573-4622
Contact: Christina Llamas

Concordia Language Villages

Ages 2–18

Concordia Language Villages is the premier language and culture immersion program for youth, families and adults. Youth ages 2–18 can learn one of 15 languages. Summer programs include day camps, one- and two-week residential camps and a four-week high school credit option. School groups can attend Village Weekends during the academic year. In addition to language skills, emphasis is placed on cultural awareness.

Program Category: Out of School Time Enrichment
Academic Content: World Languages & Cultures
Academic Skills: World language proficiency, global citizenship, environmental stewardship, recall, problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, cooperation and leadership
Program Provider: Concordia College
Fees and Deadlines: Visit the website for fees, scholarships and dates.
Website: www.concordiaLanguageVillages.org
Email: clvregister@cord.edu
Phone: 1-800-222-4750

✶ Continental Mathematics League

Grades 2–9

This program is designed to maximize student opportunities to participate and to improve students' problem-solving skills. Students compete in their own schools with others at the same grade level across the United States. Activities can be held during regular class time. Math books are available. The meets and books provide excellent support to the Common Core Standards program. The program is a Better Business Bureau member with an A+ rating.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions, Classroom Activity
Academic Content: STEM
Academic Skills: Critical thinking and problem solving
Program Provider: Continental Mathematics League
Fees and Deadlines: Grades 2–3: $90 per team; Grades 4–9 and Calculus League for Advanced Placement: $100 first team and $85 additional teams. Meet dates: Grades 2–3: Jan. 7, Feb. 4, March 4; Grades 4–9: Nov. 5, Dec. 3, Jan. 7, Feb. 4, March 4; Calculus League: Dec. 3, Feb. 4, March 4, April 8.
Website: www.cmleague.com
Email: support@cmleague.com
Phone: (631) 921-6627
Contact: Christine Pette

Crazy 8s Math Club

Grades K–5

Crazy 8s is an over-the-top after-school club that is designed to get you fired up about math. You will learn the math behind your favorite activities. It is math gone wild, nothing like your usual math club! You will build glow-in-the-dark structures, crack secret spy codes and play games like the Toilet Paper Olympics.

Program Category: Out of School Time Enrichment
Academic Content: STEM
Academic Skills: Factual recall, problem solving and teamwork
Program Provider: Bedtime Math Foundation
Fees and Deadlines: Free!
Website: https://crazy8sclub.org/
Email: joy@bedtimemath.org
Phone: (908) 444-4539
Contact: Joy Kalfus

CyberPatriot National Youth Cyber Defense Competition

Grades 6–12

The CyberPatriot competition puts teams of middle and high school students in the position of newly hired IT professionals tasked with managing the network of a small company. Through a series of online rounds, teams must find and fix cybersecurity vulnerabilities in virtual operating systems while maintaining critical services. The top teams in the nation earn all-expense-paid trips to Maryland for the National Finals Competition, where they can earn national recognition and scholarship money.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: STEM
Academic Skills: Critical thinking, problem solving and teamwork
Program Provider: Air and Space Forces Association
Fees and Deadlines: Visit website for competition schedule and fees.
Website: www.uscyberpatriot.org
Email: info@uscyberpatriot.org
Phone: (877) 885-5716

Destination Imagination

Grades K–12, Post-secondary

Destination Imagination inspires and equips students to become the next generation of innovators and leaders. The organization is a leader in project-based learning experiences, where students work together in teams to solve open-ended STEAM and service learning challenges and then present their solutions at tournaments.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: Arts, STEM
Academic Skills: STEAM concepts, problem solving, critical thinking, time/budget management, creativity, cooperation, improvisation, research and teamwork
Program Provider: Intermediate District 287
Fees and Deadlines: Visit the website for more information.
Website: www.mndi.org
Email: pfschroeder@district287.org
Phone: (763) 550-7212
Contact: Pamela Schroeder, affiliate director

Discovery Award Competition

Grades 4–12

DISCOVER extraordinary individuals who positively impacted history, yet are not well known. CREATE a documentary, performance or website that honors the legacy of your Unsung Hero. CHANGE the world for the better by using your project to inspire the hero within everyone. Participants can submit individual or group projects. Cash prizes for winning projects!

Program Category: Awards & Recognitions, Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: General, Social Studies
Academic Skills: Artistic expression, creativity, critical thinking, interdisciplinary and research
Program Provider: Lowell Milken Center
Fees and Deadlines: Submit topics for pre-approval in February. Submissions due July 1. Visit the website for additional information.
Website: https://www.lowellmilkencenter.org/competitions/discovery-award
Email: nconard@lowellmilkencenter.org
Phone: (620) 223-1312
Contact: Norm Conard

Economics Challenge

Grades 9–12

In the Economics Challenge, teams of high school students compete in a series of tests on economic problems, theory and current events to demonstrate their critical-thinking abilities. Teams can compete online or at one of the in-person competitions across Minnesota to qualify for the state championship.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: Business/Career Education, Social Studies
Academic Skills: Critical thinking, factual recall, problem solving and teamwork
Program Provider: Minnesota Council on Economic Education
Fees and Deadlines: There is no registration cost for teachers or students to participate. Registration opens on Jan. 1.
Website: https://z.umn.edu/EconomicsChallenge
Email: mcee@umn.edu
Phone: (612) 625-3727
Contact: Angela Zappa

Engineering Machine Design Contest

Grades 5–8 (Junior Division), 9–12 (Senior Division)

Using everyday objects, teams of 3–12 students design and build a complex, multi-step machine that achieves a simple task with the guidance of a coach. Teams showcase and exhibit their machines at a regional contest with the opportunity to advance to the championship. Teams are scored on Team Journal, Team Presentation, and Machine Design and Operation. Each year a competition theme is chosen to guide the machine build and allow for whimsical creativity to flourish.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions, Classroom Activity
Academic Content: Arts, Business/Career Education, STEM
Academic Skills: Creativity, critical thinking, interdisciplinary, problem solving and teamwork
Program Provider: Minnesota State Engineering Center of Excellence
Fees and Deadlines: Visit the website for details. Regional contest dates vary by site: February–April.
Website: https://engineering.mnsu.edu/engineering-machine-design-contest/
Email: melissa.huppert@mnsu.edu
Phone: (507) 389-2110
Contact: Melissa Huppert

✶ FIRST LEGO League Challenge

Grades 4–8



FIRST LEGO League Challenge encourages young innovators ages 9–14 to build confidence in STEM while developing critical thinking and team building skills. In this holistic program, teams design, build and program autonomous LEGO robots to navigate a playing field, as well as research a real-world problem associated with a yearly theme. Teams attend competitions where they share their research, explain their engineering design process and compete with their robot.

Program Category: Awards & Recognitions, Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: General, STEM
Academic Skills: Creativity, critical thinking, leadership development, problem solving and teamwork
Program Provider: High Tech Kids
Fees and Deadlines: Visit the website for fees and deadlines.
Website: https://hightechkids.org/fll-overview/
Email: vicki@hightechkids.org
Phone: (612) 781-2203
Contact: Vicki Coaty

FIRST LEGO League Explore

Grades K–4

FIRST LEGO League Explore teams work together to discover how science and technology impact the world around them. Teams of 2–6 participants between the ages of 6–9 work with LEGO SPIKE Essentials and LEGO elements to build a motorized model and create a poster related to their research on a yearly theme. Teams attend festivals where they share what they have learned and discovered.

Program Category: Awards & Recognitions, Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: General, STEM
Academic Skills: Creativity, problem solving, teamwork and innovation
Program Provider: High Tech Kids
Fees and Deadlines: Visit the website for fees and deadlines.
Website: https://www.first-lego-league.org/en/divisions/explore
Email: vicki@hightechkids.org
Phone: (612) 781-2203
Contact: Vicki Coaty

FIRST Tech Challenge

Grades 6–12

FIRST Tech Challenge is a hands-on and rapid prototyping robotic experience for students. Teams of 3–15 participants in grades 6–12 build and program robots, based on sound engineering principles, to compete in an alliance format. FIRST Tech Challenge helps kids develop strategic, problem solving and team building skills. Teams participate in qualifying events November–January with the state championship in February.

Program Category: Awards & Recognitions, Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: General, STEM
Academic Skills: Critical thinking, leadership development, problem solving, teamwork and innovation
Program Provider: High Tech Kids
Fees and Deadlines: Visit the website for detailed information.
Website: https://hightechkids.org/ftc-overview/
Email: vicki@hightechkids.org
Phone: (612) 781-2203
Contact: Vicki Coaty

✳ Gathering of Champions

Grades K–12



An annual event to celebrate academic excellence and to honor outstanding K–12 students as Academic All-Stars. Teachers, administrators and/or academic challenge coaches may nominate their top students or those that have made a dramatic improvement in their academic work for recognition as Academic All-Stars. Nominations may be placed online each spring on the website.

Program Category: Awards & Recognitions
Academic Content: General
Program Provider: Synergy & Leadership Exchange
Fees and Deadlines: No fees. Statewide recognition event is held on the first Friday in August at the Mall of America - Bloomington.
Website: https://synergyexchange.org/gathering-of-champions
Email: goc@synergyexchange.org
Phone: (507) 389-5115
Contact: Leah Garry

CALLING ALL STUDENTS...DESIGN THE 2027 GATHERING OF CHAMPIONS LOGO!
Submit your original logo design ideas for the 2027 Gathering of Champions, which will appear on the certificates of achievement, T-shirts, banners and other materials. The winner receives $100 and a framed copy of their winning design. The contest is open to all Minnesota K–12 students. All entries must be designed by a currently enrolled student and be received by May 1, 2027. See complete rules for submission and download the logo contest entry form on the Synergy & Leadership Exchange website. **Teachers make this a classroom activity; celebrate the importance of academics and the arts with your students!**

Genes in Space
Grades 7-12

Students in grades 7–12 pioneer research on the International Space Station by designing DNA experiments for space! Students are invited to propose experiments that address real-life challenges and opportunities of space exploration. One winning experiment will launch to the ISS and be carried out by astronauts. You can work alone or in a team up to two students.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: STEM
Academic Skills: Creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, research and teamwork
Program Provider: Genes in Space
Fees and Deadlines: There is no cost to enter the competition and entry does not require equipment. See website for further details.
Website: www.genesinspace.org
Email: genesinspace@minipcr.com

Girls Who Code Clubs
Grades 3–12

Clubs are free computer science programs for 3rd–12th graders to learn to code and change the world. Club participants build websites, applications, and games tackling important topics from climate change to cybersecurity and artificial intelligence. No computer science experience required to start a Club! Girls Who Code provides everything you need, including a $300 Clubs Fund for supplies!

Program Category: Classroom Activity, Out of School Time Enrichment
Academic Content: Business/Career Education, STEM
Academic Skills: Critical thinking, global citizenship, leadership development, problem solving and teamwork
Program Provider: Girls Who Code
Fees and Deadlines: Completely free to start a Club! No deadline, apply anytime.
Website: https://clubs-hqi rlswhocode.com/
Email: kibret.yebetit@girlswhocode.com
Contact: Kibret Yebetit

H2O for Life

Grades K–12

H2O for Life provides free educational resources to classrooms to bring the discussion of the world water crisis to life for your students. These resources range from free classroom presentations by our staff to online curriculum and service-learning grants. After your students learn about the issue, they have the opportunity to take on a service-learning project to support a partner school in need of help with a water project.

Program Category: Classroom Activity, Leadership Development
Academic Content: General, Language Arts, Social Studies, STEM
Academic Skills: Environmental stewardship, global citizenship, interdisciplinary, leadership development and problem solving
Program Provider: H2O for Life
Fees and Deadlines: All resources provided by H2O for Life are free to participants!
Website: www.h2oforlifeschools.org
Email: mitchell@h2oforlifeschools.org
Phone: (651) 377-1096
Contact: Mitchell LeGrand

HOBY Youth Leadership Seminar

Grade 10

HOBY is a three-day transformative youth leadership training seminar. Areas of focus include communication for understanding, critical thinking, teamwork and individual leadership. High school sophomores explore current issues facing our communities, develop tools for planning and action, and receive access to a world-wide network of HOBY alumni.

Program Category: Conferences & Institutes, Leadership Development
Academic Content: Social Studies
Academic Skills: Problem solving, critical thinking, teamwork, leadership development, global citizenship and time/budget management
Program Provider: Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership – Minnesota, Inc.
Fees and Deadlines: See website for more details.
Website: www.hobyminnesota.org
Email: dexterhanson@hobyminnesota.org
Contact: Dexter Hanson

Jostens Renaissance Education

Grades K–12

Jostens Renaissance is a framework for building a culture where teachers love their job and students thrive in school. Through online resources, regional and national events, and a robust community of educators, Jostens Renaissance strategies can lead to improved staff morale, academic achievement and student character development.

Program Category: Awards & Recognitions, Leadership Development
Academic Content: General
Academic Skills: Critical thinking, global citizenship, leadership development, public speaking and teamwork
Program Provider: Jostens, Inc.
Fees and Deadlines: No cost for Jostens customers. Visit the website for information on resources and events.
Website: www.jostensrenaissance.com
Email: renaissance@jostens.com
Phone: (800) 624-5534

JumpStart Bridge

Grades K–8, 9–12

JumpStart Bridge is the Ultimate Mind Sport for your Students! Do you need something that all your students can play, challenges high achievers, improves math skills, increases socialization, fosters teamwork, is a card game that is easy to teach, offers a stipend to teachers ($350) and is completely free!

Program Category: Classroom Activity, Out of School Time Enrichment
Academic Content: Business/Career Education, General, Personal Finance, STEM
Academic Skills: Critical thinking, factual recall, problem solving, teamwork, and verbal reasoning
Program Provider: JumpStart Bridge
Fees and Deadlines: There are no fees, deadlines or cost to schools, teachers or students.
Website: http://www.jumpstartbridge.org
Email: patty@jumpstartbridge.org
Phone: (404) 735-4779
Contact: Patty Tucker

Junior Achievement Experiential Learning Programs

Grades 5–12

Junior Achievement Experiential Learning Programs combine practical applications in real world situations with classroom principles, which allows learning to come to life! Students explore lessons of entrepreneurship, financial literacy and work readiness, and put those skills to work in simulated communities and workplace settings. Programs include JA BizTown, JA Finance Park, JA Dream Accelerator and JA Company Program.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions, Classroom Activity
Academic Content: Business/Career Education, Language Arts, Personal Finance, Social Studies, STEM
Academic Skills: Problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, public speaking, teamwork, leadership development, global citizenship, environmental stewardship, time/budget management and personal development
Program Provider: Junior Achievement North
Fees and Deadlines: Fees vary by location; contact program for details.
Website: www.janorth.org
Email: info@janorth.org
Phone: (651) 255-0055

Junior Duck Stamp Conservation Program

Grades K–12

The Junior Duck Stamp Conservation Program is a standards-based education program designed to spark interest in habitat conservation through science, art, math and technology. It focuses on wildlife observation, nature journaling, photography, enjoying and exploring the outside world, and investigating the treasures of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Program Category: Awards & Recognitions, Classroom Activity
Academic Content: Arts, STEM
Academic Skills: Problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, research, environmental stewardship and artistic expression
Program Provider: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Fees and Deadlines: No fee. Entry deadline for the Minnesota Junior Duck Stamp Design Contest is March 15 annually.
Website: www.fws.gov/juniorduck
Email: lyndaknut_sen@fws.gov
Phone: (218) 449-4115, ext. 202
Contact: Lynda Knutsen

✶ Knowledge Bowl

Grades 7–8, 9–12

Knowledge Bowl is an interdisciplinary academic contest for junior and senior high school students. Teams of students answer questions in a variety of academic areas. Senior High Knowledge Bowl students can compete for state championships. Some regions also offer this for students in grades 5–6.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: General
Academic Skills: Recall, critical thinking, cooperation and problem solving
Program Provider: Lakes Country Service Cooperative
Fees and Deadlines: Fees and dates vary by region. Senior High State Knowledge Bowl meets will take place in the spring.
Website: https://www.mnservcoop.org/knowledge-bowl
Email: mthompson@lcsc.org
Phone: (218) 737-6540
Contact: Monica Thompson

Laws of Life Essay Contest

Grades 4–6, 7–8, 9–12

The Laws of Life writing program encourages elementary, middle school and high school students to reflect and write about a core value that means the most to them — and why.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions, Classroom Activity
Academic Content: Language Arts, Social Studies
Academic Skills: Critical thinking, environmental stewardship, interdisciplinary, problem solving and time/budget management
Program Provider: Character.org
Fees and Deadlines: Free to participate. Annual participation encouraged. Check website for submission deadline.
Website: https://character.org/laws-of-life-contest/
Email: lawsoflife@character.org
Phone: (608) 548-4454
Contact: Wendy Horbinski

✶ LifeSmarts

Grades 9–12



LifeSmarts provides teens with the skills and knowledge they need to evaluate risks and opportunities in order to make informed decisions regarding personal finance, consumerism, health/safety, technology and the environment. Free LifeSmarts curriculum materials and lessons can be used in the classroom or within other student organizations. Students can choose to participate in online and/or live competitions on things they have learned.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions, Classroom Activity
Academic Content: Business/Career Education, General, STEM
Academic Skills: Critical thinking, environmental stewardship, interdisciplinary, problem solving and time/budget management
Program Provider: South Central Service Cooperative
Fees and Deadlines: Participation is free. Online competitions take place September–January. In-person state competition is in early February. The national competition is held in April in a major U.S. city.
Website: www.mnscsc.org/lifesmarts or https://lifesmarts.org/
Email: lifesmarts@mnscsc.org

✳ MAAP STARS

Grades 9–12



MAAP STARS (Minnesota Association of Alternative Programs: Success, Teamwork, Achievement, Recognition, Self-esteem) is a broad-based, vocational-oriented program to help students develop professional employment, academic and social skills. STARS helps students gain self-confidence, increases motivation to graduate and creates a desire for life-long learning. There are regional and three statewide events.



Program Category: Awards & Recognitions, Leadership Development
Academic Content: Arts, Business/Career Education, General, Language Arts
Academic Skills: Artistic expression, leadership development, problem solving, public speaking and teamwork
Program Provider: Minnesota Association of Alternative Programs (MAAP)
Fees and Deadlines: Membership Fee: $150/school year: October 22 & 23, 2026 Fall Leadership Conference; February 24, 2027 Legislative Day; Spring Events Conference May 6 & 7, 2027
Website: www.maapmn.org
Email: maapstarschair@gmail.com
Phone: (218) 731-7418
Contact: Kristin Tuel

✳ Math Masters

Grades 4–6



The Math Masters competition program challenges 4th - 6th grade students to use critical thinking and problem solving skills in mathematics. Students compete as individuals and on teams in eight competition rounds at nearly 70 competition sites throughout Minnesota and western Wisconsin, with winners receiving plaques, medals, and ribbons. All students are welcome - public, private, and home school - with more than 5,500 students participating annually. Every student gets a t-shirt!

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions, Leadership Development
Academic Content: STEM
Academic Skills: Critical thinking, factual recall, problem solving, teamwork and time/budget management
Program Provider: Math Masters
Fees and Deadlines: Visit website for current fee and registration details. Registration opens in September; competitions are held in March–April. Team and individual registration options available.
Website: www.math-masters.org
Email: mathmasters@math-masters.org
Phone: (507) 389-2509
Contact: Mary Detloff

MathCEP – Saturday Morning Math Enrichment

Grades 5–7

Spend your Saturdays delving into what keeps the internet working, takes us to space, lets us talk about infinity and helps us win more games: math! The School of Mathematics Center for Educational Programs (MathCEP) at the University of Minnesota offers Saturday Morning Math Enrichment programs during the school year where students in grades 5–7 engage in innovative activities that focus on mathematic topics that go beyond the classroom.

Program Category: Classroom Activity, Out of School Time Enrichment
Academic Content: STEM
Academic Skills: Creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, teamwork, analytic ability, STEM concepts and mathematical skills
Program Provider: University of Minnesota – MathCEP
Fees and Deadlines: For fees and calendar dates call or visit the website. Registration opens in August.
Website: https://cse.umn.edu/mathcep/saturday-morning-math-enrichment
Email: mathcep@umn.edu
Phone: (612) 625-2861

Mathematical Olympiads for Elementary & Middle Schools

Grades 4–6 (Division E), Grades 6–8 (Division M)

Math Olympiads is a series of five contests in each division that run from November–March. Contests may be administered in the classroom or in a before/after school program. The contests can be administered in-person or virtually. We also sponsor tournaments, which are exciting face-to-face competitions that may be offered by any school or professional organization in the spring.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions, Classroom Activity, Out of School Time Enrichment
Academic Content: STEM
Academic Skills: Critical thinking and problem solving
Program Provider: MOEMS – Mathematical Olympiads for Elementary & Middle Schools
Fees and Deadlines: See website for details.
Website: www.moems.org
Email: info@moems.org
Phone: (516) 781-2400
Contact: Meryl Fordin

MATH MANIA TOURNAMENT

Want more MOEMS? Join us for a live competition! Teams of five students will participate in individual, team and playoff rounds of competition surrounding mathematical thinking and problem solving Coaches are provided sample problems in advance of the competition and solutions for reviewing with teams afterward. Team and individual awards will be presented at a ceremony following the competition. Schools or other youth groups are invited to form teams, or students can register individually and will be placed on teams for the competition. Visit www.mnscsc.org/math-mania for more information.



MathWorks Math Modeling Challenge

Grades 11–12

M3 Challenge is a free, internet-based applied math competition known for inspiring students to pursue STEM majors and careers. Working in teams of 3–5, participants use math and data to solve a real-world problem in 14 hours. Teams with the best solution papers receive tuition scholarships for their college education.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: STEM
Academic Skills: Creativity, critical thinking, interdisciplinary, problem solving and teamwork
Program Provider: Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics (SIAM)
Fees and Deadlines: No fees. Registration opens in November and closes in February. Challenge weekend is late February/early March. Visit the website for deadlines.
Website: https://M3Challenge.siam.org
Email: m3challenge@siam.org
Phone: (267) 350-6336
Contact: Karen Bliss

Minnesota 4-H Youth Development

Grades K–13

Minnesota 4-H Youth Development programs are found in urban, suburban, tribal and rural communities across Minnesota. There are many ways to participate: 4-H clubs, 4-H afterschool programs, project-based learning, 4-H day and residential camps, and regional and state programs and events.

Program Category: Leadership Development, Out of School Time Enrichment
Academic Content: Arts, General, STEM
Academic Skills: Creativity, critical thinking, global citizenship, leadership development and public speaking
Program Provider: University of Minnesota Extension – Minnesota 4-H Youth Development
Fees and Deadlines: See website for details.
Website: www.extension.umn.edu/4-h
Email: fourh@umn.edu
Phone: (612) 624-2116

Minnesota Academy of Science – Middle School and High School Science Bowl

Grades 6–8, 9–12

The competition consists of five-person teams buzzing in to answer science and math questions in a fast-paced format. Each team competes in a round-robin tournament with the top teams advancing to a double-elimination championship. The winning team represents Minnesota with a paid trip to the National Science Bowl in Washington, D.C.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions, Out of School Time Enrichment
Academic Content: STEM
Academic Skills: Critical thinking, factual recall, leadership development, problem solving and teamwork
Program Provider: Minnesota Academy of Science
Fees and Deadlines: See website for details.
Website: www.mnmas.org/science-bowl
Email: kfowler@mnmas.org
Phone: (651) 917-3994
Contact: Kris Fowler

Minnesota Academy of Science – State Science & Engineering Fair

Grades 6–12

Since 1938, Minnesota State Science & Engineering Fair has been the pinnacle of project-based STEM education in Minnesota, the culmination of regional science fairs throughout the state with up to 500 students selected to present their research. The four top projects receive an all-expense-paid trip to the International Fair with more than 70 countries participating.

Program Category: Awards & Recognitions, Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: STEM
Academic Skills: Creativity, critical thinking, environmental stewardship, problem solving and public speaking
Program Provider: Minnesota Academy of Science
Fees and Deadlines: See website for fees, deadlines and competition dates.
Website: www.mnmas.org/about-science-engineering-fair
Email: info@mnmas.org
Phone: (651) 917-3994
Contact: Science & Engineering Fair manager

Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom

Grades K–12

MAITC seeks to improve student achievement by applying authentic, agricultural-based content as the context to teach core concepts in science, social studies, language arts and nutrition. By encouraging teachers to embed agriculture into their curriculum, MAITC cultivates an understanding and appreciation of the food system that we rely on every day.

Program Category: Classroom Activity
Academic Content: Business/Career Education, General, Language Arts, Social Studies, STEM
Academic Skills: Critical thinking, environmental stewardship, global citizenship, interdisciplinary and agricultural literacy
Program Provider: MAITC at the Minnesota Department of Agriculture
Fees and Deadlines: All MAITC resources are free.
Website: https://minnesota.agclassroom.org
Email: Sue.knott@state.mn.us
Phone: (651) 201-6486
Contact: Sue Knott

✳ Minnesota Bilingual Seals Program

Grades 10–12

Minnesota Bilingual Seals are a recognition awarded to graduating high school students who demonstrated language skills in languages other than English. There are three levels of awards and many Minnesota State Colleges and Universities award free college credits. The award notated on your transcript serves as an official documentation of your language skills boosting your opportunities to expanded career or enriched activities beyond post-secondary.

Program Category: Awards & Recognitions
Academic Content: World Languages & Cultures
Academic Skills: Global citizenship, language skills in listening, reading, speaking and writing
Program Provider: Minnesota public, charter, and private schools through the Minnesota Department of Education.
Fees and Deadlines: Vary depending on school or district.
Website: https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/stds/world/seals/ or Minnesota Seals Toolkit: https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/stds/world/seals/
Email: mde.worldlang@state.mn.us
Phone: (651) 582-8707
Contact: Ayumi Stockman

Minnesota Business Professionals of America

Grades 9–12

The mission of Business Professionals of America is to contribute to the preparation of a world-class work force through the advancement of leadership, citizenship, academic and technological career skills for business and office students. It combines school-based and work-based learning.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions, Conferences & Institutes
Academic Content: Business/Career Education
Academic Skills: Creativity, critical thinking, global citizenship, leadership development, problem solving, public speaking, research, teamwork, time/budget management and verbal reasoning
Program Provider: MN Business Professionals of America
Fees and Deadlines: Visit website for details on state and national fees as well as conference dates and locations.
Website: www.mnbpa.org
Email: jackie@arvig.net
Phone: (218) 847-5355
Contact: Jackie Schiller

Minnesota DECA

Grades 9–12

DECA is a school-to-work student organization that provides marketing related activities and leadership development. It combines school-based and work-based learning, focusing on careers in marketing, management and entrepreneurship. Competition is in occupational skills, leadership and management.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions, Conferences & Institutes
Academic Content: Business/Career Education
Academic Skills: Artistic expression, creativity, critical thinking, global citizenship, leadership development, problem solving, public speaking, research, teamwork, time/budget management and verbal reasoning
Program Provider: Minnesota Secondary DECA
Fees and Deadlines: Visit website for details on state and national fees as well as conference dates and locations.
Website: www.mndeca.org
Email: jackie@arvig.net
Phone: (218) 847-5355
Contact: Jackie Schiller

Minnesota Envirothon

Grades 9–12

Inspire students in this outdoor, academic competition. Registration is FREE. Study materials are provided. Students learn about conservation and careers in natural resource management while developing leadership and collaborative problem-solving skills. Teams of five are tested in aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife, and a current environmental issue. First, teams qualify at local regional events. At the MN Envirothon, one team will advance to the National Envirothon to compete for prizes and scholarships.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: STEM
Academic Skills: Environmental stewardship, leadership development, problem solving, research, teamwork
Program Provider: The Minnesota Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD), Sherburne SWCD, Minnesota SWCDs
Fees and Deadlines: FREE for regional and state events; Regional events held in April & May; State event is in May.
Website: https://www.maswcd.org/youth-education
Email: MNEnvirothon@gmail.com
Phone: (763) 220-3434
Contact: Miranda Wagner

Minnesota Family, Career and Community Leaders of America

Grades 6–12

Minnesota FCCLA is a career and technical student organization where you can learn to be an effective leader in your school and community and explore possible careers. Youth leaders in FCCLA gain confidence, practical knowledge, character development and skills in presenting, working in teams, and creative and critical thinking.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions, Conferences & Institutes, Leadership Development
Academic Content: Business/Career Education
Academic Skills: Problem solving, creative and critical thinking, interdisciplinary, public speaking, teamwork, leadership development, environmental stewardship and time/budget management
Program Provider: MN FCCLA
Fees and Deadlines: See the website for details.
Website: www.mnfccla.org
Email: patrick.mitchell@mnfccla.org
Phone: (651) 330-2950
Contact: Patrick Mitchell

Minnesota FFA

Grades 7–12

FFA makes a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agriculture education.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions, Leadership Development
Academic Content: General
Academic Skills: Communications, leadership and decision-making skills
Program Provider: Minnesota FFA
Fees and Deadlines: Visit the website for more information.
Website: www.mnffa.org
Email: acrowson@mnffa.org
Phone: (605) 695-1861
Contact: Ashley Crowson



✷ Minnesota Future City Competition

Grades 6–8 (Middle School), 9–12 (High School)



Future City Competition is a hands-on cross-curricular program that brings STEM to life for students in grades 6-8 and 9-12. On a team and using the Engineering Design Process and project management skills, students imagine, design, and build a city in the future showcasing their solutions to a citywide sustainability issue.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions, Out of School Time Enrichment
Academic Content: Arts, Language Arts, Social Studies, STEM
Academic Skills: Creativity, problem solving, public speaking, research and teamwork
Program Provider: SparkPath
Fees and Deadlines: Grades 6–8: $25 per school registration fee, due by Oct. 31, 2026. Grades 9–12: $300–$450 per school registration fee.
Website: https://futurecity.org/future-city-regions/minnesota/
Email: betsy.narr@brightworksmn.org
Phone: (612) 638-1550
Contact: Betsy Narr

✷ Minnesota Future Problem Solving Program

Grades K–12



Teaching students how to think, not what to think; learning lifelong problem-solving skills. Critical and creative thinking skills are applied to real topics. The 2026–27 topics are: Digital Dark Age, Disappearing Cultures, Influencer Marketing, and Health Security. Classroom curriculum is available for grades K–9. Competitive opportunities for grades 4–12 include Global Issues Problem Solving, Community Problem Solving, Scenario Writing, Visual Arts, and Scenario Performance.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions, Leadership Development
Academic Content: Arts, Business/Career Education, General, Language Arts, Social Studies, STEM, World Languages & Cultures
Academic Skills: Creativity, critical thinking, global citizenship, problem solving and teamwork
Program Provider: Minnesota Future Problem Solving Program
Fees and Deadlines: Visit the website for fees and deadlines.
Website: www.mnfpsp.org
Email: angela.denstad@mnfpsp.org
Phone: (507) 459-1258
Contact: Angela Denstad

Minnesota High School Music Listening Contest

Grades 9–12

The Music Listening Contest assists teachers in their efforts to expand the music experiences of students. Students gain understanding and appreciation of other cultures through listening and learning about music from various areas and time periods. They also develop teamwork skills as they work in teams of three to compete in the regional and championship contests.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions, Classroom Activity
Academic Content: Arts
Academic Skills: Active listening, artistic expression, critical analysis, factual recall and teamwork
Program Provider: Music Listening Contest Board
Fees and Deadlines: See website for updates.
Website: www.musiclisteningcontest.com
Email: musiclisteningcontestinfo@gmail.com

✳ Minnesota Institute for Talented Youth (MITY)

Grades 1–12



Our mission is to inspire and challenge intellectually curious students to pursue their passions within a diverse, inclusive community and empower them by building skills and relationships for lifelong success. MITY offers unique STEM, humanities and fine arts courses in three academic programs. Students engage in hands-on, inquiry-based learning during the summer or on Saturday mornings during the school year. Older students can live in dorms at Macalester College.

Program Category: Leadership Development, Out of School Time Enrichment
Academic Content: Arts, General, Language Arts, Social Studies, STEM
Academic Skills: Creativity, critical thinking, interdisciplinary, problem solving and teamwork
Program Provider: Minnesota Institute For Talented Youth
Fees and Deadlines: Check website for details.
Website: www.mity.org
Email: info@mity.org
Phone: (651) 243-2221
Contact: Erica Brewinski

Minnesota Junior High Math League

Grades 6–8

Minnesota Junior High Math League encourages students to participate in math contests, enables students to meet mathletes from other schools and provides recognition for students excelling in mathematics. The program also serves as preparation for the annual MATHCOUNTS competition. The meet topics are based on the MATHCOUNTS topics.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: STEM
Academic Skills: Creativity, critical thinking, factual recall, problem solving and teamwork
Fees and Deadlines: See website for details.
Website: www.mnjhml.com
Email: mnjhml1@gmail.com
Phone: (651) 252-1766

Minnesota MATHCOUNTS

Grades 6–8

Teachers, your students' math success starts here! At MATHCOUNTS, we boost students' confidence, foster a positive attitude toward math and problem-solving, and make learning fun — all while respecting your packed schedule. MATHCOUNTS is for all middle school math students. Whether you're running a classroom or a math club, our free, ready-to-use resources provide what you need to make a math team happen in your school — no extra prep required.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions, Classroom Activity
Academic Content: STEM
Academic Skills: Creativity, critical thinking, leadership development, problem solving and teamwork
Program Provider: Minnesota MATHCOUNTS/MN Society of Professional Engineers
Fees and Deadlines: Registration opens in August and closes in December.
Website: www.mathcountsmn.org
Email: katie@mathcountsmn.org
Phone: (651) 457-2347
Contact: Katie Jamieson

Minnesota Mathematics League

Grades 4–12

Minnesota Mathematics League encourages student interest and confidence in mathematics through solving worthwhile problems. There are contests for students in grades 4–8, Algebra 1 and high school. Every contest has questions from different areas of mathematics. Schools compete in statewide or multi-state league competitions.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: STEM
Academic Skills: Problem solving, critical thinking and creativity
Program Provider: The Math League
Fees and Deadlines: Visit see website for contest dates, fees and deadlines.
Website: www.themathleague.com
Email: dan@mathleague.com
Phone: (201) 568-6328
Contact: Daniel Fleger

Minnesota PTA Reflections

Grades PreK–12

Reflections arts program encourages students to explore their artistic talent and is designed to promote expression and creativity. Students create their artwork based on a student-created annual theme. Students are able to show the world how they matter through their visual arts, photography, music composition, film production, dance choreography and literature.

Program Category: Awards & Recognitions, Out of School Time Enrichment
Academic Content: Arts
Academic Skills: Artistic expression, creativity and critical thinking
Program Provider: Minnesota PTA
Fees and Deadlines: No fees, but school or student must have MN PTA membership. See website for annual theme and other details.
Website: https://www.mnpta.org/programs-events/mn-pta-reflections
Email: reflections@mnpta.org
Phone: (952) 767-4909

Minnesota Regional High School Ethics Bowl

Grades 9–12

Ethics Bowl competitions provide a supportive, respectful environment that prepares high school students for the intellectual rigors of a college education while giving them the opportunity to think carefully (and philosophically!) about meaningful ethical questions. Each year, students study a set of cases, which are the foundation for the competition. Winners of the Minnesota Bowl may go on to compete at the National Bowl at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions, Out of School Time Enrichment
Academic Content: Arts, General, Language Arts, Social Studies, STEM
Academic Skills: Creativity, critical thinking, public speaking, research, verbal reasoning
Fees and Deadlines: See website for details.
Website: https://ethicsbowl.umn.edu/
Email: ethicsbowl@umn.edu
Phone: (612) 625-6563
Contact: Cat Saint-Croix

Minnesota Scholastic Art Awards

Grades 7–12

Minnesota high school students, grade 7–12, are invited to enter a juried art exhibition. Award winners are recognized and honored at an award ceremony and reception, either in person or virtually.

Program Category: Awards & Recognitions
Academic Content: Arts
Academic Skills: Critical thinking, creativity and problem solving
Program Provider: Co-sponsored by Art Educators of Minnesota, The University of Minnesota's Art Department & Regis Art Center and the Weisman Art Museum
Fees and Deadlines: Submissions open in September and are due the first week in December.
Website: www.artandwriting.org/affiliate/MN001A/ or https://www.aem-mn.org/student-opportunities-2/scholastics

Minnesota Science Olympiad (Division A)

Grades 3–6

The Minnesota Science Olympiad is devoted to improving the quality of science education, increasing student interest in science and providing recognition for outstanding achievement. Team competition includes challenging and motivational events ranging from earth science to physics. The winning team from each division will be invited to the National Science Olympiad.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: STEM
Academic Skills: Creativity, environmental stewardship, factual recall, problem solving and teamwork
Program Provider: Minnesota Science Olympiad
Fees and Deadlines: See website for details.
Website: www.minnesotaso.org
Email: mnscioly@gmail.com
Contact: Michael Huberty

Minnesota Science Olympiad (Division B)

Grades 6–9

Science Olympiad is a nationwide organization dedicated to improving science education through competitions like academic track meets of team events. Each year, students prepare for competition by studying a wide range of STEM topics with an emphasis on group participation. Through Science Olympiad, participants bond together and work toward shared goals.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: STEM
Academic Skills: Creativity, critical thinking, environmental stewardship, factual recall, interdisciplinary, problem solving, research and teamwork
Program Provider: Minnesota Science Olympiad
Fees and Deadlines: See website for details.
Website: www.minnesotaso.org
Email: hans1355@isd194.org
Phone: (952) 232-3877
Contact: Brandi Gordon

Minnesota Science Olympiad (Division C)

Grades 9–12

The Minnesota Science Olympiad offers competitions to encourage students to solve problems and become proficient in a variety of topic areas. Participants compete as a team. The winning team from each division at the state competition will be invited to the National Science Olympiad held in May.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: STEM
Academic Skills: Critical thinking, factual recall, problem solving and teamwork
Program Provider: Minnesota Science Olympiad
Fees and Deadlines: See website for details.
Website: www.minnesotaso.org
Email: kfoley@edenpr.org
Phone: (612) 597-2499
Contact: Katie Foley

CONNECT YOUR STUDENTS, STAFF AND FAMILIES WITH REACH FOR THE STARS!

Help students discover exciting academic enrichment opportunities through Reach for the Stars! Here are three easy ways to spread the word:

Share it: Feature a short Reach for the Stars blurb in your newsletters, website, social media, or other communications.

Make it easy to access: Share the Reach for the Stars QR code or website link for qi ck access to the digital catalogue.

Spread the word: Reqe st free informational postcards to distribute to students, families, staff, and community members.

Need materials or assistance? We're happy to help! Email reach@synergyexchange.org.

Minnesota SkillsUSA

Grades 9–12, Post-secondary

SkillsUSA helps students become future leaders by developing their personal, workplace and technical skills. Students engaged in technically skilled courses and programming as well as those looking for career exploration activities and opportunities can benefit!

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions, Leadership Development
Academic Content: Business/Career Education, STEM
Academic Skills: Critical thinking, leadership development, problem solving, teamwork and communication
Program Provider: Minnesota SkillsUSA
Fees and Deadlines: Visit the website for fees and deadlines.
Website: www.mnskillsusa.org
Email: executive.director@mnskillsusa.org
Phone: (218) 639-2278
Contact: Heidi Mattson

Minnesota State High School Mathematics League

Grades 6–12

Schools send students to five meets in their geographic region with both individual and team competitions. Top teams in geographic regions and top 50 scoring students participate in a state tournament. Top individuals in the state are invited to join the All-State Team that represents Minnesota in national competitions. The Summer Math Institute, a residential summer camp, is held in June.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: STEM
Academic Skills: Problem solving and teamwork
Program Provider: Augsburg University
Fees and Deadlines: See website for details.
Website: https://www.mnmathleague.org/home.php
Email: mathleague@augsburg.edu
Phone: (612) 330-1788
Contact: Tom Young

Minnesota Student Digital Mapping Competition

Grades 6–8, 9–12

The competition empowers students to develop skills in spatial analysis, critical thinking, and storytelling through digital mapping. It's an opportunity to gain recognition, earn awards, and explore the fascinating world of digital mapping (GIS) technology. Students can participate individually or as a team of two. Prizes for the top three entries.

Program Category: Challenges & Competition, Classroom Activity
Academic Content: Social Studies, STEM
Academic Skills: Critical thinking, geographic inqi ry, problem solving and research
Program Provider: Minnesota Alliance for Geographic Education
Fees and Deadlines: No competition fees. All competition entries must be created using a free Esri ArcGIS Online School Software Bundle Account. Visit the website for registration details and applying for a free account.
Website: https://minnesota-alliance-for-geographic-education-mage.hub.arcgis.com/
Email: jimsoli@mac.com
Phone: (612) 590-6422
Contact: Jim Hanson

Minnesota Youth Institute

Grades 9–12

The Minnesota Youth Institute challenges high school students to solve local and global food security issues. MNYI is a half-day program where high school students from across Minnesota share research, participate in interactive experiences and network with research/industry leaders in agricultural/food/natural resource fields. Participating students are eligible for scholarships, international and domestic internships, and an opportunity to represent Minnesota at the Global Youth Institute and World Food Prize International Borlaug-Dialogue Symposium.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions, Classroom Activity
Academic Content: General, Social Studies, STEM, World Languages
Academic Skills: Factual recall, problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, interdisciplinary, research, public speaking, leadership development, global citizenship and environmental stewardship
Program Provider: University of Minnesota
Fees and Deadlines: No fee. Visit website for registration and essay deadline details.
Website: www.mnyi.cfans.umn.edu
Email: mnyi@umn.edu
Phone: (612) 624-1745
Contact: Mary Buschette

MN Cup Competition – Youth Division

Grades K–12

The Minnesota Cup is an early-stage business competition. Through the Youth and Student divisions, young entrepreneurs are provided a supportive environment to start a new business and compete for prize money. More information about the competition is available on the website.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions, Out of School Time Enrichment
Academic Content: Business/Career Education
Academic Skills: Critical thinking, leadership development, problem solving, public speaking, verbal reasoning
Program Provider: Holmes Center for Entrepreneurship, University of Minnesota
Fees and Deadlines: The competition is free to enter. Applications available starting in March. Visit the website for more information.
Website: www.mncup.org
Email: hellomncup@umn.edu
Phone: (612) 625-4772
Contact: Kailin Oliver

Mock Trial Program

Grades 7–12

The program gives students an insider's look at the American legal system while helping them develop critical thinking, communication and teamwork skills. A volunteer attorney works with each team to prepare for the simulated trials held in actual courtrooms in January/February. The state tournament is held in March; the state champion competes at the national tournament in May.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions, Classroom Activity
Academic Content: Arts, Business/Career Education, Language Arts, Social Studies
Academic Skills: Critical thinking, problem solving, public speaking, teamwork and verbal reasoning
Program Provider: Minnesota State Bar Association
Fees and Deadlines: See website for details.
Website: https://mnbars.org/?pg=for-public-mock-trial
Email: kbasting@mnbars.org
Phone: (612) 278-6306
Contact: Kim Basting

Mondale-Quie Essay Contest

Grades 11–12

The Mondale-Quie Essay Contest provides Minnesota high school juniors and seniors with an opportunity to compete for up to $1,000 in scholarship money by writing essays that analyze and take a position on a current topic relevant to Minnesota's judicial system.

Program Category: Awards & Recognitions, Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: Language Arts, Social Studies
Academic Skills: Creativity, critical thinking, global citizenship, problem solving and research
Program Provider: Minnesota Supreme Court Historical Society
Fees and Deadlines: No fees. Check website for topic information and deadlines.
Website: https://mncourthistory.org/Essay-Contest/
Email: director@mncourthistory.org

MSHSL Debate, Speech

Grades 7–12

For each program, see Fine Arts Rules and Policies manual available on the MSHSL website. Debate is a MSHSL winter activity. Competition events in policy debate, Lincoln-Douglas debate, public forum debate and congressional debate. Speech is a MSHSL spring activity. Contests are held in creative expression, discussion, duo interpretation, extemporaneous reading, extemporaneous speaking, great speeches, humorous interpretation, informative speaking, original oratory, serious drama interpretation, serious poetry interpretation, serious prose interpretation and storytelling.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: Language Arts
Program Provider: MSHSL
Fees and Deadlines: Fees vary by school. Registration deadline is Dec. 1.
Website: www.mshsl.org/sports-and-activities/debate
www.mshsl.org/sports-and-activities/speech
Email: adoherty@mshsl.org
Phone: (763) 560-2262
Contact: Amy Doherty

MSHSL Music, One Act Play, Visual Arts

Grades 7–12

For each program, see Fine Arts Rules and Policies manual available on the MSHSL website. Music is a spring MSHSL activity. The contest events provide for competition in major groups (choir, orchestra and band), special groups, ensembles and solos. One Act Play is a winter MSHSL activity. Visual Arts is a spring MSHSL activity. Artwork may be submitted in the categories of drawing, painting, sculpture, film-based photograph, digital photography, video art, computer-based artwork, crafts, printmaking, ceramics, 2D mixed media/collage and graphic design.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: Arts
Program Provider: MSHSL
Fees and Deadlines: Fees vary by school. Registration deadline is Dec. 1.
Website: www.mshsl.org/sports-and-activities/music
www.mshsl.org/sports-and-activities/one-act-play
www.mshsl.org/sports-and-activities/visual-arts
Email: tleighton@mshsl.org, adoherty@mshsl.org
Phone: (763) 560-2262
Contact: Tim Leighton (Music, Visual Arts), Amy Doherty (One Act Play)

MSHSL/FIRST Robotics

Grades 9–12

MSHSL/FIRST Robotics is an extracurricular opportunity for students with an interest in engineering and robotics.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: STEM
Academic Skills: STEM and communications
Program Provider: MSHSL/FIRST
Fees and Deadlines: Fees vary by school. Visit website for full schedule and details.
Website: https://www.mshsl.org/sports-and-activities/robotics
Email: kr71@aol.com
Phone: (952) 884-5169
Contact: Ken Rosen

MTEEA Supermileage Challenge

Grades 7–12

This program joins classroom learning with imagination, ingenuity and teamwork to produce the most fuel-efficient vehicle. Ideas are tempered with calculation to produce optimum design. Students are in charge of this project from the vehicle's conception to planning, fabrication and testing.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: STEM
Academic Skills: Problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, interdisciplinary, research, teamwork, leadership development and time/budget management
Program Provider: Minnesota Technology & Engineering Educators Association
Fees and Deadlines: Visit website for fees and specific dates.
Website: www.mteea.net/index.php/competitions/supermileage
Email: mteeasupermileage@gmail.com
Contact: Luke Becker

✳ National Geography Challenge

Grades 2–12

National geography contest that takes place in the classroom. Five levels: grade(s) 2, 3–4, 5–6, 7–9 and 10–12. Contests reflect the main themes of geography, appropriate to each grade level. The program is a Better Business Bureau member with an A+ rating.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: Social Studies
Academic Skills: Critical thinking and factual recall
Program Provider: Continental Mathematics League, Inc.
Fees and Deadlines: First team $85, additional teams $60. Registration through March. Meet dates: April 20–May 30, 2027.
Website: www.cmleague.com
Email: support@cmleague.com
Phone: (631) 921-6627
Contact: Christine Pette

National History Day in Minnesota

Grades 6-12



National History Day is a co-curricular academic fair in which students learn academic research, analysis and effective presentation of ideas with the help of staff and partnership organizations. Students are eligible to compete in school, regional, state and national contests. The 2026–2027 theme is "Innovation."

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions, Classroom Activity
Academic Content: Social Studies
Academic Skills: Critical thinking, factual recall, interdisciplinary, research and teamwork
Program Provider: Minnesota Historical Society
Fees and Deadlines: There is no classroom fee to participate and program materials are sent to teachers free of charge. Regional events take place in March and registration fees begin at $12 per student.
Website: www.mnhs.org/historyday
Email: samantha.papas@mnhs.org
Phone: (651) 259-3439
Contact: Sammi Jo Papas

National Language Arts League

Grades 2-12

National language arts contest that takes place in the classroom. Multiple-choice questions appropriate for grades 2 and 3–4. Multiple-choice questions based on spelling, vocabulary, reading comprehension, analogies and grammar available for grades 5–6, 7–9 and 10–12. The program is a Better Business Bureau member with an A+ rating.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: Language Arts
Academic Skills: Critical thinking and factual recall
Program Provider: Continental Mathematics League, Inc.
Fees and Deadlines: $110 for the first two teams, $60 for additional teams. Registration through March. Meet dates: April 19–30, 2027.
Website: www.cmleague.com
Email: support@cmleague.com
Phone: (631) 921-6627
Contact: Christine Pette



✶ National Science League

Grades 2–12

National science contest that takes place in the classroom. Contests in general science for grades 2, 3–4 and 5–6. Contests for middle and high school levels in life science, physical science, earth science, biology, chemistry and physics. Questions based on both factual knowledge and students' understanding of scientific processes. The program is a Better Business Bureau member with an A+ rating.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: STEM
Academic Skills: Critical thinking and factual recall
Program Provider: Continental Mathematics League, Inc.
Fees and Deadlines: $110 for the first two teams, $60 for additional teams. Registration through March. Meet dates: April 19–30, 2027.
Website: www.cmleague.com
Email: support@cmleague.com
Phone: (631) 921-6627
Contact: Christine Pette

✶ National Social Studies League

Grades 2–12

National social studies contest that takes place in the classroom. Questions for grades 2–9 based on topics appropriate to each grade level in American Studies, U.S. Geography and U.S. Government. Two contests available for grades 10–12 in American History and World History. The program is a Better Business Bureau member with an A+ rating.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: Social Studies
Academic Skills: Critical thinking and factual recall
Program Provider: National Social Studies League
Fees and Deadlines: $110 for the first two teams, $60 for additional teams. Registration through March. Meet dates: April 19–30, 2027.
Website: www.cmleague.com
Email: support@cmleague.com
Phone: (631) 921-6627
Contact: Christine Pette

NCTE Achievement Awards in Writing

Grade 10–11

The National Council of Teachers of English Achievement Awards in Writing encourages high school sophomores and juniors to write and to publicly recognize the best student writers. Students who have been nominated by their schools may submit a themed writing that is up to 10 pages in length. Electronic submissions only.

Program Category: Awards & Recognitions
Academic Content: Language Arts
Academic Skills: Artistic expression, creativity, critical thinking, verbal reasoning and writing
Program Provider: National Council of Teachers of English
Fees and Deadlines: No fee. Visit the website for yearly prompt theme, timeline, submission due date and further program details.
Website: https://ncte.org/awards/achievement-awards-in-writing/
Email: studentwriting@ncte.org
Phone: (217) 328-3870 or (877) 369-6283

NCTE Promising Young Writers Program

Grade 8

The purpose of the Promising Young Writers Program is to stimulate and recognize the writing talents of eighth-grade students and to emphasize the importance of writing skills among them. Students who have been nominated by their schools may submit a themed writing that is up to 10 pages in length. Electronic submissions only.

Program Category: Awards & Recognitions
Academic Content: Language Arts
Academic Skills: Artistic expression, creativity, critical thinking, verbal reasoning and writing
Program Provider: National Council of Teachers of English
Fees and Deadlines: No fee. Visit the website for yearly prompt theme, timeline, submission due date and further program details.
Website: https://ncte.org/awards/promising-young-writers/
Email: studentwriting@ncte.org
Phone: (217) 328-3870 or (877) 369-6283

Nobel Conference at Gustavus Adolphus College

Grades 7–12

Join hundreds of high school students Oct. 6–7 at the 62nd Nobel Conference – The Mighty Mississippi: Currents of Change. The conference examines key challenges confronting the Mississippi basin including pollution, agricultural impacts, flooding, and tradeoffs between navigational and recreational uses.

Program Category: Conferences & Institutions, Out of School Time Enrichment
Academic Content: STEM
Academic Skills: Critical thinking, environmental stewardship, global citizenship. interdisciplinary and problem solving
Program Provider: Gustavus Adolphus College
Fees and Deadlines: The conference is free and open to the public.
Website: www.gustavus.edu/nobelconference
Email: nobelconference@gustavus.edu
Phone: (507) 933-7520
Contact: Phillip Voight

Noetic Learning Math Contest

Grades 2–8

The Noetic Learning Math Contest is a semiannual problem-solving contest for elementary and middle school students. The goal of the competition is to encourage students' interest in math, to develop their problem-solving skills and to inspire them to excel in math. During the contest, students have 45 minutes (50 minutes online) to solve 20 creative problems independently without a calculator. The contest is offered in both paper-pencil form and online.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: STEM
Academic Skills: Critical thinking, problem solving
Program Provider: Noetic Learning LLC
Fees and Deadlines: Visit the website for details.
Website: www.noetic-learning.com/mathcontest
Email: info@noetic-learning.com
Phone: (913) 735-4088
Contact: Li Kelty

Perennial Math Online Math Competition

Grades 3–12

Math is COOL! The goal of this competition is to stimulate students' enthusiasm for problem solving. Students can join the online competition (grades 3–8), travel to an on-site tournament (grades 3–8) or compete in WebEx virtual tournaments (grades 3–12). Homeschool teams are also welcome. Visit the website or Facebook page at www.facebook.com/perennialmath for more information.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions, Classroom Activity
Academic Content: STEM
Academic Skills: Mathematics
Program Provider: Perennial Math
Fees and Deadlines: See website for details.
Website: www.perennialmath.com
Email: info@perennialmath.com
Phone: (888) 835-2366

Personal Finance Challenge

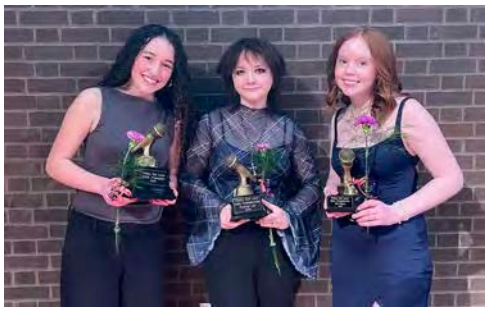
Grades 9–12

The Personal Finance Challenge is an exciting competition for high school students to practice real-world skills in managing money and solving problems. Teams of students compete online to demonstrate their knowledge of fundamental personal finance topics, with the top teams being invited to the state competition to showcase their talent in solving problems and communicating effectively.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: Business/Career Education, Social Studies
Academic Skills: Critical thinking, problem solving, public speaking, teamwork and verbal reasoning
Program Provider: Minnesota Council on Economic Education
Fees and Deadlines: There is no registration cost for teachers or students to participate. See website for details.
Website: https://z.umn.edu/PFChallenge
Email: mcee@umn.edu
Phone: (612) 625-3727
Contact: Angela Zappa

✳ Poetry Out Loud

Grades 9–12



Poetry Out Loud inspires students to experience great poetry while bringing literature to life in the classroom. The program strengthens public speaking skills, builds self-confidence, deepens appreciation for poetry, and connects students to both literary history and contemporary voices. Free educator resources make it easy to implement in any classroom, regardless of experience. Contests begin at the classroom level and can advance through regional and state competitions to an expenses-paid National Finals.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions, Classroom Activity
Academic Content: Arts, Language Arts
Academic Skills: Public speaking
Program Provider: South Central Service Cooperative in partnership with the Minnesota State Arts Board and the National Endowment for the Arts
Fees and Deadlines: Free! Registration is in the fall; visit the website for details.
Website: www.mnscsc.org/poetry-out-loud or www.poetryoutloud.org
Email: mhillmann@mnscsc.org
Phone: (507) 389-2509
Contact: Mary Hillmann

Poster Contest

Grades K–8

Unleash your students' creativity, imagination and talent by exploring economic ideas and competing in the Poster Contest. Using our topics and guides, teachers can support students in connecting economic concepts to their own lives while encouraging student self-expression through visual art. Teachers may submit the excellent work done by their students and possibly be selected for recognition.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: Arts, Business/Career Education, Social Studies
Academic Skills: Artistic expression, creativity and critical thinking
Program Provider: Minnesota Council on Economic Education
Fees and Deadlines: No fees. Registration opens on Jan. 1; exact dates can be found on the MCEE calendar.
Website: https://z.umn.edu/PosterContest
Email: mcee@umn.edu
Phone: (612) 625-3727
Contact: Minnesota Council on Economic Education

Real World Design Challenge

Grades 9–12

Real World Design Challenge is a competition that provides students the opportunity to work on real world engineering challenges in a team environment. Teams address a challenge that confronts our nation's leading industries. Students utilize professional engineering software to develop their solutions and generate business-style presentations. RWDC provides students with opportunities to apply the lessons of the classroom to the technical problems that are being faced in the workplace.

Program Category: Awards & Recognitions, Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: STEM
Academic Skills: Critical thinking, leadership development, problem solving, teamwork and time/budget management
Program Provider: Real World Design Challenge
Fees and Deadlines: Visit the website for fees and deadlines.
Website: https://www.competitionsciences.org/competitions/real-world-design-challenge/
Email: bryan.farmer@isd832.net
Phone: (651) 762-5934
Contact: Bryan Farmer

✶ Reality Fair NEW!

Grades 8–12

Reality Fairs are experiential budgeting simulations. Students receive a job, an income, a credit score, and some existing debt. Volunteers guide the students through the budgeting process as they learn real life money management skills.



Program Category: Challenges & Competitions, Classroom Activity
Academic Content: Business/Career Education, STEM
Academic Skills: Critical thinking, problem solving, time/budget management
Program Provider: Wings Credit Union
Fees and Deadlines: No fees or deadlines.
Website: https://www.wingscu.com/foundation/financial-education/reality-fair
Email: jared.little@wingsfinancial.com
Phone: (612) 723-3807
Contact: Jared Little

Wings | Credit Union Foundation

✶ Scholars of Distinction

Grades 11–12

Scholars of Distinction is a significant capstone project in a student's academic area of interest, which is recognized by their high school and the Minnesota Department of Education. This project creates an ideal opportunity for students to develop and refine skills that are increasingly required in today's world. Through the project students will exercise their creativity, stretch what they have learned and challenge themselves.

Program Category: Awards & Recognitions, Leadership Development
Academic Content: Computer Science, Cultural Studies, Environmental Leadership, Social Studies, STEM
Academic Skills: Independent and critical thinking at complex levels, creative problem solving, learning across disciplines, and synthesizing/integrating a variety of viewpoints.
Program Provider: Minnesota Department of Education
Fees and Deadlines: No fees. Oct. 1 deadline for Intent to Apply; important dates, scoring rubrics and project consultants are listed on the website.
Website: https://education.mn.gov/MDE/fam/sod/
Email: mde.academic-standards@state.mn.us
Phone: (651) 582-8786
Contact: Wendy Behrens

School Chess Association

Grades K–12

Learn a lifetime activity — CHESS! The School Chess Association sponsors tournaments, matches, instruction, camps and clubs at school. The Tournament of Champions takes the top 16 players in primary, elementary and middle school sections of the statewide tournament to compete in a United States Chess Federation rated tournament. The winner of each of the sections will earn the title of School Chess Association Primary and Elementary and Middle School Champion.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: STEM
Academic Skills: Problem solving and critical and analytical thinking
Program Provider: School Chess Association
Fees and Deadlines: Call for fees and dates or visit the website for more information.
Website: www.schoolchess.org
Email: lorene@schoolchess.org
Phone: (763) 593-1168
Contact: Lorene Lampert

Science and Nature Live Virtual Programs

Grades K–12

These 45-minute virtual programs are designed to connect your students with a museum educator online for a live, interactive program about our natural world and the universe around us. Hybrid cohort groups, distance learners, and in-person classrooms are all possible with our virtual field trips. We are happy to meet your learners where they are!

Program Category: Classroom Activity
Academic Content: STEM
Academic Skills: Critical thinking, environmental stewardship, global citizenship and problem solving
Program Provider: Bell Museum, University of Minnesota
Fees and Deadlines: Visit the website for more details.
Website: https://www.bellmuseum.umn.edu/statewide-engagement/#tab_3_6
Email: bellinfo@umn.edu
Phone: (612) 626-9660

Science from Scientists

Grades 3–8

Science from Scientists is a STEM education non-profit that sends real STEM professionals into the community to teach engaging, hands-on, standards-aligned STEM lessons with elementary and middle schoolers. Choose from our lesson library of over 100 STEM topics that can either be delivered in-person or virtually. Programs include multiple visit school engagements, single day school engagements and out-of-school programs.

Program Category: Classroom Activity, Out of School Time Enrichment
Academic Content: STEM
Academic Skills: Creativity, Critical thinking, Problem solving, Research, Teamwork
Fees and Deadlines: Science from Scientists provides programming year-round with schools and community partners. We can customize our frequency and length of visits to accommodate your schedule and budget. Please contact us for more information on fees.
Website: https://www.sciencefromscientists.org/
Email: minnesota@sciencefromscientists.org
Phone: (612) 701-2125
Contact: Bekki Hansen

Show Us Your Mussels

Grades 6–12

Be a freshwater mussel advocate! Participants create an original digital media campaign to educate the public about the importance of native mussels, the impact of water qa lity has on native mussels, and what actions we need to take to ensure their survival. The schools who reach the most community members combined with receiving the most votes win a FREE field trip to the Minnesota Zoo!

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions, Classroom Activity
Academic Content: Language Arts, STEM
Academic Skills: Artistic expression, creativity, environmental stewardship, interdisciplinary and research
Program Provider: Minnesota Zoo
Fees and Deadlines: No cost to participate. Registration opens in August and closes Dec. 31. Challenge/Voting is Feb. 1–28. Check website for more information and important dates.
Website: https://mnzoo.org/mussels-challenge-2/
Email: digitalmussels@mnzoo.org
Phone: (952) 431-9200

✶ Spelling Bee

Grades 5–8

In addition to improving students' spelling skills and increasing their vocabularies, spelling bee participation provides valuable experience in developing poise—a necessary skill for success in public speaking, performing arts and other activities.



Program Category: Challenges & Competitions, Classroom Activity
Academic Content: Language Arts
Academic Skills: Factual recall and verbal reasoning
Program Provider: Spelling sponsors vary by region.
Fees and Deadlines: Visit the website for details.
Website: www.spellingbee.com

bee
Scripps National Spelling Bee®

Student Television Network

Grades 7–12

STN is committed to supporting teachers and students with curriculum materials that enhance the classroom experience. Affiliate members have access to STN national standards, lesson plans, training videos, and various webinars that teach television and film production.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions, Classroom Activity
Academic Content: Arts, Business/Career Education
Academic Skills: Artistic expression, creativity, leadership development, public speaking and teamwork
Program Provider: Student Television Network
Fees and Deadlines: See website for details.
Website: www.studenttelevision.org
Email: info@studenttelevision.com
Phone: (760) 692-2299

Sumdog Math Contest

Grades K–8

Sumdog's online math contests are a simple, engaging way to motivate your students as they compete with other classes and schools. Each year, more than 48,000 classes take part and answer over 3.5 billion questions. It's a powerful way for students to work on their math fact fluency, enjoy themselves, and build confidence.

Program Category: Classroom Activity, Out of School Time Enrichment
Academic Content: Language Arts, STEM
Academic Skills: Numeracy and literacy
Program Provider: Sumdog, Inc.
Fees and Deadlines: See website for details.
Website: https://learn.sumdog.com/en-us/how-it-works/engagement/maths-contests
Email: support@sumdog.com
Phone: (877) 978-6364

TEAMS

Grades 7–12

TEAMS (Tests of Engineering Aptitude, Mathematics and Science) is a one-day competition for middle school and high school students. Focused on a new theme each year, TEAMS challenges students to collaboratively solve real-world engineering issues by applying their STEM knowledge in practical and creative ways. Teams of 2–4 students work together on multiple choice, essay and design/build components.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions, Classroom Activity
Academic Content: STEM
Academic Skills: Problem solving, critical thinking and cooperation
Program Provider: Technology Student Association
Fees and Deadlines: Online registration opens in September. Registration fees are determined by the competition site. Statewide competitions take place January and February.
Website: https://tsaweb.org/teams/teams
Email: awilliams@tsaweb.org
Phone: (888) 860-9010
Contact: Amber Williams





The Liminal Essay Contest

Grades 9–12

Take a dive into the deep with the Liminal Essay Contest! The liminal provides a way of looking at the difficult and confusing times in life as integral and necessary parts of it, providing a much needed paradigm for discussion of such experiences in a pluralistic society. Students will explore liminality in a short story and write an essay. Cash prizes available!

Program Category:	Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content:	Arts, Language Arts
Academic Skills:	Creativity, critical thinking, writing skills and story analysis
Program Provider:	Author S. K. Kruse and The Guild for Engaged Liminality
Fees and Deadlines:	No fees. Submission period opens in January. March 31 deadline. See website for details.
Website:	https://www.skkruse.com/liminalessaycontest
Email:	skaye@skkruse.com
Phone:	(608) 345-9115
Contact:	Sandra K. Kruse

Thinking Cap Quiz Bowl

Grades 5–8

Fun scholastic team competition for students in their own school. All quizzes are self-scoring, online contests of 100 multiple-choice qe stions. Areas covered include math, geography, government, sports, spelling, science, literature, language arts, history, general information and fun trivia. An adult is needed to monitor but no adult help can be given. See website for details.

Program Category:	Challenges & Competitions, Classroom Activity
Academic Content:	General
Academic Skills:	Factual recall, problem solving, critical thinking, research, teamwork, leadership development, time/budget management and verbal reasoning
Program Provider:	Harvey Kimble, owner
Fees and Deadlines:	Check website for entry forms, information fees and deadlines.
Website:	www.thinkingcapqi zbowl.com
Email:	thinkcap5@gmail.com
Phone:	(525) 422-2722
Contact:	Harvey Kimble

Toshiba/NSTA ExploraVision Awards

Grades K–12

ExploraVision is a science competition which challenges students to envision and communicate new technology 20 years in the future through collaborative brainstorming and research of current science and technology. Students enter as a team of two to four with a teacher/coach and optional mentor (no individual entries). Students may submit only one project online per year.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: STEM
Academic Skills: Problem solving, critical thinking, creativity and cooperation
Program Provider: Toshiba/NSTA ExploraVision
Fees and Deadlines: No entry fee. Projects must be received online. Visit the website for details.
Website: www.exploravision.org
Email: exploravision@nsta.org
Phone: 1-800-explor-9

U.S. National Chemistry Olympiad

Grades 9–12

The U.S. National Chemistry Olympiad is a multi-tiered competition sponsored by the American Chemical Society. Participants compete in a series of qualifying events and the top four students of the national competition represent the United States in the annual International Chemistry Olympiad.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions
Academic Content: STEM
Academic Skills: Problem solving, chemistry and mathematical skills
Program Provider: American Chemical Society
Fees and Deadlines: No fees. Local exam: March; National exam: April; Study Camp: June; International event: July (location changes every year). Visit website for rules and eligibility.
Website: www.acs.org/olympiad
Email: USNCO@acs.org
Phone: (800) 333-9511

United States Senate Youth Program

Grades 11–12

Two student leaders from each state will spend a week experiencing their national government in action and be awarded a $12,500 college scholarship for undergraduate studies, with encouragement to pursue coursework in history and political science.

Program Category: Awards & Recognitions, Leadership Development
Academic Content: Social Studies
Academic Skills: Leadership, critical thinking and cooperation
Program Provider: Minnesota Department of Education
Fees and Deadlines: For more information and eligibility requirements visit https://education.mn.gov/MDE/fam/youth/index.htm
Website: www.ussenateyouth.org
Email: mde.USSYP@state.mn.us
Phone: (651) 582-8484
Contact: Brittany Rawson Haeg

University of Minnesota Talented Youth Math Program

Grades 6–12

UMTYMP provides a challenging alternative for Minnesota's talented mathematics students in grades 6–12. The highly accelerated courses are specially designed to provide students with an intense academic experience that will stimulate their mathematical interest and abilities.

Program Category: Classroom Activity, Out of School Time Enrichment
Academic Content: STEM
Academic Skills: Creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, teamwork, analytic ability, STEM concepts and mathematical skills
Program Provider: UMTYMP – MathCEP
Fees and Deadlines: Registration for the entrance exam begins in mid-December for admission the following fall; fee varies per University of Minnesota campus (Twin Cities, Rochester, Duluth). Visit the website for exam registration and fees. Scholarships are available for students with financial needs.
Website: www.mathcep.umn.edu/umtymp
Email: mathcep@umn.edu
Phone: (612) 625-2861

Unsung Hero Projects

Grades K–12

The Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes works across diverse academic disciplines to discover and share the stories of individuals who have made a profound and positive impact in history. Through a unique project-based learning approach, students produce documentaries, plays, websites and visual arts projects that champion unsung heroes.

Program Category: Awards & Recognitions, Classroom Activity
Academic Content: Arts, Language Arts, Social Studies
Academic Skills: Creativity, critical thinking, interdisciplinary, research and teamwork
Program Provider: Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes
Fees and Deadlines: Free. Visit the website for program details.
Website: https://www.lowellmilkencenter.org/programs/projects
Email: info@lowellmilkencenter.org
Phone: (620) 223-1312
Contact: Norm Conard

Walker Art Center Art Today Tours

Grades K–12

The Walker offers virtual and onsite tours for schools and students. Content is interactive, learner-centered, and inquiry-based explorations of the galleries and/or the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden. These tours are led by our professional museum educators and can be customized to focus on specific themes and exhibitions.

Program Category: Classroom Activity
Academic Content: Arts
Academic Skills: Critical thinking, creativity and art appreciation
Program Provider: Walker Art Center
Fees and Deadlines: Visit the website for details.
Website: https://walkerart.org/visit/tours-group-visits/k-12-and-university-tours/
Email: tours@walkerart.org
Phone: (612) 375-7609

✳ WordMasters Challenge

Grades 3–8



Celebrating our 40th year of competition! Students use vocabulary they have studied in advance to solve analogies expressing various types of logical relationships. Competitions are held three times per year at your school. Aligns perfectly with CCSS ELA Literacy Standards for Vocabulary Acquisition and Use.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions, Out of School Time Enrichment
Academic Content: Language Arts
Academic Skills: Critical thinking, factual recall, problem solving, teamwork, verbal reasoning
Program Provider: WordMasters, LLC
Fees and Deadlines: $110 per team (same grade/division; no limit to number of students per team). Discounts available to schools that enroll 5+ teams or districts that enroll 5+ schools. Competition begins Oct. 1. Visit our website for Challenge Schedule, discount details and study tools.
Website: www.wordmasterschallenge.com
Email: lisa.lombardi@wordmasterschallenge.com
Phone: (888) 385-5656
Contact: Lisa Lombardi

WordMasters CHALLENGE
USING ANALOGIES TO MASTER VOCABULARY

World Savvy

Grades K–12

World Savvy envisions a K–12 education system that prepares all students with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions for success and active engagement in the global community. Our Comprehensive School Partnerships are tailored to meet the needs of each school and collaboratively designed with school leaders to align with each building's strategic vision and goals.

Program Category: Classroom Activity, Conferences & Institutions
Academic Content: General
Academic Skills: Critical thinking, global citizenship, interdisciplinary, problem solving and teamwork
Program Provider: World Savvy
Fees and Deadlines: Visit the website for more information.
Website: www.worldsavvy.org/our-programs/schools/
Email: info@worldsavvy.org
Phone: (612) 314-6567







YES! (Youth Eco Solutions)

Grades 6–12

Join YES and be part of a statewide network of students working to create solutions for today's ecological challenges. Students work in teams to plant trees, restore prairies and shorelines, recycle, educate others, connect with their local community, learn from green career professionals, build community with like-minded peers and more! The year begins with the annual YES Fall Summit and concludes with a spring event to celebrate the students' accomplishments.

Program Category: Leadership Development, Out of School Time Enrichment
Academic Content: Arts, Business/Career Education, STEM
Academic Skills: Creativity, critical thinking, environmental stewardship, leadership development and teamwork
Program Provider: Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center
Fees and Deadlines: Fees vary. Registration is in early fall.
Website: www.yesmn.org
Email: kalley@yesmn.org
Phone: (320) 894-8538
Contact: Kalley Pratt

YMCA Model United Nations

Grades 7–12

Students in Model United Nations take on the role of a diplomat from one of 193 countries and spend three days in downtown Minneapolis exploring solutions to international challenges. Students discuss and debate global issues, pass resolutions, form alliances, and draft legal opinions while practicing cooperation and diplomacy.

Program Category: Conferences & Institutions, Leadership Development
Academic Content: Language Arts, Social Studies
Academic Skills: Critical thinking, global citizenship, leadership development, public speaking and teamwork
Program Provider: YMCA Center for Youth Voice
Fees and Deadlines: See website for details.
Website: www.ymcanorth.org/locations/centerf ory outhvoi ce/programs
Email: youthvoice@ymcanorth.org
Phone: (612) 263-9893
Contact: Brianne Leibham

YMCA Respectful Conversations in Schools

Grades 6–12

The Respectful Conversations in Schools is a structured, content-neutral classroom discussion model that gives educators and students a framework to speak from their own experience, listen carefully to others and ask questions of genuine interest. Participants deepen their connections with peers and develop a greater sense of empathy and understanding.

Program Category: Classroom Activity
Academic Content: General, Language Arts
Academic Skills: Critical thinking, global citizenship, leadership development, public speaking and social emotional skills
Program Provider: YMCA Center for Youth Voice
Fees and Deadlines: Workshop fees are determined by the number of participants.
Website: www.ymcanorth.org/locations/centerf ory outhvoi ce/programs
Email: youthvoice@ymcanorth.org
Phone: (612) 263-9893
Contact: Brianne Leibham

YMCA Student Election Judge Network

Ages 16+

The YMCA Center for Youth Voice works with Minnesota cities, counties and high schools to recruit student election judges to help run elections in their communities.

Program Category: Leadership Development, Out of School Time Enrichment
Academic Content: General, Social Studies
Academic Skills: Critical thinking, global citizenship, research, teamwork and civic awareness
Program Provider: YMCA Center for Youth Voice
Fees and Deadlines: No fees. Students get paid by the election offices for pre-election training and for working as an election judge on Election Day.
Website: www.ymcanorth.org/locations/centerf ory outhvoi ce/programs
Email: youthvoice@ymcanorth.org
Phone: (612) 263-9893
Contact: Brianne Leibham

YMCA Students Voting

Grades K–12

The YMCA Center for Youth Voice and the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State work together to help students statewide discover the importance of elections and the power of their voice—and their vote—in our democracy. Elementary, middle and high school students across the state learn about the candidates and offices on the ballot in their community and cast their vote on or before Election Day through Students Voting, an authentic, hands-on mock election program.

Program Category: Classroom Activity
Academic Content: General, Social Studies
Academic Skills: Critical thinking, global citizenship, research, teamwork and civic awareness
Program Provider: YMCA Center for Youth Voice and Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State
Fees and Deadlines: Free. Registration is open, and Students Voting runs in the fall of even-numbered years.
Website: www.ymcanorth.org/locations/centerf ory outhvoi ce/programs
Email: youthvoice@ymcanorth.org
Phone: (612) 263-9893
Contact: Brianne Leibham

YMCA Youth in Government

Grades 8–12

Students in Minnesota YMCA Youth in Government become legislators, lawyers, judges, lobbyists, journalists or cabinet members and spend four days running a state model government at the Minnesota State Capitol. Students elect their own leaders, debate their own ideas, and support policies and laws that highlight their values.

Program Category: Conferences & Institutions, Leadership Development
Academic Content: Language Arts, Social Studies
Academic Skills: Critical thinking, leadership development, public speaking, teamwork and verbal reasoning
Program Provider: YMCA Center for Youth Voice
Fees and Deadlines: See website for details.
Website: www.ymcanorth.org/locations/centerf ory outhvoi ce/programs
Email: youthvoice@ymcanorth.org
Phone: (612) 263-9893
Contact: Brianne Leibham

Youth for Human Rights

Grades 1–12

Youth for Human Rights educates students of all ages on their human rights as put forth by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The interactive curriculum, with audio-visual presentations and group activities, makes human rights easy to understand to ensure each individual knows their rights and helps to make them known to others.

Program Category: Classroom Activity, Leadership Development
Academic Content: Social Studies
Academic Skills: Global citizenship, leadership development
Program Provider: Youth for Human Rights International
Fees and Deadlines: None
Website: https://www.youthforhumanrights.org/
Email: activities@youthforhumanrights.org
Phone: (323) 663-5799
Contact: Leslie Browning

ZOOMS STEM Design Challenge

Grades 3–12

The ZOOMS STEM Design Challenge offers students a chance to develop a solution to a 'real' problem faced by zookeepers and staff at the Minnesota Zoo. From designing an animal enrichment, to building a model of a renovated animal exhibit, the problem will challenge students to use their science and math knowledge, creativity, problem solving and research skills to best solve the problem and present a solution.

Program Category: Challenges & Competitions, Classroom Activity
Academic Content: STEM
Academic Skills: Creativity, critical thinking, environmental stewardship, problem solving and teamwork
Program Provider: Minnesota Zoo
Fees and Deadlines: Free to participate! Teachers can also attend a free teacher training in late September to support the challenge.
Website: https://mnzoo.org/zooms-stem-challenge/
Email: stem@mnzoo.org
Phone: (651) 539-6605
Contact: Kristi Berg







WOULD YOU LIKE YOUR PROGRAM TO BE PART OF REACH FOR THE STARS?

The Minnesota Academic League Council reviews and approves statewide academic enrichment programs for inclusion in the Reach for the Stars catalogue, including competitions, awards, classroom enrichment, conferences, leadership development, and out-of-school-time opportunities. Applications are available at the Synergy & Leadership Exchange website. Questions? Email reach@synergyexchange.org.

THANK YOU

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Synergy & Leadership Exchange

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