2026 MNSAA CONFERENCE

ROOTED IN RELATIONSHIPS

GROWING STRONGER SCHOOLS & COMMUNITIES



MNSAA

205 Lexington Ave S New Prague, MN 56071 | (507) 222-9205 | mnsaa.org





St. Michael Catholic Church and School are excited to welcome MNSAA to our parish! **Faith, family, and community are at the heart of all we do**. Through worship, faith formation, our parish ministries, and our strong connection to St. Michael Catholic School, we work together to help people of all ages grow in their relationship with Christ.

We are blessed with dedicated staff, volunteers, and parishioners who generously share their time and talents, making St. Michael a welcoming place for all.

We are proud of our Catholic community and look forward to sharing it with you! To learn more, visit stmcatholicchurch.org.

ENJOY YOUR DAY OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN OUR BEAUTIFUL CHURCH.
WE ARE SO HAPPY YOU ARE HERE!

THANK YOU! MAJOR CONFERENCE SPONSORS

***ST. MICHAEL CATHOLIC CHURCH AND SCHOOL -** HOST

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2026 MNSAA CONFERENCE
WELCOME!

WELCOME TO MNSAA'S 2026 CONFERENCE

MISSION

Another exciting school year is underway, and we are thrilled to welcome you to MNSAA's 2026 Conference! This year's theme, **Rooted in Relationships: Building Stronger Schools and Communities**, reminds us that the heart of every great school is the people who make it special. The connections we build with our students, families, colleagues, and communities create a foundation where everyone can learn, grow, and succeed. We hope this conference gives you time to reconnect, share ideas, build new relationships, and leave feeling inspired to make an even greater difference in your school community.

We are excited to welcome **Joe Beckman** as our keynote speaker! For more than 20 years, Joe has traveled the world sharing one simple but powerful message: Reclaim Human Connection. Through his humor, energy, and heartfelt storytelling, Joe reminds us of the importance of slowing down, truly listening, and making meaningful connections with those around us. His message is a perfect fit for this year's theme and will encourage us to strengthen the relationships that make our schools and communities such special places.

COMMUNITY

MNSAA BOARD OF DIRECTORS IS GRATEFUL

Bringing this day to life requires tremendous effort and dedication. We thank **St. Michael Catholic Church and School**, especially Pastor Brian Park, for welcoming us into their community and hosting this enriching day of networking, learning, and growth. Today is a testament to the strength and value of our school communities as we come together to share in a spirit of collaboration and unity.

MNSAA EXISTS TO SUPPORT YOUR FINE WORK

CULTURE

MNSAA was founded in 1976 to accredit, support, and value Minnesota's nonpublic schools in their unique guiding philosophies and missions. Our agency is recognized by the State of Minnesota. Large or small, rural or urban, faith-based or independent - MNSAA schools are diverse in the students and families they serve. Our requirements unify schools as accreditation assures the public and stakeholders that schools are meeting high standards of educational excellence and focused on continuous improvement.

2026 MNSAA CONFERENCE RESOURCES





MNSAA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

SERVING OUR ASSOCIATION OF MEMBER SCHOOLS



MS. VICKI MARVIN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MNSAA Member, Northfield

"I am honored to be starting my fifth year as Executive Director for MNSAA. As a board member since 2011, my understanding of and belief in the framework that MNSAA provides has grown exponentially through the years. It is deeply fulfilling to work with nonpublic schools across the state of Minnesota, helping them meet and exceed their goals as they strive to discover their full potential.

CONTACT INFORMATION: vicki.marvin@mnsaa.org | 507.222.9205

Vicki Marvin is in her fifth year as Executive Director for MNSAA, following 21 years as a Catholic school principal. She holds a BA in Elementary Education from the College of St. Benedict and a Master's degree from St. Mary's University in Winona. During her first principalship, Vicki earned her Education Specialist degree and Administrative licensure from Minnesota State University, Mankato. Her teaching experience spans kindergarten through 8th grade, and she has coached athletes at both the middle school and high school levels. Vicki joined the MNSAA board in 2011, where she served as board secretary and MNSAA Team Chair before assuming her current leadership role.



MS. MAGGIE QUAST, PRESIDENT

MNSAA Board Member, Minneapolis

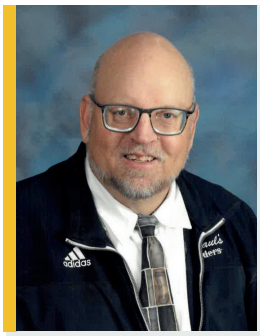
"Every school leader is dedicated to the unending pursuit of institutional excellence. The MNSAA accreditation framework is central to this mission, providing the critical structure necessary to both establish and realize objectives that elevate school performance. MNSAA's support for our member schools is extraordinary and unmatched, providing comprehensive guidance through the accreditation process while consistently offering superior professional development for educators and administrators alike.

CONTACT INFORMATION: maggiequast56@gmail.com | 952.484.3959

Maggie Quast is a retired teacher and principal from the Archdiocese of St. Paul/Minneapolis. She has served on the MNSAA Board of Directors for the last 5 years. She received her undergraduate degree from Drake University and Master's Degree from the University of St.Thomas.

During her tenure as a school leader, she profoundly valued the consistent guidance and support provided by MNSAA throughout each accreditation cycle. Now, as a member of the Board of Directors for the past five years, she is honored to continue contributing to that vital support system for her fellow school leaders.

MNSAA BOARD OF DIRECTORS



MR. PETE MARKGRAF, VICE PRESIDENT

St. Paul's Lutheran School, New Ulm

"MNSAA has provided the personal care and support we need to continually strengthen our educational system. From their rigorous standards to the thorough team visit, I've valued the opportunity to connect directly with an MNSAA representative throughout the process. While other accreditation options exist, we continue with MNSAA because we're confident in the quality and integrity of their accreditation.

CONTACT INFORMATION: principal@splnewulm.org | 507.276.3398 ex. 205

Pete Markgraf is the principal of St. Paul's Lutheran School in New Ulm, MN, serving a preschool through eighth-grade program for the past eight years. He previously held principal roles in Clearwater, FL, and Sioux Falls, SD. Pete also has 16 years of teaching experience in grades 3-8. He served as a coach in various locations and years as an athletic and technology director. He currently serves as chairman of the Southwest Minnesota Principals' Conference of the WELS and earned his Master of Science in Educational Administration from Martin Luther College in New Ulm, MN.



MR. JOEL KOSKI, TREASURER

Christian Heritage Academy, Lakeville

"The accreditation process through MNSAA has provided both my school community and myself with confidence and stability in our curriculum, programming, and future. I appreciate that every non-public school I observe is permitted to maintain its uniqueness in alignment with its mission while adhering to the framework established by the MNSAA standards.

CONTACT INFORMATION: jkoski@chacademy.com | 952.953.4155

Joel Koski has served as the principal of Christian Heritage Academy in Lakeville since 2019. Prior to moving into an administrative position, he taught at CHA in 4th grade. Joel earned his bachelor's degree in K-8 Education in Social Studies from Bethel University in St. Paul. He earned his Master's Degree from Saint Mary's University of Minnesota in Educational Leadership. Joel greatly appreciates the MNSAA standards, serving on teams to visit other non-public schools, and the entire accreditation process.

2026 MNSAA CONFERENCE RESOURCES

MNSAA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

SERVING OUR ASSOCIATION OF MEMBER SCHOOLS



DR. BONITA JUNGELS, SECRETARY

MNSAA Board Member,

"Non-public schools are essential to the health and stability of our communities. I appreciate that MNSAA is a strong catalyst for the continued growth and excellence of our schools. It is an honor to serve on the MNSAA Board of Directors, and I look forward to continuing in that capacity.

CONTACT INFORMATION: bjungels@nda-mn.org | 952.358.3500

After 19 years as an administrator in Catholic schools, Bonnie has entered her retirement era! She served as a principal in Minnetonka, Jordan, and Winsted, serving students in preschool through 12th grade. She has an EDD in Leadership, Policy and Administration and MA in Curriculum and Instruction - both from the University of St. Thomas and a BA in English and Secondary Education from the College of St. Benedict. She taught middle school and high school English and religion. Ensuring students receive the social emotional skills they need to thrive and reach their full potential has become her passion and mainstay.



DR. MARY ADRIAN

MNSAA Leader, St. Paul

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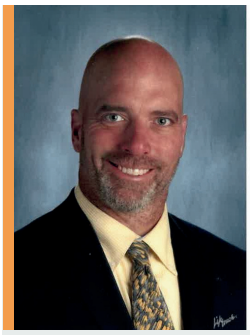
CONTACT INFORMATION: maryadrian@me.com | 952.758.5985

After many years working in the public sector in the area of Special Education, Mary became principal of Holy Spirit in St. Paul where she was a principal for 21 years. A standing member of the MNSAA Board of Directors, Mary is committed to maintaining and improving the quality of Preschool - Grade 12 education through the MNSAA process. She does this in part by leading onsite team visits, reading annual progress reports, onboarding new principals in the MNSAA process, and actively engaging in the board.

2026 MNSAA CONFERENCE RESOURCES

MNSAA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

SERVING OUR ASSOCIATION OF MEMBER SCHOOLS



MR. MATT CLEARY

Torah Academy, St. Louis Park

"MNSAA has been instrumental in helping both our school and teachers grow through its comprehensive accreditation process. The insights gained from accreditation have significantly enhanced our school's performance. The high-caliber presenters at the Annual Conference provide valuable knowledge and inspiration. I also greatly enjoy supporting MNSAA by participating in onsite accreditation visits, which allow me to collaborate with and learn from other schools. It is an honor to serve on a board that contributes so meaningfully to the success of nonpublic schools."

CONTACT INFORMATION: mcleary@torahacademymn.org | 952.285.8606

Matt Cleary currently serves as the General Studies Principal at Torah Academy. He has been a member of the MNSAA board since 2020. Prior to his current role, Matt was the Dean of Summer School and a social studies teacher and football coach at Forest Lake High School. He began his teaching career in Shell Lake, WI, where he taught and coached for five years. Matt holds an M.S. in Curriculum and Instruction, a Graduate Certificate as a Reading Teacher, and an Education Specialist (Ed.S.) degree from St. Cloud State University. In his free time, Matt enjoys time with his wife, Tina; stays connected with their three children (two have launched, one still at home); dotes on their grandchild; and loves reading, playing music, and getting outdoors.



MRS. PAULA LEIDER

Bethlehem Academy, Faribault

"High-quality schools that continue to grow and improve begin with a high-quality accreditation process. MNSAA not only provides the rigor necessary to affirm a school's commitment to excellence, but also the resources for schools to truly improve educational experiences for students. MNSAA walks hand in hand with its schools to provide kind of support necessary to meet these aspirational goals, inspiring deep institutional change."

CONTACT INFORMATION: paula_leider@bacards.org | 507.334.3948

Paula has served non-public schools for the past 25 years. After graduating from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire with a BA in English Secondary Education, she began her career as a high school English teacher at a Catholic high school in the Twin Cities. During her time there, Paula pursued a Masters in Curriculum and Instruction, a Masters in K-12 Reading, and her Ed. S degree all from the University of St. Thomas. She has served as a principal in K-8 Catholic schools in St. Cloud and Minneapolis, and now serves as the head of school at Bethlehem Academy in Faribault. Paula is particularly passionate about growing schools through developing high-impact and innovative educational experiences for students.

MNSAA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

SERVING OUR ASSOCIATION OF MEMBER SCHOOLS



MR. WADE MATHERS

Diocese of Duluth, Duluth

"I am thrilled to join MNSAA as a new board member! I look forward to engaging with its mission of promoting excellence in private school education as we continually strive for excellence together.

CONTACT INFORMATION: wade.mathersduluthcatholic.org | 218.724.9111

Wade is currently in his fourth year as the Director of Catholic Schools for the Diocese of Duluth. Prior to this, he spent 29 years in public education, teaching K–12 art in western South Dakota and middle school art in Redwood Falls, MN. During the last 19 years of his public education career, he served as a middle school principal in Redwood Falls and Little Falls, MN. Wade earned his Master's degree in Educational Leadership from Southwest Minnesota State University and holds Minnesota K–12 Principal and District Superintendent licensure. He recently joined the MNSAA board as an associate member.



MS. KELLY ROCHE

St. Joseph School Community, Rosemount

"MNSAA provides nonpublic schools with the support and tools needed for achieving continuous school improvement and excellence.

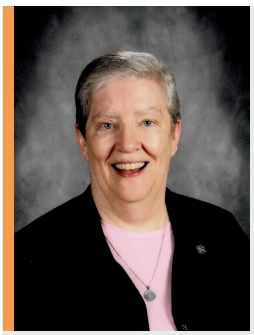
CONTACT INFORMATION: kelly.roche@stjosephcommunity.org | 651.423.1658

Kelly is in her 11th year as an administrator in a Catholic school. In fact, Kelly has been a part of the St. Joseph School community in Rosemount for her entire life--as an alumni, teacher, and principal. She earned a BA in Elementary Education from the College of St. Benedict, an MA in Education: Catholic School Leadership from St. Mary's University, and her Education Specialist degree from the University of St. Thomas. Kelly is passionate about building positive, joy-filled school culture through cultivating meaningful relationships and modeling a growth mindset.

2026 MNSAA CONFERENCE RESOURCES

2026-2027 CANDIDATES

RECOMMENDED FOR CONTINUED SERVICE 2026-29



SR. JULIE BRANDT

New Ulm Area Catholic Schools, New Ulm

"The MNSAA organization provides both support and accountability for schools in meeting standards of excellence. The accreditation process, including the school's self-study report, which is validated by the visiting team, supports schools in developing a strategic plan focused on growth and improvement. Such a continuous improvement cycle provides assurance that schools are striving toward excellence.

CONTACT INFORMATION: sjulie.brandt@nuacs.com | 507.233.0701

Sr. Julie Brandt, SSND serves as the president of the New Ulm Area Catholic Schools. A lifelong educator, she earned a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from Mankato State University. She holds both a master's degree from Boston College and a doctorate from St. Louis University in Catholic Educational Leadership. With experience in both elementary and high school, she has served as a teacher, principal, president and associate superintendent over her career in Catholic education. She has worked in schools in Minnesota, North Dakota and Missouri. She previously served on the Missouri Nonpublic Schools Accrediting Association.



MS. NIKKI GIEL

Shakopee Area Catholic School, Shakopee

"MNSAA offers nonpublic schools a meaningful and reflective process that truly strengthens our commitment to excellence. As a principal, I value how MNSAA not only holds us to high standards but also walks alongside us with support, wisdom, and encouragement.

CONTACT INFORMATION: ngiel@sacsschools.org | 952.445.3387 ext. 164

Nikki Giel has served in Catholic education for 20 years. Her teaching experience has primarily been in kindergarten, though she has also taught preschool, served as a school librarian, and taught middle school. Nikki currently serves as the principal of St. Hubert Catholic School. She holds a B.A. in Elementary Education from the University of St. Thomas, along with a Master's in Curriculum and Instruction, a Certificate in Differentiation, and an Education Specialist degree, all from the University of St. Thomas as well. Nikki is a licensed K–12 principal in the state of Minnesota. A passionate advocate for Catholic education, Nikki believes deeply in the value of faith-based learning and works to support school choice, ensuring that all families have the opportunity to choose the educational environment that best meets their child's needs.

2026-2027 CANDIDATES



MS. MARTHA LAURENT

Holy Name of Jesus School, Wayzata

"I am honored and blessed to serve MNSAA member schools and to support progress towards excellence in our schools.

CONTACT INFORMATION: mlaurent@hnoj.org | 763.473.3675

Dedicated to Catholic education and school choice for families, Martha Laurent is the principal of Holy Name of Jesus School in Wayzata. She received her Master's Degree from the University of St. Thomas in Educational Leadership; her Educational Specialist degree is also from UST. Martha is a licensed K-12 administrator in the state of Minnesota. Martha serves as a MNSAA Board Member, leads onsite accreditation visits, serves on the Annual Progress Report review committee, is the Chair of our Governance Committee, and speaks regularly at our conference. Martha has supported dozens of schools in meeting MNSAA standards.



Board of Directors Considerations

Directors are administrative leaders who represent the various sizes, types, geography, and religious/cultural diversity of our member schools. Each year, schools have the opportunity to nominate leaders at any time. If you or your school community wants make such a nomination, candidates will be considered for the next election.

In addition to elected Directors, MNSAA Bylaws allow for up to three Associate Directors to be appointed annually by the seated board. Appointed directors come from agencies that are in agreement with the objectives and function of MNSAA and who possess expertise relating to the accreditation of nonpublic schools.





2026 MNSAA CONFERENCE RESOURCES

MNSAA

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2026
St. Michael Catholic Church
11300 Frankfort Pkwy NE, St Michael, MN 55376

2026 CONFERENCE AGENDA

ROOTED IN RELATIONSHIPS

7:30 - 8:00A	**Registration	Continental Breakfast	Exposition**
8:00 - 8:10A	**WELCOME! 2026 MNSAA Annual Conference** MNSAA & St. Michael Catholic Church and School **invitation to an exceptional professional day!**
8:15 - 9:15A	**Professional Development - BREAKOUT I**
9:20 - 10:20A	**Professional Development - BREAKOUT II**
10:20 - 10:40A	**Break	Exposition**
10:45 - 11:45A	**Professional Development - BREAKOUT III**
11:45 - 12:30P	**Exposition	Networking	Lunch**
12:35 - 1:35P	**Professional Development - BREAKOUT IV**
1:40 - 2:00P	**Prize Drawing & Thank Yous**
2:00 - 3:00P	**KEYNOTE: Just Look Up! A Radial Experiment in Human Connection** **SPEAKER: Joe Beckman**
3:00 - 3:10P	**Conference Closing** Thanks for coming! We look forward to seeing you again in 2027! Watch your email for a conference evaluation and CEUs.

OUR ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS IS MOST SINCERELY GRATEFUL TO OUR GRACIOUS HOSTS!

We have deeply valued the support of the entire St. Michael Catholic Church and School community!
Our conference would not be possible without the work of the St. Michael team.

2026 MNSAA
CONFERENCE RESOURCES

SESSION I WORKSHOPS
8:15-9:15 AM
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

BEYOND "NOT YET": TURNING GROWTH MINDSET FROM BUZZWORD TO SUPERPOWER

Room: Saint Francis
Ben Tierney | Principal at Cretin-Derham Hall
Intended for Teachers

Everyone has heard of growth mindset. But what does it actually look like in practice? And how do we move beyond simply encouraging people to "try harder" or "keep a positive attitude" to genuinely creating environments where growth mindset thrives? In this highly interactive session, participants will challenge their own assumptions about growth mindset, explore the differences between fixed and growth mindsets, and examine five core messages that can transform how we approach learning, leadership, and challenges. Through reflection, discussion, and hands-on activities, participants will discover practical strategies for making growth mindset more than a slogan—turning mistakes into opportunities, challenges into catalysts, and everyday interactions into opportunities for growth. Participants will leave with concrete strategies they can immediately apply in their own organizations.

MNSAA 101 FOR NEW SCHOOL PRINCIPALS & LEADERS

Room: Saint John
Kelly Roche | Principal at St. Joseph School/MNSAA Board Member
Maggie Quast | MNSAA Board President
Intended for Administrators

New Principal MNSAA Orientation

BEHAVIOR IS COMMUNICATION: PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORTING STUDENTS

Room: Saint Elizabeth
Jackie Virnig | Associate Director of Remote Counseling & Parent Education at Phoenix School Counseling
Intended for Teachers & Administrators

Participants will explore proactive classroom practices that prevent escalation, de-escalation approaches for tense moments, and ways to repair and reconnect afterward. The session also demystifies the role of school counseling: when and how to refer, what counselors can (and can't) do, and how teachers, administrators, and counselors can work as a coordinated team to support students with the greatest needs.

Attendees will leave with ready-to-use tools, a clearer picture of how to collaborate with their school counseling team, and renewed confidence in responding to difficult behavior.

Learning objectives:

- Identify common functions and underlying causes of student behavior
- Apply two to three proactive and de-escalation strategies immediately in the classroom
- Understand the school counselor's role and recognize when to refer a student
- Strengthen communication and collaboration between teachers, administrators, and counseling staff

THE POWER OF WHY? EMPATHY DRIVEN TEACHING ACROSS K-12

Room: Saint Thomas
Kelsey Irizarry | Center for Engineering Education Director at the University of St. Thomas
Intended for Teachers

Empathy is the catalyst for meaningful learning and problem-solving across all subjects. In this hands-on session, educators will learn practical, classroom-ready ways to lead with empathy using the Design Thinking cycle. Using empathy maps and other tools that invite feelings and facts, we will discover surface assumptions, and translate insights into clear problem statements students can answer: Why is this important? Who is it a problem for? Participants will walk away ready to embed empathy-first strategies that deepen student engagement.

2026 MNSAA CONFERENCE RESOURCES

SESSION I WORKSHOPS
8:15-9:15 AM
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

RELATIONSHIPS LEAD TO HEALTHY CULTURE
Room: Saint Teresa
Kevin Brennan | Director/Speaker at Top 20 Training
Intended for Teachers & Administrators

The culture we live or work in impacts our experience as well as our personal and professional development. This session presents four components of a healthy and effective culture that creates high levels of safety, trust, and belonging. When these components are present, enjoyment, potential fulfillment, and high performance are more likely to occur: (1) everyone's first job is to help others succeed, (2) communicate 'you matter,' (3) honor the absent, and (4) see the problem, own the problem. It also presents a tool for assessing the degree to which these components exist in a culture.

PRIVATE SCHOOL LAW: NAVIGATING TODAY`S HOT TOPICS
Room: Saint Anne
Sam Nelson | Attorney at Nelson Law, PLLC
Intended for Administrators

This session will address new and perennial legal issues facing private schools, including the rapidly evolving use of artificial intelligence by employees, student and employee discipline, accommodation requests, and challenging parent disputes. The session will focus on practical strategies for navigating these issues while managing legal risk.



LEADING THROUGH CHANGE: WHAT PEOPLE NEED FROM YOU WHEN THE PATH ISN'T CLEAR
Room: Saint Anthony
Steve Fredlund | Founder of The Safari Way
Intended for Teachers & Administrators

When change creates uncertainty, people look to their leaders for more than answers. They need honesty, connection, and someone willing to listen.

In this interactive session, Steve Fredlund combines memorable safari stories with practical leadership insights to explore what school leaders and educators can do when the familiar playbook no longer fits. Through reflection and conversation, participants will consider how to show up authentically, strengthen trust, and approach difficult conversations with curiosity.

- Participants will leave with small, specific actions they can use to support colleagues and build stronger school communities, even when they don't know what comes next.



2026 MNSAA CONFERENCE RESOURCES

SESSION II WORKSHOPS
9:20-10:20 AM
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGIC PLANNING IN THE MNSAA CYCLE
Room: Saint Elizabeth
Andrew Hilliker | President at Stella Maris Academy
Joel Koski | Principal at Christian Heritage Academy and MNSAA Board Member
Intended for Teachers & Administrators
This session dives into practical approaches to developing and maintaining your school strategic plan. We will share practical tools that make this integral part of your school seem much more manageable... and maybe even exciting!

HOW TO SURVIVE A BEAR ATTACK
Room: Saint Francis
Ben Tierney | Principal at Cretin-Derham Hall
Intended for Teachers & Administrators
Conflict is inevitable—but it doesn't have to be destructive. In this highly interactive session, participants will explore a framework for identifying and navigating "bear attacks" (challenging conversations) with their team, parents and external partners. We'll examine how to proactively build trust and understanding, recognize when tension arises, and use practical tools to turn potential conflict into opportunities for relationship and clarity. Attendees leave with strategies to communicate with greater confidence, empathy, and purpose.

THE LITTLE THINGS ARE THE BIG THINGS: CREATING A SCHOOL CULTURE THAT STICKS
Room: Saint Anne
Nikki Giel | Principal at St. Hubert Catholic School
Intended for Teachers & Administrators
School culture isn't built through a mission statement on the wall. It's built through everyday interactions, traditions, expectations, and relationships. Discover small, intentional practices that help students, staff, and families feel connected, valued, and part of something special.

2026 MNSAA CONFERENCE RESOURCES

NOT HARDER, IN ORDER: HOW SCHOOL LEADERS BUILD A TEAM AND A PLAN THAT OUTLAST THEM
Room: Saint Maria
Casey Breen | Lead Coach at Escale Advisors
Intended for Administrators
Strong school communities are rooted in relationships, and those relationships move at the speed of leadership. It's a domino effect: the leader's relationship with the leadership team shapes the team's relationship with faculty and staff, and that shapes everything families feel. When everyone is singing from the same hymnal, the whole school grows stronger. Yet most school leaders, whether a head of school, a president, or a principal leading an elementary, middle or high school, are working harder than ever and still feel like everything runs through them. The problem isn't effort. It's order. In this practical session, Casey walks through six common mistakes that keep good leaders stuck, then shows the order that fixes them: Seats (the right people owning the school's key functions), Outlook (a clear view of your real numbers) and Strategy (a one-page plan with 90-day goals). Get the leadership in order, and the whole school follows.

Participants will:
- Spot which of the six mistakes is costing their school the most
- Sketch a simple function chart that spreads the load beyond the principal
- Leave with two free tools: a Function Chart and Seat Scorecard, and a Cost-per-Student and Break-Even Worksheet



SESSION II WORKSHOPS
9:20-10:20 AM
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

OUR CHILDREN ARE NOT WELL
Room: Saint Teresa
Joe Cavanaugh | CEO and Founder at Youth Frontiers
Intended for Teachers & Administrators

Generation Z is unraveling. As adults, we need to significantly change how we raise, mentor and interact with the next generation. Young people need to know they are Strong, not Fragile, Responsible, not Self-absorbed, and that at their core they have intrinsic dignity... They are Precious, not Perfect.

This presentation utilizes outside experts and is filled with practical tips to do in your next interaction with a young person in your life. It is suited for any group working with young people (parents, educators, youth workers, etc.).

LITERACY INSTRUCTION: EVERYONE IS A READING TEACHER!
Room: Saint Anthony
Pam McSweeney | Principal at St. John the Baptist Catholic School
Intended for Teachers & Administrators

This literacy presentation focuses on foundational reading components and practical instructional strategies for primary and elementary classrooms:

Fluency & Assessment: Explores the definition and significance of oral reading fluency (ORF) as a key predictor of comprehension.

Instructional Strategies by Grade Level: Outlines targeted classroom practices, such as partner reading and rhyming, repeated readings or Reader's Theater.

Core Comprehension Strategies: Covers essential techniques and strategies for helping students with constructing meaning.

Explicit & Implicit Modeling: Differentiates between modeling fluent reading implicitly through read-alouds and explicitly through teacher think-alouds.

Navigating Informational Texts: Addresses the high demands complex non-fiction texts place on students, offering practical reading strategies and examples.

NOT HARDER, IN ORDER: HOW SCHOOL LEADERS BUILD A TEAM AND A PLAN THAT OUTLAST THEM
Room: Saint Maria
Casey Breen | Lead Coach at Escale Advisors
Intended for Administrators

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2026 MNSAA CONFERENCE RESOURCES

SESSION II WORKSHOPS
9:20-10:20 AM
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

COURAGE AMIDST THE CHAOS: WHAT LIVING WITH UNHOUSED PEOPLE FOR 20+ YEARS HAS TAUGHT US

Room: Saint John

Paul Freid | Farmer - Teacher - Speaker at Lake City Catholic Worker Farm

Intended for Teachers & Administrators

Life can feel chaotic. As educators, administrators, students, parents, and guardians, we are constantly surrounded by demands, expectations, problems, and people who need something from us. When everything feels important, how do we know what matters most?

For more than 20 years, Paul Freid, his wife Sara, and his family have shared their home and community with people experiencing homelessness and other profound crises—all while raising a family, running a regenerative farm, and working outside the home.

Along the way, they have experienced incredible moments of growth, unexpected joy, heartbreaking loss, and plenty of uncertainty. Those experiences have taught them some important lessons about courage, compassion, community, and the difficult work of deciding what truly matters.

In Courage Amidst the Chaos, Paul shares stories from this unusual life and invites us to consider a simple but challenging question: When life feels overwhelming, how do we find the courage to focus on what matters most?

This talk is designed for Catholic school communities and can be adapted for students, parents and guardians, faculty, staff, or administrators. It offers a practical and deeply human reflection on living with courage, responding to people in crisis, and building a community rooted in the Gospel.







2026 MNSAA CONFERENCE RESOURCES

SESSION III WORKSHOPS
10:45-11:45 AM
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

GRACE AND ACCOUNTABILITY: DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS THAT STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS

Room: Saint Maria

Casey Breen | Lead Coach at Escale Advisors

Intended for Administrators

In mission-driven schools, many of us avoid hard conversations because accountability feels like it betrays grace. So deadlines slide, problems go unaddressed and our best people quietly burn out. The fix starts long before the conversation. When a school is explicit about who it is and who it isn't, with clear core behaviors and clear performance expectations, those expectations can be built into everything: how you hire, how you welcome fit families, and how you lead day to day. Casey shows how a simple scorecard for every role, and a clear picture of a fit family, turn accountability into an act of care. Then when someone misses the mark, the conversation isn't out of the blue. It's grounded in what everyone already agreed to, and it can be honest, short and loving.

Participants will:

- See why avoiding accountability damages the very relationships it is meant to protect
- Define clear behavior and performance expectations for any role, and what a fit family looks like for their school
- Learn how to build those expectations into hiring and enrollment, so every hard conversation starts on common ground

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LITTLE LEARNERS, BIG LEADERS: THE MAGIC OF MULTI-AGE PRESCHOOL CLASSROOMS

Room: Saint Francis

Cassidy Burkman | Preschool Teacher at Shakopee Area Catholic School

Intended for Teachers & Administrators

A look at how peer duos and strong relationships can have a positive impact in Preschool classrooms. Hear about practical strategies for connecting students, fostering leaders, and differentiating instruction.

2026 MNSAA CONFERENCE RESOURCES

LEADING THE MOMENTS THAT MATTER: EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE FOR STRONGER SCHOOL CULTURES

Room: Saint Elizabeth

Duane Jourdeans | Owner | Speaker | Consultant | Emotional Intelligence Mentor at Upward Spiral Consulting

Intended for Teachers & Administrators

A school's culture is shaped in the small, everyday moments between leaders and the people they serve. This interactive session begins with an experience that helps participants see and feel how emotions influence their decisions, relationships, and impact on others. From there, participants will explore practical emotional intelligence strategies for managing themselves under pressure, responding instead of reacting, and creating Meaningful Micro Moments.

School leaders will leave with simple tools they can use immediately to strengthen relationships, navigate challenging conversations, and help build a culture where people feel valued, supported, and ready to do their best work.

LEADING HUMANS, NOT JUST SCHOOLS - LEADERSHIP TOOLS YOU CAN USE MONDAY — TO BUILD CONNECTION, CULTURE, AND LEGACY

Room: Saint Joe's Hall

Joe Beckman | Speaker and Author at Happy Caveman

Intended for Teachers & Administrators

We spend years learning how to run schools/companies — but almost no time learning how to lead humans. This breakout is for educators who want more than survival and compliance; it's for leaders who care about connection, culture, and the legacy they're building every single day. You'll walk away with leadership tools you can actually use on Monday — short videos, simple lessons, and practical activities that strengthen confidence, human connection, and gratitude in both adults and students. Nothing fluffy. Nothing theoretical. Just real tools that work in real schools. (And yes — there may be a few free things along the way.) If you're tired of initiatives that don't stick and ready to lead in a way that actually lasts, this session is for you.

SESSION III WORKSHOPS
10:45-11:45 AM
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

TURNING THE MOMENT OF MISTAKES & FAILURE INTO A MEANINGFUL LEARNING EXPERIENCE
Room: Saint Teresa
Kevin Brennan | Director/Speaker at Top 20 Training
Intended for Teachers & Administrators

The reactions and handling of a student or colleague in the moment a mistake is made is more impactful than we think! This session focuses on (1) the beliefs formed about ourselves from the messages we receive from others when we make a mistake, (2) what keeps us stuck in our comfort zone, and (3) more effective ways of responding to our own mistakes and the mistakes of others.

ACCREDITATION -- YEAR 6 & 7
Room: Saint Anne
Martha Laurent | Principal at Holy Name of Jesus, MNSAA Board Member
Bonnie Jungels | MNSAA Board Member
Intended for Administrators

Walk participants through the process of preparing for an on-site visit



WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL ABOUT PRESCHOOL?
Room: Saint Anthony
Marybeth Stotts | Educational Consultant
Intended for Teachers

The beauty of Early Childhood Education and its value, licensing requirements, and state standards.



2026 MNSAA CONFERENCE RESOURCES

SESSION IV WORKSHOPS
12:35-1:35 PM
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

BREATHING WITH THE SAINTS
Room: Saint Francis
Anna Wagner | Kindergarten Readiness Teacher at Divine Mercy Catholic School
Intended for Teachers

In today's fast paced environment, building emotional resilience is an important foundational skill that will benefit everyone's mental wellbeing.

This session will share the connection that the Saints have with breathing tools to help students and teachers regulate when emotions may be high. You will walk away with knowledge about the saints and how you can utilize different social emotional tools in the classroom and in your own lives.

WORKING ON YOUR SCHOOL, NOT JUST IN IT: A LEADERSHIP RHYTHM THAT PROTECTS THE PRINCIPAL
Room: Saint Maria
Casey Breen | Lead Coach at Escale Advisors
Intended for Teachers & Administrators

Too many schools are stuck on a hamster wheel: busy for busyness' sake, playing whack-a-mole with the same problems, fixing the blame instead of fixing the process. Teachers and principals end the year exhausted and can't point to much that actually moved the school forward. Sit in a school's meetings and you'll learn almost everything about its health. This session introduces a simple leadership rhythm (a short daily huddle, a weekly team meeting, monthly and quarterly check-ins and an annual planning day) that works ON the school, not just in it. Problems get traced to their root causes and carried up to quarterly and annual planning, and the wins flow back to everyone. The result is a cohesive team with clarity, a shift from scarcity to abundance, and people who thrive because they can see the success and know they helped make it happen.

Participants will:

- Spot whether their school is fixing the process or fixing the blame, and where their own time really goes
- Map a weekly, monthly and quarterly rhythm that fits a thin staff
- Leave with one change to make before Christmas break

ARE WE MARKETING WHAT PARENTS ACTUALLY CARE ABOUT?
Room: Saint Elizabeth
Kati Sletten | Director of Admissions at Rochester Catholic Schools
Intended for Administrators

For years, schools have focused their marketing on academic excellence, small class sizes, dedicated teachers, and preparing students for the future. While those things are incredibly important, the conversations we're having with prospective families are changing.

Parents want to know their children will make friends, feel supported, and be part of a community where they belong. So how do we make sure our marketing and admissions efforts reflect what families are actually looking for?

In this session, we'll talk about what's working (and what's not) when it comes to school marketing and admissions. We'll look at everything from websites and social media to school tours, family communication, and retention. We'll also share ways to tell your school's story, build stronger connections with prospective families, and make the most of the resources you already have.

Walk away with ideas you can take back to your school and start using right away, whether you're a one-person admissions office or part of a larger team.



2026 MNSAA CONFERENCE RESOURCES

SESSION IV WORKSHOPS
12:35-1:35 PM
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

LIVING ABOVE THE LINE: HOW OUR INNER LIFE IMPACTS OUR OUTER WORLD
Room: Saint Teresa
Kevin Brennan | Director/Speaker at Top 20 Training
Intended for Teachers & Administrators

Being more aware of our inner lives can make our interactions with the outer world a better experience. This session focuses on becoming aware of our thinking, so we know when it is working in our best interest and when it is not working. It explores:

1. the conditions that come up in our life that invite us to go Below the Line,
2. indicators telling us when we are Below the Line,
3. how to handle Below the Line experiences with more grace and dignity and
4. how to trampoline back Above the Line.

USING AI IN EDUCATION 3.0: CHATGPT AND BEYOND
Room: Saint Anthony
Matt Cleary | General Studies Principal at Torah Academy
Intended for Teachers & Administrators

Artificial intelligence continues to evolve, creating new opportunities for educators and administrators.

In this session, we'll explore some AI tools and practical ways to improve communication, instruction, and everyday school operations. Through real-world examples and live demonstrations, discover how AI can save time, increase efficiency, and make your job easier.



HARD CONVERSATIONS, STRONG RELATIONSHIPS: SAYING WHAT NEEDS TO BE SAID
Room: Saint Anne
Nikki Giel | Principal at St. Hubert Catholic School
Intended for Teachers & Administrators

Whether it's a conversation with a parent, colleague, or student, educators and administrators often face situations where the message is difficult but necessary. Learn how to communicate with warmth, clarity, confidence, and compassion without avoiding accountability.





2026 MNSAA CONFERENCE RESOURCES

2026 KEYNOTE SPEAKER

MEET OUR KEYNOTE SPEAKER

JOE BECKMAN



Hi! I'm Joe. Our world is experiencing an unprecedented shift. Loneliness is at an all-time high, while self worth, belonging, and connections are at all-time lows. The consequences impact ALL of us.

ONE SIMPLE MISSION: RECLAIM HUMAN CONNECTION

Over the last 20+ years I've spoken all over the world with one simple mission... to reclaim human connection.

Whether it's an educational setting in Minneapolis, a Leadership workshop in Montana, or an International Conference in Malaysia, Joe's timeless message (and unique delivery) around human connection is being craved more than ever!

It's only when we stop and slow down, separate from our screens, and truly listen to each other's stories, that we can course correct, and give ourselves the best chance to leave their mark on this world.

Joe is also a co-founder of Happy Caveman, a company built around the belief that modern life has pulled us away from what humans need most.

KEYNOTE

JUST LOOK UP! A RADIAL EXPERIMENT IN HUMAN CONNECTION

What if the most radical thing we could do today was simply... look up?

In a world of constant noise, endless notifications, and growing disconnection, human connection has never mattered more.

In this high-energy, music-filled, and deeply moving keynote, bestselling author and Happy Caveman founder Joe Beckman uses unforgettable stories, relatable humor, and practical, "use-it-today" strategies to help audiences rediscover the power of human connection.

Audiences leave inspired to build stronger relationships, create a greater sense of belonging, and remind the people around them that they matter.

Because sometimes the smallest moments of connection make the biggest difference.

2026 CONFERENCE SPEAKERS



CASEY BREEN
FOUNDER AND LEAD COACH
ESCALE ADVISORS



KEVIN BRENNAN
DIRECTOR
TOP 20 TRAINING



MATTHEW CLEARY
GENERAL STUDIES PRINCIPAL AT
TORAH ACADEMY



JOE CAVANAUGH
CEO AND FOUNDER
YOUTH FRONTIERS



STEVE FREDLUND
FOUNDER
THE SAFARI WAY



PAUL FREID
FARMER - TEACHER - SPEAKER
LAKE CITY CATHOLIC WORKER FARM



NIKKI GIEL
MNSAA BOARD MEMBER AND
PRINCIPAL AT ST. HUBERT CATHOLIC
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ANDREW HILLIKER
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KELSEY IRIZARRY
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DUANE JOURDEANS
OWNER | SPEAKER | CONSULTANT | EMOTIONAL
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MARYBETH STOTTS
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BEN TIERNEY
PRINCIPAL AT CRETIN DERHAM HALL

2026 CONFERENCE SPEAKERS



ANNA WAGNER
KINDERGARTEN READINESS TEACHER
DIVINE MERCY CATHOLIC SCHOOL



JACKIE VIRNIG
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF REMOTE COUNSELING & PARENT EDUCATION
PHOENIX SCHOOL COUNSELING

SPEAKERS, THANK YOU FOR MAKING THE 2026 MNSAA CONFERENCE A SUCCESSFUL DAY OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT!





2026 MNSAA CONFERENCE RESOURCES

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THANK YOU!

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MNSAA HOPES YOU LEAVE THE 2026 CONFERENCE: ROOTED IN RELATIONSHIPS | GROWING STRONGER SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES FEELING INSPIRED, WITH MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS, FRESH IDEAS, AND RENEWED ENERGY TO STRENGTHEN YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNITIES.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Minnesota Nonpublic School Accrediting Association (MNSAA) is a catalyst for enhancing the quality of Preschool through Grade 12 nonpublic education in Minnesota through a comprehensive process of accreditation.

WHO MAY SEEK ACCREDITATION?

MNSAA is a Minnesota based organization that is recognized by the State of Minnesota as an accrediting agency. MNSAA accredits MN nonpublic schools that have been in existence for at least two years and have 501c3 nonprofit status. Nonpublic schools are private institutions of learning in which a resident may legally fulfill our State Compulsory Instruction Law. They are institutions of learning that have one: unified mission, administration, consistent curriculum, and local governing authority.

WHY SEEK ACCREDITATION?

CREDIBILITY

Delivers recognized credibility of the quality of the school's program in the eyes of stakeholders and the public.

VALIDATION OF EXCELLENCE

Offers objective outside validation that a school has met high standards of excellence and is actively seeking a quality education program.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Provides for long-range strategic planning focused on student achievement and on-going school improvement.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Provides local and ongoing accountability as schools provide annual reports identifying progress achieving goals, new opportunities or obstacles to growth, communication with stakeholders, and monitors the progress of its learners.

WHAT ARE MEMBERSHIP COSTS?

Member schools of MNSAA pay annual dues reflective of the number of students enrolled. The cost to schools is a base fee of $325 plus $4 per student. Our Annual Conference is supported by a registration fee. There are additional expenses associated with renewal and onsite visits. Reasonable fees for services and benefits are possible because MNSAA utilizes the generosity and talent of volunteers from our membership.

OVERVIEW OF OUR ACCREDITATION

MNSAA enhances the quality of education through a process of self-evaluation and ongoing improvement. An essential and vital principle is that our schools are evaluated in terms of how well they are guided by their own mission. Respect is given to the differences that exist among accredited schools. We subscribe to a traditional accreditation process in which every 7 years member schools are required to complete an extensive self-evaluation based on MNSAA standards. As a result of this reflection, a school develops a visionary strategic plan for improvement.

MNSAA ACCREDITATION STANDARDS:

- **Mission & Philosophy**
- **Teaching & Learning**
- **Climate for Learning**
- **Commnications & Relations**
- **Personnel**
- **Leadership & Governance**
- **School Strategic Plan**



MINNESOTA NONPUBLIC SCHOOL ACCREDITING ASSOCIATION

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