

Brad Evenson



August 2026

Community Education

- **Another successful Summer Recreation season is in the books!** It is hard to believe that our summer programs wrapped up just last week. A tremendous thank you goes to all of the volunteers and staff members who dedicated their time, energy, and creativity to making this summer such a positive and memorable experience for LPGE youth. Their commitment truly helped make this a great summer to be a kid in our community.
- **As we wrap up the summer season, we are also beginning our program evaluation process.** This is an important opportunity to celebrate what went well, identify areas for growth, and gather ideas for future programming. Feedback from participants, families, staff, and volunteers helps us continually strengthen our programs and ensure Community Education is meeting the needs and interests of our community.
- **LPGE Schools were recently awarded four Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) seats** for the upcoming school year. While this is significantly fewer seats than we had hoped to receive, the award still provides a valuable opportunity to strengthen our early learning offerings. The additional VPK funding will allow us to extend our current preschool programming to four half-days per week and increase the number of service hours available to participating students, providing additional opportunities to build the foundational academic and social skills needed for a successful transition to kindergarten. Additionally, receiving VPK funding makes LPGE eligible to receive additional VPK funding that may become available if other school districts are unable to utilize their allocated funds, and we will continue to monitor these opportunities and pursue any additional funding that could help expand access to high-quality early learning experiences for LPGE families.
- **Collaboration continues to be one of the strengths of our youth programming.** Community Education works closely with local organizations and youth program providers to coordinate services, maximize resources, reduce duplication, and expand opportunities for children and families. This strong community partnership allows us to reach more students and provide a wider variety of meaningful experiences.
- **The 2026 Fall Community Education & District Newsletter is coming soon!** Families can look forward to receiving the newsletter at the beginning of September, featuring a great lineup of new classes, activities, trips, and learning opportunities. We are excited to continue providing engaging opportunities for students, families, and community members throughout the fall!
- **I would like to take a moment to recognize and sincerely thank Cassie Zimmer**, our Community Education Administrative Assistant, as she prepares to leave LPGE for a new career opportunity. She has been so much more than a great employee—Cassie has been a valued member of our Community Education team and someone we have

been fortunate to work alongside. Her positive attitude, dependability, willingness to help, and genuine care for our students, families, staff, and community have made a lasting impact on our program. She has consistently gone above and beyond to help make our Community Education programs successful, and her contributions have been greatly appreciated. While we are very sorry to see her leave, we are also excited for her as she takes this next step in her career. We are grateful for everything Cassie has done for LPGE and for the many ways she has made our workplace and our programs better. Cassie will certainly be missed, and we wish her all the very best in her new position and in this next chapter of her life. Thank you for everything!

- **I would like to welcome our new Community Education Administrative Assistant, Jessica Wettstein,** to the LPGE Community Education Department! I am very excited to have her join the team and look forward to working together!

21CCLC

- **This is a copy of the email that I received from the Director of the 21st CCLC Program** last Wednesday. I actually smiled because of the long process this has been. Having the money frozen and then all of the uncertainty for the entire year, it is very good to see we have finally reached the end of this process:

Dear Brad,

Congratulations! We are pleased to let you know that you have successfully completed the pre-award review phase for the Minnesota Department of Education's 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21CCLC) Cohort 10 grant.

The following pre-award requirements have been completed and approved:

- *Your School Year 26-27 Work Plan is approved.*
- *Your updated Budget is approved (including supplemental budgets if applicable).*
- *Your updated grant application documents are approved (if applicable).*
- *Your pre-award site visit is complete.*
- *Your pre-award risk assessment is complete.*

The next and final step will be to have your IOWA re-sign the grant application cover page with updated state assurances.

The document was reviewed, signed, and returned to MDE last Tuesday. This means that we can begin the execution of the Grant Application on September 1st, 2026.

Federal Programs

- **Summer Kindergarten Jump Start took place last week.** The LPGE Achievement and Integration Grant supports our Jump Start to Kindergarten program, which provides incoming kindergarten students with an opportunity to experience school before the regular school year begins. Students participate in half-day sessions designed to give them a fun and meaningful introduction to the kindergarten experience, helping them become familiar with classroom routines, expectations, and new learning opportunities.

This year's Jump Start program was a tremendous success, with excellent participation and a group of enthusiastic future Thunder kindergarteners! Students had the opportunity to explore and practice many important kindergarten skills while building confidence and becoming more comfortable in their new school environment.

A special thank you goes to our wonderful staff members, Maressa Rousslange and Caitlin Gustafson, as well as volunteer Anika Bitz, for creating such a welcoming, engaging, and positive experience for our incoming kindergarten students. Their time and dedication helped make the transition to kindergarten an exciting one for our youngest learners.

