



Education and Leadership for a Lifetime

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Summer 2025

Dear Head of School and Board Members,

This is an exciting time of year, as the League and our Member Schools are engaged in the work that is required to properly prepare for the 2025-2026 school year. This coming year will be a significant year in the Minnesota State High School League as, for the first time since the League's inception in 1916, the League will govern all programs and students in 9th grade in its approved activities. This monumental change may be rather unnoticed for many, as 9th grade students have long been eligible to participate in grades 10 – 12 programs, yet for some it will be very impactful. The League will expand its mission to provide educational opportunities through fine arts and athletics to all students in grades 9 - 12 as well as some in grades 7 and 8.

In preparation for approval and completion of your Resolution for Membership, please take a few minutes to review the League's founding purposes, its mission and beliefs that bind all Member Schools together. Please see the attached document that has been a standard in the League for many years. These important pillars are more than just words on a page; they drive the actions of all members of the League and provide the foundation for the decisions and the leadership choices the League makes every year.

The Minnesota State High School League is focused on support and leadership for our Member Schools. Beyond our state tournaments and fine arts festivals and competitions, this past year the League provided education to over 25,000 coaches and fine arts directors and certified eligibility for over 7500 officials and fine arts judges. Throughout this time, the League continues to provide leadership in establishing Member School driven bylaws, policies and rules. Together, our membership remains strong and is a supportive network to all Member Schools. The appetite in our communities for these activities continues to be incredible with the ultimate goal of providing opportunities for as many students as possible.

This has been a great year with understandable excitement in all League programs. The first year of sanctioned boys volleyball has been thrilling with the first state tournament at the University of St. Thomas. This year we had 79 teams and well over 100 schools registered in the inaugural year of boys volleyball. Similarly, there is outstanding growth in the number of girls wrestlers across the state of Minnesota. Each of the past three years we have nearly doubled the number of participants in this incredible sport. With plans to expand our state tournament to more girl qualifiers this coming year, we are also establishing a timeline for the full sanction of girls dual wrestling.

As we prepare for the coming year, it's important to know that the League has established a strong foundational financial base and is in a positive financial position in leading our schools.

Last year the League was able to credit membership dues and reduce them to a level that is the lowest in over 30 years. While attendance and excitement for our tournaments and events continue to be great, the increasing cost of venues and operations are having an impact. While we expect a significant membership credit, it is projected to be less than last year's record-setting amount. At the same time, we see the majority of our administrative regions providing financial support back to schools at year end, which is also helpful to member schools.

The League also recognizes the changing landscape in education, evidenced by the growing number of educational models for students across the state. We continue to study and establish governance for these schools, regardless of the model. The League is engaged with an ad hoc committee, of member school representatives, that is studying the various models that are part of the Minnesota educational landscape and will make recommendations as to the rules of eligibility for our Board of Directors.

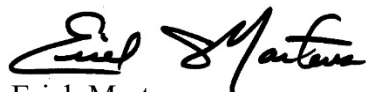
The leadership that the League provides also extends to our students as we look forward to our fourth year of statewide leadership and character events titled "Together We Make a Difference." Thanks to the committed partnership of our state associations; MSBA, MASA, MASSP, MNIAAA, MSHSCA and AMSD, we have provided behavioral expectations for students and schools and energized student and staff leaders in making these a reality in our events. These highly engaging, student-energized conferences are designed to bring students together and establish safe, respectful and inclusive contests and events for all participants. In addition, these current and future leaders have the opportunity to engage with one another and commit to leading others in their school and community.

We truly appreciate all of our Member Schools and recognize that, even as some schools are consolidating or encountering challenges, our membership now exceeds 600 Member Schools on an annual basis. This signals the strength of our League and the quality of the experiences that our students have. We appreciate our longtime members and our newest members equally and welcome all to the Minnesota State High School League, a statewide community that shares the same beliefs, responsibilities and opportunities.

As you prepare to declare your commitment to membership and provide access to over 50 available fine arts and sports through the Minnesota State High School League, we ask each Member School and board to more clearly understand the depth of the League and recognize your role in leading within your school, your community, your conference and your section as we prepare for an outstanding 2025–2026 school year. Should you have any questions related to participation in the Minnesota State High School League, please reach out to our League Office or to me personally and we will do our best to serve our members. Thank you for all you have done to make the 2024-2025 school year a great one and the League is looking forward to beginning our new school year with the first day of practice on August 11.

Have an outstanding year!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Erich Martens", written in a cursive style.

Erich Martens
Executive Director



FOUNDING PURPOSES

The Minnesota State High School League is organized for the following educational purposes:

1. To provide, promote, extend, manage and administer a program of activities for youth of the schools of the state on subsection, section and state levels in the fields of athletics, speech, music and dramatics on a competitive basis, as well as such other curricular and extracurricular activities as may from time to time be sponsored by the schools of Minnesota.
2. To establish uniform and equitable rules for youth in inter-school activities.
3. To elevate standards of sportsmanship and to encourage the growth of responsible citizenship among the students, member schools and their personnel.
4. To protect youth, member schools and their personnel from exploitation by special interest groups.
5. To provide mutual benefit and relief plans for the assistance of school students injured in athletic events or supervised school activities in meeting medical and hospital expenses incurred by reason of such injuries.
6. To serve the best interests of member schools and their students by providing a medium of cooperation and coordination in educational fields of endeavor and a series of related activities on a state-wide basis, which they individually could not achieve or accomplish for their students and which aid and assist the schools in maintaining a constantly improved program.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Minnesota State High School League provides educational opportunities for students through interscholastic athletic and fine arts programs and provides leadership and support for member schools.

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BELIEFS

We believe that...

- Participation in school activity programs is a privilege and not a right.
- Sportsmanship needs to have a constant presence in all school-based activity programs.
- Students should have an equal opportunity to participate in all activities offered by their school.
- Ethical behavior, dignity and respect are non-negotiable.
- Student participants who choose to be chemically free must be supported.
- Collaborative relationships with parents enhance a school's opportunity to positively impact student success.
- Academic priorities must come before participation in athletic or fine arts activities.
- Positive role models and an active involvement in a student's life by parents and others are critical to student success.
- High school activity programs are designed for student participants, and adults must serve in a supportive role.
- The success of the team is more important than individual honors.
- Compliance with school, community and League rules is essential for all activity participants.
- Participation in school-sponsored activities must be inclusive, not exclusive.
- Ethical behavior, fairness, and embracing diversity best serve students and school communities.