

July 25, 2025

Dear Educational Partners,

Thank you for your continued support of BrightWorks and your participation in our programs. Your partnership drives us to develop innovative ways to enhance student learning, professional development, and school-based services.

Exciting Growth for 2025-2026

We've doubled our staff to better serve you! Most of our new professionals will support the Minnesota COMPASS (Collaborative Minnesota Partnerships to Advance Student Success) system. Through our partnership with the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), our new COMPASS team will provide evidence-based support aligned with the Minnesota Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MnMTSS) framework for continuous improvement. We're eager to collaborate with your leaders on relevant, effective professional development opportunities.

New Teacher Apprenticeship Program

BrightWorks is proud to sponsor teacher apprenticeship programs statewide in partnership with multiple Minnesota districts, the Department of Labor and Industry, Minnesota State University-Mankato, University of Minnesota, Southwest State, PELSB, and the MDE. Together, we're supporting approximately 70 teacher apprentices this year, strengthening our educator pipeline.

Comprehensive Services (We Continue to Offer...)

- **Mental Health Support** – Licensed providers in schools for staff support, with planned expansion
- **Facilities Planning** – Monthly Professional Development, including LTFM, health and safety, and MDE presentations (Now included with your membership)
- **Networks** – Homeschool Liaison and Equity Leaders
- **Cooperative Purchasing** – Cost-saving opportunities
- **Special Education Support** – Early Childhood and Low Incidence (ASD, DeafBlindness, TBI, Physical Impairment)
- **ParaPro & ParaEducator** – Courses and testing
- **Student Enrichment Programs** – Young Authors Conference, Knowledge Bowl, Creativity Festival, CreativeCon, STEMLink, Future City Competition, Spelling Bee, and Minnesota Braille Challenge
- **Professional Development** – Regional in-person and virtual for teaching and administrative staff
- **Special Education Resource Libraries**

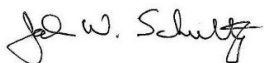
Membership Investment

To maintain quality services in today's challenging environment, we're implementing a modest fee increase: \$1,200 base plus \$2.00 per pupil (maximum \$16,000). Your membership reduces service costs by approximately 45% while ensuring availability when you need us most. Your 2025-2026 invoice and 2024-2025 participation data are enclosed. We welcome your input to ensure we're meeting your needs effectively.

We're dedicated to serving your district, schools, staff, and students. Together, let's create another outstanding year of cost-effective collaboration among metro area educators!

encs.

Sincerely,



Executive Director

John.schultz@brightworksmn.org

612-638-1525

Professional Development

The BrightWorks Collaborative Minnesota Partnerships to Advance Student Success (COMPASS) team provides professional learning and implementation support in the following areas:

- Culturally Responsive Instruction Leadership
- Literacy Instruction & READ Act Support
- Math Instruction
- Minnesota Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MnMTSS)
- School Culture & Climate

State-wide COMPASS Pathways are also available to support professional learning and implementation in the areas of:

- American Indian Education Supports
- Attendance
- Data and Assessment
- Early Childhood
- Equitable Access for Multilingual Learners
- Equitable Access for Students with Disabilities
- Tier 1 Instruction

Additional professional learning opportunities include:

- Leadership Development
- Strengths-Finder Coaching
- Education Policy Fellowship

Student Programs

- CreativeCon
- Creativity Festival
- Future City Competition
- Knowledge Bowl
- Minnesota Braille Challenge
- Spelling Bee
- STEMLink
- Young Authors Conference

Administrative Services & Publications

- Annual Class Size Study
- Composite Calendar
- Cooperative Purchasing (satisfies Minnesota competing bidding requirements)
- Mental Health Services for School Staff
- ParaPro and ParaEducator Testing
- E-12 Professional Development
- Teacher Apprenticeship

Special Education

State-Initiated, Federally Funded Programs

- Early intervention strategies for children with disabilities
- Greater MN Launch PAD
- Minnesota School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports
- Network developing, conferences, and cutting-edge staff training
- Professional development and technical assistance for staff in the low incidence areas of Special Education
- Special Education libraries (Judy Wolff Library, Zot Artz Library, DeafBlind Toy Lending Library)



Facilities Planning

- Professional development
- Building management assistance services

SparkPath

OUR VISION:

Expand curiosity,
confidence, and
creativity in students.

SparkPath is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization created by BrightWorks, a Minnesota Service Cooperative, to provide student enrichment programs. BrightWorks member districts/schools save 30%-50% on SparkPath registration fees.

Detailed pricing, Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards alignment, and registration information is available at www.sparkpath.org

Engaging Field Trips

Spend a day learning from and with Minnesota professionals in our local visual and performance arts, writing, and STEM communities

CreativeCon - Grades 5-8 | January 15, 2026

Creativity Festival - Grades 3-5 | January 13-14, 2026

STEMLink - Grades 5-6 | Spring 2026

Young Authors Conference - Grades 4-8 | March 20, May 26-28, 2026



Exciting Academic Competitions

Challenging experiences that emphasize academic excellence, leadership, healthy competition, good sportsmanship, and effective communication

Future City Competition - Grades 6-8 | January 24, 2026

Middle Grades Knowledge Bowl - Grades 6-8 | Nov. 2025 - Feb. 2026

Minnesota Braille Challenge - Grades 1-12 | February 14, 2026

Senior High Knowledge Bowl - Grades 9-12 | Dec. 2025 - Feb. 2026

Twin Cities Regional Spelling Bee - Grades 4-8 | March 2026

2025 Program Impact

99% of Future City Competition participants strengthened their project management skills while working on their cities

95% of students at CreativeCon learned that creativity is a skill that can be practiced and strengthened

94% of students said the Young Authors Conference encouraged and challenged them to be better writers

- "I have much more creativity than I thought I did!" -7th grader at CreativeCon
- "Just have fun with it. This is a super fun activity, and I recommend going all in, not just halfway." -11th grade Knowledge Bowl player
- "One of my 5th graders asked if she could just eat her lunch on the bus ride home because she'd rather finish the story she started than eat." -Teacher at the Young Authors Conference



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 **BrightWorks**
A Minnesota Service
Cooperative



2024-2025

ANNUAL REPORT

FROM THE DIRECTOR

The SparkPath team is proud to have served over 10,000 students in grades 3-12 in the Twin Cities metro area and throughout Minnesota during the 2024-2025 academic year. We are especially proud of our partnership with the Region 11 Low Incidence Project at BrightWorks to coordinate the first Minnesota Braille Challenge.

Our impact is reflected in comments from teachers and students who attended our programs:

- "This day is so well-organized and the presenters are knowledgeable and fun!"
- "Keep doing this... It was a magical day."
- "I HAVE to come back."
- "I learned we should express and be proud of our ideas and creativity."
- "The confidence students get when presenting, the knowledge they get throughout the competition, and the opportunity to learn about STEAM are super valuable."
- "I felt comfortable to express myself."
- "It was empowering, creative, and very fun."

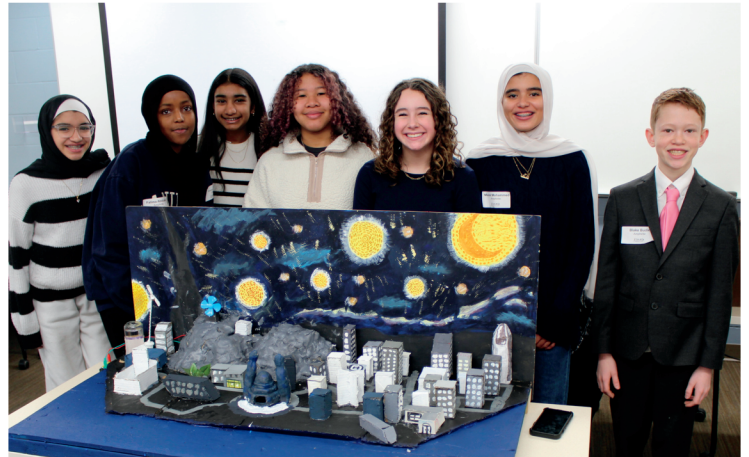
Looking ahead, we plan to expand STEMLink by adding more days of programming and we continue to seek new collaborations and program opportunities.

We are grateful for our volunteers, donors, and as always, our growing board of directors. Our board's commitment plays a vital role in advancing SparkPath's mission and shaping the futures of our students.

SparkPath

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SparkPath is a 501(c)(3) non-profit that presents its programs in collaboration with BrightWorks, a Minnesota Service Cooperative.



STAFF

Madi Ericksen, Lead Coordinator
Colleen Feller, Director
Betsy Narr, Program Coordinator
Sydney Navoichick, Program Associate
Katie Wenzel, Lead Coordinator

BOARD

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Jonathan Wiese | 3.2.1, Inc.





2024-2025

CROSS-PROGRAM SUMMARY

11,193

Participants

1,142

Volunteer hours

720

Volunteers

\$90,089

Raised

\$15,177

Scholarships Awarded



PROGRAMS

National Programs

Braille Challenge

Future City Competition

Spelling Bee

HIGHLIGHTS

National competitions were hosted on both coasts: Washington, D.C. (Future City Competition and Spelling Bee) and Los Angeles (Braille Challenge)

STUDENTS

6,383

Young Authors Conference

This year's theme was *Adventure in Every Draft*

2,322

CreativeCon & Creativity Festival

Our Creatives celebrated their 30th anniversary in 2025

1,167

Knowledge Bowl

98 Senior High teams & 100 Middle Grades teams

970

STEMLink

STEMLink looks to expand locations in 2025-2026

351



"I loved seeing the excitement of the braille readers!"
- Braille Challenge Teacher



"This is my favorite thing and I appreciate all the work you put in to make it happen!"
- Middle Grades Knowledge Bowl Coach



"Love, love, love youth leadership and the diversity of sessions!"
- Creativity Festival Teacher



2024-2025

FIELD TRIP EVALUATION REPORT

111 3rd Graders
642 4th Graders
891 5th Graders
738 6th Graders
433 7th Graders
322 8th Graders

**not every student indicated a grade, but 3,000+ student evaluations were collected at SparkPath field trips*



94%

of students let us know they're now curious about STEM careers after attending STEMLink

96%

of students learned that creativity and problem solving are important skills at the Creativity Festival and CreativeCon

97%

of students garnered new strategies to become stronger writers at the Young Authors Conference

77%

attended a SparkPath field trip for the first time



"It was so fun seeing the students take ownership of their day!"

- Young Authors Conference Teacher



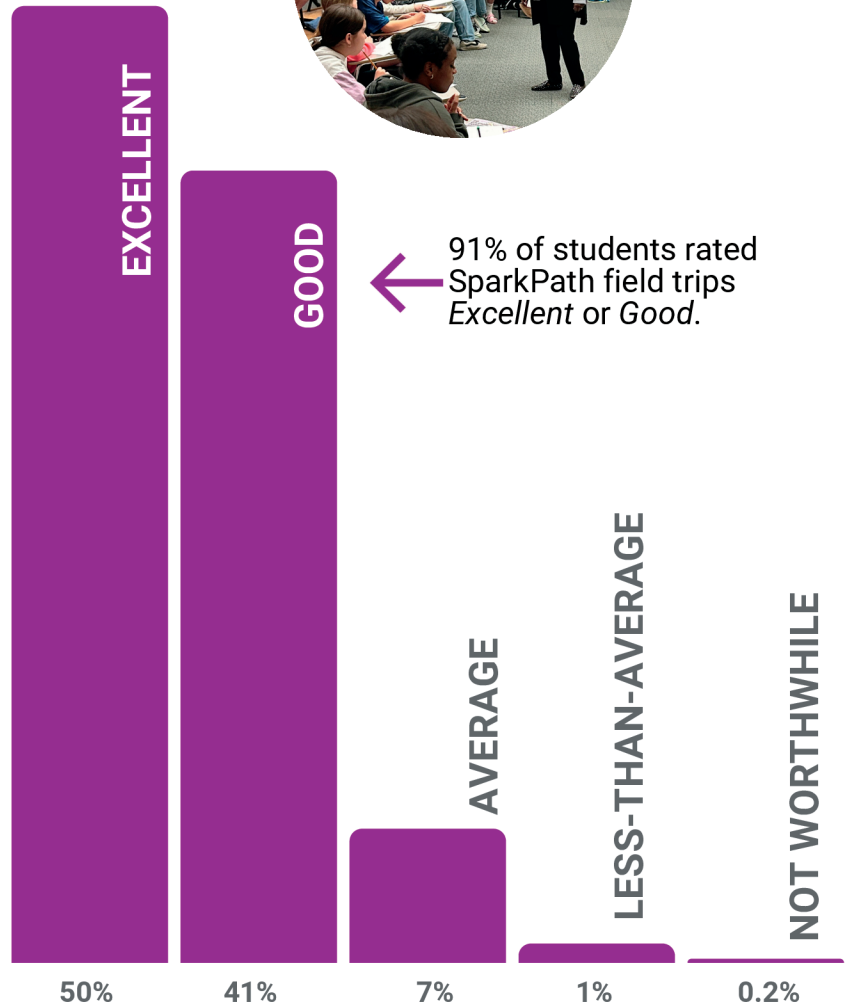
"I loved everything I saw— I visited every session!"

- Creativity Festival Teacher



"I really liked how all the sessions were very hands-on and engaging."

- STEMLink Teacher





2024-2025

ACADEMIC COMPETITION EVALUATION REPORT

KNOWLEDGE BOWL (GRADES 6-12)

90%

of players strengthened their teamwork skills by participating in Knowledge Bowl

85%

are planning to participate in Knowledge Bowl again

39%

were first-time Knowledge Bowl participants

FUTURE CITY COMPETITION (GRADES 6-8)

99%

of competitors learned how engineering can be used to solve real problems

99%

strengthened their project management skills while working on their cities

84%

are interested in exploring engineering and/or other STEM careers

SPELLING BEE (GRADES 4-8)

86%

of spellers participated in the Bee for the first time

76%

of educators said their Bee students increased their vocabulary

73%

of spellers felt that the Bee deepened their understanding of words and language

BRAILLE CHALLENGE (GRADES 1-12)

13

students registered, with 4 qualifying for nationals

100%

of all adults and kids rated the program *excellent* or *good*

19

organizations came together to make the program happen





2024-2025 VOLUNTEER & COMMUNITY PARTNERS REPORT

SparkPath achieves program goals and carries out its mission thanks to our invaluable volunteers and community partners. Each of our programs require different support— from being team leads at STEMLink to being engineering mentors for the Future City Competition to helping with special scoring at Middle Grades Knowledge Bowl to stuffing thousands of folders for Young Authors Conference. On behalf of the staff and board, we offer a sincere thank you to our partners.

SPARKPATH VOLUNTEERS REPRESENT:

38 Companies and Organizations, including:

3M
Andersen Corporation
Boston Science Corporation
Burns & McDonnell
Cassia
Collins Aerospace
Douglas Animal Hospital
Dunham
Eaton
Ecolab
Emerson
Engineering Education Foundation of America
HDR
HGA, Inc.
Jamf
Kimley-Horn & Associates
M.A. Mortenson
Medtronic
Polaris Inc
Rani Engineering
SRF Consulting
Target
TKDA
Wells Fargo
WSB

17 Public Agencies, Municipalities, Utilities, and Post-Secondary Schools, including:

CenterPoint Energy
City of Eagan
City of Robbinsdale
City of Roseville
Hennepin County
Hennepin Technical College
Metropolitan Airports Commission
Metropolitan Council
Minnesota Department of Education
Minnesota Department of Transportation
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
Minnesota Service Co-ops
Minnesota State Centers of Excellence
State Services for the Blind
Xcel Energy

12 Professional Societies, including:

American Public Works Association - Minnesota Chapter
American Society of Civil Engineers - Minnesota Section
American Water Works Association - Minnesota Section
Association for Facilities Engineering (AFE 13 Twin Cities)
Engineering Education Foundation of America
Minnesota Association of County Surveyors
Minnesota Society of Professional Engineers and Foundation
Society of American Military Engineers



"I was really impressed with what the students were able to accomplish in their sessions!"

- STEMLink Volunteer



"I loved seeing kids minds light up when asked about something they are passionate about."

- Future City Competition Mentor