



# 2022-23 ANNUAL REPORT TO OUR PARTNERS

SOUTHWEST WEST CENTRAL SERVICE COOPERATIVE



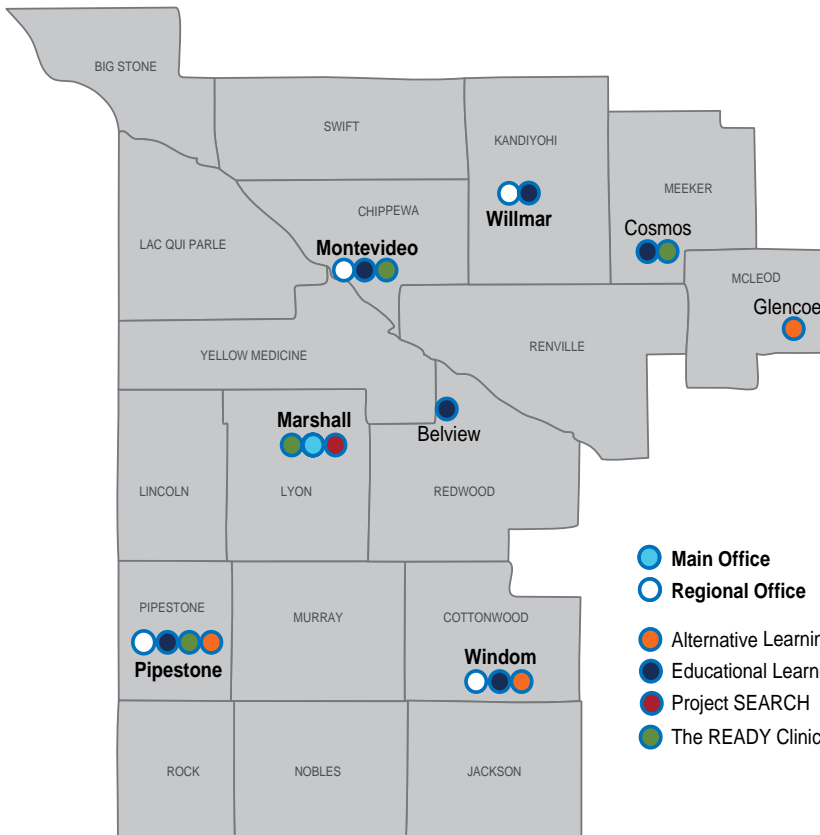
Education & Administrative Resources

**Our mission is to support and enhance the work of our members by providing programs and services that meet their needs.**

# SERVICE AREA AND STAFF

We are dedicated to providing unparalleled **EDUCATION AND ADMINISTRATIVE** services, solutions and support to our members and communities. The physical boundaries of SWWC's service area are the 18 counties of southwest and west central Minnesota. Within those boundaries, we have 58 public school members and 12 private school members. Several of our services expand past those boundaries and even into South Dakota.

The SWWC team is made up of over 400 highly skilled and talented professionals, and our values of **SERVICE, INTEGRITY AND RESPECT** are an important part of how we do our work. Our team works at the locations identified in the map below and in schools throughout the region.



## STAFF STATS

Average length of service: 5.9 years  
 Staff working 20+ years: 25  
 Staff working 15-19 years: 16  
 Staff working 10-14 years: 23

## SWWC MAIN OFFICE

1420 East College Drive  
 Marshall, MN 56258  
 507-537-2240



SWWC is a member of the Minnesota Service Cooperatives, an association of nine educational service agencies in Minnesota.



# ADMINISTRATION

Through a collaborative and innovative approach, SWWC is known for providing comprehensive programs and services for our members. For two decades, this approach to service has supported continued growth and expansion of SWWC programs in our 18-county region.

As we continue to rebound from the global pandemic, this past year we saw a slow and steady return to normal. However, this “new normal” is different from the old normal! To begin with, one of SWWC’s biggest challenges continues to be the workforce shortage. In addition, there are new expectations for more flexible work options. These two challenges have put pressure on every part of our agency; pressures that continue to play a part in today’s planning. Without great people doing great things, we simply cannot provide the services our members expect. It is with this context that we look at our past accomplishments, future challenges, and current plans.

The staffing challenges experienced in 2022-23 were real and impacted the way we provided services. Although staffing shortages put pressure on our ability to provide services, SWWC staff did an outstanding job finding new and innovative ways to support our members. **GREAT people doing GREAT things every day!** We expect staffing and staffing shortages to continue to impact our work into the future.

2022-23 saw a continued focus on facility developments and improvements for SWWC. Renovations at our current sites and finalizing plans for our new Belview and Willmar sites made great progress this year. We saw the planning stages of building a new educational learning center in New London and the remodeling of a building on the SMSU campus for the Belview program come to fruition. These projects are slated to be completed in 2024 and will provide vastly improved facilities for the students attending these programs.

All SWWC departments saw growth in programs and services during this past year. From finance/payroll support, to cybersecurity, mental health, literacy, early behavioral health, and student enrichment activities, SWWC continues to be a regional resource for our members. An increase in providing virtual services grew and appears to have a permanent place into the future. All of what we do is tied to member needs and is a result of the intentional focus on member service. SWWC will continue to collaborate in our efforts to support our membership.



Our members value SWWC programs and services, and I am proud of the work we do for all of you. As we look to the future, I am confident that SWWC will continue to be a valued partner with our members!

Cliff Carmody  
SWWC Executive Director

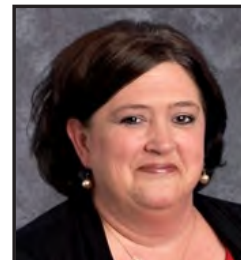
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## 2022-23 Executive Leadership Team

- Cliff Carmody, Executive Director
- Amber Bruns, Clinical Director of Behavioral Health Services
- Elizabeth Deen, Senior Director of Teaching and Learning Services
- Randy Erdman, Director of Finance (through May 2023)
- Tegan Gillund, Director of Finance (beginning June 2023)
- Shelly Maes, Manager of Member Services and SWWC Foundation Executive Director
- Mary Palmer, Senior Director of Special Services
- Abby Polzine, Director of Human Resources
- Christine Schmitt, Director of Business Services
- Josh Sumption, Chief Technology and Information Officer

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The care, management, and control of SWWC shall be vested in a board of directors. The majority of the members of the board of directors shall be current school board members of school districts in full membership. The remaining board members may be representatives at large appointed by the board of directors or elected as representatives by other participating agencies, such as schools, cities, counties, or other governmental units.



## **SWWC BOARD OF DIRECTORS** (as of June 30, 2023)

Top: Maydra Maas, Chair, Westbrook-Walnut Grove Schools; Tom Walsh, Treasurer, KMS Schools; Don Brugman, Clerk, Windom Area Schools; Jody Bauer, Tracy Area Schools

Bottom: Matt Coleman, Vice-Chair, Marshall Schools; Steve Schnieder, Worthington Schools; Mike Zins, Fulda Schools

### **From the Board Chair, Maydra Maas:**

Today I picture my granddaughter sitting at the Westbrook-Walnut Grove Schools “Little Charger” table. I want the absolute best for her. I want her to feel loved, stay healthy as she grows and be ready for a lifetime of learning. I want this for ALL children in the SWWC area.

Getting the same educational opportunity for our children is not a simple process. Education is more demanding. Finances remain a constant issue. Collaboration and coordination become the investment needed to secure education and success in our region.

Yet SWWC doesn’t do anything alone. Setting our children up for success is no different. It takes people in the communities across the region – family, friends, neighbors, volunteers and our entire SWWC membership of cities, counties and other governmental agencies – to raise a child.

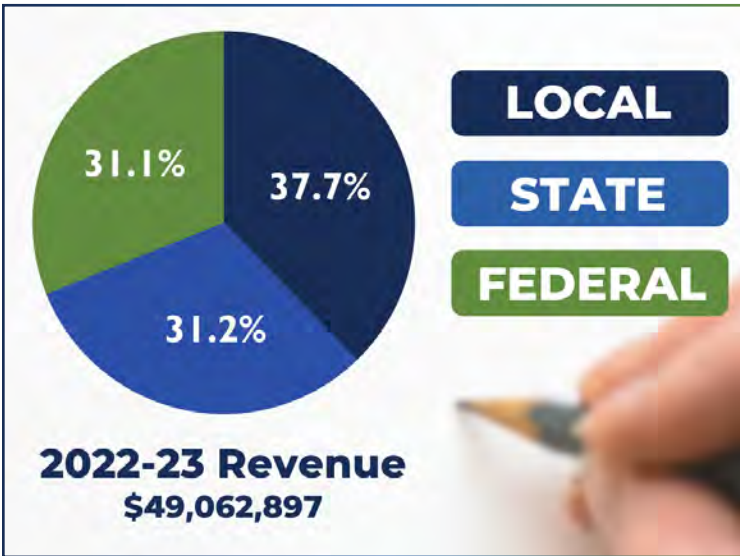
The SWWC Board of Directors, administration and staff focus on providing programs and services that meet the needs of our regional public/parochial schools and city/county/other governmental agencies. Together we all want a stake in our organization that helps achieve the goals essential for our foundation of service, integrity and respect. Is this enough? Is the future not ours to determine? Are not the actions and decisions that SWWC succinctly take now continuing to influence what happens tomorrow?

I most sincerely thank you for your membership, your partnership, and your organization on behalf of SWWC. Together the plans we make, and the people and the policies we influence matter because they define our children’s future – truly the greatest blessings!

With this final annual report, I am humbly honored to offer the following quotation of Kahill Gibran: “You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that YOU truly give”.

*Maydra Maas has served on the SWWC Board of Directors since 2004. We are extremely thankful for her commitment and dedication to SWWC and the region. Maydra completed her service on the board June 2023.*

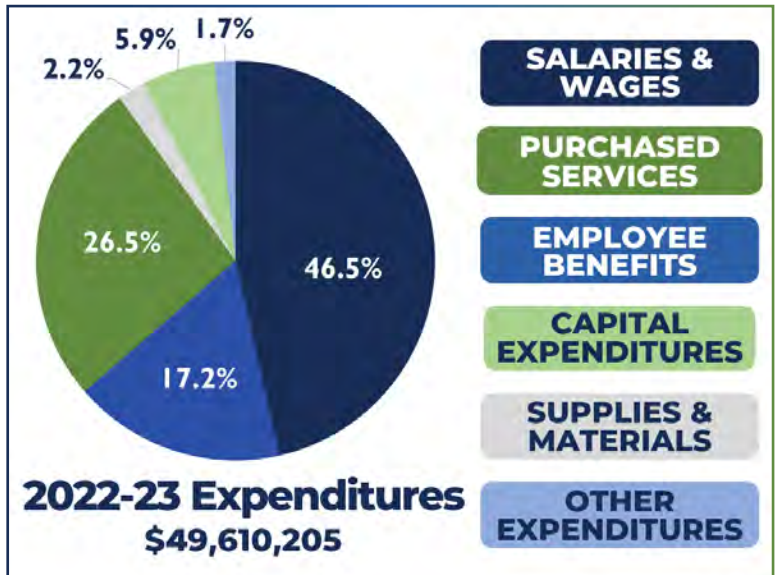
# FINANCIALS



As the foundation for all we do, our core values also drive our efforts to be great financial stewards of the resources we are given to serve our members.

This financial information is from the 2022-23 SWWC Final Budget approved by the SWWC Board of Directors.

Complete copies of audited financial statements are available at the SWWC office.



## 2022-23 Superintendents' Executive Council

Chair: Joe Meyer, Murray County Central  
 Vice Chair: Scott Monson, Minneota  
 Past Chair: Ryan Nielsen, Canby  
 Dr. Bill Adams, Willmar  
 Paul Bang, Heron Lake-Okabena  
 Dr. Chris Fenske, Lakeview  
 Kevin Enerson, Pipestone Area  
 Doug Froke, Renville County West

Ray Hassing, Round Lake-Brewster  
 Jeff Holm, Willmar  
 Todd Holthaus, Hills-Beaver Creek  
 Jeff Horton, GFW  
 John Landgaard, Worthington  
 Dennis Laumeier, Benson  
 Dr. Michelle Mortensen, BLHS

Dr. Melissa Radeke, Lester Prairie  
 John Regan, ACGC  
 Molly Schilling, Adrian  
 Barry Schmidt, Jackson County Central  
 Richard Schneider, YME  
 Dr. Sonya Vierstraete, SMSU  
 Dr. Terry Gaalswyk, Minnesota West

The Superintendents' Executive Council provides advice and support to SWWC Administration and Board of Directors. Members are elected and representative of SWWC membership.

# BUSINESS SERVICES

The **REGIONAL MANAGEMENT INFORMATION CENTER** team serves 50 public schools districts for finance, UFARS, payroll and HR support. Our finance staff process approximately 400 closing UFARS file submissions a year, and our payroll staff process approximately 12,000 W-2s a year!

We held many workshops throughout the year focused on budgeting, the Affordable Care Act, calendar year-end, fiscal-year end, and tax levies. Even the long winter couldn't stop our Annual Business Conference in April.



*Annual School  
Business  
Conference*



SWWC's **HEALTH AND SAFETY PROGRAM** continues to offer an online Type III Vehicle Safety Training. The training information, compiled from the Minnesota School Bus Operators Association, Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Minnesota State Patrol, and Minnesota Department of Education, helps drivers learn the rules and requirements for a Type III school bus. During 2022-23, over 600 drivers completed training.

# BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

**BEHAVIOR ANALYTIC SERVICES** continue to be a steady and stable foundation for Behavioral Health Services. During 2022-23, 649 students were supported, 582 consultations with teachers, 191 functional behavioral assessments were written, 127 students were moved to a least restrictive environment and 88 professional development training opportunities were provided. We were short four Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) positions, so we were unable to take on many requests for additional services. Our annual behavior conference continues to be a successful endeavor with 215 registrants.

**MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES** provided support for clinical supervision of staff, student support at SWWC's Educational Learning Centers, PBIS webinars, conflict resolution, team building, and professional development for Northwest Service Cooperative, and two member district contracts. We continue to hear that districts need mental health supports and services for staff and students. During 2022-23, 520 students and 12 staff received mental health supports.

# BEHAVIORAL HEALTH



The READY Clinic Client Work

During 2022-23, **THE READY CLINIC** locations in Cosmos, Marshall (new as of May 2023), Montevideo and Pipestone received referrals for 55 children in need of early intervention services. Of those, we completed 33 diagnostic assessments and have 12 on the assessment wait-list.

Across all sites last year, we served 16 children. Enrollment and diagnostic assessments have been limited due to staffing shortages, but we continue to deploy different strategies to recruit new staff. As of June 30, there are 27 families on the wait-list for intensive services.



The READY Clinic Open Houses in Cosmos and Marshall

Through the Minnesota Department of Health's workforce grant, in collaboration with the Minnesota Service Cooperatives, we were able to create positions to provide **REGIONAL NURSING SERVICES, REGIONAL MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES, and TRANSLATION/ INTERPRETATION SERVICES**. We provided training and services at no cost to districts, and thousands of students and staff were impacted. Moving into 2023-24 without grant funding, we will continue providing these services on a fee for service basis.



The **SWWC SCHOOL CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM (SCRT)** responded to 11 calls in the region during the 2022-23 school year. The SCRT is called to provide support and assistance when a school experiences a student or staff death due to accident, illness, suicide, or other tragic event. Team members are primarily school psychologists, school social workers and school counselors from school districts across the region. All have been trained on the effects of trauma on student learning, signs and symptoms of distress, interventions, developmental considerations, referral signs, debriefings and team development. Our regional trainer has also supported the statewide initiative to develop crisis response teams in each service cooperative region.

# INSURANCE SERVICES

SWWC offers self-insured **HEALTH INSURANCE POOLS** for our school, city, county and other governmental agencies. In 2022, the pool saw many changes from a switch in medical carriers to a change in vendor for our medical spending accounts. Now that we are getting accustomed to the changes, we are able to connect with our members more frequently and continue to be a valuable resource for the ever-evolving health insurance market.

The only change for 2023 is we have now moved our large group pool to a statewide model, partnering with the Minnesota Healthcare Consortium (MHC) in a similar manner to our small group pool. This change will help provide stable and sustainable pool options for our members during a time with high volatility in the market. We look forward to continuing to serve our 70+ groups and 4,200+ members.

Our Live Well Program continues to be a strong asset to our member loyalty and as a way to educate our members on the importance of preventative healthcare. Just over \$1.4 million of pool assets was paid out to participating groups. This program not only provides worksite wellness grants to help pay for the wellness activities like biometric screenings or a dietitian speaking on the importance of nutrition, but we also provide an incentive of \$500 to each member that completes the program. The \$500 incentive goes into medical spending accounts to encourage smart spending when it comes to their healthcare decisions. We know based on the positive feedback we hear from members and group leaders that this program has been a game-changer in putting the member more in control of their healthcare needs and costs.



**Minnesota  
Healthcare  
Consortium**  
Participating Minnesota Service Cooperatives

# SPECIAL EDUCATION

Building Administrators play an essential role in Special Education! Educational leadership is ranked as the key variable associated with effective schools. The principal of an effective school must be the leader of ALL programs within the school, including special education services. To help support our districts, the SWWC Directors of Special Education developed a training series to provide insights, support, and resources for building administrators to address all things special education in their schools ... we call it the **BUILDING ADMINISTRATOR SPED COFFEE HOUR**.

Topics covered during the coffee hours included the following: District Administration & Director Relationships, Team Member Roles, IEP Meetings, Accommodations vs Modifications vs Interventions, Referring Students for Out of District Placement, Problem Solving Teams/Child Find & Referrals, Paraprofessional Supports & Resources, Guide for Responding to Parent Requests, and Special Transportation. Forty-three building administrators representing 20 districts participated in 2022-23. We look forward to continuing this series in 2023-24.



When district SpEd staff have questions, they need clear answers so they can act quickly ... and it shouldn't be a struggle to find it. Our mission is to put needed information they need at their fingertips so they can navigate due process regulations and procedures with confidence. The majority of our guidance regarding SpEd due process is hosted on our **SPECIAL EDUCATION RESOURCES FOR INFORMED SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER (RIST) WEBSITE**. This website is available to all districts subscribing to SpEd Administrative Services.

A wide variety of information is kept on this website such as How to Run an IEP Meeting; How to Write an IEP, How to Conduct SpEd Evaluations, MA Billing, Restrictive Procedures, SpEd Student Discipline, and much more.



# SPECIAL EDUCATION

In 2022-23, districts subscribing to our SpEd Administrative Services were assigned a **DUE PROCESS SPECIALIST**. Eight due process specialists were assigned to a specific cluster of districts and/or SWWC ELCs. This team was our 'boots on the ground' and were visible and available to school district staff. The due process specialists provided monthly training to their respective districts and worked closely with the SWWC Directors of SpEd to assist with district questions and needs.

The SWWC Due Process Specialists hosted the 2022-23 **NEW/NEWER SPED TEACHER COHORT (NSTC)**. Throughout the school year, they helped member districts with SpEd staff retention and increased staff skills by providing relevant and meaningful support and training in due process and instruction. A total of 101 teachers participated in the year-long program from the following districts:

ACGC	Ellsworth	Lester Prairie	Mountain Lake	Red Rock Central
BBE	Fulda	Luverne	New London-Spicer	RTR
BLHS	Glencoe-Silver Lake	Lynd	Ortonville	Springfield
BOLD	Hills-Beaver Creek	MACCRAY	Pipestone Area	SWWC ELCs
Canby	Heron Lake-Okabena	Marshall	Prinsburg	WWG
Cedar Mountain	Jackson County Central	MCC	Redwood Area	Willmar
Eden Valley-Watkins	KMS	Milroy	Round Lake-Brewster	Windom
				Worthington

SWWC's **EDUCATIONAL LEARNING CENTERS (ELCs)** are located in Belview, Cosmos, Montevideo, Pipestone, Willmar and Windom. Our purpose is to provide a highly effective social and emotional learning and academic program for students with disabilities and provide support for their families. We work hard to provide the resources and supports to students so they can transition back to their home district. When that happens, we know we have done our job! During the 2022-23 school year, ELC enrollment across the six sites was 187 students.

**TWO PROGRAMS** are offered at the ELCs.

- The SUN Program is designed to meet the needs of students with severe disabilities with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder, DCD: Severe to Profound, DCD: Mild to Moderate, and Severely Multiply Impaired.
- The Bridges Program is designed to meet the needs of students who are having behavior issues in their resident school district.

## A FEW HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2022-23 SCHOOL YEAR

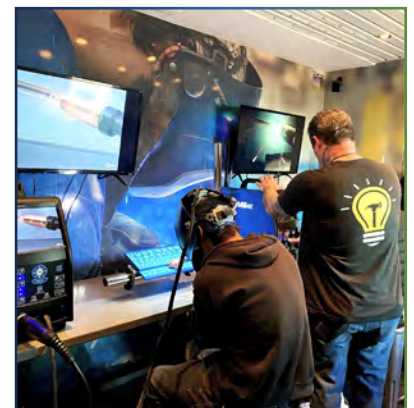
- The Big Ideas Mobile Learning Lab gave the ELC students the opportunity to explore a variety of trades, including welding, industrial painting, excavating and more.
- ELC - Willmar took field trips to the bowling alley and Robins Island, and held their first end-of-the-year carnival.
- ELC - Montevideo students learned fire safety from a local fireman, saw him demonstrate how they put on their gear, and got to explore a firetruck. They also learned dental hygiene from dental clinic staff. Their PBIS rewards during the year included trips to the bowling alley, movie theater, roller skating rink, the city park, all-school BINGO and a school carnival.



*ELC - Windom Sensory Room*



*Fire Safety at ELC - Montevideo*



*ALC and ELC students in Big Ideas Mobile Learning Lab*

# TEACHING AND LEARNING

SWWC's **ALTERNATIVE LEARNING CENTER (ALC)** services continued to grow in 2022-23 with the opening of a third site in Glencoe. Total enrollment across all three sites (Glencoe, Pipestone and Windom) sites was 115 students. Night classes and summer school sessions saw record numbers of participants from surrounding schools.

The Work-Based Learning seminar class enrolled 65 students, with 43 taking part in work experiences in the community. Students at the ALCs in Pipestone and Windom attended the Southwest Minnesota Career Expo to learn more about careers in the region, while the students in Glencoe were able to experience the Big Ideas trailer when it visited SWWC ELC - Cosmos.

At the end of the year we graduated 39 students ... another successful year!



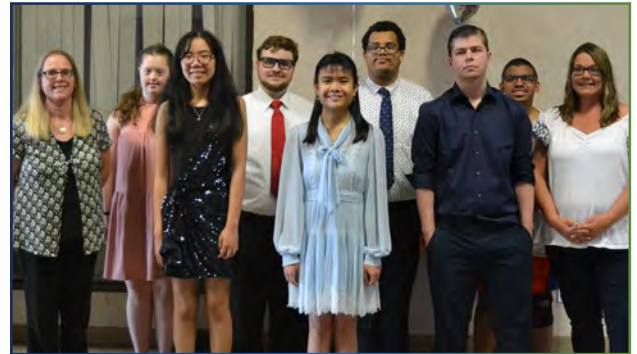
*ALC - Glencoe Graduates*



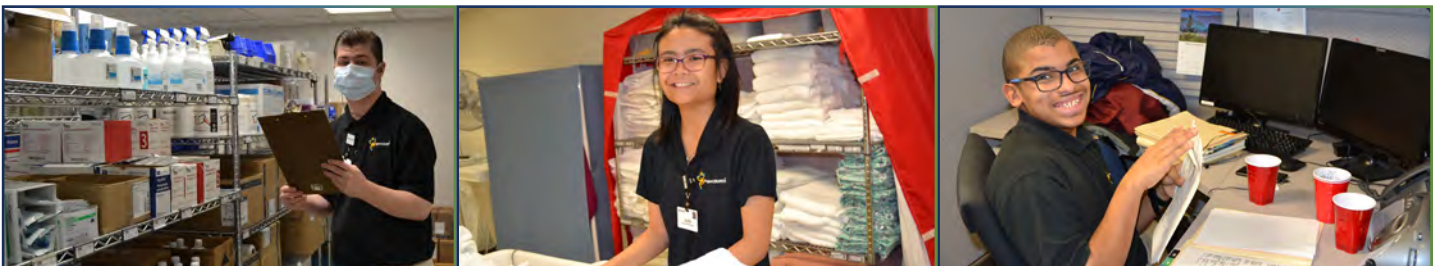
The 2022-23 school year saw **PROJECT SEARCH** move back to Avera Marshall for both the internships and classroom time.

Seven students graduated after taking part in three 10-week internship experiences from the following: housekeeping, clerical/mail, dietary, hospital maintenance, health services, long term care, maintenance and laundry.

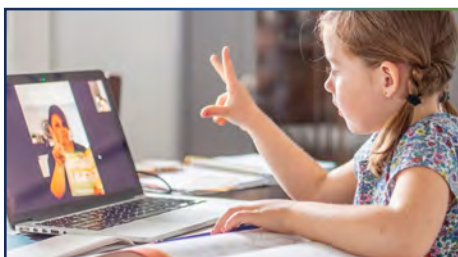
We were awarded with a 100% Employment Outcome Award for the 2021-22 school year!



*Project SEARCH Graduates and Instructors*



*Project SEARCH Internships*



**STARRS ONLINE ACADEMY** helps K-12 students across the state achieve their potential through individualized educational opportunities.

STARRS Online teachers supported 326 students across the state using Edgenuity curriculum so they could continue to meet their grade progression or graduation requirements through an online learning platform. Students completed age-appropriate, engaging lessons that met Minnesota Academic Standards.

# TEACHING AND LEARNING

SWWC's partnership with the **NEW TEACHER CENTER** (NTC) began in 2018. Since then, four cohorts of instructional coaches have participated in a two-year evidence-based training. This training prepares instructional coaches/mentors to support teachers in meeting diverse student needs, focusing on standards-based learning, social emotional learning (SEL) and research-based instructional practices.

*"The support that I received through the SWWC/NTC program was the lifeline to my success. I like having the training spread out so I can learn strategies, tools, teacher language, and other important skills to bring back to my position and implement little by little. The opportunity to reflect and discuss with others before moving on in our learning is extremely important in the learning processes. I felt like I had authentic, relevant, and successful PD for the first time."*

- Instructional coach



New Teacher Center Training

SWWC was named as a partner with the NTC on an **EDUCATION INNOVATION AND RESEARCH GRANT (EIR)** from the U.S. Department of Education. Under this grant, NTC and SWWC support schools implementing a whole-school professional learning model aimed at accelerating instructional practice through job-embedded instructional coaching focused on SEL and rigorous academic content. NTC and SWWC engage in strategic planning with leadership teams from participating schools to establish the conditions for effective coaching. Through this grant work, NTC-trained coaches provide support to English/Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics in grades 3–8 through one-on-one and/or small professional learning communities with integrated supports for SEL. Twenty-two schools participated during the two-year grant period. What we have learned through this work will help support rural schools nationwide.

SWWC has also partnered with NTC, MDE and the Minnesota Service Cooperatives to support the development of mentoring and induction frameworks that will be used in pilot district and charter sites during the 2023-24 school year.

The **SOUTHWEST PRAIRIE REGIONAL CENTER OF EXCELLENCE (RCE)** team provided support to 17 school districts and 23 schools during 2022-23. These districts/schools were identified as needing support based on student outcomes across multiple indicators, including math achievement, reading achievement, progress toward English language proficiency, overall proficiency or by specific student group, graduation rates and/or consistent attendance. The RCE team works with district/school staff to identify a root cause, make a school improvement plan with an evidence-based practice and implement the process.

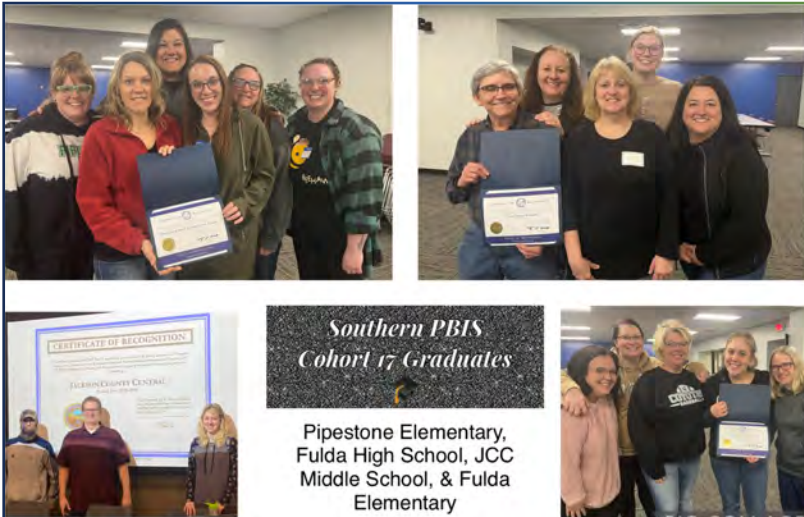


2022-23 RCE Team

The RCE team worked in collaboration with the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), the Minnesota Service Cooperatives and the other MN Regional Centers for Excellence on the statewide education system, COMPASS (Collaborative Minnesota Partnerships to Advance Student Success).

# TEACHING AND LEARNING

**POSITIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION AND SUPPORTS (PBIS)** is a collection of evidence-based behavioral practices which lead to improved academic and behavioral outcomes for students when implemented with fidelity. Our PBIS work continued to grow and expand in the southern region. Cohorts 17 and 18 continued to work through their Year 2 and Year 1 work through cohort training to support the needs of the districts.



This past spring, nine southern Minnesota school teams completed the two-year team based PBIS Tier I cohort training. These nine teams have joined 850+ schools across the state currently trained on implementing positive and proactive strategies to support students. The Cohort 17 teams that completed training from our region were JCC Middle School, Pipestone Area Elementary, Fulda Elementary, and Fulda Secondary.

The southern region also completed another year of Tier II cohort training model, with a K-12 school from Lake Crystal Wellcome Memorial completing the year with great success.

We have also continued to build capacity with the number of trainers, external coaches, data facilitators and individuals trained to provide support for schools at no cost to them.

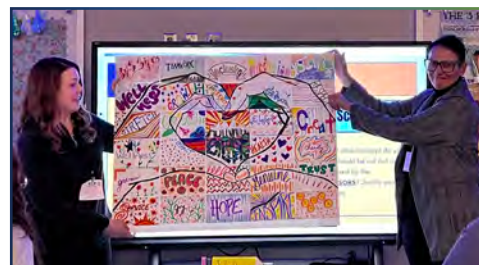
**TEACHING AND LEARNING EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANTS** supported over 19 school districts during 2022-23. Educational Consultants work with a shared group of districts and schools to provide tailored teaching and learning support, improve instructional practices, and provide guidance on curriculum and instruction to improve student outcomes. This year we were thrilled to support multiple educators with professional learning, team development, and system supports to effectively expand and develop their knowledge of evidence-based literacy practices.

Teaching and Learning Educational Consultants:

- Provided guided support on analyzing data and action planning.
- Guided superintendent and principal collaboration meetings.
- Facilitated grade and subject alike curriculum meetings.
- Hosted multiple common in-services for educators and paraprofessionals.
- Provided technical assistance, training and coaching on curriculum and instruction.
- Trained many educators on Structured Literacy.
- Supported curriculum review, standards alignment and purchasing of curricular resources.



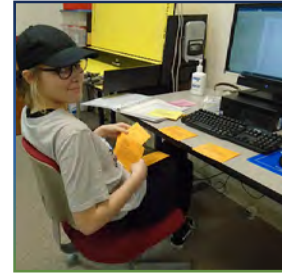
*North Collaborative Professional Development Day in January*



# TEACHING AND LEARNING

**PROJECT DISCOVERY** is a State-Approved Transition Disabled Program providing career exploration and assessments for special population high school students. This year, over 135 students from 21 schools came to the career exploration lab in Marshall with an opportunity to explore more than 40 careers. Project Discovery allows for hands-on career exploration with formal and informal assessment. Students are provided written assessment of interests, work skills, and social skills. Project Discovery had another wonderful year supporting students to broaden their exposure to available careers!

*Exploring Careers at Project Discovery*



**LAUNCH YOUR FUTURE TODAY (LYFT) CAREER PATHWAYS** is guided by an advisory committee that encompasses broad representation of secondary education, post-secondary education, workforce development, businesses (public and private sector) and economic development. Working together, the committee established the following priorities and strategies for advancing Career and Technical Education (CTE) across the region:

- Advancing Career Connected Learning
- Ensuring Equitable Access to Advanced CTE Opportunities for All Students
- Expanding Regional Awareness and Collaboration
- Advancing Educator Awareness/Development



Successful strategies towards meeting these priorities came by way of LYFT Innovation Grants. Fourteen projects totaling \$150,000 were funded across the region and provided engaging hands-on real-life experiences for about 5,000 students. Business, high school and post-secondary leaders collaborated to develop projects on law enforcement, small engines, entrepreneurship, diesel mechanics and video production to name a few.

LYFT also invested in making career navigation services available to local schools, educators and students, leveraging funding to support five full-time Career Connector/Navigators. These positions support coordination and collaboration among educators and employers, helping students make informed education and career choices.

LYFT continues into 2023-24 due to a new \$3 million Statewide Rural Career and Technical Consortium grant, which is a collaborative effort with the Minnesota Service Cooperatives (MSC). This MSC partnership is working together to expand CTE experiences statewide, recruit and retain CTE teachers statewide, and forge deeper relationships between high schools, students, and Minnesota businesses.



*Diesel Mechanics at Wabasso Public School*

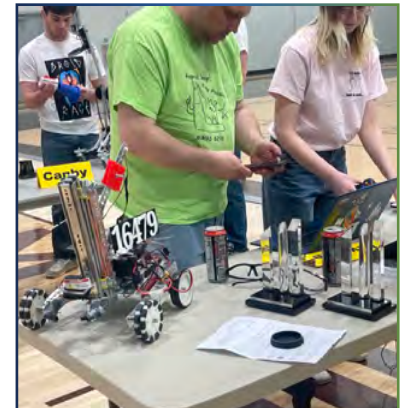


*WWG Student's Early Childhood Job Shadow*

# TEACHING AND LEARNING

SWWC, in partnership with LYFT Career Pathways, hosted a **HIGH TECH KIDS MINNESOTA FIRST TECH CHALLENGE (MN FTC) DEMO DAY** in April at Southwest Minnesota State University. Local existing teams were invited to demonstrate their robots and share their experiences with MN FTC. High Tech Kids is part of an international robotics program that includes more than 6,700 teams globally. High Tech Kids, in partnership with FIRST, has been bringing FIRST Tech Challenge to Minnesota since 2013.

The goal of DEMO DAY was to increase awareness of the MN FTC robotics program and increase the number of new teams across the region to ultimately sponsor a local competition to provide access and opportunity for more students and schools to participate. The partnership with MN FTC significantly lessens the time and costs that are typically associated with a robotics program. LYFT Career Pathways makes a small amount of grant funds available to SWWC member school districts to start or add a NEW team and/or help existing teams.



*First Tech Challenge DEMO Day*

LYFT Career Pathways sponsored the 2nd annual **STUDENT ENTREPRENEURSHIP CONFERENCE** hosted by Southwest Minnesota State University. High school students from across southwest and west central Minnesota participating in their local CEO (Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities) class and college entrepreneurs from the Center of Innovation and Entrepreneurship came together in March to network with one another, pitch business ideas, get feedback from and make quality connections with seasoned entrepreneurs, and tour local businesses.

Schools and regional businesses are working together to create an entrepreneurial culture in the region. Students are being mentored by local business owners and working toward launching their own businesses. This event provided students with the opportunity to pitch business ideas and receive feedback from other students and veteran entrepreneurs.



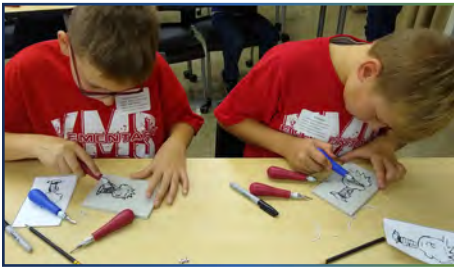
*Student Entrepreneurship Conference*



# TEACHING AND LEARNING

The **SWWC STUDENT ENRICHMENT** events this year included: Conference for Young Writers, Conference for Young Artists, Science and Nature Conference, First Tech Challenge Demo Day, Regional Spelling Bee, Culinary Skills Challenge, Photography Competition, and both Junior High and Senior High Knowledge Bowl.

These programs give students a chance to try something new that they might not experience in the regular classroom setting. These programs can be a gateway to open doors to potential higher education and career opportunities for students. Over 9,500 K-12 students from across the region participated in events during 2022-23 and we are excited to open more doors for our region's students again next year.



Students at Regional Conferences and Competitions



United Way of Southwest Minnesota  
Community Partner Check Presentation

The **SWWC FOUNDATION** raises funds through grants and donations to support student enrichment. It was created in 2017 as a 501(c)3 public charity and a 509(1)3 Type II Supporting Organization, and exists in a brother/sister relationship with SWWC. While the organizations are separate and governed by two separate board of directors, the SWWC Foundation was organized exclusively for the benefit of SWWC.

Read more about the SWWC Foundation on the last page of this report.

# TECHNOLOGY

**SWWC CYBERSECURITY** grew throughout the year in both the number of members that it serves, but also in the scope of services and recognition that it has received throughout the state and nation. SWWC Cybersecurity is now Marsh McLennan Agency's recommended Cybersecurity partner for school districts in Minnesota and our surrounding area. SWWC Cybersecurity services and staff have been recognized as leaders in mitigation efforts to help schools and organizations reduce their cyber risks and have also been viewed as leaders in the response to cybersecurity incidents that occur in schools and organizations whether or not they participate in our service. SWWC staff and leadership are regularly featured in Cybersecurity workshops and seminars throughout both locally throughout Minnesota and nationally.



*Cybersecurity Session at the IT2 Conference*



*Artificial Intelligence Training at Yellow Medicine East Schools*

As news outlets and the media began covering **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE**, namely ChatGPT, SWWC's Technology Solutions staff were ready to provide outreach and trainings to schools throughout our membership and the state. With in-person and virtual workshops available for staff awareness and development as well as our online courses available through SWWC PD on Demand, SWWC is at the forefront of research and awareness on the impacts and shifts that AI will have on education. This collaboration between SWWC's Cybersecurity and Technology Integration teams give our approach both a pedagogical, privacy and security focus that creates meaningful connections and conversations with educators and administrators.

Over the course of 2022-23, SWWC was involved in several meetings and discussions with our members who are a part of the Little Crow Telecommunications Network (LCTN) and Minnesota River Valley Education District (MRVED) Telecommunications Network Consortia. After decades of working together, the LCTN/MRVED Network members explored various solutions and opportunities with the upcoming retirement of LCTN's Executive Director in June 2024. After much discussion and careful consideration among the advisory committees of the LCTN, MRVED and SWWC Networks, it was approved in May to begin a transition of consolidating the operations of the LCTN/MRVED Wide Area Network into SWWC over the course of the 2023-24 school year. As a combined **WIDE AREA NETWORK** consortium, SWWC is looking forward to working more closely with all our members as we move through this transition and develop a cohesive network that continues to provide comprehensive, cutting-edge services.

We were thrilled to re-launch our **IT2 CONFERENCE** in October, in-person in Willmar, for its 17th run! After dealing with relentless winters and the pandemic over the past three years, we finally got back to normal, and did so with excitement and enthusiasm among our staff, exhibitors, presenters and attendees. The 2022 IT2 Conference was a huge success and has laid the foundation for what we hope to build into a statewide Education Technology Leadership professional development event for Technology Leaders, Technology Support Staff and Technology Integrationists!



*Technology Staff at the IT2 Conference*



# TECHNOLOGY

Minnesota's Student Data Privacy Law took effect on July 1, 2022, and SWWC worked diligently on behalf of our membership to create a solution providing the resources and tools necessary to be compliant with the inventory and communications requirements that schools must adhere to and provide communication on annually to parents and students. Nearly every SWWC full and associate member signed on to this valuable program and were able to meet compliance and send out their annual communication in August 2022 with ease. With nearly 4,400 unique Technology Providers identified as being used in our schools, and an average of 400 Technology Providers in use in each school district, this quickly proved a task best addressed through the power of cooperative effort!

Since the initial roll-out of the program, participation in the **SWWC DATA PRIVACY PROGRAM** has grown throughout all corners of the state, including some of the largest districts and several from the metro area. Our commitment to data privacy continues to grow with the roll-out of our Data Privacy Agreement that will be executed with Technology Providers on behalf of districts participating in the SWWC Data Privacy Program, as well as staffing that will be dedicated to ensuring that each Technology Provider approved through the program meets all of the criteria required by the state law.

SWWC's **TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION PROGRAM** has been a leading force in the region, driving collaboration among technology integrationists through regional meetings and by creating a coaching program to help teachers adopt best practices in Education Technology. We have expanded professional development opportunities through PD on Demand courses and in-person sessions, both during the school year and summer months.

Recognizing the impact of artificial intelligence in education, we have partnered with the SWWC Cybersecurity team to provide guidance and training to school districts. These initiatives have ensured success throughout the school year and positioned our regional district for future growth.



*Tech Integration Presentation*



*Tech Integration with Students at Lake Benton*

For the past two decades, SWWC's Technology team has been providing installation, support and management of **PHONE SYSTEMS** for our members through partnerships with Nortel, Shoretel and Mitel. In 2022, our staff began building a relationship with 3CX, a fully-featured and budget-friendly solution that a number of SWWC members were already enjoying. Our Technology and Network Services staff were excited to implement this new solution in several school districts and throughout SWWC's 12 locations during 2022-23. Our team provides complete planning, project management and implementation of the system to meet member needs, including an evaluation of dial-tone phone services. This service has resulted in an annual savings of 20-70% where implemented thus far, and offers significant savings in upfront and ongoing support costs through SWWC.



# SWWC

## FOUNDATION FOR INNOVATION IN EDUCATION

The **SWWC FOUNDATION** believes that students in the region, no matter where they live or how much money they have, deserve innovative and learning-rich educational opportunities so they can be positioned to learn, grow and find success.

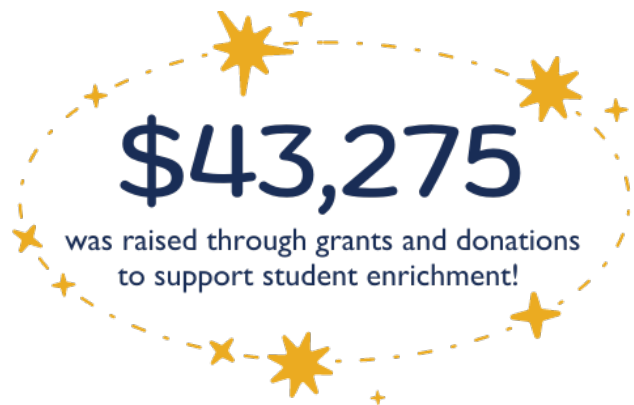
Funds raised support regional opportunities including the Career Expo, Conference for Young Artists, Conference for Young Writers, Creative Writing Contest, Culinary Skills Challenge, Photography Competition, regional Knowledge Bowl competitions, Regional Spelling Bee, Camp Aspire and the Science and Nature Conference.

These opportunities are an extension of the classroom and give students the opportunity to further explore areas of interest in a hands-on learning environment, which may lead to higher education and career choices.

Imagine the impact on our region if **EVERY CHILD** had the opportunity to discover and explore their passion in life!

### Our partners made a **HUGE** impact on our region's future leaders in 2022-23!

(July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023)



#### 2022-23 Business Partners

- Southwest Minnesota Arts Council
- Monogram Foods Loves Kids Foundation
- Southwest Initiative Foundation
- United Way of Southwest Minnesota
- United Way of McLeod County
- Schwan
- SW MN Workforce Development Board
- MDU Resources Foundation
- United Way of Nobles County
- Great River Energy
- Kandi Power Charitable Trust
- Lyon-Lincoln Electric Trust
- Meeker Cooperative Electric Trust
- Otter Tail Power Foundation
- Redwood Electric Trust
- Renville-Sibley Cooperative
- Sioux Valley Energy Customers' Trust
- Federated Rural Electric Trust
- Agralite Electric Trust
- Nobles-Murray Rural Electric Trust
- United Way of Pipestone County
- Brown County Rural Electric Trust
- Minnesota Valley Coop Light & Power Trust

#### 2022-23 Individual Partners

- Sherry Brandt
- Amber Bruns
- Bobbie & Cliff Carmody
- Matt Coleman
- Jan Fransen
- Scott & Carolyn Fuller
- Cheryl Glaeser, Achieve TFC
- Luther Heller
- Don Heuer
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- Noah Johnson
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- Stephanie Strenge
- Josh Sumption
- Lori Timmerman
- Will Thomas
- Mike & Suzi Zins
- In Memory of Geraldine Carmody by:
  - Amber Bruns
  - Mindy Halverson
  - Shelly Maes
  - Abby Polzine
  - Josh Sumption
- In Memory of Bryan Plack by Amber Bruns
- and many other donors who wished to remain anonymous

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