

## Presentations at NLIC Gatherings!

The NLIC's purpose is to provide eligible children with disabilities and their families with an intervention services system that is family-centered, community-based and culturally competent. In keeping with that purpose, the subcommittees of the NLIC welcomed the following presentations during the 2023-2024 school year:

**Northland Adaptive Recreation (formerly Courage Kenny Northland)** - Mark Hanna, longtime Northland Adaptive Recreation employee, shared that this organization, locally owned and based in the Duluth area since 1979, provides access to and support for adapted activities for people with disabilities ages 5 and up. Although they have a small staff, their robust volunteer program provides opportunities for participants to engage in cycling programs, sailing, adaptive skiing and more! Northland Adaptive Recreation also provides support for field trips for students receiving special education in their local schools to participate in curling and archery. Although there may be a small maintenance fee for equipment, no one is ever turned away from services due to an inability to pay. <https://mdfoundation.org/support-areas/northland-adaptive-recreation/>

**Lake Superior College's Fully Inclusive Initiative** - Drs. Karen Swanson (LSC) and Annette Romualdo (UMD) shared that Lake Superior College (in Duluth, MN) is in the process of developing a program to provide a fully inclusive opportunity for students with intellectual disabilities who otherwise cannot access college in a typical manner.

Through this program, students will earn meaningful credentials, which can include certificates, microcredentials, and credentials aligned with proposed national standards for inclusive postsecondary education initiatives. Students can audit classes or take courses for credit with accommodations.

This exciting opportunity will enhance the experience for all students by providing multiple means of access, engagement, and expression (UDL). <https://www.lsc.edu/diversity-equity-and-inclusion/>

## Paraprofessional Training Day

The Northern Lights Special Education Cooperative recently hosted a highly successful full-day professional development event at Esko High School for paraprofessionals across our cooperative districts. Despite adverse weather, nearly 100 paraprofessionals attended, participating in 18 sessions covering topics such as behavior modifications, empowering students, supporting the mental health of our students, and working with students with Down syndrome and autism. The day started with a panel discussion on adults with disabilities and concluded with self-care sessions, offering wellness options like stress management strategies, laughter yoga, and mindful drawing. The overwhelmingly positive feedback underscores the event's success in promoting both professional growth and personal well-being.



**Children's Dyslexia Centers** (supported by the Scottish Rite Freemasonry), located in Superior, WI, is a resource for families where a family member has Dyslexia. The goals of the Scottish Rite Freemasonry are:

- To help children with dyslexia learn to read and to reach their full potential;
- To help their families end the frustration, guilt and disruption caused by dyslexia
- To help communities by developing Children's Dyslexia Centers to help children succeed in and out of school.

To learn more, contact Melissa Nick, Director of the Children's Dyslexia Center of Superior. <https://www.childrensdyslexia-centers.org/>

**Camp Confidence/Confidence Learning Center.** Confidence Learning Center, near Brainerd, MN, provides year-round outdoor educational and recreational experiences for people of all ages with cognitive and developmental disabilities. Their areas of focus include:

- To provide opportunities with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community for language and cultural expansion, support, and education.
- To enhance the ability and self-confidence of people of all ages with developmental and cognitive disabilities.
- To educate through "hands-on" outdoor and recreation experiences while meeting individual needs.
- To facilitate exceptional learning experiences for families, direct care staff, interns, and professionals in the field of developmental and cognitive disabilities

To learn more about Confidence Learning Center, visit <https://campconfidence.com/>

**The Northern Lights Interagency Public Awareness Committee** is made up of experienced and new members from the Northern Lights Special Education Cooperative and Duluth Public Schools Interagency Committee. This year, the committee worked together to plan Provider Day, a day focused on early intervention services, that hasn't been held since 2018 due to COVID pandemic. This day is a professional development opportunity for our early intervention birth-5 years providers and allows for networking in the Duluth and surrounding areas. Provider Day 2024 will be held in October.

The committee collaborated to assemble this Annual Report to highlight the interagency work in our region made possible by the partnerships with our schools, local sector, and agency partners. The Public Awareness Committee also incorporates social media to publicize the work of the Northern Lights Interagency Council, providing support through sponsoring and advertising opportunities for our families to connect with and access resources, such as Help Me Grow early intervention referral, work-based learning options, wraparound health and wellness services, to name a few. The NLIC interagency website provides updated information for parents, caregivers, and providers as well as agency links and contact information. Check out the work of our Interagency Council at: <https://www.nlsec.org/interagency>

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NLIC  
2024 Annual Report

Interagency  
Planning  
For All

- Parent Resource Booklet
- Secondary Transition Resource Booklet/Checklist and other documents can be found at: [www.nlsec.org/parents](http://www.nlsec.org/parents)

[www.nlsec.org](http://www.nlsec.org)  
Follow us on Facebook,  
Twitter or YouTube!

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Quality education through  
cooperation and partnership

Northern  
Lights  
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2024 Annual Report

## Together we Thrive...

Jessa Cook  
Director of Special Education

First, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the amazing NLSEC staff for welcoming me to my new role as the Director of Special Education. As you can imagine, this position comes with quite a learning curve and everyone has been gracious and extremely supportive. I am grateful to be part of such an amazing organization and the kindness that I have been shown is apparent in the work that our staff do each and every day out in schools and the community supporting students, school teams, and families. Each day at school is busy and some days are harder than others but one thing is certain - together we thrive. The Northern Lights Interagency Council is another great example of teams with a variety of skill sets coming together to provide an even greater support network for the individuals they serve.

While we can't say that all things in our schools are necessarily back to business as usual - there are several skills that we have worked on over the last few years that are now more commonplace as part of our practice. For example, while our Northern Lights Cooperative staff try to make it to the majority of their meetings/training in person - the reality is that they also travel across our 6,000 sq. mile service area. Becoming masters at running meetings that are "hybrid" has allowed us to attend to more of the needs of our districts by attending virtually, whereas in the past, we wouldn't have been able to.

While interrupted learning during COVID had an impact on many students, we are seeing positive results with students back in classrooms and spending more time with peers. Although kids are truly resilient, we do continue to see a rise in mental health needs for students and for those who work in special education. Now is the time to help ensure that individualized instruction continues to be put into place and make sure that the greatest impacts for success are happening for our students and staff.

Remember - you can help your local school district. Each of our districts continues to have positions that remain unfilled and those staffing shortages can impact the level of effectiveness that teams provide. We want to make sure that our students have as many supportive adults looking out for and mentoring them as possible! Together we thrive and your local schools need you! Positions include not only teachers but also paraprofessionals, bus drivers, substitutes, etc. Each and every one of these positions plays a crucial role in developing the unique culture of a school building! We can't wait to see you at our member sites doing what we love - supporting our fabulous students!



## NLSEC Parent Advisory Committee

The Parent Advisory & Family Support Committee includes parents, county supports, school personnel, and other agencies who support and represent the NLSEC member districts and work through the Northern Lights Interagency Council. This group strives to organize activities each year to best support children with disabilities.

During the four yearly meetings, the Director of Special Education, Jessa Cook, provides the members with a variety of special education topics to discuss, updates on new legislation, teaches the group about components of due process and also provides other information that relates to families of children with disabilities. This year the group is working to shift the focus to even more parent-driven topics and ways to support other parents. This is shown through the Parent Coach program. This is a group where parents of students with disabilities volunteer their time to support other parents new to special education.

**The Parent Advisory Committee is always looking for new members!** If you are interested in joining the Parent Advisory Committee, please feel free to reach out to Jessa Cook for more information at 218-655-5018 x7006 or [jcook@nlsec.org](mailto:jcook@nlsec.org). Or visit the Parent Advisory & Family Support Committee website at: <https://www.nlsec.org/parents/parentsupportcommittee>



NLIC  
2024 Annual Report

## Interagency Early Intervention Committee

Interagency Collaboration in Northeast Minnesota

Northern Lights Special Education Cooperative and ISD 709 participate in the Region 3 Interagency Early Intervention Committee (IEIC). The IEIC is responsible for planning and implementing region-wide child find and public awareness procedures and activities to increase awareness of, and access to, early intervention systems and supports for our youngest learners. The statewide referral portal is called Help Me Grow, <https://helpmegrowmn.org/HMG/index.html>.

Help Me Grow is a statewide initiative to connect young children, who may have developmental delays or disabilities, and their families, to free early intervention services.

The Region 3 IEIC is made up of educators, public health providers, social services providers, and parents who meet several times per year. These committee members come from the following counties: Carlton, St. Louis, Itasca, Koochiching, Pine, Lake and Cook, as well as all of the school districts within Region 3.

## What is Work Based Learning?

Work-based learning (WBL) is formalized learning with instruction occurring at the school and at a community-based setting with an employer in the geographical region of the school. Work-based learning is a collaborative endeavor between a student, their parent/guardian, an employer, and the school that engages students in real-world activities. Through school involvement and defined learning, students have the opportunity to earn school credit for the supervised WBL.

A formalized WBL involves an appropriately licensed teacher with a work-based learning coordinator endorsement license (or variance) who closely supervises the worksite activities and is responsible for all the paperwork associated with this experience (training plans, agreements, safety training, seminar class, evaluations, recordkeeping, site observation, etc.). The experience provides students with opportunities to build career awareness, explore careers, and develop critical thinking, decision-making and problem-solving skills.

NLSEC employs three [Work-Based Learning Coordinators](#) who assist students in obtaining employment in community job sites in twelve member school districts. Through this program, students can learn firsthand the skills necessary to be good, marketable employees.



## Mentoring Day is a transition conference for high school students with disabilities.

The day includes break-out sessions for students, time to visit with exhibitors, and a motivational keynote speaker. The main objective of the day is to provide students with information to assist in preparing for life after high school. Throughout the day students attend different breakout sessions of their choosing where they will have an opportunity to learn about various careers, employment skills, money management, post-secondary training options, apprenticeship options, recreational activities, driver's education, self-advocacy skills, interviewing skills, and transition planning. Students also have an opportunity to meet with various exhibitors and employers from local and state colleges/training institutes, apprenticeships, employment agencies, recreational/leisure groups, county supports, and self-advocacy agencies and supports.

There was also a learning strand just for parents! Parents of students with disabilities had an opportunity to learn about the importance of transition planning and how to better prepare their

students to transition from high school into the adult world and to live as independently as possible. Past topics have included: parent rights in the special education process, what is secondary transition and what does it look like in high school, guardianship, county services, vocational rehabilitation services, self-advocacy, driving accommodations and more. The schedule of the day included time for parents to visit with exhibitors and to hear from various service providers and agencies about what they offer and what the transition process should look like for a student. Parents had time to ask questions and network with other parents.

This year's event was held on March 11, 2024, at Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College. A new feature of Mentoring Day 2024 was a Career and College Exploreathon. This portion of the event was put on by collaborative efforts of the Northeast MN Office of Job Training (JET), Career Force, Northern Lights Interagency Council and Interagency Coordinating Council of Duluth. The focus was to provide high school-aged students an opportunity to connect with businesses and post-secondary education institutions in our area for current and/or future employment & training opportunities.

## Parent Resources

Comprehensive resources are available to parents, one for parents of preschool and school-age children; and another for parents of children transitioning out of high school into the "real world".

Hard copies are available upon request or online at: <https://www.nlsec.org/parents>

### Parent Resource Booklet

This publication is for parents and guardians of preschool and school-age children. The purpose of this book is to provide a comprehensive resource and local directory with information regarding:

- Special education (overview and referral information)
- County-based services
- Behavioral/mental health resources
- Community-based resources
- Advocacy
- Early Hearing Detection and Intervention
- Preschool-age resources
- Disability-specific resources
- Assistive Technology
- Child development resources
- Web-based resources

## Parent Resource Booklet

For parents/guardians of preschool and school-age children



[www.nlsec.org/parents](https://www.nlsec.org/parents)

## Secondary Transition Resource Booklet

A Guide to Preparing You and Your Child For Life After High School



[www.nlsec.org/parents](https://www.nlsec.org/parents)

## Secondary Transition Resource Booklet

Transitioning out of high school into the "real world" can be a very stressful and emotional time for both students and families. There is a lot of information to be aware of when planning for life after high school. This booklet was organized to assist families, students, and educators with the necessary information for community resources and transitional information within St. Louis, Carlton, Lake, Pine and Aitkin counties.

Hard copies available upon request or print a digital copy at: <https://www.nlsec.org/parents>

## Secondary Transition - planning checklist

by: Northern Lights Special Education Cooperative and the Interagency Coordinating Council of Duluth

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

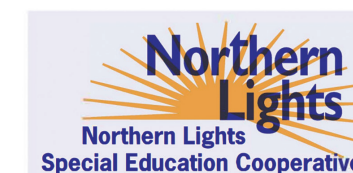
School Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### Introduction

The Secondary Transition planning process should take into account all of the necessary components that will help facilitate the student's transition to adulthood. Most importantly to consider and remember, is that the student's skills and interests will determine which items on this checklist are relevant and whether these items should be addressed in the IEP.

Transition is unique to each individual student and based on where they and/or their family see's them in adulthood. It is also an important time to identify and build adult supports based on the students individual needs.

Use this checklist as a discussion in preparing for life after high school.



Quality education through cooperation and partnership

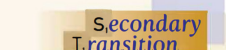


Interagency Coordinating Council of Duluth (ICCOD)

Collaborates to ensure coordinated services for individuals with disabilities, birth to 22 years, and their families

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p: 218-336-8740  
f: 218-336-8773  
isd709.org



### Is your child on track?

Help Me Grow helps you know.  
(And helps you know what to do next.)

[HelpMeGrowMN.org](https://www.helpmegrowmn.org)  
1-866-693-4769

Help Me Grow is an interagency initiative of the State of Minnesota (Departments of Education, Health and Human Services) in partnership with school districts and local services agencies.



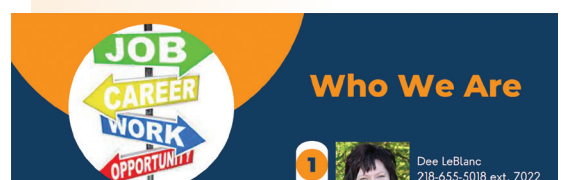
### What is Help Me Grow?

Help Me Grow provides resources for families to understand developmental milestones and learn if there are concerns. It is a statewide referral system which partners with school districts and all local service agencies.



### Thank you so much to the Employers who support our Work Based Learning Program.

For a complete list, visit the NLSEC WBL website at: [www.nlsec.org/services/wbl](https://www.nlsec.org/services/wbl) or view the [employer list](#) here.



### Who We Are

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### Why Choose WBL?

WBL bridges the gap between school and careers. Through structured employer engagement, WBL helps students build on their classroom-based instruction by developing and strengthening technical skills and employability skills in preparation for future careers.

School-community partnerships ensure that our youth are prepared for their next steps after high school graduation throughout the education pipeline. Minnesota has an unprecedented collaboration between school and employment support agencies to prepare students with disabilities for college and career success.

"Building Students' Academic, Life Skills, and Experiences"

## 2023-24 NLIC Secondary Transition Subcommittee

NLIC Secondary Transition Sub-Committee is committed to [Minnesota's E1MN initiative](#). E1MN is a state-agency partnership advancing employment first between MN Department of Human Services, MN Department of Education and the MN Department of Employment and Economic Development. The main goal is to work together to deliver a more seamless and timely employment support system for youth and adults with disabilities. The collaboration strengthens the partnership with school IEP teams and agencies, such as Vocational Rehabilitation Services, State Services for the Blind, Waiver/County Case Managers and other service providers.

The focus is setting common goals among agencies, such as; aligning common values, systems and practices, facilitating coordination of services and supports, promoting collaborative partnerships with youth, families and professionals and ensuring consistent transition planning expectations for youth and families. NLSEC has built a local E1MN group, comprised of VRS/SSB, county/waiver case managers, WBL Coordinators and other

service providers in the 5 counties served. For the remainder of the 2023-24 school year and into the 2024-25 school year, the local team will begin an assessment to gather baseline data on where services are at and determine goals to work in order to support all 13 school districts.

