



MINNESOTA STEM ECOSYSTEM

Third Quarter, July 2026

From Classrooms to Careers: Drone Technology in Minnesota Schools

Students across Minnesota are gaining hands-on experience with one of today's fastest-growing technologies thanks to innovative drone education initiatives led by the **Southeast Service Cooperative (SSC)** and the **Minnesota FFA Association**. Through the Minnesota STEM Ecosystem Partnership Grant Program, these complementary efforts are helping educators introduce students to emerging technologies while building awareness of career opportunities in aviation, engineering, precision agriculture, and other high-demand STEM fields.

SSC's STEM Lending Library is making drone technology more accessible to schools by providing educators with ready-to-use equipment, curriculum resources, and professional learning opportunities. Through the Lending Library, Mobile Science Lab, and regional training events, schools can incorporate drones, virtual reality, and other emerging technologies into classroom instruction without the significant cost of purchasing specialized equipment.

At the same time, the **Minnesota FFA Association** is preparing students for **the future of agriculture** through its new Drone Grant Program. During the program's first year, **eleven agricultural education programs from across Minnesota were selected through a competitive application process to receive classroom drone packages, educator training, and curriculum resources.** The initiative is introducing students to careers in precision agriculture, automation, engineering, and natural resource management while strengthening connections between education and industry.

"Any time we can bring real world examples into the classroom is a win for me. The Drone Project has taken my students to another level of learning. Students were able to see a lot of great current world examples of how drones are beginning to be used for so many different things. Having students get a taste of being a drone pilot is such a neat experience and I was so glad we could provide them such a great experience."

-Stewartville Middle School Teacher

Bringing Industry into to the Classroom

This summer, the Minnesota State Centers of Excellence for Agriculture, Energy, and Engineering & Applied Manufacturing welcomed a statewide cohort of 12 educators to St. Cloud to launch the Educator Externship Program—an initiative designed to strengthen connections between classrooms, careers, and Minnesota industry.

The cohort represents schools and colleges from across Minnesota, with educators teaching agriculture, manufacturing, engineering, computer science, and other career-connected fields spanning grade levels from sixth grade through college.

A key highlight of the St. Cloud experience was a visit to New Flyer, where educators received an immersive look at modern manufacturing and sustainable transportation production.





Preparing Students for an AI & Computer Science Future

Artificial intelligence and computer science are rapidly transforming nearly every industry, creating new opportunities—and new responsibilities—for Minnesota's education system. Through the Minnesota STEM Ecosystem Partnership Grant Program, educators and students are gaining access to professional learning, classroom resources, and hands-on experiences that help prepare them for a future where AI, data, and digital technologies are essential workforce skills. By connecting schools with higher education, industry experts, and statewide partners, these initiatives are helping ensure Minnesota learners are ready for tomorrow's innovation economy.

Several Partnership Grant projects are advancing this work across the state. **Southeast Service Cooperative** established a Southeast MN AI Taskforce, representing a broad and diverse cross-section of districts throughout the region tasked with creating an AI Literacy Framework to help educators confidently integrate artificial intelligence into the classroom.

The **Science Museum of Minnesota** is preparing to launch its AI Foundations for Educators professional learning series, providing K–12 educators with practical classroom resources and strategies for teaching artificial intelligence concepts. Minnesota educators will gather on August 3 for the Second Annual Minnesota Computer Science Educator Conference (MN+CS), hosted by the **Raspberry Pi Foundation** in partnership with the Minnesota Chapter of the Computer Science Teachers Association (CSTA). The conference is designed to expand access to high-quality computer science education across Minnesota. Educators are eligible to receive a professional learning stipend reducing barriers to participation.

Together, these initiatives demonstrate Minnesota's commitment to building AI literacy, expanding computer science education, and preparing the next generation with the knowledge and skills needed to thrive in an increasingly technology-driven workforce.

Upcoming Events and Conferences

August 12, 2026 Don't miss an exciting day filled with innovation, inspiration, and meaningful connections at the **Minneapolis STEM Education Conference** in Maple Grove. Come together with other educators, STEM specialists, and school leaders to gain new insights and discover new resources to promote imaginative learning and engagement for your students. [Learn More](#)

August 27, 2026 Join us at **STEM Day at the Fair** hosted by SciMathMN. This year's theme is, "Hands-On STEM: Build It. Test It. Change the World" inviting young minds to roll up their sleeves and experience the excitement of science, technology, engineering, and math through real-world building, experimenting, and problem-solving! [Learn More](#)

November 12-13, 2026 Join us at the Career and Technical Education Summit! This is Minnesota's biggest gathering of CTE educators, leaders, workforce and industry partners, and community stakeholders across secondary and higher education. It's where the CTE community comes together to learn, share ideas, and work through the challenges shaping the field. [Learn More](#)

Learn more about these events and more at stemmn.org.