

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 Erickson, Lead Coordinator

Colleen Feller, Director

Betsy Narr, Program Coordinator

Sydney Navoichick, Program Associate

Katie Wenzel, Lead Coordinator

BOARD

Andrew Blake | VAST Data

Nancy Diekmann, Chair | Xcel Energy

Holly Fistler | Thrivent

Loan Ngo, Treasurer | Henkel

Ashley Perala | Xcel Energy

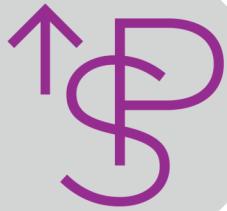
Marilyn Porter, Secretary | Metro Transit

Denise Ratzlaff | Wells Fargo

Maija Sedziolarz | Science Museum of MN Retiree

Jonathan Wiese | 3.2.1, Inc.





2024-2025 CROSS-PROGRAM SUMMARY

11,193

Participants

1,142

Volunteer hours

720

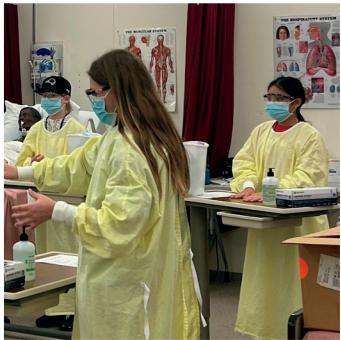
Volunteers

\$90,089

Raised

\$15,177

Scholarships Awarded



PROGRAMS

National Programs

Braille Challenge

Future City Competition

Spelling Bee

Young Authors Conference

CreativeCon & Creativity Festival

Knowledge Bowl

STEMLink

HIGHLIGHTS

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

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

Our Creatives celebrated their 30th anniversary in 2025

98 Senior High teams & 100 Middle Grades teams

STEMLink looks to expand locations in 2025-2026

STUDENTS

6,383

2,322

1,167

970

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



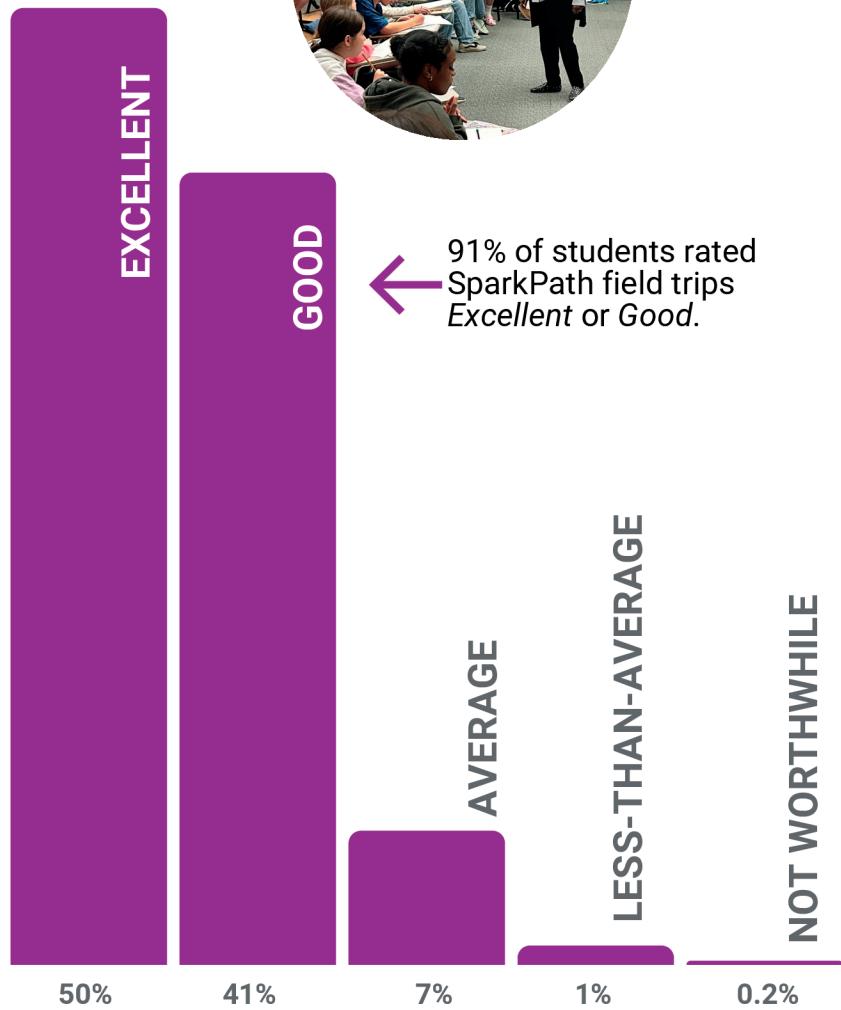
"I loved everything I saw— I visited every session!"

- 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

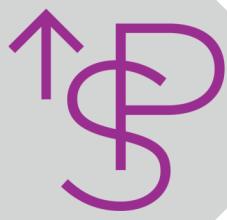
100%

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