



Farm to School in Minnesota

Fourth Annual Survey of School Food
Service Leaders



By Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
in partnership with
the Minnesota School Nutrition Association

March 2012

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The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) works locally and globally at the intersection of policy and practice to ensure fair and sustainable food, farm and trade systems. IATP's Local Foods program works to build thriving local food systems by strengthening small and medium-scale sustainable farming, expanding market opportunities for locally produced food and improving access to healthy food choices. More information can be found at www.iatp.org/localfoods and www.farm2schoolmn.org.

IATP's work on Farm to School is funded in part by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota's Prevention Minnesota Initiative, which works to improve the health of Minnesotans by combating the root causes of cancer and heart disease, of which unhealthy eating is a leading factor.

The Minnesota School Nutrition Association (MSNA) is a nonprofit, state-wide professional association working to ensure that all children have access to healthy meals and nutrition education in Minnesota. Founded in 1956, MSNA represents over 2,700 foodservice professionals working in K-12 schools. More information can be found at www.mnsa.org.

About this survey

Aimed at educating children about where and how their food is grown, strengthening local economies and supporting healthy eating habits, the Farm to School (F2S) movement is rapidly growing. The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) has supported Farm to School efforts locally and nationally since 2007. Our work has included training for K-12 school staff and farmers, building relationships with allied businesses, promotions, outreach, research and policy change.

Food service leaders at all 333 K-12 school districts in Minnesota were encouraged to participate in this survey, the fourth annual survey in our series. Responses from 184 districts were received. Their feedback is summarized in this report.

Key Highlights

- The number of Minnesota schools districts engaged in Farm to School has risen sharply from fewer than 20 districts in 2006 to 145 districts in 2011.
- The 145 school districts now engaged in Farm to School:
 - range in size from about 100 to 39,000 enrolled students.
 - are in every region of the state and include rural, urban and suburban communities.
 - are conducting Farm to School at 884 locations attended by approximately 558,000 students, or 68 percent of Minnesota's K-12 population.
- IATP estimates that total F2S purchases by Minnesota school districts in 2011 were approximately \$1,328,000. This is roughly double the estimated amount for 2010.
- Districts are incorporating a growing diversity of foods into their Farm to School programs. Twenty-seven different Farm to School foods were used by more than 10 districts in 2011, up from just 11 F2S foods that were used this widely in 2009. Apples, cucumbers, tomatoes, watermelon, potatoes, winter squash, peppers, carrots, cantaloupe and sweet corn are most commonly used. The vast majority of the Farm to School foods used were rated "very successful" or "somewhat successful" by school food service leaders.
- Among districts engaged in Farm to School, 75 percent purchased directly from a farmer or producer-owned business, up from 44 percent in 2009. Seventy-four percent reported buying Farm to School foods through a distributor in 2011, the same figure as for 2009. Some districts purchased Farm to School foods in both ways.
- Fifty-three percent of participating districts indicate that they developed closer relationships with farmers in their area over the past year.
- Feedback about F2S programming continues to be very favorable, with the majority of respondents indicating that the feedback they have received has been positive or very positive.
- Forty-three percent of participating food service leaders perceive that student consumption of fruits and vegetables increases when these foods are part of their Farm to School program.
- Menuing Farm to School foods in the cafeteria, F2S communications/promotions at school, and celebrating Farm to School Month (September) were the most common Farm to School activities reported by districts in 2011. We also saw an increase in the number of districts that directly involved farmers in educating students about Farm to School this year and more schools that are growing food on-site.
- The most commonly cited barriers to Farm to School are: extra labor/prep time; difficulty finding farmers to purchase from directly; and price/"fitting Farm to School food into my budget." "Student resistance to less-processed foods" was infrequently cited by participating districts as a major challenge.
- When asked what additional F2S support or training would be most helpful, respondents indicated the strongest interest in help finding farmers, more Farm to School recipes and strategies for engaging students.
- When asked about the level of scratch cooking districts did, 43 percent of districts indicated that they did more scratch or modified scratch cooking in 2011 than in prior years. Forty-seven percent indicate that they purchased more fresh produce (from all sources) in 2011 than they did in 2010.
- Looking ahead to the 2012-13 school year, all but one district that is currently engaged in F2S indicate that they will either expand their F2S programming or continue it at the same level. Twenty additional districts indicate that they plan to pursue Farm to School for the first time in 2012-13.

A note to readers

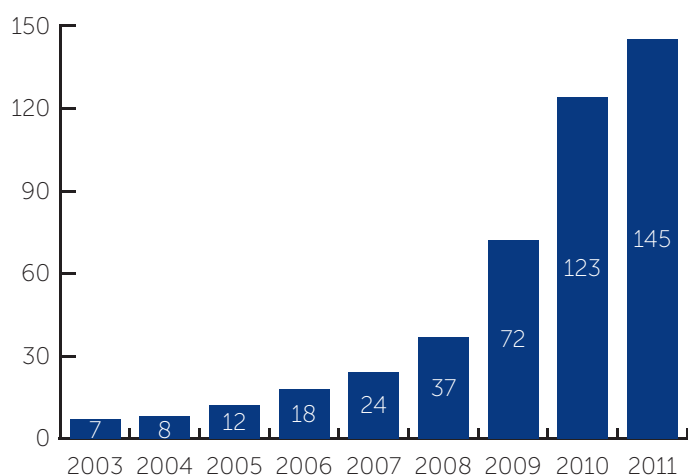
- This survey address calendar year 2011.
- In this survey, we requested information about purchases of Farm to School (F2S) foods grown or raised in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, North Dakota and South Dakota as some districts consider nearby areas of adjacent states to be part of their F2S program.
- The percentage figures shown below are based on the number of respondents to each given question.

Survey Questions & Responses

1. In what year did your Farm to School program begin?

145 districts engaged in Farm to School (F2S) in calendar year 2011, up from 123 districts in 2010 and fewer than 20 in 2006. The rapid growth in Farm to School participation among Minnesota school districts is shown below:

Minnesota school districts engaged in Farm to School



2. How many of your school feeding sites were engaged in Farm to School activity in 2011?

The vast majority of districts with F2S programs reported that they engaged in F2S activity at all or nearly all of the school feeding sites in their districts. Specifically, districts engaged in F2S indicate that they have 948 feeding sites in total, with F2S activity reported at 884 sites in 2011. The schools participating in F2S serve approximately 558,000 students, or 68 percent of Minnesota's K-12 population.

3. Did you purchase any Farm to School foods (grown in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, South Dakota or North Dakota) directly from a farmer or producer-owned business during the 2011 calendar year?

Of the respondents, 107 districts answered "Yes," up from 86 districts in 2010. Among districts engaged in Farm to School, 75% purchased directly from a farmer or producer-owned business. Virtually all of these districts purchased from one or more producers in Minnesota. 14 districts reported purchasing directly from producers in Wisconsin. Purchases from Iowa, North Dakota and South Dakota appear to be very limited.

4. How would you rate your experience purchasing food directly from a farmer or producer-owned business? (1 = Trouble-free, 7 = Very Problematic)

The average rating was 2.3.

5. Over the past year, have you developed closer relationships with farmers in your area?

Fifty-three percent of districts answered "Yes." Thirty-five percent answered "No" and 13 percent answered "Not sure."

6. In 2011, did you arrange in advance for any farmers to produce foods specifically for your district?

Thirty-eight districts said "Yes."

7. Did you purchase any Farm to School foods (grown in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, South Dakota or North Dakota) through a distributor during the 2011 calendar year?

Among the districts engaged in Farm to School 74 percent reported buying Farm to School foods through a distributor in 2011. (Note that some districts purchase F2S foods both via distributors and directly from farmers).

8. How would you rate your experience purchasing food through a distributor? (1 = Trouble-free, 7 = Very Problematic)

The average rating was 1.9.

9. Is your school district's food service self-operated or it is managed by an outside food service management company?

	Number of responding districts
Self-operated	110
Taher	18
Chartwells	4
Sodexo	2
Inac	1
Aramark	0

10. Which of the following Farm to School foods (from Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, South Dakota and/or North Dakota) did you use during the 2011 calendar year? Please rate the overall level of success you experienced with each food item used.

In 2011, the 27 F2S foods shown below were used by more than 10 districts in Minnesota. This reflects a significant increase in the number and variety of F2S foods being widely used by Minnesota schools. By comparison, only 11 F2S foods were being used by more than 10 districts in 2009. Most F2S foods were characterized by school food service leaders as “very” or “somewhat” successful.

Food Item	Number of districts using item in 2011	Number of districts using item in 2009	Very successful	Somewhat successful	Not successful
Apples	117	67	81%	17%	0%
Cucumbers	81		78%	12%	0%
Tomatoes	77	17	77%	17%	0%
Watermelon	70	15	74%	23%	1%
Potatoes	64	25	72%	17%	2%
Squash, Winter	60	17	55%	30%	8%
Peppers	57	22	74%	14%	2%
Carrots	57	15	74%	11%	5%
Cantaloupe	55	14	76%	18%	4%
Sweet Corn	51	17	79%	10%	4%
Onions	48	12	79%	15%	0%
Cabbage	47	11	62%	34%	5%
Wild Rice	36		75%	22%	0%
Green Beans	31		61%	32%	3%
Zucchini	30		60%	27%	3%
Radishes	29		55%	41%	0%
Salad Greens	29		79%	7%	7%
Broccoli	26		62%	35%	4%
Beets	23		17%	65%	13%
Pumpkins	22		59%	23%	5%
Spinach	20		75%	15%	0%
Honey	20		85%	15%	0%
Herbs	14		86%	7%	0%
Turnips, Parsnips and/or Rutabagas	14		43%	43%	14%
Bison	13		77%	23%	0%
Cauliflower	12		75%	33%	0%
Grains	12		75%	25%	0%

Other Farm to School foods used by 10 or fewer districts included: apple cider, grapes, cranberries, honeydew melon, pears, cheese, dried beans, turkey, beef, pork, or chicken raised on independent family farms, asparagus, bok choy, pea pods, edamame, Native and wild foods.

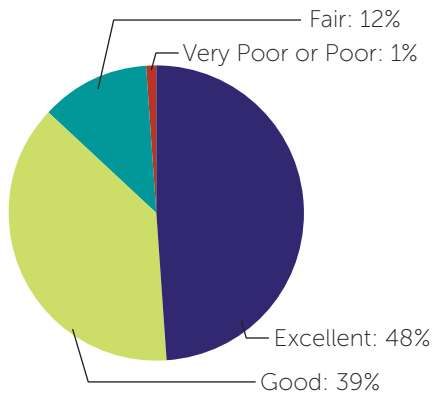
Note: Percentages for individual foods will not sum to 100 percent where respondents indicated that they used a given item but did not rate the success level.

11. What dollar value of Farm to School foods did you purchase in calendar year 2011? (For the purposes of this survey, fluid milk purchases were not included.)

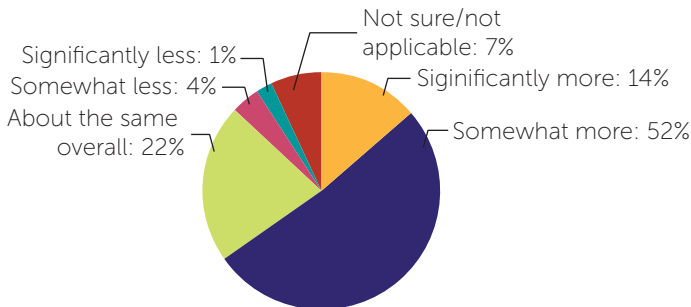
Ninety-one percent of respondents purchased between \$1 and \$50,000 of Farm to School products, with the majority purchasing between \$500 and \$10,000. IATP estimates that the total amount of Farm to School purchases by Minnesota school districts in 2011 was approximately \$1,328,000. This is roughly double the estimated amount for 2010.

12. Overall, how would you rate the quality of the Farm to School foods you used in 2010?

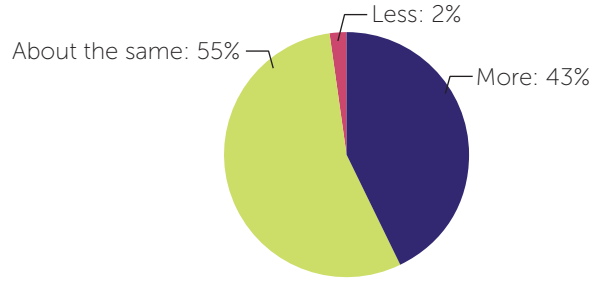
Eighty-seven percent of respondents characterized quality as either “Excellent” or “Good.”



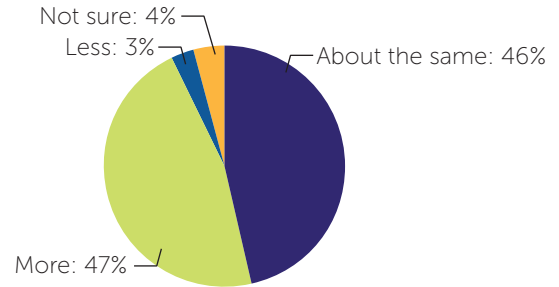
13. On a cost-per-serving basis, how do Farm to School foods typically compare to non-Farm to School items?



14. Did you engage in more, less or about the same level of scratch and/or modified scratch cooking (e.g., combining purchased and scratch ingredients) in 2011 than in prior years?



15. Overall, was the quantity of fresh produce you purchased in 2011 more, less or about the same as in 2010 (from all sources, measured in pounds)?



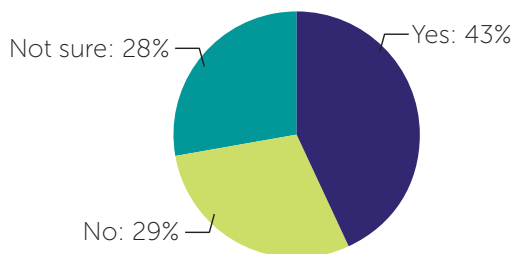
16. How would you describe the feedback you have received about your Farm to School activities?

Feedback being received by foodservice leaders about F2S programming continues to be very favorable. Respondents indicated no negative feedback from students, parents, administrators, farmers or their communities in 2011. Only one district indicated negative feedback from foodservice staff or teachers.

	Very positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very negative	Not sure
Your own staff	19%	52%	27%	0	1%	1%
Students	15%	56%	27%	0	0	2%
Parents	14%	41%	29%	0	0	16%
Teachers	16%	42%	33 %	1%	0	8%
Administrators	23%	40 %	28%	0	0	9%
Your community	11%	38%	0	0	0	51%
Your farmers/producers	23 %	43 %	20%	0	0	14%

17. In your opinion, do students increase their consumption of fruits and vegetables when those foods are part of your Farm to School program?

Forty-three percent of responding districts indicated that students increase their consumption of fruits and vegetables when they are part of a Farm to School program.



18. As a food service leader in your district, who have you partnered with on your F2S efforts within the school environment?

The most commonly cited types of partners were agriculture, science, and Family and Consumer Science (FACS) teachers.

19. Please check the Farm to School activities that you or your school engaged in during 2011:

The most common activities were menuing Farm to School foods in the cafeteria, F2S communications/promotions at school, and celebrating Farm to School Month (September). We also saw an increase in the number of districts that directly involved farmers in educating students about Farm to School this year and more schools that are growing food on-site.

Answer Options	Response Percent
Menuing farm to school foods in our cafeteria	84%
Communications/promotions at school (cafeteria signage, newsletters, etc.)	59%
Celebrated Farm to School Month	56%
Taste testing/demos in the cafeteria	51%
Media (e.g., press interviews, media coverage of your F2S program)	27%
School garden or orchard activities	26%
Used cafeteria food coaches (e.g., adults or students in the cafeteria encouraging students to eat healthy/local foods)	23%
Used foods grown on school property in the cafeteria (demos, menuing, etc.)	21%
Received locally grown food that was donated for free by farmers, community members or others	20%
Had farmer(s) visit the cafeteria, classroom or other school-related setting	17%
Food waste management (like diverting food waste for composting or hog feed)	14%
Growing food in a greenhouse	10%
Student field trips to farms	10%

F2S activities in the classroom	9%
Community events (invitations to lunch, corn shucking contests, etc.)	6%
Freezing, canning, drying or storing Farm to School foods	6%
Provided opportunities for children to interact with farm animals	5%
Students coordinating with local farmers to purchase Farm to School foods (a.k.a "foraging")	2%

20. Are you a member of the Minnesota School Nutrition Association (MSNA)?

104 districts answered "Yes."

21. How big a challenge are the following issues for you in your Farm to School efforts?

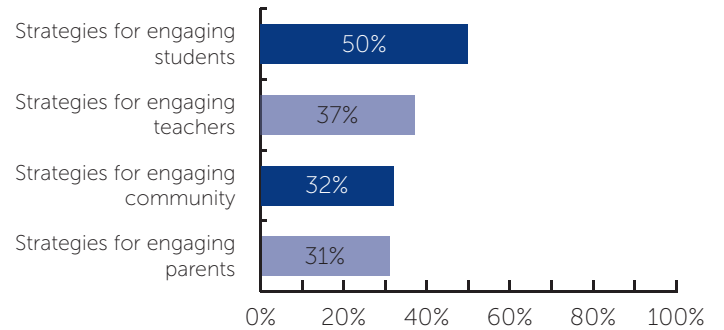
Consistent with our findings for the last several years, we noted that the major challenges have remained Extra labor/prep time for local product; difficulty finding farmers to purchase from directly; and price/fitting Farm to School food into my budget.

Answer Options	Major challenge	Minor challenge	Not a challenge
Extra labor/prep time for local product	45%	43%	12%
Difficulty finding farmers to purchase from directly	40%	40%	20%
Price/fitting Farm to School food into my budget	37%	50%	13%
Concerns about on-farm food safety requirements	33%	50%	17%
Don't have the equipment, facilities or staff skills that we need	27%	50%	23%
Prime vendor/distributor doesn't offer the local products we want	25%	43%	32%
Student resistance to less processed foods	14%	39%	46%

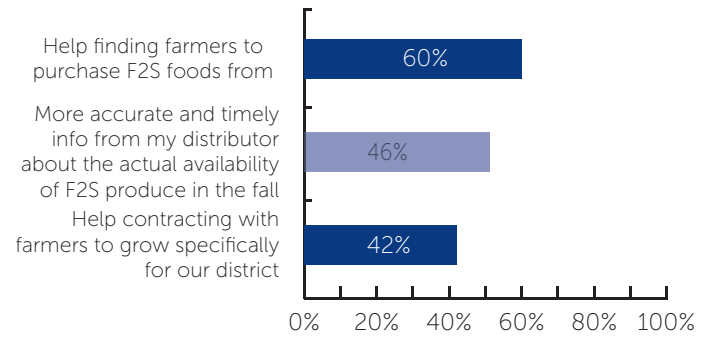
22. What additional support or training would be most helpful in starting or expanding your Farm to School program?

The following percentage of respondents selected these types of support/training:

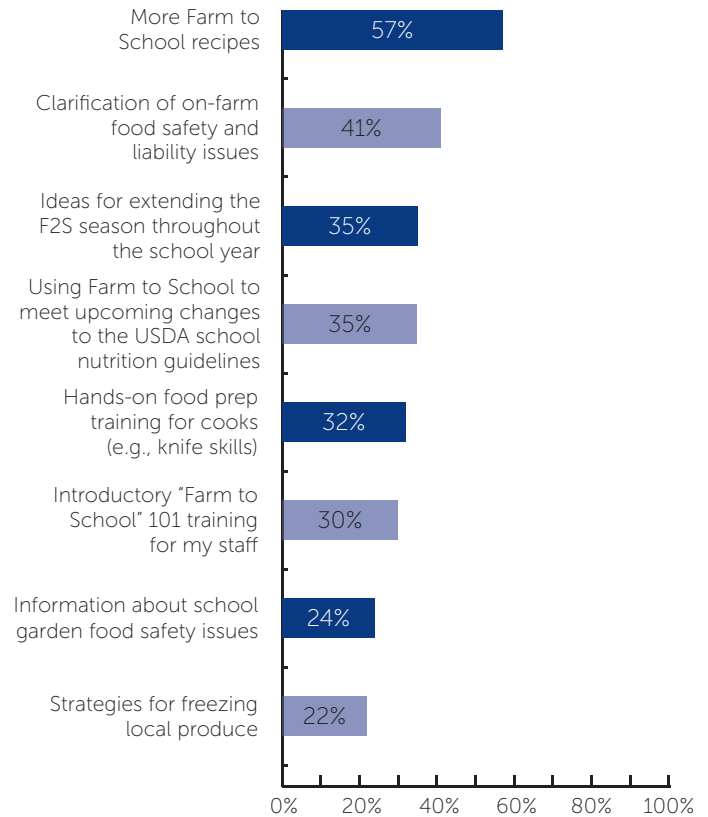
F2S Engagement Strategies



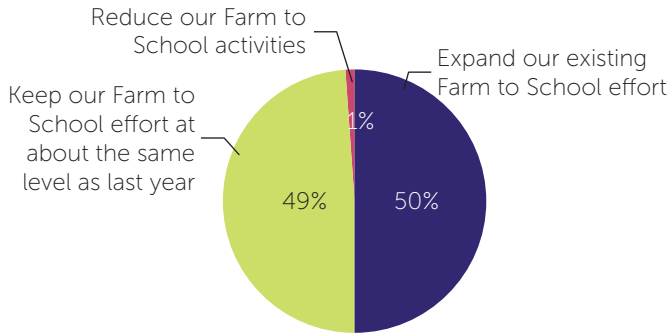
Food Procurement



Staff and Program Development



23. Looking ahead to the 2012-13 school year, do you plan to:



Minnesota School Districts Engaged in Farm to School

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Ada-Borup Public Schools | Cleveland Public School | Holdingford Public Schools |
| Adrian Public Schools | Clinton-Graceville-Beardsley ISD | Hopkins Public Schools |
| Albany Area Schools | Cloquet | Houston Public Schools |
| Albert Lea Schools | Columbia Heights Public Schools | Hutchinson Public Schools |
| Alexandria School District | Cook County Schools | Inver Grove Heights Public School |
| Anoka-Hennepin School District | Crookston Public Schools | Jordan Public Schools |
| Atwater Cosmos Grove City Public School | Dawson-Boyd Public Schools | Kenyon-Wanamingo School District |
| Battle Lake Public Schools | Delano School District | Lac qui Parle Valley School District |
| Becker Public Schools | Deer River ISD | Lakeview Public Schools |
| Belle Plaine School District | Dover-Eyota Public Schools | Lakeville Area Public Schools |
| Bemidji Area Schools | Duluth School District | Lanesboro Public Schools |
| Benson Public Schools | East Central School District | Lincoln HI-Ivanhoe Public School |
| Bertha-Hewitt Public Schools | Eastern Carver County Schools | Little Falls Community Schools |
| Bird Island Olivia Lake Lillian ISD | Eden Prairie Schools | Lynd Public School |
| Bloomington Prairie School District | Eden Valley Watkins Public Schools | Madelia Public Schools |
| Bloomington Public Schools | Elk River Area School District | Mahnomen Public School |
| Brainerd Public Schools | Eveleth-Gilbert Public Schools | Mahtomedi Public Schools |
| Browerville Public School | Faribault Public School | Maple Lake Public School |
| Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose Schools | Forest Lake Area Schools | Mankato Area Public Schools |
| Byron Public Schools | Fridley Public Schools | Marshall Public School |
| Caledonia School District | Fulda Public School | McGregor Public Schools |
| Cambridge-Isanti Public Schools | Gibbon-Fairfax-Winthrop ISD | Menahga Public Schools |
| Canby Public School | Goodhue Public Schools | Minneapolis Public Schools |
| Cannon Falls Schools | Grand Meadow ISDI | Minnetonka Public Schools |
| Centennial School District | Hastings Public Schools | Minnewaska Area Schools |
| Chatfield Public Schools | Hermantown Community Schools | Montevideo Public Schools |
| Chisago Lakes School District | Hibbing Public School District | Mora Public School |
| Chisholm Public Schools | Hills-Beaver Creek School District | Morris Area Schools |

Mountain Lake Public School	Robbinsdale Area School District	St. Paul Public Schools
Murray County Central Schools	Rochester Public School	Stillwater Area Public Schools
New London-Spicer Schools	Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan Public Schools	Triton School District
New Prague Area Schools	Rothsay Public School	Verndale Public School
Norman County West Public Schools	Round Lake-Brewster School Districts	Virginia School District
North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale ISD	Royalton Public School District	Wabasso Public School District
Northfield Public Schools	Rush City School District	Waconia Public Schools
Onamia Public Schools	Rushford-Peterson Schools	Wadena-Deer Creek Public Schools
Orono Schools	Sartell-St. Stephen Schools	Waseca Public Schools
Osseo Area Schools	Sauk Rapids-Rice Schools	Watertown Mayer School District
Owatonna Public Schools	Shakopee Public Schools	Waterville-Elysain-Morristown Pub. Schools
Perham-Dent Public Schools	Sibley East-Arlington Schools	Wayzata Public Schools
Pine City Public Schools	South St. Paul Public Schools	West St. Paul-Mendota Heights- Eagan Area Schools
Pine River-Backus Schools	South Washington County Schools	Westonka Public School
Pipestone Area School District	Springfield Public Schools	White Bear Lake Area Schools
Plainview-Elgin-Millville Community Schools	St. Cloud Area School	Willmar Public Schools
Princeton Public Schools	St. Francis Independent School District	Windom Area Schools
Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools	St. James Public Schools	Winona Area Public Schools
Red Wing Public Schools	St. Louis County Schools	Worthington School District
Redwood Area Schools	St. Louis Park Public Schools	Zumbrota-Mazeppa Schools
Richfield Public Schools		