

Dear Colleague:

Congratulations on deciding to offer your students an amazing learning adventure! We are delighted that you are seeking approval from your district to travel abroad. To help you succeed we have assembled this packet of useful information.

This packet includes ideas on how to seek administrative approval, including answers to frequently asked questions that will help you prepare your proposal to your administration. In addition, letters addressed directly to your administration will assist in explaining our joint effort to provide an educational travel program for your students. It is our hope that your administration realizes the endless advantages of an educational student travel program and how feasible it is with ISE.

If this is your first time traveling with students, you must first determine whether administrative or school board approval is necessary. Some teachers on summer programs do not need formal approval when the school does not officially recognize the ISE program and the program is not viewed in any way as “school sponsored.”

The following materials are enclosed in this packet:

1. Steps and hints for seeking administrator and/or school board approval
2. Vetting Process Comparison Chart
3. Frequently Asked Questions and Answers About ISE
4. Sample Letter to Administrator (you may modify it to suit your needs)
5. Letter from ISE’s Director of Education (can be torn out and distributed)
6. Letter about ISE’s finances and insurance (can be torn out and distributed)
7. References (can be torn out and distributed)

Additional information on a variety of subjects is also available from ISE. Please contact us for information on: teacher-leader responsibilities, fundraising ideas, using surveys to promote your program, and how to screen students.

Best wishes as you move forward!

Sincerely,

The ISE Team

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## Steps for Seeking Administrator and/or School Board Approval

1. **Follow the chain of command.** In most districts it is desirable and necessary to seek new program approval at successive levels of administrative authority. Begin with your principal and move up through the "chain of command." Rarely does a school board approve a proposal if it does not already carry the expressed endorsement of a district administrator.
2. **Determine what paperwork is necessary.** Some districts have specific forms you'll have to complete. If this is the first time travel is being proposed, you may have to put together a packet of information explaining your intentions. The info in this packet will help you do that. You'll need to determine if a presentation or a written proposal is necessary.
3. **Reserve a place on the agenda early.** You may be required to appear at a subsequent meeting before the board acts. They may want additional time to study your proposal. Encourage interested students and parents to attend the meeting(s). Boards and administrators are rightfully influenced by the input of their electorate. Be sure your proposal gets good publicity.
4. **Prepare and present your proposal.** Once you've determined the required format of the proposal (presentation or written or both), you can prepare the actual proposal. In this packet you will have ideas on how to appeal to administrators, as well as the information necessary to answer questions from the administration. Remember to explain why you've chosen ISE, who is eligible for the program (students with 2+ years of language) and what your expected educational outcomes of the program are.
5. **Follow up.** If permission is granted and the program is executed, it's a good idea to have students send thank you notes (and share success stories!) to the board to ensure future programs.

## Appealing to School Administrators and/or School Boards

1. **Community Pride:** The strongest argument is that the proposed program is outstanding both for the students and the community. Ask the board to imagine what such an experience would mean to them or to their children. Appeal to the sense of community pride to have such a program in the school.
2. **ISE programs are an extension of the existing educational curriculum:** Remind administrators that the family stay is the best language and cultural immersion experience. Let everyone know that ISE prepares students and teachers with preparatory materials like study units and workshops for teachers.
3. **Other Positive learning outcomes:** ISE students often fundraise or otherwise earn much of the program cost themselves. They develop sales techniques, public relations, bookkeeping skills, the ability to formulate and meet goals, cooperation with others, feelings of accomplishment and a strong sense of identity with a group. They meet the challenge of living with a family in a another culture; they learn about accepting and understanding cultural differences; they commit to a goal - financial and personal - and often come back with the self-confidence gained from having pursued a challenge and succeeding.
4. **"Pilot Project" status:** Depending on how you read your board, you may want to seek approval as a first-year pilot project; i.e., you may enhance your chances for approval by asking for this single experience. Indicate your willingness to conduct follow-up evaluations and return for on-going approval contingent on the evaluation results. ISE can provide you with results from the ISE post program evaluation, or we can provide you with ideas on conducting your own evaluation to present to the board upon return.
5. **Find out as much as you can about the participation of other schools near you.** The board will likely feel more comfortable to vote in favor of your program with the knowledge that the program has won approval in other districts. This packet includes a list of references.

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**Vetting Process Comparison Chart: Educational Student Travel Programs**

Item	ISE	Organization/Company # 2	Organization/Company #3
How long have they been in business?	Almost 40 years		
Financial Stability: Can you view their IRS 990 or recent audit?	Yes, you can view our 990 on Guidestar.org and we can provide a letter about financial stability		
Do they emphasize speaking the target language?	Yes		
Do they offer a family stay or similar component?	Yes—ONE student per family to emphasize language		
Do they provide educational study units?	Yes		
Is Financial Aid available? How much? Is it based on need or other criteria? How many students are served annually? What is the average grant amount?	ISE gave almost \$60,000 in financial aid last year to 118 recipients; the average grant was \$543		
Do they have a Code of Conduct?	Yes		
Do they provide a teacher training workshop?	Yes		
Do they offer other grants or awards for teachers and students focused on language learning?	Yes—our website has a complete description.		
<b>Itinerary Comparisons</b>			
How long is the program (# of days)?	7-21 days		
Are hotels located in the city center or outskirts?	All hotels are centrally located		
Transportation: how many days of coach or train?	Depends on itinerary		
Entry fee allowance: How much is included?	Depends on itinerary		
Leader Stipend: what amount?	\$25-\$50 per student on programs published in our booklet / on our website		
Meals: how many are included?	Breakfast every day; other meals depend on the itinerary.		

**Vetting Process Comparison Chart: Educational Student Travel Programs**

Price & Payment Comparisons	ISE	Organization/Company # 2	Organization/Company #3
Insurance: What is included?  Is there liability insurance to cover your school, district and teacher(s)?	Included: Accident, sickness and trip cancellation insurance for students + teachers; Liability insurance for teachers Schools + districts may become an additionally insured for a fee.		
Is additional insurance offered?	Yes- additional insurance is available from Access America through our web site; commisions are allocated to our Financial Aid Program		
Is the fuel surcharge included? Will there be a refund if the fuel surcharge decreases?	Fuel surcharges are determind by airlines and fluctuate often; we provide an estimate based on current trends in the airline industry and send the final amount at final billing in order to charge a fair price.		
Do they accept credit card payments?	Yes—only the deposit must be paid with check or money order. All other payments may be made using a credit card.		
<b>Extras (Other enhancements)</b>			

### **Frequently Asked Questions & Answers about ISE**

1. **What is ISE?** ISE, Intercultural Student Experiences, is a nonprofit educational organization working with teachers and school districts in over 30 states. ISE was created by world language teachers in 1972 to provide unique immersion experiences for high school students outside their language classrooms. These educational experiences are structured to develop and to reinforce what is learned in the classroom.
2. **What is the ISE Mission Statement?** “To inspire and educate students of the world through experiential learning across cultures.”
3. **How do ISE programs benefit the entire community?** ISE teachers frequently involve themselves and their students in a variety of activities before, during or after their program.
  - Enthusiastic students may share their experiences with civic and social organizations.
  - Some teachers arrange projects and presentations for use in their school districts.
  - Some participants give back to the communities they visited through donations or other volunteer efforts.
  - Many students become inspired to continue cultural and language education in college with the goal of being world language teachers themselves. ISE is proud to provide a \$2,000 ISE Alumnus Scholarship to one student per year who plans to study a world language in college. To find out how to nominate a student, teachers and administrators can go to our website for eligibility guidelines, nomination forms and application materials: [www.isemn.org](http://www.isemn.org).
4. **Who is eligible to participate?** Students of world languages and culture are eligible. Most program participants are high school world language students and teachers. Two years of target language is the minimum suggested language requirement for students participating in a family stay abroad.
5. **How many schools are involved with ISE Programs?** Hundreds of schools in over 30 states provide this experience for their students. ISE has been providing educational programs for almost 40 years and continue to grow.
6. **What does a typical ISE program consist of?** Most of ISE’s programs consist of a travel itinerary to a variety of cities and towns plus a stay with a host family.
7. **How does the ISE program differ from a typical tour?**
  - ISE programs are run entirely by world language educators or expert guides whose primary objective is a high quality educational experience for participating students.
  - ISE provides comprehensive orientation and study materials to adequately prepare each student for his/her program. Most ISE lessons are in the target language and provide essential cultural and linguistic information.
  - Nearly all ISE programs include a family stay, which gives participants unique insights into the target culture and way of life.
  - Students are asked to speak the target language during the entire program, thus providing invaluable practice of the language skills learned in the classroom.

8. ISE's prices reflect the best value possible to meet the needs of the various families, teachers and school districts we serve. ISE is nonprofit organization motivated by mission. Our goal is to provide outstanding educational opportunities for those who consider themselves "students of the world."**Is this program available only to the affluent?** No! ISE wants to help every student who is committed to language and culture immersion. There are many ways that ISE partners with teachers and students to make this investment and meet this goal. Most ISE students earn at least half of the program price themselves. In schools where the program is established on a regular basis, students are able to plan and save over a two or three year period and many do! ISE provides fundraising ideas to teachers and parents who request them. In addition, ISE's Financial Aid program awards thousands of dollars each year to eligible students. For many students the ISE program is a significant lesson in setting priorities and realizing goals. ISE's website features a financial planning calculator to aid parents and students in knowing how much to save each month.
9. **Is financial aid available to students?** As a nonprofit educational organization, ISE maintains a financial aid fund to benefit eligible students. Each year ISE dispenses more than \$50,000 in financial aid grants based on need. See our website for the most up to date eligibility requirements and application materials: [www.isemn.org](http://www.isemn.org)
10. **What is included in the cost of the program?** ISE strives to provide simple and clear pricing for all programs. Our prices include health and cancellation insurance, which other programs charge extra for. See the current ISE Program Booklet for specific price inclusions.
11. **What preparation and cost is involved for the District and accompanying teachers?** The cost of a substitute teacher if school time is missed. Teachers accompanying a group of students with the minimum participants necessary to cover the cost of an itinerary must pay for their unspecified meals, and incidental expenses. ISE provides study units to aid teachers in preparing students for their program abroad.
12. **Are the participants covered by insurance during the time of the program?** Yes. Limited medical and cancellation insurance is covered in the basic price of the program. Details on this coverage are available from ISE and can be found in the booklet and on our website: [www.isemn.org](http://www.isemn.org) Some coverage against catastrophic monetary loss due to unpredictable world events may be provided by ISE's Cancellation Protection Plan. ISE is protected by a multi-million-dollar liability policy for its operations abroad. Teachers who travel as leaders are automatically covered under ISE's liability policy. A school or district may be added to the policy for a small fee.
13. **What provision is made for medical or other emergencies?** The standard parental release form gives ISE the authority to secure necessary medical treatment and/or to send the participant home for medical treatment.
14. **What is the overall leader-student ratio on ISE programs?** Approximately 8 students per leader. Minimum ratios vary with the type of program chosen.
15. **Who will supervise the students during the program?** Supervision is assumed by the world language teacher accompanying the students or, if the teacher is not going, by a capable leader selected and assigned by ISE. During the family stay the students will be supervised by their host families. One of the American group leaders will also be available on an "on-call" basis within the family-stay community. The local ISE family-stay coordinator is also available.

16. **Are non-participating students put at a disadvantage by the absence of the regular classroom teacher?** ISE teacher-leaders expend much time and effort to provide continuity in the classroom. Explicit lesson plans and instructions in methods should be well-communicated by the traveling teacher to the interim teachers. Students choosing not to participate will learn a great deal from the experience of those going abroad when the latter return and share their insights and impressions.
17. **What about work missed in other classes?** This is seldom a problem. The world language teacher works with students and fellow teachers to determine make-up work requirements and agreements. He/she also works cooperatively with faculty members to supervise completion of work. Where permitted by the principal, world language teachers have released students from their own class for the purpose of working with other teachers on missed work. The greatest burden for make-up work clearly rests with the individual students. In the overwhelming majority of cases, they are very responsible and grade-conscious. Many non-world language colleagues recognize the significant value of the upcoming experience and actually incorporate it as a part of their assignments. Some teachers use make-up work contracts (specifying tasks and deadlines) to facilitate the completion of all missed work.
18. **What are the advantages to traveling on a Spring program?**
- Price** - Costs of all accommodations, airfares, buses, etc. can be much higher in the summer months than during the “off season”. ISE programs are designed to be affordable to students from as many economic backgrounds as possible. Our surveys show that 70% to 75% of our students earn more than half of the program cost by themselves.
- Availability to Students Who Work** - Spring programs, which take place during the school year or “off season,” can be more affordable and still allow students who have summer employment to earn money during the summer months.
- Non-Tourist Environment** - During the summer, many destinations become clogged with tourists. Slowed transportation, long waits for visiting museums and monuments and crowded restaurants may be avoided.
- Fosters a Strong Learning Attitude** - Students participating in the Spring programs – in the context of the academic year – tend to be more disposed toward educational experiences. Because they return to the classroom after their travel they also are more accountable to the teacher and school, resulting in fewer discipline problems. Many make post-program presentations in school. This is one of the very strong points in support of spring travel.
- Safe Educational Alternative to Regular Spring Breaks** - An ISE program will be a more attractive destination for our students and parents as an educational spring break instead of traveling alone or with friends to “party” or to be involved in higher-risk activities.
- Few School Days Will Be Missed** – The program may take place during Spring break, so no or very few school days are missed.
19. **What kind of transportation is used on the program?** Flights are arranged on commercial airline carriers. Public buses and trains as well as chartered motor coaches and vans may all be potential transportation options depending on your destination and the size of your group. Privately chartered buses are required to provide proof of insurance to ISE.
20. **How can a student be contacted during the program?** Contact of students is made possible through a communication network linking ISE with its representatives abroad and local correspondents along the itinerary. All necessary telephone and fax numbers are printed on the
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student final itinerary, a copy of which the student is instructed to leave with his/her parents. Group leaders have an emergency cell-phone number to reach ISE at any hour. For parents who need to contact their child in an emergency, it is best for parents to contact ISE first.

21. **What happens to the student who causes a discipline problem on the trip?** ISE reserves the right to return a problem student to the United States at parent expense. This option is consented to in the parent release form on the back of each program application form. This option, of course, will not be employed unless group teachers/leaders have exhausted their disciplinary measures or unless the individual's behavior threatened the group. The decision of the leadership team is supported by ISE.



### Sample Letter for Administrator or School Board

To: (Board member names), (District name)  
From: (Teacher name)  
Re: **Proposed program to (country) – Spring/Summer (year)**

Leader: \_\_\_\_\_ (Teacher name)  
Proposed Dates: \_\_\_\_\_  
Number of students: \_\_\_\_\_ (estimated number of students)

Organization: Intercultural Student Experiences (ISE), located in Minneapolis, is a nonprofit educational organization that provides travel with home stay programs for students learning Spanish, French, German and Mandarin. ISE's one-of-a-kind educational travel programs combine sightseeing with an authentic family stay.

**The ISE mission:** To inspire and educate students of the world through experiential learning across cultures.

The proposed program costs \$\_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_ days and includes:

1. Round-trip airfare on a commercial airline
2. Land transportation per itinerary
3. Lodging in centrally located hotels
4. Family stay (5-8 days depending on itinerary)
5. All meals during family stay; all breakfasts and some dinners depending on itinerary
8. Entrance fee allowance (\$40-\$70) per participant
9. Preparatory materials for students
10. Teacher Preparation Workshop for teachers
11. Insurance (accident, sickness and trip cancellation) for all participants and teachers
12. Liability insurance for teachers

The program does not include:

1. Transportation to and from US departure city
2. Passport fees/Other travel document fees
2. Fees contracted outside the program by individual participants or leaders
3. Spending money
4. Meals not indicated on itinerary

Since this travel immersion program is run by a nonprofit organization founded by world language educators, it places great emphasis on learning. This program includes an authentic family stay experience and financial aid is available to students based on need. Students must participate in after-school preparation meetings in cultural and linguistic orientation, and they must be willing to speak the target language during the program. In addition, students will be expected to make up their other course work as requested by teachers.

Thank you for your consideration in making this educational opportunity available to our students. We are eager to begin planning! I hope that this proposal can receive your earliest consideration so that if we are permitted to participate in the ISE program in the (Spring/Summer) of (year), students will be aware of it and be able to plan for it financially.

Sincerely,  
(Teacher name)



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**To: School Administrators & School Board Members**  
**Re: Educational Student Travel with ISE**

One of your world language teachers has expressed interest in participating in a program abroad. I believe this proposal is worthy of your approval, and I am happy to share why I feel this way.

Intercultural Student Experiences (ISE) is a nonprofit educational organization working with teachers and schools in over 30 states. ISE was founded by world language teachers in 1972 for a specific purpose: to provide real-life, practical experiences for world language students and teachers beyond the confines of the classroom. I believe our Mission Statement says it all: **to inspire and educate students of the world through experiential learning across cultures.**

How is this travel opportunity different from those available through other travel companies?

- *Participants must qualify for eligibility (level II or higher of target language proficiency at the time of travel if participating in a family stay).*
- *The target language is the primary means of communication throughout the program.*
- *ISE provides study units to maximize student preparation.*
- *Our immersion approach promotes real progress in development of target language skills.*
- *A family stay provides a unique perspective of the culture not available through textbooks and tours only. For most, it is the first step on a path leading to cultural competency.*
- *ISE's comprehensive Leader Handbook and annual Teacher Workshop provide information and practical training for all group leaders, the teachers who travel with their students.*
- *Our Code of Conduct was created to help teachers and school districts enforce their rules and disciplinary policy during the program. The code is signed by participants and their parents and is broad enough to accommodate your own district's policies governing student behavior.*
- *An important goal for ISE is to make our programs as accessible as possible to students from all economic backgrounds. To help meet this goal, ISE provides substantial financial aid for eligible students annually.*
- *ISE provides liability insurance coverage for your teachers who lead.*
- *ISE provides a Cancellation Protection Plan (see ISE program booklet for details).*

I believe the program you are being asked to approve has exceptional merit and the educational substance that parents want for their children. If you would like any additional information beyond that provided by the organizing teacher, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Tanya Gajewski  
Director of Education



Intercultural Student Experiences  
129 North 2<sup>nd</sup> St., #102 ▪ Minneapolis, MN 55401 ▪ USA  
612.436.8299 ▪ 800.892.0022 ▪ Fax: 612.436.8298 ▪ [www.isemn.org](http://www.isemn.org)

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**To: Teachers, School Administrators & Parents**  
**Re: Financial Stability of ISE and Insurance Coverage**

Intercultural Student Experiences (ISE) was founded in 1972 as a nonprofit educational organization. ISE serves schools in more than 30 states and provides high-quality family stay and travel programs for world language teachers and their students. At ISE, we take great pride in our long history of accomplishments and understand that you are making a decision to trust ISE to make your students' experience educational, rewarding and safe.

Anyone contemplating participation on a student travel program has the right to expect that the organization chosen will indeed carry out the program as advertised. Persuasive promotional materials and compelling arguments in support of educational travel will - by themselves - never guarantee performance. We believe that you have the right to substantially more assurance, including the knowledge that ISE has sufficient financial backing to protect all monies paid by participants and to ensure fulfillment of all of our commitments to participants.

As a nonprofit organization, ISE is required by law to meet transparency standards. Annually we file a public tax return (IRS Form 990) and this information is available to the public. Additionally, our annual audited financial statements are available upon request. Over the many years of our operation, our board of directors and management team have been careful stewards of our financial resources. As a result of this practice, you can feel secure in the knowledge that our financial position ensures no travel participant will experience any financial losses related to ISE operations. We believe that this guarantee is an important component of your decision to select ISE.

Occasionally, ISE also receives inquiries regarding the issue of liability and insurance for our programs. The following information addresses these inquiries:

1. As the single sponsoring organization, ISE assumes responsibility for its entire program. The Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State has granted ISE an educational charter, thereby making ISE an independent nonprofit legal entity capable of offering educational programs of its own. **No liability is implied or inferred on the part of any school district whose teachers and/or students participate in an ISE program.**
2. ISE carries a **\$5,000,000 General Liability Policy** that covers foreign operations. **Teachers accompanying students as ISE leaders are covered under this policy.** A certificate of insurance is available upon request.
3. Teachers and students are covered under ISE's **Accident and Sickness insurance.** (Find coverage amounts, limits and exclusions here <http://www.isemn.org/registration/insurance.html>)
4. **Trip Cancellation/Interruption insurance** is provided to cover non-refundable program costs due to illness or death of the participant or member of their immediate family. (See <http://www.isemn.org/registration/insurance.html> for coverage amounts.)
5. Coverage against substantial loss of money in case of terrorism is provided through ISE's **Cancellation Protection Plan.** (See details in the ISE Program Booklet.)

*(Continued on the reverse)*



## Intercultural Student Experiences

129 North 2<sup>nd</sup> St., #102 • Minneapolis, MN 55401 • USA  
612.436.8299 • 800.892.0022 • Fax: 612.436.8298 • [www.ise mn.org](http://www.ise mn.org)

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I am happy to answer any additional questions you may have about the financial operations and stability of ISE as well as the insurance coverage ISE provides. Please feel free to call me at any time. I am also available via conference call for school boards and school administrators who may have more detailed questions. Thank you for considering ISE!

Sincerely,

Steve Struthers  
Executive Director

Toll-free: 800.892.0022 x 291  
Direct: 612.436.8291  
Email: [steve@ise mn.org](mailto:steve@ise mn.org)



## Intercultural Student Experiences

129 North 2<sup>nd</sup> St., #102 • Minneapolis, MN 55401 • USA  
612.436.8299 • 800.892.0022 • Fax: 612.436.8298 • [www.isemn.org](http://www.isemn.org)

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**To: Teachers, School Administrators, School Board Members & Parents**  
**Re: References**

The following contacts have agreed to serve as references for ISE programs. You may contact them with questions.

### FRENCH

**AnnMarie Allen**  
Bayport-Blue Point H.S.  
Bayport, NY  
[aallen@bbpschools.org](mailto:aallen@bbpschools.org)  
631.472.7800

**Andrea Behn**  
Janesville Parker H.S.  
Janesville, WI  
[abehn@janesville.k12.wi.us](mailto:abehn@janesville.k12.wi.us)  
608.743.5600

**Mauri Deer**  
Farmington H.S.  
Farmington, MN  
[mbuetzow@farmington.k12.mn.us](mailto:mbuetzow@farmington.k12.mn.us)  
651.252.2501

**Jane Ditewig**  
R.A. Long H.S.  
Longview, WA  
[jditewig@longview.k12.wa.us](mailto:jditewig@longview.k12.wa.us)  
360.575.7296

**Jodi Johnson**  
Blue Valley North H.S.  
Overland Park, KS  
[jjohnson02@bluevalleyk12.org](mailto:jjohnson02@bluevalleyk12.org)  
913.239.3000

**Marybeth Myhren**  
Valley Christian H.S.  
Cerritos, CA  
[mmyhren@vcschools.org](mailto:mmyhren@vcschools.org)  
562.865.0281

**Cathy Stressing**  
Homestead H.S.  
Mequon, WI  
[cstressing@mtsd.k12.wi.us](mailto:cstressing@mtsd.k12.wi.us)  
262.238.5900

**Kyle Sweeney**  
St. Louis Park H.S.  
St. Louis Park, MN  
[sweeney.kyle@slpschools.org](mailto:sweeney.kyle@slpschools.org)  
952.928.6100

### GERMAN

**Pat Branstad**  
Eden Prairie Central M.S.  
Eden Prairie, MN  
[pbranstad@edenpr.org](mailto:pbranstad@edenpr.org)  
952.975.7300

**Gayle Carlson**  
Eagan H.S.  
Eagan, MN  
[Gayle.Carlson@district196.org](mailto:Gayle.Carlson@district196.org)  
651.683.6900

**Suzanne Greenwalt**  
Parkway North H.S.  
Creve Coeur, MO  
[svanni01@yahoo.com](mailto:svanni01@yahoo.com)  
314.415.7600

**Linda Havas**  
Homestead H.S.  
Mequon, WI  
[lhavas@mtsd.k12.wi.us](mailto:lhavas@mtsd.k12.wi.us)  
262.238.5900

**Claudia Holum**  
Stanwood H.S.  
Stanwood, WA  
[cholum@stanwood.wednet.edu](mailto:cholum@stanwood.wednet.edu)  
360.629.1300

**Gretchen Ortenzio**  
Minnetonka H.S.  
Minnetonka, MN  
[gretchen.ortenzio@minnetonka.k12.mn.us](mailto:gretchen.ortenzio@minnetonka.k12.mn.us)  
952.401.5347

**Doug Philipp**  
Cheyenne Mountain H.S.  
Colorado Springs, CO  
[runhiketeach@yahoo.com](mailto:runhiketeach@yahoo.com)  
719.475.6110

**Ann Weber**  
Sun Prairie H.S.  
Sun Prairie, WI  
[atweber@spasd.k12.wi.us](mailto:atweber@spasd.k12.wi.us)  
608-834-6700

### SPANISH

**Belinda Bjerkvold**  
Whitefish Bay H.S.  
Whitefish Bay, WI  
[belinda.bjerkvold@wfbschools.com](mailto:belinda.bjerkvold@wfbschools.com)  
414.963.3928

**Leslie Burgess**  
Hastings H.S.  
Hastings, MN  
[lburgess@hastings.k12.mn.us](mailto:lburgess@hastings.k12.mn.us)  
651.480.7470

**John Fitzer**  
Delano H.S.  
Delano, MN  
[jfitzer@delano.k12.mn.us](mailto:jfitzer@delano.k12.mn.us)  
763.972.3365

**Cathy Longcore**  
Milford H.S. (Retired)  
Highland, MI  
[cathylongcore@hotmail.com](mailto:cathylongcore@hotmail.com)  
248.887.7856

**Lyndsey Ryerson**  
Enumclaw H.S.  
Enumclaw, WA  
[lyndsey\\_ryerson@enumclaw.wednet.edu](mailto:lyndsey_ryerson@enumclaw.wednet.edu)  
360.802.7669

**Jody Snow**  
Morris Area H.S.  
Morris, MN  
[jsnow@fedtel.net](mailto:jsnow@fedtel.net)  
320.589.4400

**Mary Tuchscherer**  
Wausau East H.S. (Retired)  
Hilton Head, SC  
[Senorat@gmail.com](mailto:Senorat@gmail.com)  
843.842.7173

**Oakley Van Oss**  
Tallahassee, FL  
[vanosso@leonschools.net](mailto:vanosso@leonschools.net)  
850.671.2520