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Introducing Minnesota Educators to the Future Leaders Academy



While many Minnesota students and their families enjoy an extended fall weekend thanks to MEA, most educators in the state mark the third Thursday in October for Education Minnesota’s MEA conference — the largest one-day professional development event for educators in Minnesota. Open to members and college students aspiring to be educators, the MEA conference showcases techniques and ideas teachers can take back to the classroom and use right away with their students.

At this year's MEA conference, think2perform Research Institute hosted a booth to introduce t2pRI's Future Leaders Academy to Minnesota educators. "The event was so well organized, and we felt so welcomed," says Brian Hammer, t2pRI's Executive Director. With a prime location in the main hallway of the conference, the t2pRI booth received plenty of attention from attendees. "It was wonderful to meet with future teachers, current teachers, and retired teachers from a range of institutions including urban, big city school districts, smaller town school districts, and colleges throughout the state."

To foster understanding of the Future Leaders Academy five-month leadership development training and one-year mentorship, Brian and t2pRI Board Chair, Ryan Goulart, walked educators through the leadership development curriculum program map and mentorship schematic, two pedagogical tools that resonated strongly with the audience.

"We had positive and productive conversations with a broad range of educators," says Brian. "There was a clear connection with what we're trying to do and what they're interested in."

One of the main reasons the Future Leaders Academy appeals to educators is that it enhances social-emotional learning, a major emphasis in today's classroom. With a focus on emotionally intelligent leadership, values-based decision making, goal setting, and mentorship, the Future Leaders Academy reinforces the five key aspects of social-emotional learning: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

Increasing awareness among educators will help the Future Leaders Academy serve more Minnesota students. "Because educators have close relationships with students and oftentimes a deep understanding of students, they can help us identify individuals who could benefit from and really thrive in a program like this," says Brian. The Future Leaders Academy supports students of all backgrounds, especially underrepresented students or those from under-

resourced environments. “One of the things I emphasize is that everyone is a leader, not just an obvious shining star,” says Brian.

Because the Future Leaders Academy offers high school and college students fundamental skills for life, the program also intrigued some attendees to apply. “Interestingly, new educators said, ‘I might want to do this myself because I’m in that age group [16-23],’” says Brian. These aspiring educators saw the program’s potential in enhancing their own development and helping them succeed as a teacher.

While the online application process is not extensive, it takes 15-30 minutes to complete, Brian sees a role for educators through the process: “Teachers can support their students by sharing information about the program, reinforcing that they are good enough and absolutely the right people to apply, and by encouraging students to persevere during the application process if they have self-doubt.” Students are also welcome to apply on their own, a teacher’s endorsement is not required.

The Future Leaders Academy program includes a five-month, five-module facilitated leadership workshop delivered online followed by a twelve-month mentorship and comes with a \$500 stipend for each student. Learn more about the program [here](#). Or forward the link to a student or educator you know.

Applications for the 2025 Future Leaders Academy cohort are being accepted now until December 1, 2025. [View application](#).

[think2perform Research Institute](#) has funded research and leadership development programs since its founding as a nonprofit 501(c)(3) in 2016.

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