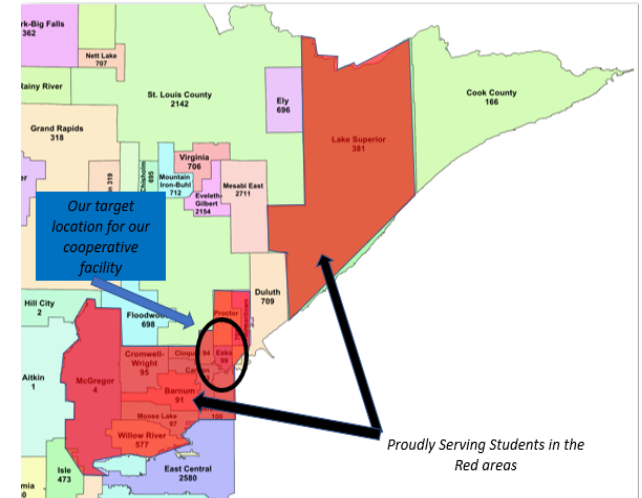




Reimagining the Possibilities

What is the Northern Lights Academy Cooperative?

- A cooperative public school district operated through a Joint Powers Agreement between 12 member school districts in NE Minnesota.
- Special Education Setting 4 – Special Education services which intensively teach students the behavior skills they need in order for them to successfully transition back to their home districts.
- Day Treatment – Intensive mental health services delivered on a daily basis. Each school day is 3 hours of mental health treatment plus educational services in core subjects for the rest of the day.
- Northern Lights Special Education services – 25 Special Education Staff shared among our 12 independent districts to provide services that are too costly to have on their own.



Why do we need a new co-op facility?

- Our rural cooperative students with extremely high special needs deserve the same quality educational spaces as students in the metro area of Minnesota with the same needs.
- For cost efficiency, programs need to be together. Current programs are located in 3 separate buildings in 2 different cities: a church educational wing (approx. 1000 sq. ft), the basement of an old school building (approx. 5,000 sq. ft.), and in 2 classrooms in a member district high school.
- The students know they get second hand options for school. They have no green space or playground of their own and know they are learning in cramped spaces. One student said it *“doesn’t have stuff like other schools.”*
- This program changes lives. Before the NLA, students with high behavior needs in our districts had to learn at home for safety. Due to space limitations, there are still students learning at home because there is no space to add more classrooms to serve them.

Our Ask: We need help from the State of MN to make this happen

- **HF 3239** is asking for \$6 million in state bonding assistance to pay for 1/2 of our project. *(Reducing the financial burden on our school districts).*
- Additionally, **HF 3224** would allow rural district access to the same lease levy authority as metro intermediate districts-an additional \$65/pupil unit lease levy authority for cooperative facilities. *(This would allow the remaining burden to be matched by the entire regional tax base in a fair and equitable manner)*
- Our member school districts understand this need and are unified in their support to make this happen. However, there are very limited funding options to allow individual school districts to build cooperative facilities like this under current legislation. Each district has significant challenges to pay their portion of a debt payment towards the project. Unless we can get all 12 school boards a funding plan that works for all 12 member districts, this project will not happen.

Thank you so much for considering our funding request!

