



30 Years of Building a Strong Foundation for the Future of Our Region

Winter 2017

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Volunteers in Education partners with community to boost student achievement on Iron Range

Harnessing the power of volunteers to help students reach toward greater school success



A student receives assistance from volunteer Roberta Klink.

Volunteers in Education (VinE), in partnership with Iron Range communities, is looking to the future by helping elementary through high school students experience more success in the classroom. This collaboration between schools, volunteers, and students is having an impact that can ripple far beyond the classroom and last long after graduation day.

Here is how it works: students from Babbitt, Cherry, Cook, Cotton, Culver, Embarrass, Eveleth, Gilbert, Independence, Iron, Orr, Soudan, and Tower are recommended by school

staff to receive academic support from VinE volunteer tutors.

Although it is volunteer-based, VinE employs Volunteer Coordinators to recruit and schedule tutors, connect them with training, and match volunteers with classroom needs.

Last year alone, 68 volunteer tutors and 435 students spent a total of 5,610 hours working together, either one-on-one or in small groups. Volunteers range in age from 15 to 86 and possess a variety of experience and skills. They may help a student who is temporarily behind or consistently work with a student that needs additional time in a given subject.

“Thank you so much for helping me. I want to go again next year!” —5th grade student who received tutoring through VinE



Volunteers in Education was the brainchild of a local man, **Art Dale**. Dale saw headline after headline about declining test scores and academic achievement in the area and nationwide. He knew students were being left behind and believed that the community could make a difference. In 2009, the Northland Foundation made the first grant to help him get VinE off the ground. To date, the Foundation has awarded more than \$120,000 through six separate grants to support innovation and expansion.

A majority of the students who are recommended for participation with VinE have some degree of learning disability. With its most recent grant from the Northland Foundation, approved in January, VinE will provide additional tutor training including strategies for working effectively with students who are challenged by disabilities such as dyslexia.



A volunteer, Mary Baratta, (second from right) works on a play with a group of 3rd graders.

VinE's model of recruiting community volunteers, and providing them with training and support to engage with students, is working. Its 2015-2016 school year pilot Tutor Survey showed 72 percent of students improved their school work completion, 71 percent increased

engagement, and 60 percent improved their confidence. Confidence to try to do the work even when it is hard, rather than giving up, can make a great impact on learning.

“(This) student struggles with confidence in many areas. She seems to complete more problems on her minute math in the morning. She will at least give them a try now. She feels confident even when she knows that she might do it wrong,” stated a teacher from Cherry.

Together with teachers, VinE is helping students in northeastern Minnesota gain the skills they need to excel in school and the world.

“Through teachers, administrators, and volunteer tutors, VinE has built a community-to-school connection in which students feel that adults in their community truly care about them and how they are doing,” said Program Director, Cassandra Hainey. “This fosters a joy of learning that will help them continue on a path to success.”

