

2019 POLICIES

Education

For Minnesota to continue to have the world class, skilled workforce that is a cornerstone of our competitive business climate, systemic reforms must be implemented to raise the achievement of all students, ensuring every high school graduate is ready for post-secondary education or a career. We support improved kindergarten readiness; high academic standards with curriculum aligned to those standards; and meaningful outcomes that show students have learned what they need to know and have achieved academic growth year over year. Additionally, we support private-sector efforts to better connect middle and high school students with the employers so that students and education institutions are aware of the academic skills needed and opportunities available for jobs in their communities.

INCREASE ACCESS FOR TARGETED EARLY LEARNING SCHOLARSHIPS

Providing low-income families with access to quality early childhood education programs is necessary to closing the preparation gap, which ultimately leads to closing the achievement gap and ensuring career readiness. To improve education outcomes for these

OUR KEY PRIORITIES FOR THE 2019 SESSION INCLUDE:

- Increase access to Early Learning Scholarships that prioritize low-income families, rather than an expensive, universal prekindergarten mandate.
- Ensure all students meet key benchmarks by requiring strong academic standards and accountability.
- Promote choice and innovation.
- Ensure best teachers and leaders in schools.

students and address the serious shortage of affordable childcare, particularly in Greater Minnesota, early learning scholarships should be targeted to helping low-income children access high-quality providers that build on existing public funding through strategic realignment of existing resources. The Parent Aware system must be expanded to additional programs so that families throughout the state have the flexibility to find a high-quality program that fits their unique needs. Public resources invested in early childhood education, including scholarships and the Child Care Assistance Program, should be streamlined and aligned with the Parent Aware ratings system.

ENSURE STRONG ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Schools must prepare students for success by setting clear, rigorous standards, aligning curriculum to standards, and assessing outcomes. Closing the achievement gap will require that all students master state academic standards before graduation, including the following key academic milestones: kindergarten readiness, 3rd grade literacy proficiency, 8th grade math proficiency, and high school graduation. Grade-level proficiency in high school decreases postsecondary remediation and increases the likelihood that students will succeed in higher education and in the workforce.

OUR GOALS

Minnesota boasts higher education achievement than most other states, as evidenced by high scores on standardized tests. This is cause for celebration and a point of pride. However, not all of our students experience this kind of academic success. Data show that we have a persistent achievement gap for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Minnesota's future economic success depends on ensuring ALL Minnesota students graduate prepared for next steps - post-

secondary education or a career. The Minnesota Chamber supports evidence-based reforms that will improve student outcomes and close Minnesota's achievement gap.

Students' career interests and critical abilities should be assessed, ensuring that all students develop an attainment plan for a postsecondary education or a career. A comprehensive inventory of all work-based learning programs and measurements of success in districts across Minnesota should be compiled by the state. Access to work-based learning and career pathway resources should be expanded.

PROMOTE SCHOOL CHOICE AND DUAL-CREDIT POSTSECONDARY PROGRAMS

School choice increases the number of high-quality school options for each student, enabling parents and students to select education that meets their needs and helps them reach their potential. Additionally, dual-credit postsecondary programs should be promoted, including postsecondary enrollment options for all Minnesota institutions, early college, concurrent enrollment, advanced placement, international baccalaureate, career and technical education, and college level examination placement.

ENSURE EFFECTIVE TEACHERS AND EFFECTIVE LEADERS

To have effective teachers, there must be stronger teacher preparation programs and robust professional development. Teacher training programs at Minnesota higher education institutions should measure the effectiveness of the teachers they prepare. Teachers should have professional development support throughout their careers including externships in businesses.

Because of recent legislative changes, alternative pathways for teacher licensure offer solutions for school districts striving to close the achievement gap or facing challenges to find diverse qualified candidates in specialty fields. Meaningful teacher evaluations, staffing flexibility, and tenure reform are needed to attract new teachers and ensure success in every classroom. School leaders should be given maximum flexibility, including the use of the Q-comp program, to ensure that effective

teachers are retained with the ability to terminate teachers who are not performing up to the state's standards. ■