

EDUCATION POLICY

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PRINCIPLES FOR REFORM

As active advocates for strengthening Minnesota's education system for more than 30 years, the Partnership has been guided by four Principles for Education Reform:

- Set rigorous, world-class, academic standards for all students.
- Measure and report student progress – individually and by school – on a uniform and comparable basis.
- Give educators flexibility to offer the programs they believe will be most effective for their students.
- Provide families with the ability to choose the programs that best meet their children's academic needs.

Blueprint for Education Reform: Achieving world-class education and closing the achievement gaps

To compete in a global economy that prizes innovation and rewards higher level skills, Minnesota must transform its approach to raising student achievement and closing the achievement gaps.

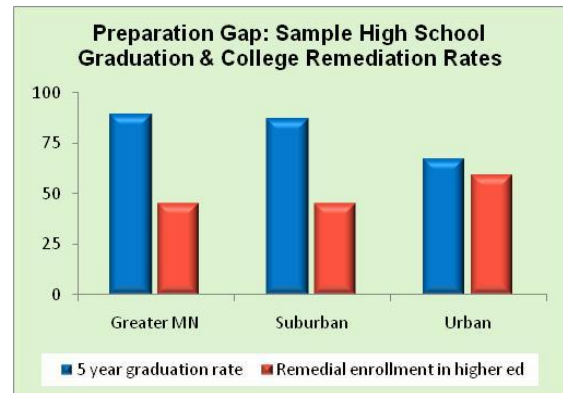
In 2008, the Minnesota Business Partnership, the Itasca Project, the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce and the Bush Foundation established the Minnesota's Future Initiative and asked McKinsey & Company to answer two questions:

- 1. How does Minnesota's K – 12 education system compare with the best in the world?**
- 2. What can we learn from top-performing systems to deliver a better education to Minnesota students?**

McKinsey's report, "World-class Schools, World-class Jobs," revealed that in many ways Minnesota's education system matches up with the best in the world. "The state has implemented rigorous standards, led the U.S. in providing educational choices for parents and has equitably invested in education," the report said.

But the research, however, indicated that improvements were needed in the following areas for Minnesota to compete with the world's top-performing systems:

- Teacher preparation
- Recruiting top talent and innovation
- School leadership development
- Using data to drive performance improvement



Minnesota suffers from a substantial gap between a high school diploma and preparation for higher education. In sample suburban and greater Minnesota, nearly 90% of high school students graduate within five years. Of those who enroll in higher education, nearly half (45%) will take at least one remedial class. Meanwhile, 68% of urban high school students in sample schools earn a diploma in five years, and 59% of those enrolling in higher education will take at least one remedial class.

LEGISLATIVE AND NON-LEGISLATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to legislative recommendations, the Minnesota's Future Initiative (MFI) has identified reforms that could be accomplished through non-legislation actions (e.g. administrative actions, district-level changes or by leveraging foundation and private-sector support).

Progress is being made on efforts outside the Legislature. The Bush Foundation has partnered with 11 teacher training programs to begin transforming how teachers are recruited, trained and placed. MFI members have raised more than \$3 million to support Teach for America, which has provisional authority to operate in Minnesota but continues to seek legislative approval for alternative teacher licensure. MFI has supported two statewide principal training programs and is working with the Department of Education to develop the state's Longitudinal Data System.

Legislative progress, however, has been limited. Broad, bipartisan support for systemic reform was most apparent in 2010 when members of the Minnesota's Future Initiative gathered signatures from more than 100 business, foundation, community and education leaders urging state lawmakers to pass reforms that would strengthen Minnesota's application for a federal Race to the Top grant. While the legislation failed to pass, support remains. And many of those reforms are reflected in the following recommendations.

Teacher Quality

Our aspiration: Effective teachers in every classroom – teachers that can achieve at least a year's worth of growth in learning every year for every student and close the achievement gap.

The rationale: Teachers matter more than any other in-school factor.

Our opportunity: Half of all teachers are expected to retire over the next 10 years.

Recommendations: Transform how new teachers are recruited, prepared, placed and supported.

M *Indicates the recommendation is a priority for the Partnership.*

- M** Provide statutory authority for any teacher preparation program that's willing to guarantee the effectiveness of their graduates and support them through the first two to five years of teaching.
- M** Develop a definition of effectiveness, substantially based on student achievement.
 - M** Modify teacher licensure, hiring, tenure and compensation practices to incorporate effectiveness (e.g. provisional and renewable continuing licenses, and compensation based on effectiveness)
- Expand access to the Teacher Academies in Math and Science.
 - In conjunction with expanding access, conduct program evaluation to measure impact on student achievement and identify program improvements.
- Provide incentives for teacher candidates to enter shortage areas (e.g. STEM, rural schools).
- Provide incentives for teachers and principals who work, and succeed in "challenging" schools.
- Raise graduation expectations by requiring teacher candidates to demonstrate their effectiveness as a condition of graduation (e.g. Teacher Performance Assessment).

Teacher Quality (cont'd)

- Link state funding for teacher preparation programs to the number of teachers each program will guarantee as effective, with a priority on shortage areas (e.g. STEM, rural schools and teachers of color). Additionally, creating an Office of Effective Teaching can:
 - Coordinate a statewide campaign to recruit our best into teaching; and
 - 'Buy' teacher preparation from those programs willing to guarantee effectiveness and based on their continuing performance.

School Leadership

Our aspiration: Effective principals in every school.

The rationale: Principals matter more than any other in-school factor except teachers, and efforts to grow and retain effective teachers will fail if they are placed in dysfunctional school environments.

Our opportunity: We're able to reform recruitment and preparation of school leaders through the renewed focus on the importance of school leadership, and substantial expected retirements.

Recommendations: Transform how new principals are recruited, prepared, placed and supported.

✎ *Indicates the recommendation is a priority for the Partnership.*

- ✎ Develop a definition of principal effectiveness, substantially based on student achievement.
 - ✎ Modify school leadership licensing, hiring, tenure and compensation practices, based on effectiveness (e.g. provisional and renewable continuing licenses, and compensation based on effectiveness).
- Provide statutory authority for any alternative principal preparation program that's willing to guarantee the effectiveness of their graduates and support them through their first two to five years of practice.
- Expand access to the two statewide school leadership development academies (and other programs, if warranted).
 - In conjunction with expanding access to the leadership academies, conduct program evaluations to measure impact on student achievement, identify program improvements and corresponding changes to licensure requirements.

Data to Drive Improvement

Our aspiration: Timely and actionable student performance data is available and effectively used at every level of the education system to continually improve practices and outcomes.

The rationale: Without comparable measures, student performance can't be tracked and system strengths and weaknesses can't be reliably identified.

Our opportunity: As better student and system data becomes available we can be more strategic in replicating successful practices and reducing performance gaps.

Data to Drive Improvement (cont'd)

Recommendations: Effectively use data to recognize success and support improvement.

✎ *Indicates the recommendation is a priority for the Partnership.*

- ✎ Ensure Minnesota's standards are globally competitive, and high school graduates are college and career ready.
 - Using student academic performance data (e.g. MCA results, graduation rates) identify top-performing schools. Highlight and disseminate successful practices of these schools for others.
 - Link student data to teachers, and to the teachers' preparation programs. Use the data for preparation programs to:
 - Receive feedback for program improvement; and
 - Determine their eligibility for state funding.
 - Grant specific authority for the MN Commissioner of Education to intervene in persistently low-performing schools, after district-level interventions are unsuccessful.

Innovation & Efficiency

Our aspiration: Encourage and support school boards in effectively managing their resources and create opportunities to continuously improve student achievement.

The rationale: School boards need the flexibility to act according to their unique circumstances, and options for addressing projected budget limitations.

Our opportunity: Public demand for improved delivery of public services supports alternative strategies, and technology will continue to provide new options.

Recommendations: Give school boards greater autonomy over the management of available resources, flexibility for restructuring the delivery of services and expand effective options for families.

✎ *Indicates the recommendation is a priority for the Partnership.*

- ✎ Support the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation (MELF) recommendations to improve family access to effective early education programs and services.
- ✎ Give school boards greater authority to limit the growth in expenditures (e.g. costs of contract settlements within available revenues).
- ✎ Encourage consolidation of district administrative offices and services (e.g. rural – countywide districts, metro – consolidate non-classroom services).
- ✎ Expand education options for families (MBP priority, not specified in MFI report).
 - Enhance development of on-line learning courses and programs (e.g. professional development programs for educators, state virtual high school for students).