

**The Minnesota Student Bill of Rights:**

1. Every child in Minnesota will receive a high-quality, 21st century education, regardless of where they live, what race they are, or how much money their family has.
2. The State of Minnesota will fulfill its Constitutional obligation to fully and fairly fund public education from early childhood through college.
3. Every child in Minnesota has the right to the early care and learning opportunities necessary to start school successfully.
4. Our children will have access to high quality after-school and summer programming that promotes their success in school.
5. Every Minnesota student will have access to, and be prepared for, higher education that meets his or her learning and career preparation needs.
6. Our schools will offer a broad curriculum that includes core competencies in math, science, reading and writing, but also emphasizes the arts, citizenship, technology, physical health and foreign languages.
7. Every Minnesota child will be taught by high-quality, dynamic teachers who are well-trained, certified, and supported.
8. Class sizes in Minnesota will be reasonable so that our children, and their families, can build personal relationships with teachers who know them and understand their individual strengths and learning styles.
9. School Boards, parents, school administrators, and teachers will be given local control to make decisions that best support the children in their communities.
10. Parents and the broader community will be invested and involved in Minnesota's schools.

**Detailed proposals:**

**1. Every child will receive a high quality education.**

- Minnesota will aggressively work to close the achievement gap using proven methods.
  - Stabilize families so that children can stay at one school. (1)
  - Reduce class sizes to allow teachers to form personal relationships with students and families.
  - Improve parent and family involvement using community outreach models.
  - Support programs that honor academic achievement like the YWCA's Black Achievers.
  - Expand community school solutions that provide many services for children at the school, like nurses and social services.
  - Improve cultural competency of school personnel and recruit and retain teachers and school staff of color. (2)
  - Expand mentorship programs for students of color.
  - Restore after-school opportunities and programming that both help students be successful and keep them engaged in a learning community.
- Minnesota will eliminate geographic disparities in educational opportunity.
  - Funding for schools will be fair across the state. All of our schools -- urban, rural and suburban -- will have the resources they need to educate the children in their

community in accordance with the expectations set forth in the Student Bill of Rights.

- Minnesota will be a leader in using technology and innovation in our classrooms that prepare our students for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.
  - Minnesota classrooms will be equipped with up-to-date technology including high speed Internet access, computer labs, hand-held devices or SmartBoards, and the new technologies that will be developed in the coming years.
  - Children will develop media and online literacy skills.

## **2. Fully fund our schools.**

- Over the next 5 years, Minnesota will increase school funding (at least \$1 billion) to reduce class size, close the achievement gap, and broaden the curriculum. This increase will be phased in.
  - Simplify the funding formula: Minnesota will modify the way that it funds schools based in part on the work of PS Minnesota, but with a greater eye to equity in rural Minnesota. Their work, based on extensive research by non-partisan experts, proposed to make the funding formula easier to understand, more transparent, and student driven. The work of PS Minnesota will be part of a larger effort to clarify, reform, and increase school funding. (3)
  - Use local innovation grants to promote research-based, effective, innovative programs in school districts.
- We will not pit districts against one another in a competition for scarce funding.

## **3. Support early childhood and family education.**

- Promote proper child development from before birth by offering parenting and brain-development courses like the Baby College offered by the Harlem Childrens Zone.
- Target early childhood and family education using a community health approach and by improving children's health.
- Based on recommendations from Ready 4 K and other groups, work to ensure that all children come to kindergarten ready. (4)
- Expand effective family and early childhood education pilot programs currently implemented by the Blandin Foundation's Invest Early initiative, and others. (5)
- Fully fund all-day kindergarten.
- Consider adopting age 3 to grade 3 school like the proven Chicago Child-Parent Centers where appropriate.

## **4. Provide after-school and summer programs that support learning.**

- Ensure that activities are accessible to all students by bringing down fees. Students are often engaged in school because of involvement in extra-curricular activities.
- Implement high-quality after-school programs based on successful models in St. Paul, and nationally. Minnesota must start seeing what happens after school as part of a student's ability to succeed.
- Expand summer school options, access, and availability so that those who want or need to continue learning beyond the school year, can.
- Promote life-long learning by providing adult education options where appropriate.
- Create more opportunities for kids to explore their interests in math, science and engineering outside school.

## **5. Access to higher education for all.**

- Make tuition affordable by moving our state funding obligations to MNSCU and the University of Minnesota back to the goal of 2/3 state coverage of cost.

- Support state grant programs for low-income students.
- Promote 2-year, technical, and apprenticeship programs by extending their recruiting and reach into high schools.
- Break down barriers between high schools and higher education by promoting advancement programs like AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination), Advanced Placement, College in the Schools, Post-Secondary Enrollment, Admission Possible, Project Graduate and partnerships between schools and community and technical programs.
- Enact Opportunity Minnesota Act designed to relieve student loan debts for Minnesota residents that have graduated from a Minnesota higher education institution and continue to work in the state following graduation

## **6. Prepare our children for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.**

- Minnesota will learn technology and citizenship skills. Our children now compete in an incredibly dynamic, global economy. Most of them will get jobs as adults that do not exist today. As a result, they must learn transferable skills that will allow them to prosper.
- Expand the curriculum. Our children's current curriculum is getting squeezed as a result of the need to comply with No Child Left Behind.
  - More and more time is being taken by standardized testing, with some schools reporting a total of 12-15 instruction days lost to mandated testing.
  - The pressure for schools to perform on math and reading tests has meant more and more class time is being dedicated to these subjects at the expense of important subjects like social studies, the arts, technology education, and literature. Our children deserve a well-rounded curriculum that engages them in learning. (7)
- Minnesota children will be globally aware and able to compete in a diverse, competitive global market.
- Improve the tests our students take to ensure that they provide teachers with valid, immediate feedback and that they assess genuine student growth and do not compare apples to oranges.
- Minnesota will examine Smart Standards, a longer school day, a longer school year, and re-balancing curriculum by engaging teachers and education leaders around best practices.

## **7. The best teachers.**

- Minnesota has a long and proud tradition of recruiting excellent teachers. We should honor the work already being done with support and funding.
- Expand and fund effective, locally controlled mentorship programs that support new teachers so that they stay in the teaching profession. (8)
- Encourage collaboration and team-work by providing time within the school day and year for these activities to take place.
- Restore our emphasis on high-quality teacher training by supporting the 2% set-aside for staff development.
- Protect teacher pensions so that those who serve our children are well-cared for in their senior years.
- Recruit and retain teachers and staff of color and provide economic incentives for teachers willing to teach in low performing schools. (9)
- Preserve the integrity of teacher quality by promoting vigorous teacher preparation a high standard for teacher licensure.

## **8. Reduce class size.**

- Minnesota will phase in class size reductions beginning with a cap of 21 students in grades K-3, moving to a cap of 24 students in grades 4-6 and keeping secondary classes below 27 students.
  - Nearly all evidence gathered on the achievement gap indicates that a student's relationship with a quality teacher is a driving force in their academic achievement. This is especially true for students of color. Lower class sizes allow teachers to develop personal relationships with students. (10)
  - The most recent (November, 2009) and long-term study on class size was published in the *American Journal of Education*. Children in smaller classes, particularly in the early grades, are more successful in school. (11)
- Support even smaller class sizes for special education, Limited English Proficiency, low achieving, and advanced students.

## **9. Return collaborative decision making between the state and communities by giving greater local control to our school districts.**

- Encourage school and site-based management that empowers districts, schools, and teachers to make important decisions about their schools and classrooms.
- Engage in collaborative decision-making between the state, stakeholders, and communities. Our education policy will be research-based and driven by best practices, not by political whims.
- Make smart reduction in mandates that allow districts to make local decisions again.

## **10. Promote parent, family, and community involvement.**

- Engage in community outreach efforts by bringing school staff and children to the community, for example, by connecting with area senior centers.
- Encourage a home-visit model where appropriate. (12)
- Consider expanding parent commitment contracts that have been used in some public and charter schools.
- Provide school-day time to for teachers and school staff to communicate effectively with parents and families.
- Compensate teachers to use online tools to communicate with parents and families.

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### End Notes:

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