St. Cloud Area School District 742 - Board of Education
2027 Legislative Platform

The Constitution of Minnesota requires a thorough and efficient system of public schools. District 742 serves a uniquely diverse student population where 69.9% of our students are eligible for free and reduced-price meals, 24.9% have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), and 23.5% receive English Language Learner support annually. All of these are well above state averages. The St. Cloud Area School District 742 Board of Education remains committed to providing every student with access to a safe, supportive, and high-quality education. We urge the Governor and Legislature to act collaboratively to ensure equitable and sustainable funding for all Minnesota students. Our comprehensive Strategic Plan goals guide every priority below.

GOAL 1: Eliminate the Special Education Cross-Subsidy

- Increase special education funding to reduce or eliminate the cross-subsidy over the next four years.
- Repeal the automatic $250 million reduction trigger so changes follow deliberate action on Blue Ribbon Commission recommendations.
- Hold the cross-subsidy aid factor at 50% or higher and restore transportation reimbursement.

Why this matters: District 742 carries a $52 million special education budget with a ~$13.3 million cross-subsidy (~$1,034 per student) drawn from general education.

GOAL 2: Strengthen Charter School Facilities & Fiscal Oversight

- Request the Office of the Legislative Auditor consider evaluating charter school lease aid and facility arrangements, including affiliated building corporations.
- Require transparent reporting on facility ownership, lease terms, and related-party relationships comparable to district facility spending.
- Review lease aid formula design against actual costs of comparable district space.

Why this matters: The Legislative Auditor recommended clarification in 2003 and 2008; no comprehensive evaluation has occurred since.

GOAL 3: Modernize How Minnesota Measures Student Progress

- Direct MDE to lead public reporting with student growth and publish contextual indicators alongside proficiency results.
- Permit districts to substitute an approved nationally recognized high school assessment where it reduces duplication.
- Fund statewide graduate competencies and evaluate federal Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority for a limited pilot.

Why this matters: MCA proficiency is closely tied to factors associated with socioeconomics. Growth measures better reflect school contribution and reduce misuse that can impact enrollment shifts.

GOAL 4: Fully Fund State-Mandated Unemployment Benefits

- Convert one-time unemployment reimbursement for educational support staff into a permanent base appropriation in the E-12 budget.
- Alternatively, repeal the mandate so districts are not left with an unfunded state-created obligation.

Why this matters: District 742's annual cost is approximately $1.3 million from general education revenue. Costs shift to the levy in FY2028 under current law.

GOAL 5: Protect Public Education Funding

- Reject proposals that divert public education dollars to private schools, including vouchers and education savings accounts.
- Preserve the inflation adjustment in the general education formula.
- Protect and stabilize compensatory education revenue through the transition from meal applications under universal free meals.

Why this matters: Nearly 70% of District 742 students qualify for free or reduced-price meals. Compensatory funding (~$27 million) supports intervention, multilingual, and mental health services.

GOAL 6: Preserve the Federal E-Rate Program

- Preserve the federal E-rate program in its current form, including Category 2 support for internal connections and Wi-Fi.
- Reject proposals to narrow, rural-limit, or sunset E-rate.
- Oppose conditioning E-rate funding on screen-time limits or parental opt-out requirements, these are local instructional decisions.

Why this matters: E-rate is the district's primary mechanism for affordable broadband. If weakened, the shortfall lands on local taxpayers and hits low-income students hardest.