

Weekly Advocate empower, educate, engage

Week Eight- February 22, 2021

Governor Walz's Education Policy Bill - What you need to know this week

HF 950 / SF 788 Governor's Policy Bill

Governor Walz's policy bill includes many provisions relating to academic standards, student discipline, increasing the number of teachers of color or American Indian teachers, teacher licensure, school meals, and post-secondary enrollment options. There are many provisions MSBA supports; however, there are many new requirements for school districts that have us concerned. [HF 950 will be heard Thursday \(February 25\) in Education Policy.](#)

MSBA has submitted the statement below to the committee chairs outlining concerns, and we will be testifying on Wednesday as well. We encourage you to reach out to [Chair Richardson](#) and/or [Chair Chamberlain](#), or [Governor Walz's office](#) with any specific concerns you may have. Our message to the committees has been consistent, please allow our districts to focus on our students' needs and education.

MSBA Statement: *The pandemic has presented enormous challenges for students, parents, teachers and other staff, as well as administrators and board members. Accordingly, we believe it is imperative that state policymakers refrain from enacting new mandates in the 2021 legislative session. Our staff must be allowed to focus all of their time and energy on meeting the academic and social and emotional needs of our students. SF 788 includes proposed changes to academic standards, teacher evaluation and teacher licensure. We do not believe this is the time to impose new mandates and requirements when educators are already feeling overwhelmed.*

New Requirements:

Academic standards. Requires school districts to adopt the state arts standards rather than local standards. Adds media arts to list of arts areas that districts must offer and require.

Graduation requirements. Requires one credit of physical education. Reduces number of elective credits from seven to six.

American Indian mascots and graduation. Prohibits a district from adopting a name, symbol, or image of an American Indian tribe, custom, or tradition as a mascot, nickname, logo, letterhead, or team name of the district or school. Allows

a district to seek an exemption from the Tribal Nations Education Committee and the Indian Affairs Council.

Requires a district or charter school to allow an American Indian student to wear American Indian regalia, tribal regalia, or objects of cultural significance at graduation ceremonies.

Alternative Programs. Requires a school to use non-exclusionary disciplinary policies and practices before dismissal proceedings or pupil withdrawal agreements. States that alternative education services are required when a student is suspended more than five consecutive days.

Teachers. Eliminates option to use three years of teaching experience under a Tier 2 license to fulfill coursework requirement for a Tier 3 license. Community education teachers, including teachers in early childhood and family education programs, are required to have teacher licenses. They are not, however, considered “teachers” for purposes of section 122A.40 or 122A.41, which means that they cannot become tenured or have continuing contracts. This bill brings community education teachers that are required to have licenses, except for those that teach driver training courses, within the definition of “teacher” under the continuing contract and tenure statutes. Mental Health Education Requires districts to provide mental health instruction.

Teacher Evaluation. Requires districts to evaluate teachers on cultural responsiveness. Requires districts to support and evaluate principals’ culturally responsive leadership practices.

School meals. Requires school districts to adopt and post a school meal policy. Lists required elements of policy, including a prohibition on withdrawing a meal from a student’s tray. Prohibits a sponsor that receives lunch aid from denying a school lunch or breakfast to a student who qualifies for free or reduced-price meals even if the student has an outstanding balance in a meal account. Requires a sponsor to provide meals to students in a respectful manner and prohibits a sponsor from imposing certain restrictions or limiting a student’s participation in certain activities due to an unpaid student meal debt. Requires the commissioner to send a letter of noncompliance to a sponsor violating respectful treatment requirement; sponsor must respond and remedy the practice.

Discipline and Suspensions. There are many requirements in the Governor’s bill surrounding discipline and suspensions. Requires student records transmitted when a student transfers schools to include pupil withdrawals and services a student needs to prevent inappropriate behavior from recurring. Requires an out-of- school suspension to include a readmission plan. Requires an administrator to ensure alternative education services are provided when a pupil is suspended for more than five consecutive school days. Requires school officials to give suspended students the opportunity to complete all school work assigned during the suspension and receive full credit for the

assignments. Encourages a principal to designate a school employee as a liaison to work with the student's teachers to allow the student to receive timely course materials and complete assignments and receive feedback.

Requires written notice of intent to impose an expulsion to describe the non-exclusionary disciplinary policies and practices offered the student to avoid the expulsion.

Requires a district inform parents that the department's list of legal resources is posted on the department's website.

Requires an admission or readmission plan to include measures to improve the student's behavior and lists optional elements of the plan. Requires the plan to include parental involvement in the admission or readmission process.

Requires districts to report on pupil withdrawal agreements and non-exclusionary disciplinary practices to the commissioner.

Requires the application of restrictive procedures statutes from only students with disabilities to all students.

Requires an oversight committee to review additional information regarding use of restrictive procedures. Requires reporting on the use of the debriefing process that follows use of a restrictive procedure. Prohibits using a restrictive procedure on a child younger than five.

Policies.

Requires the commissioner to issue guidance on engaging stakeholders to review and revise discipline policies that are restorative and responsive. Requires policies to include non-exclusionary disciplinary policies and practices, and emphasize providing multi-tiered supports to students. Requires schools to ensure student is getting alternative educational services. Requires schools to make sure students who have been expelled or excluded, or withdrawn, are on track for readmission with peers, remain eligible for school-based or school-linked mental health services, and have information on accessing mental health services.

Requires a school board to annually review and revise the school discipline policy and to include in the policy parameters for when input into discipline decisions is allowed.

Requires districts to provide instruction to help students identify, prevent, and reduce prohibited conduct; and take other action to create a safe and supportive school environment.

World's Best Workforce Requires districts' world's best workforce plans to include ethnic studies curriculum, and anti-racist and culturally sustaining curriculum; modifies other plan requirements.

Requires district advisory committee to recommend strategies regarding curriculum and learning and work environments.