



Where School Boards Learn to Lead

2017 Legislative Platform



Table of Contents

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Investing in All of our Students	3
Ensure Every Student has a Qualified and Committed Teacher	4
Support the Work of Locally Elected School Boards	5
Equity and Student Achievement	6
21st Century Facilities	7

About MSBA

The Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA) — a leading advocate for public education — supports, promotes and strengthens the work of public school boards.

Founded in 1920, MSBA is a voice for public education and the work of strong school boards at the state Capitol. We are committed to supporting effective student-centered public education that is adequately and equitably funded.

Minnesota School Boards Association

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See <http://www.mnmsba.org/Portals/0/PDFs/2016MSBALegislativePolicies.pdf> for MSBA's complete list of Legislative Policies.

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Investing in All of our Students

Secure Adequate and Equitable General Education Funding

High-quality education for each and every student plays a critical role in economic vitality and future for our communities. MSBA's top priority is to annually fund the general education formula for public schools by at least the rate of inflation.

World's Best Workforce

The Legislature established five goals for the purpose of statewide accountability system in 2013. These goals are:

- All students are prepared for kindergarten.
- All students achieve reading proficiency by the end of third grade.
- All achievement gaps are closed among racial and ethnic groups of students, students living in poverty, and students receiving special education services.
- All students graduate from high school.
- All students are ready for career and/or postsecondary education.

Failure to make adequate progress on World's Best Workforce goals may result in the Commissioner of Education repurposing up to 2 percent of a school district's revenue.

Special Education Cross-Subsidy

It is time for the Minnesota Legislature and U.S. Congress to pay for a greater share of special education costs. The largest underfunded mandate for Minnesota schools is special education. The state's responsibility for funding the special education cross-subsidy will be \$543 million for fiscal year 2018-2019. This persistent underfunding requires local school districts to use general fund revenue to meet requirements.

Fully Fund the Prekindergarten Program

The prekindergarten program should be fully funded to ensure fair, equitable, and voluntary access for every four-year old student. Currently, school districts receive partial state aid (0.6) payments for a full-time (1.0) prekindergarten student.

Ensure Every Student Has a Qualified and Committed Teacher

Attracting and Retaining Quality Teachers

Support policies that will help attract and retain teachers in shortage areas.

- Hiring staff that reflects the diverse student populations;
- Reducing barriers to the teacher licensure process;
- Streamlining and simplifying the teacher licensure process;
- Providing alternative licensure pathways to career and technical experts;
- Retaining existing teachers through mentorship and training;
- Supporting locally developed, research-based programs to recruit, train, and develop potential staff in areas difficult to fill; and
- Increasing education funding to provide competitive compensation packages.

Pensions

The Legislature should address any increase in the employer's share of teacher retirement costs with matching state funding.

Provide Teachers with Funding for Concurrent Enrollment Credentialing

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities and the Legislature need to assist K-12 concurrent enrollment teachers to obtain accessible and affordable pathways to earn up to 18 graduate credits in the area they teach high school dual-credit classes as required by the Higher Learning Commission.



Support the Work of Locally Elected School Boards

Reduce Unfunded Mandates

Significant educational changes and new requirements have placed stress on local schools and staff. These new demands have not been adequately funded, as our school systems attempt to fulfill these requirements.

We urge the Legislature to address the following mandates:

- Delay implementation of the new state reporting requirements regarding additional disaggregation of student data.
- Allow school boards to set the starting and ending dates of the school year that best fit the needs of their students and community.
- Remove the section of law on health insurance that forces the insurance aggregate value to never be reduced.
- Remove the provision that limits school district contracts for group health insurance to no longer than two years unless the largest union agrees to the change.

MSBA Board of Directors



Standing (from left to right): Linden Olson (Worthington), Mike Domin (Crosby-Ironton), Kirby Ekstrom (North Branch Area), Carla Bates (Minneapolis), Betsy Anderson (Hopkins), Heidi Jones (Red Wing), John Berklich (Hibbing), Ann Long Voelkner (Bemidji Area), Linda Leiding (Lake Crystal Wellcome Memorial), Suzy Guthmueller (Centennial), George Kimball (White Bear Lake Area) and Melissa Sauser (Farmington Area).

Sitting (from left to right): MSBA President Kathy Green (Austin), MSBA Past President Kevin Donovan (Mahtomedi) and MSBA Treasurer Deborah Pauly (Jordan).

Equity And Student Achievement

Research and Development

School districts exist in a rapidly changing world and should research new educational models.

Schools should be allowed additional flexibility from current laws and rules necessary to innovate solutions. These innovation zones should demonstrate the value of redesigned educational models.

High-Quality Assessments

In order to be effective, tests must be meaningful and timely to meet the needs of students.



21st Century Facilities

Technology

Technology is essential in the design of effective learning and teaching environments. Digital literacy is crucial in the academic success of students and their preparation for college and careers and citizenship. All students should have equitable and affordable access to broadband and devices to support learning at school and home.

As a step in achieving digital literacy, we urge the Legislature to permanently and fully fund the Telecommunications/Internet Access Aid Program.

Fair Tax Policies

Minnesota public school districts rely heavily on local property taxes for school building needs, safety and security improvements, and technology. School facilities are in need of repair. Every child needs a safe and creative learning environment, no matter the ZIP code.

- Increase equalization for debt service, operating, and the long-term facility maintenance program.
- Index the debt service equalization formula.
- Provide agricultural property tax credit for agricultural land equal to 40 percent of the property attributable to school district-bonded debt levies.

