

2021 Legislative Session Issue Brief

Education funding

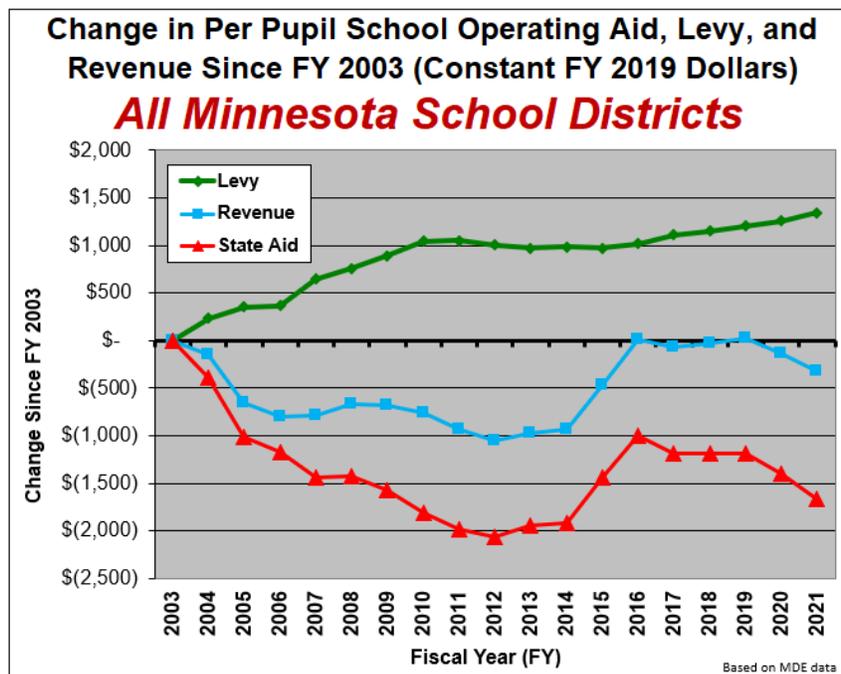
A strong system of public schools, one that gives every Minnesota student an equal opportunity for success – no matter what they look like or where they come from – will strengthen our communities and improve the lives of children and their families.

If we're serious about making sure every student can pursue their dreams, our state needs to get serious about funding what works.

Investing in smaller class sizes, mental health services, high-quality training for educators, learning and working environments that are welcoming and inclusive and competitive compensation packages are key to attracting and retaining great educators.

But Minnesota has failed to make those needed investments and now faces a critical teacher shortage, particularly in greater Minnesota and with teachers of color.

One of the biggest problems is the state's share of funding schools hasn't kept pace with inflation—it's now 11.8 percent less than it was in 2003 in real dollars.



It's time for Minnesota to fully fund public education to give students and educators the safe and racially just schools they deserve. That means the richest 1 percent need to pay their fair share and the state needs to invest billions of dollars into strategies proven to help our students succeed. This includes:

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Education Minnesota is an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association and AFL-CIO.  1758



THE VOICE FOR PROFESSIONAL
EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS

- Reversing Minnesota's perpetual underfunding of education by significantly increasing the per-pupil funding formula and tying it annually to inflation.
- Creating a new racial equity funding stream and increasing American Indian aid so schools can better serve students of color and Indigenous students.
- Full funding of special education costs at the state and federal levels instead of relying on school districts to pay for them.
- Ensuring all education support professionals earn a living wage of at least \$20 an hour.
- Attracting and retaining teachers of color by increasing starting salaries and creating loan forgiveness, mentoring and other programs and protections to support educators on the job.
- Universal access to child care and early learning.
- Expanding access to full-service community schools.
- Lowering class sizes so teachers can give students more of the individual attention they need.
- Providing additional resources for school districts to hire more support staff, including counselors, social workers, psychologists, nurses and other job classifications.
- Expanding mental health services and trauma-informed practices to ensure all schools are safe and welcoming places in which students can learn and educators can work and end the school-to-prison pipeline.
- Helping educators get quality, affordable health care through innovative, cost-sharing initiatives and allowing all Minnesotans to take advantage of any affordable public option.
- Lifting the cap on Q Comp, so every educator has access to equitable and sustainable funding for professional development.
- Making post-secondary education affordable and accessible so all students can pursue higher education free from the stress of unmanageable loans and debts. This includes expanding Minnesota's existing teacher loan forgiveness program and creating a student loan advocate within state government to act as an advocate for consumers against abuses by loan servicers and lenders.
- Investing in infrastructure and deferred maintenance in K-12 schools and college campuses so that all students – no matter where they live – are in high-quality learning environments and have access to a wide range of resources and a well-rounded education.
- Providing up to 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave for all workers through a payroll deduction and employer tax.
- Supporting proposals that help keep students and educators safe and that support teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic and the different learning models it brings with it. This includes expanding broadband access and mental health services and helping educators, especially in special education, with increasing workloads.