

2022 Legislative Session Issue Brief

Education funding

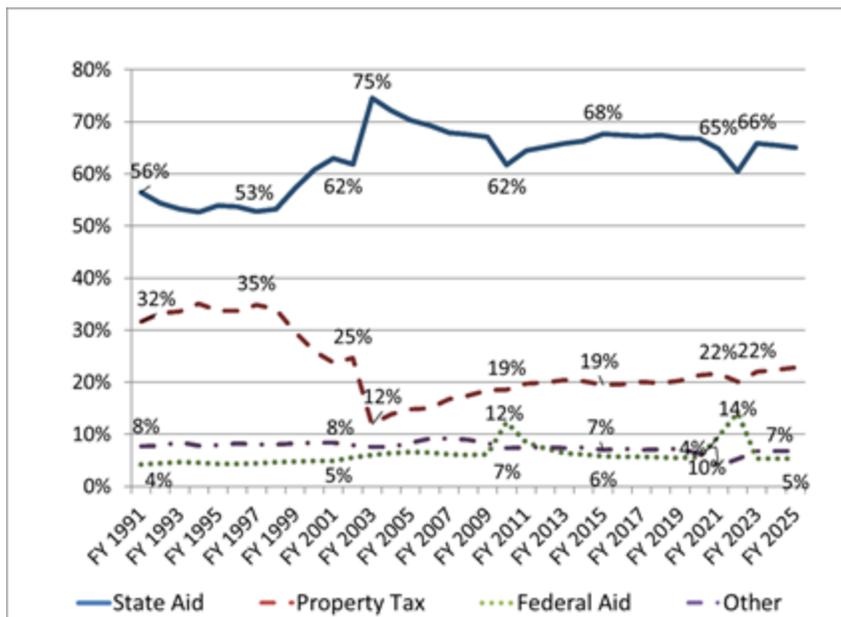
A strong system of public schools, one that gives every Minnesota student an equal opportunity for success – no matter what they look like or where they come from – will strengthen our communities and improve the lives of children and their families.

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 16.3 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. Minnesota must:

- Reverse the state's perpetual underfunding of education by significantly increasing the per-pupil funding formula and tying it annually to inflation.
- Ensure all students, no matter what they look like or where they come from, have equitable access to welcoming schools where they see themselves reflected in the curriculum.

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Education Minnesota is an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association and AFL-CIO.  2489



THE VOICE FOR PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS

- Fully fund special education costs at the state and federal levels instead of relying on school districts to pay for them.
- Ensure all education support professionals earn a living wage of at least \$25 an hour.
- Attract and retain teachers of color by increasing starting salaries and creating loan forgiveness, mentoring and other programs and protections to support educators on the job. This includes building culturally responsive schools that reflect and honor the diverse students and staff in our state.
- Universal access to child care and early learning.
- Expand access to full-service community schools.
- Lower class sizes so teachers can give students more of the individual attention they need.
- Provide additional resources for school districts to hire more support staff, including counselors, social workers, psychologists, nurses and other job classifications.
- Expand 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.
- Help educators get quality, affordable health care through innovative, cost-sharing initiatives and allow all Minnesotans to take advantage of any affordable public option.
- Lift the cap on Q Comp, so every educator has access to equitable and sustainable funding for professional development.
- Make 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 adding a permanent student loan advocate to enforce our recently passed Borrower Bill of Rights and pursue abuses by loan servicers and lenders.
- Invest in infrastructure and deferred maintenance in K-12 schools and college campuses, including heating/cooling and ventilation systems, 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.
- Provide up to 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave for all workers through a payroll deduction and employer tax.
- Ensure sustainable funding for teacher pensions, including opposing any deviation from the 2018 pensions framework that does not address maintaining the purchasing power for retirees.
- Support 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.