

Education Minnesota

State leaders agree to a disappointing education budget

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ST. PAUL, Minnesota. May 21, 2019 – Gov. Tim Walz, House Speaker Melissa Hortman and Senate Majority Leader Paul Gazelka have agreed to an education budget that makes small improvements to the status quo and includes no significant changes to education policy.

Education Minnesota President Denise Specht said she was disappointed with the result.

“This is a lukewarm outcome to a legislative session that had a lot of potential for Minnesota students,” Specht said. “We have a status quo in our public schools that is driving out educators, failing to serve the needs of thousands of students and was rejected by voters who elected a former educator as governor in a landslide last year. This budget makes some progress, but Minnesotans want transformational change.”

The budget invests \$543 million new dollars in public education. Significantly, this is the first time in recent memory that unfunded mandates for special education services, called the cross-subsidy, will not take a bite from the increase in the per-pupil formula. Budget highlights include:

- Increases the per-pupil formula 2 percent in each year of the biennium for \$388 million, essentially an inflationary increase.
- Freezes the projected growth of the special education cross-subsidy with \$91 million.
- Maintains 4,000 seats in high-quality preschool for \$47 million.

“The most disappointing things about this agreement are the missing policies,” Specht said. “The state could have enacted rules to retain teachers of color, require radon testing in schools and reduce suspensions for kindergartners. We also squandered a chance to fine-tune the state’s teacher licensure law to raise standards and avoid unintended consequences. It hurts to think of all the lost opportunities.”

“Educators recognize that Gov. Walz and Speaker Hortman fought hard for Minnesota students this year, but they faced an obstructionist majority in the Senate that put the desires of the giant corporations and the wealthy few ahead of the voters and students,” Specht said. “If this is the best deal Minnesotans can get with the Senate we have, Minnesotans need to vote in a new Senate.”

Earlier this year, Education Minnesota released its definition of fully funding E-12 public education, including reducing class sizes so students can get individual attention, bringing the state’s ratio of counselors to students in line with national standards, giving every 4-year-old access to a high-quality pre-K program, raising educator pay and reducing educators’ education debt. The cost was \$3.7 billion to \$4.3 billion for the biennium.

About Education Minnesota

Education Minnesota is the voice for professional educators and students. Education Minnesota's members include teachers and education support professionals in Minnesota's public school districts, faculty members at Minnesota's community and technical colleges and University of Minnesota campuses in Duluth and Crookston, retired educators and student teachers. Education Minnesota is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, National Education Association and AFL-CIO.

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