

Education Minnesota

Education Minnesota testifies for proven solutions to raising academic achievement of students of color

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ST. PAUL, Minnesota. March 6, 2020 – Several members of Education Minnesota testified Friday in favor of proven solutions to improve the academic achievement of students of color during the Minnesota House symposium on racial disparities in education.

“The needs of our students are obvious and urgent to everyone who cares about education equity,” said Denise Specht, president of Education Minnesota. “Educators thank the House for advancing this conversation by hearing testimony on workable solutions. Now it’s time to act.”

Jessica Davis, the 2019 Minnesota Teacher of the Year and a high school math teacher in South St. Paul, said the Legislature should improve funding of public education and pass a bill to recruit and retain more teachers of color. And, she said, there was no reason to wait.

“We cannot lose sight of ‘right now,’” Davis said. “My students are not ‘future’ humans. Their humanity and validity as a sentient being doesn’t start in a couple of years after they’ve graduated.”

Emily Crook testified about a program of racial equity coaches in St. Louis Park Public Schools that helps the overwhelmingly white teaching corps examine their own racial attitudes and become better educators for students of color. She is a union member and one of the coaches.

“Equity coaching offers teachers the tools to discuss deeply, explore openly and inquire into their racial identity,” Cook said, adding, “Equity coaching allows teachers to notice that an anti-racist classroom is more than a multicultural curriculum.”

José Muñoz, director of the national Coalition for Community Schools, presented data from around the country demonstrating that bringing academic, medical and other supports for students and families into a school can have dramatic, positive results.

He said brand new programs aren’t necessary when there are already proven models to replicate.

“We need a strategy that blends all those resources so every child has an opportunity to succeed,” Muñoz said.

Muñoz has worked with members of Education Minnesota to expand full-service community schools in the state.

Education Minnesota streamed the House symposium on the union's Facebook page. The testimony for the day will be available there for re-viewing.

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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