

2014 Legislative Platform

The 2013 legislative session prioritized education and significantly invested in early childhood, K-12 and higher education. SEE applauds the legislature for adding 1.5% to the basic formula in FY 14 and in FY 15, fully funding all-day kindergarten, and providing revenue to reduce the special education cross-subsidy beginning in FY15. However, one session cannot make up for over a decade of inadequate and inequitable school funding. ***With the improving economy, the 2014 Legislative Session can continue its investment in Minnesota's K-12 public education system.*** SEE and its 59 member school districts urge the Legislature to:

- **Increase the basic formula to restore school funding and provide all school districts with the flexibility to meet unfunded mandates. Develop comprehensive funding reform that creates an adequate and equitable system of funding.**
 - The basic formula is crucial to all school districts, but especially to those school districts that do not generate considerable revenue through categorical formulas or are not able to pass large referendum levies. The Governor's Education Finance Working Group proposed an 12.9% increase to the basic formula so districts can recoup the buying power they have lost since 2003
 - The new teacher evaluation system and potential new anti-bullying policy are two significant unfunded mandates that would drain districts' limited resources.
 - Recent legislative action created two new education categorical formulas that financially assist certain districts. This has left a "doughnut" hole* of 62 non-metropolitan districts with enrollments between 960 to 2,000 pupil units without any corresponding formula adjustment. The legislature must immediately reduce the funding disparity for these districts while planning comprehensive funding reform so all children will have equal access to a high quality education regardless of where they live in Minnesota.
- **Continue to make voter-approved school referendum more affordable in low property wealth districts by expanding equalization aid.**
 - The 2013 legislature dedicated \$70 million in state aid to reduce the property taxpayer cost for the first \$300 per pupil of operating referendum in low property wealth districts.
 - The average referendum in the state is over \$1,000 per pupil. Equalization aid must be increased to provide property taxpayers in low property wealth districts greater fairness. These taxpayers continue to pay two to three times more for the same amount of school referendum revenue as taxpayers in high property wealth districts.
 - The newly created location equity categorical indirectly raises the referendum cap and provides districts already with the highest levels of referendum revenue access to even more. This change has made Minnesota's education funding system more inequitable even with the increased equalization.
 - The property taxpayer cost for debt service of capital projects also varies greatly based on a school district's property wealth. Like referendum equalization, debt service equalization needs to be increased.
- **Develop new and improve existing funding streams so school districts can meet their facility and technology needs.**
 - Expand eligibility to the alternative facilities program to allow all school districts the advantages enjoyed by the state's 25 largest school districts.
 - Create an ongoing state-bonding program that would allow the neediest school districts to make necessary upgrades to their facilities without overburdening local taxpayers.
 - Increase the equalization rates for all programs dealing with levies relating to school facility improvements.

SEE Districts

Albany*
Albert Lea
Annandale*
Anoka-Hennepin
Austin
Belle Plaine
Big Lake
Braham*
Brainerd
Buffalo
Byron
Cambridge-Isanti
Cannon Falls
Centennial
Chisago Lakes
Dassel-Cokato
Delano
East Central
Elk River
Faribault
Forest Lake
Fridley
Hinckley-Finlayson*
Howard Lake-
Waverly-Winsted
Hutchinson
Kasson-Mantorville
Kimball
LaCrescent-Hokah*
Lake City*
Litchfield*
Maple Lake*
Medford*
Melrose*
Milaca
Monticello
Mora*
New London-Spicer*
New Prague
North Branch
Northfield
Owatonna
Paynesville*
Pine City*
Pine River-Backus*
Princeton
Prior Lake-Savage
Rockford
Rocori
Roseau*
Rosemount-Apple
Valley-Eagan
Royalton*
Rush City*
Sartell-St. Stephen
Sauk Rapids-Rice
St. Francis
St. Michael-Albertville
Stewartville
Stillwater
Waconia