

Toward fully funding public education

Getting 'back to normal' funding isn't good enough

When we get past this crisis, if we're serious about making sure every student can pursue their dreams regardless of what they look like or where they're from, our state needs to get serious about doing what works.

Studies and common sense show real learning can't happen when kids arrive to school hungry or stressed out about issues at home; so, let's make sure those who need it have healthy meals, support and access to trustworthy mental health staff.

Educators can't give individual attention in packed classrooms or with overwhelming caseloads; so, let's fund schools with small class sizes and reasonable workloads that can foster stronger relationships. Let's offer free preschool to families that want it and spend the money to ensure our schools are safe and welcoming for everyone, no exceptions.

Our schools can't do any of this unless the richest 1 percent and the big corporations start paying their fair share, especially now, when so many working families are struggling in an economy that was rigged against them. We can't settle for going back to normal because normal wasn't good enough for many of our students, our profession or our neighborhoods.


By joining together as educators with the families in our communities, we can elect leaders who reflect the very best of every Minnesotan, who will make public education a top priority, and who will fully fund our schools so they have the resources they need to deliver the education our students deserve, from early childhood through college.

Four things to know

- Over the last two decades, per-pupil aid to schools, in real dollars, has fallen by as much as \$2,000. Even in 2016, when lawmakers made what they called a historic investment, they brought per-pupil funding only halfway back to its 2003 level.
- Due to the chronic refusal to pay for special education services at both the state and federal levels, school districts redirect about more than \$700 million to those services from their general education budgets.
- Fully funding public education in Minnesota will require the state and federal governments to invest more than \$6 billion more, a challenge during the pandemic recession. But if educators don't demand better for our students and our families, and keep demanding it for as long as it takes, how will it ever happen?
- The economic pain of the pandemic hasn't been shared equally. In fact, the Institute for Policy Studies, a progressive think tank, reports that in just the three weeks between March 18 and April 10, 2020, the wealth held by the nation's billionaires increased by \$282 billion, an almost 10 percent gain, to \$3.23 trillion. The problem isn't that there's no money for schools, the problem is that money is concentrated in the wrong places.

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FOR FULL FUNDING OUR STUDENTS DESERVE
FOR WELCOMING SCHOOLS FOR EVERYONE

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Taking charge

- Members of the Minnesota House and Senate make the decisions about how much revenue to raise and how much public money to invest in public education. If educators are to see new investments in education, we must elect a pro-education majority in the state Senate.
- The president, the U.S. Secretary of Education and the U.S. Congress will decide how much, if any, federal emergency funds go to public schools in Minnesota and throughout the United States. Joe Biden has pledged to appoint an educator as education secretary if he's elected president. Current Education Secretary Betsy DeVos is a billionaire, but not an educator.
- The failure of Congress to pay its share of the state's special education costs forces state and local taxpayers to pay more. We must elect representatives and senators who increase the federal government's share of special education costs to 40 percent, the promise Congress made when it passed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in the 1970s.