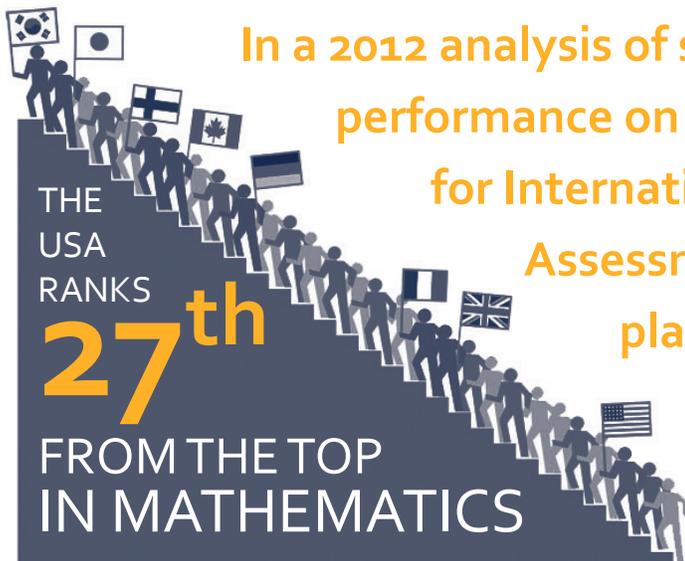


# 2016 Policies

## EDUCATION

MINNESOTA  
CHAMBER *of*  
COMMERCE

For Minnesota to continue to have the world-class, skilled workforce that is a cornerstone of our competitive business climate, systemic reforms must be implemented to raise the achievement of all students, ensuring every student graduates ready for postsecondary education and ready for success. We support improved kindergarten readiness, high standards with curriculum aligned to those standards, and meaningful outcomes that show students have learned what they need to know and have achieved academic growth year over year.



In a 2012 analysis of student performance on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the U.S. placed 27th out of 34 countries in math performance, 20th in science performance and 17th in reading performance.

Source: studentsfirst.org

### OUR GOALS

Minnesota boasts higher education achievement than most other states, as evidenced by high scores on standardized tests. This is cause for celebration and a point of pride. However, not all of our students experience this kind of academic success. Data shows that we have a persistent achievement gap for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Minnesota's future economic success depends on ensuring ALL Minnesota students graduate prepared for work and ready to succeed. The Minnesota Chamber of Commerce supports evidence-based reforms that will improve student outcomes and close Minnesota's achievement gap, and ensure all students are college and career ready.

### OUR PRIORITIES FOR 2016 SESSION INCLUDE:

- Increase access to Early Childhood Education Scholarships that serve families in need over an expensive, universal pre-kindergarten mandate.
- Ensure all students meet key benchmarks by requiring strong academic standards and accountability.
- Promote choice and innovation.
- Ensure best teachers and leaders in schools.

## **INCREASE ACCESS TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIPS**

Providing low-income families with access to quality early childhood education programs is necessary to closing the preparation gap, which ultimately leads to closing the achievement gap. The Minnesota Chamber supports early childhood scholarships targeted to helping low-income children access high-quality providers that build on existing public funding through strategic layering and realignment of existing resources. We support expanding the Parent Aware system to additional high-quality early childhood education programs. Public resources invested in early childhood education should align to the Parent Aware ratings.

## **STRONG ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

Minnesota must prepare its students to be the best in the world by setting clear, rigorous standards, aligning curriculum to standards, and assessing outcomes. Minnesota must close the achievement gap by requiring that all students master state academic standards before graduation.

The following key academic milestones correlate with students' future success:

- It is critical that all Minnesota children are well-prepared for kindergarten to ensure their future success.
- Children who are unable to read at grade level by the end of third grade have higher rates of school dropout. Students should be required to meet the third-grade literacy benchmark.
- Laying the groundwork for math attainment in middle school is critical – successful completion of Algebra 1 by the end of eighth grade should be required.
- High school graduates should demonstrate that they have met the minimum standards for reading, writing, and math on a high school graduation examination.
- Adequately preparing students in high school decreases postsecondary remediation and increases the likelihood that students will succeed in higher education and in the workforce. The Minnesota Chamber supports assessing students' career interests and critical abilities, ensuring that all students develop a college and career attainment plan, and providing expanded access to career pathway resources.

## **PROMOTE SCHOOL CHOICE AND INNOVATION**

School choice increases the number of high-quality school options for each student, enabling parents and students to select education that meets their needs and helps them reach their potential. The Minnesota Chamber supports strengthening and expanding established dual-credit postsecondary programs, including postsecondary enrollment options (PSEO) for all Minnesota institutions, early college, concurrent enrollment, advanced placement, international baccalaureate, career and technical education, and college level examination placement (CLEP).

## **EFFECTIVE TEACHERS AND EFFECTIVE LEADERS**

To have effective teachers, there must be stronger teacher preparation programs and robust professional development. Teacher training programs at Minnesota higher education institutions should be redesigned to increase and measure the effectiveness of the teachers they prepare. Teachers should have professional development support throughout their career including externships in businesses.

Alternative pathways for teacher licensure offer solutions for school districts striving to close the achievement gap or that face challenges finding qualified candidates in specialty fields. Minnesota's alternative licensure legislation must be fully implemented and roadblocks must be removed. Meaningful teacher evaluations, staffing flexibility, and tenure reform are needed to ensure success in every classroom. School leaders should be given maximum flexibility to ensure that effective teachers are retained with the ability to terminate teachers who are not performing up to the state's standards. Statewide expansion of the Q Comp performance-based teacher compensation is needed in order to ensure effective teachers are in the classroom.