



MREA members support expanding educational opportunities and closing achievement gaps in Minnesota in the following ways. MREA's membership includes about 225 school districts across Greater Minnesota, 11 education districts, special education and service cooperatives and additional associate members.

## Teacher Crisis

All Minnesota students need highly qualified licensed teachers, across all grade levels and specialties, guiding them every day. Student academic achievement is directly impacted by the quality of the teachers in their classrooms.

### KEY LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS NEEDED

- Maintain a stable, defined-benefit retirement plan through shared responsibility of the state, school districts, teachers and retirees.
- Secure adequate, ongoing funding for loan forgiveness/scholarships to attract and retain teachers in rural Minnesota.
- Expand Grow Your Own Teachers pilot programs to rural districts and cooperatives.
- Support equitable funding for Teacher Development & Evaluation activities across the state for all teachers and their students.

## Jump Start to School Readiness

While there is widespread understanding and support for the value of early learning, Minnesota's multiple categorical, competitive funding streams result in inequitable opportunities for children across the state and impede the ability of rural school districts to deliver high quality preschool education to all young children.

### KEY LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS NEEDED

- Streamline early learning revenues and ensure local coordination of early learning programs by consolidating Pathway I and II, Voluntary Pre-K, School Readiness Plus into the School Readiness account with consensus requirements.
- Consensus requirements should include a minimum of 350 hours of service, 3- and 4- star rated providers and a focus on serving FRE population.
- Ensure a viable mixed delivery system by requiring schools to reserve 40 percent for non-district providers with same program requirements, while holding harmless revenue for Voluntary Pre-K recipients. Release unused reserved funds to school districts annually on June 30.

## Strengthen Rural Communities

Robust economic development in rural Minnesota relies on affordable child care and Internet connectivity.

### KEY LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS NEEDED

- Enhance state funding to support quality childcare in underserved rural communities.
- Expand broadband development grants to underserved rural communities to provide home access to high-speed broadband Internet to maximize student success with school-based 1-to-1 initiatives.



# Facility Fallout

Rural schools balance a variety of critical facility needs, including instructional space for students with high needs, early learning environments and remodeling for 21st century learning. They all fall outside of Long Term Facility Maintenance (LTFM).

## KEY LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS NEEDED

- Enact Recommendation #4 of the School Facilities Financing Work Group to
  - Repurpose the current \$212 per pupil Lease Levy as School Facilities Improvement Revenue to expand the uses of these funds for facility renovation and improvements as well as lease payments, and
  - Provide Greater Minnesota school district members of cooperatives the authority to levy up to \$65 per pupil for cooperative facilities.
- Set a minimum allowable district lease levy authorization equal to that for 480 Adjusted Pupil Units.
- Allow districts to enter into joint powers agreements for cooperative facilities, use lease levy for cooperative facilities even if they once owned the facility, and use LTFM to enhance leased facilities from public and private owners.
- Equalize homeowner tax effort for school facility bonds by linking Debt Service Equalization to a fixed percentage of state average Adjusted Net Tax Capacity (ANTC) and maintain the 40 percent Ag2School Bond Credit for agricultural land for school bond taxes.

# Student Opportunity Gaps

Greater Minnesota schools are required to offer all required subjects, elective opportunities and services for students regardless of their size. They are facing increasingly diverse student bodies with more mental health needs and a pressing need to credential concurrent enrollment teachers by the new Higher Learning Commission deadline of Sept. 1, 2022.

## KEY LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS NEEDED

- **Concurrent Enrollment Credentialing Support:** Fully fund the statewide partnership authorized in 2017.
- **Cooperative Technical Assistance:** Support cooperative technical assistance for rural school districts and the ability to make improvements in curriculum, instruction and the effective use of data.
- **Telecommunications Equity Access (TEA):** Expand funding and Regional Library Telecom Aid (RLTA) programs to ensure cost-effective, high-speed broadband access to learners of all ages.
- **English Language Learners:** Raise both the minimum amount of funding each district receives for serving ELL students to \$32,000 and the amount per pupil with a minimum of \$17,000 per district increase.
- **Mental Health:** Restore funding for ongoing school-county collaborative efforts to provide mental health and related services.

