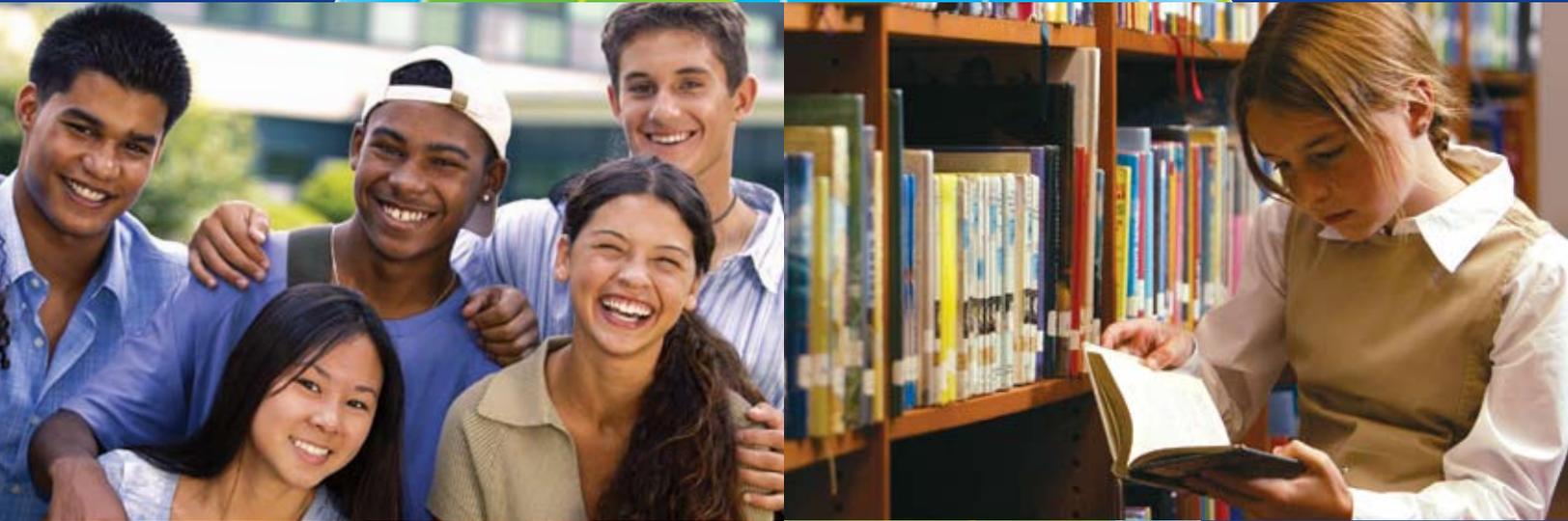


# Minnesota's Promise

*World-Class Schools, World-Class State*



## Final Report

January 2008

PARTNERS IN MINNESOTA'S PROMISE

As partners in *Minnesota's Promise*, we have agreed to work toward the ten strategies of *Minnesota's Promise* both within our organizations and together across the state as a whole.

Alliance for Student Achievement  
Association of Metropolitan School Districts  
Education Minnesota  
Greater Twin Cities United Way  
Minnesota Administrators of Special Education  
Minnesota Association of School Administrators  
Minnesota Association of School Business Officials  
Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals  
Minnesota Campus Compact  
Minnesota College Access Network  
Minnesota Community Education Association  
Minnesota Council on the Teaching of Languages and Cultures  
Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association  
Minnesota International Center  
Minnesota Minority Education Partnership  
Minnesota Private College Council  
Minnesota Rural Education Association  
Minnesota School Boards Association  
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities  
Parents United for Public Schools  
Ready 4 K  
Schools for Equity in Education  
Search Institute  
University of Minnesota:  
    Children, Youth and Family Consortium  
    College of Education and Human Development  
    College Readiness Consortium  
Working Family Resource Center

For a list of individual Minnesotans who have also signed on as partners in *Minnesota's Promise*, please visit [www.minnesotaspromise.org](http://www.minnesotaspromise.org).

CO-CHAIRS:

Darlyne Bailey, Ph.D., Dean and Assistant to the President, College of Education and Human Development, University of Minnesota

Charlie Kyte, Ph.D., Executive Director, Minnesota Association of School Administrators

# Minnesota's Promise

*World-Class Schools, World-Class State*

Final Report



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# What's the Vision?

## Dear Fellow Minnesotan:

Over the past two years, I have helped to facilitate a stakeholder input process called *Minnesota's Promise*, through which hundreds of citizens have agreed that establishing a common vision for the future of public education is an urgent priority for our state. Those citizens concluded that without such a shared vision, our educational debates will remain stuck on questions—such as whether schools are under-, adequately, or overfunded—that cannot be answered without a yardstick against which proposals for change can be measured.

This report seeks to articulate an educational vision that goes beyond broad statements of principle (“Every child can learn”) and ambitious improvement targets (“100 percent of all students will graduate on time by 2016”) to identify strategies and structures that can be implemented at the state, district, and school levels. Many of the strategies outlined in this report will be familiar to readers, but few of them have been taken to scale across entire schools, systems, or states. And those strategies that have been taken to scale have rarely been sustained through changes in political and organizational leadership.

In contrast, over the past several decades a number of nations with populations roughly the size of Minnesota—such as New Zealand, Singapore, and Finland—have become global leaders by developing educational systems that are coherent and comprehensive, and that are continuously improved through analysis and experimentation. Closer to home, Massachusetts has become the U.S. leader in student achievement by following a reform strategy that was signed into law in 1993, and that has been sustained through four Republican governors and the current Democratic governor, and through changes in the Democratically controlled legislature.<sup>1</sup>

Minnesota has the potential to join the ranks of the world's highest-performing educational systems, but both research and experience make it clear that to realize that goal, we need a statewide strategy that is serious, systemic, and supported across political, economic, and cultural lines.

As the old saying goes, if you don't have a destination, any road will do. *Minnesota's Promise* is an effort to provide our state with a clear and compelling vision of the future of public education, so that we can travel together down the most promising roads to reform in the decades to come.

Sincerely,

Kent Pekel  
Executive Director  
College Readiness Consortium  
University of Minnesota

1. For more information on high-performing and fast-improving educational systems in the United States and around the world, visit the *Minnesota's Promise* website at [www.minnesotaspromise.org](http://www.minnesotaspromise.org).

# The Status Quo Is Not an Option



## *What Is Minnesota's Promise?*

The *Minnesota's Promise* project began in 2005, when twenty-seven past and present superintendents of schools came together to share strategies and build relationships across rural, urban, and suburban lines. Their work over the course of more than a year together was supported by the Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi Foundation, and it resulted in an initial draft of this report. During the 2006–2007 school year, the superintendents partnered with the University of Minnesota to launch a yearlong series of conversations about their ideas. Those conversations engaged more than five hundred Minnesotans and a broad array of organizations in large summits and small group meetings, and significant changes were made in the *Minnesota's Promise* framework along the way. This report summarizes the results of that multidimensional stakeholder input process.

## *The Winds of Change*

At every meeting of *Minnesota's Promise*, participants were asked to share their views on the most important issues facing Minnesota's students and schools in the twenty-first century. While many ideas emerged, people consistently identified two trends that are transforming public education in our state. The first trend is the emergence of the global knowledge economy, in which all citizens must possess high-level knowledge and skills to earn a living wage and to take advantage of the extraordinary opportunities that are available to well-educated Americans today.

The second trend is demographic. In schools and districts of every size and in every region, the percentage of pupils who are students of color, whose first language is not English, and who live in poverty is rising rapidly. As a result, many educators face the challenge and opportunity of working with students from backgrounds that are different from their own and different from the backgrounds of students they have worked with in the past. The face of public education in our state is literally changing—and the pace of that change will only accelerate in the years ahead.

Taken together, these two winds of change—economic globalization and demographic transformation—have the potential to propel Minnesota forward or to blow us backward into the second tier of states and nations. If we educate today's students as successfully as we educated their predecessors in previous generations, they will provide our state with ideas and innovations that will enable us to compete and win in the global economy. But because today's students face new and different educational challenges, helping them realize their potential—and ours—will require new approaches and solutions.<sup>2</sup>

And so the challenge before us is twofold: we must find ways to close achievement gaps between Minnesota's students and their peers in the highest-performing nations of the world, while also closing gaps between groups of our own students here at home.

To cite one example of the global gap we face, a recent study by the American Institutes for Research found that 43 percent of all eighth graders in Minnesota are proficient in mathematics, as compared with 73 percent of the eighth graders in Singapore, the top-scoring nation. It should be of little comfort to Minnesotans that our students did better than students in the United States as a whole, 26 percent of

2. For more information on the challenges and opportunities facing public education in Minnesota, please visit the *Minnesota's Promise* website at [www.minnesotaspromise.org](http://www.minnesotaspromise.org), and the LearnMore website at [www.learnmoremn.org](http://www.learnmoremn.org).



# Essential Elements of High Performance

whom were found to be proficient in eighth-grade math. The same study found that 55 percent of the eighth graders in Singapore (again the top country) are proficient in science, compared with 39 percent of Minnesota students and 31 percent of all students in the United States.<sup>3</sup>

On the domestic front, four-year high school graduation rates are indicative of the many educational disparities that exist among student groups in Minnesota. According to the Minnesota Department of Education, 80 percent of white students graduate from high school in four years, compared with 40 percent of American Indian students, 68 percent of Asian students, 38 percent of African American students, and 39 percent of Hispanic students.<sup>4</sup>

## *The Vision*

Rooted in the realities of Minnesota's schools today, the question facing participants in *Minnesota's Promise* was this: What is the vision for the future? What does an educational system that prepares all of its students for success in the global economy look like, and how do we build such a system in Minnesota within the next decade?

Through the *Minnesota's Promise* process, diverse citizens of our state identified and agreed upon ten essential elements of a high-performing educational system. They are:

1. **Early Childhood Education:** Investment in educational success starts early.
2. **Educator Quality:** Great teachers and principals are recruited, prepared, supported, and retained.
3. **Academic Rigor:** All academic roads are rigorous, and all lead to higher education.
4. **Family and Community Involvement:** Families and communities are full partners in education.
5. **Multicultural Community:** All cultures are included and supported, and connections are made across local and global cultural divides.
6. **Data and Research:** Educators use data and research to improve teaching and learning every day.
7. **Funding:** Schools are provided with funding that is predictable and sufficient to produce world-class performance.
8. **Time:** Schedules and calendars are designed to help all students reach high standards.
9. **Special Education:** Services for students with disabilities are proactive, effective, efficient, and adequately funded.
10. **Health and Wellness:** Parents and other stakeholders ensure that students come to school physically and mentally ready to learn.

3. Phillips, Gary W., *Chance Favors the Prepared Mind: Mathematics and Science Indicators for Comparing States and Nations* (Washington, D.C.: AIR, 2007).

4. Minnesota Department of Education, *Taking Minnesota Students from Nation-Leading to World-Competing: Setting a Course for Success in the 21st Century* (Roseville, Minn.: Minnesota Department of Education, April 2007), 27.

# Building a System That Makes Sense



## *Who Does What?*

A guiding premise of *Minnesota's Promise* is that if our state is to provide all students with a world-class education, we must create an educational system that is coherent from the capitol to the classroom. In such a system, every level of education must have a clear understanding of the role that it plays in helping all students succeed. Each of those levels must understand how its efforts reinforce what happens at the other levels, and build upon what has gone before.

This report focuses on the three levels of Minnesota's educational system that have formal responsibility for educating students from kindergarten through twelfth grade: the State of Minnesota, school districts, and individual schools. Public charter schools are very much included in the report's recommendations, although as independent public schools, their areas of authority and responsibility encompass both the district and school levels of the framework.

While the state, school districts, and individual schools have formal responsibility for educating Minnesota's K–12 students, many other organizational and individual partners play vitally important roles. For example, **families and communities** provide students with positive and persistent direction on their paths through school, and connect what students do inside the classroom to learning that takes place beyond school walls. **Educational associations and unions** advocate for improvements that help their members help students master high-level knowledge and skills. **Postsecondary institutions** are the primary producers of research that identifies effective educational practices, and they also prepare teachers and other professionals for service in our schools. And **businesses and other employers** have the most current and detailed understanding of the world of work that K–12 educators are ultimately preparing students to enter and achieve in.

Although the *Minnesota's Promise* framework outlines ways that the state, school districts, and schools can work more effectively with these “informal” partners in education, it is beyond the scope of the project to describe their roles in detail. As the *Minnesota's Promise* vision moves forward, continuing to engage those partners and clarifying the ways they can contribute to making all Minnesota's schools world-class will be critical.<sup>5</sup>

5. Visit the *Minnesota's Promise* website at [www.minnesotaspromise.org](http://www.minnesotaspromise.org) for more information on ways that these partners can help Minnesota's students achieve at world-class levels.



# Choosing the Levers of Change

## *Where Do We Start?*

The *Minnesota's Promise* framework identifies ten essential elements of high performance, and multiple options for implementing each of those strategies at each level of our educational system. The sheer number of ideas for change included in this report raises a critical question: *Where do we start?*

In their book, *Teaching the New Basic Skills*, economists Richard J. Murnane of Harvard and Frank Levy of MIT provide a useful response:

The best answer to this problem comes from the writings of political economist Albert O. Hirschman. Writing about strategies for economic development in the 1950s, Hirschman developed a key insight about “getting from here to there.” In those years, the prevailing wisdom was that balanced growth was the most effective economic development strategy for a poor country. Balanced growth meant moving on all fronts at once: raising financing for new factories, building roads so the new factories could easily move raw materials and finished products, establishing schools to train labor for the new factories, and so on. The idea of balance—avoiding bottlenecks—sounded wonderful, but it required herculean coordination effort well beyond the capability of most governments.

Hirschman’s advice was to attack the development problem quite differently. Instead of trying to make progress on all fronts simultaneously, start with the initiative that creates the most pressure for other constructive changes. For example, if the government concentrated on raising funds for new factories, the owners of the new factories would create pressures to build the most-needed roads and to develop the most essential training programs.

Hirschman’s logic applies equally well to a strategy for school improvement.<sup>6</sup>

Guided by that logic, readers of this report should ask themselves which *options for change* would promote broader improvements in their schools and districts, or in state-level policies and programs. For example, research clearly shows that increased investment in high-quality early childhood education significantly strengthens students’ readiness for kindergarten and their rates of achievement in elementary and secondary school. Studies have also demonstrated that students who participate in effective early childhood programs are less likely to require special education services and to spend time in prison. In other words, increased investment in early childhood will produce powerful returns throughout students’ K–12 careers and beyond.

6. Richard J. Murnane and Frank Levy, *Teaching the New Basic Skills: Principles for Educating Children to Thrive in a Changing Economy* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 224–25.

# Early Childhood Education

*Investment in educational success starts early*

**CRITICAL MEASURE:**

- ▶ The percentages of students in all student groups and the state as a whole who enter first grade with the knowledge, skills, and habits to meet grade-level standards and expectations

OPTIONS FOR CHANGE

STATE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Support Targeted Services from Birth to 3:</b> Support early screening and quality childcare for children between birth and three years of age who live in poverty</li> <li><b>2. Support Targeted Early K:</b> Fund high-quality pre-kindergarten programs for 3- and 4-year-olds who live in poverty and face other educational challenges</li> <li><b>3. Support Universal All-Day K:</b> Fund all-day kindergarten programs for all students</li> <li><b>4. Emphasize Quality:</b> Develop and disseminate a quality-rating system that helps parents and other caregivers choose the best providers for their children</li> <li><b>5. Promote Collaboration:</b> Facilitate regular communication between major providers of early education and child care services (such as Head Start, ECFE, and private preschool and daycare centers) to expand access and minimize duplication of effort</li> <li><b>6. Provide Training:</b> Create a common core curriculum for the preparation and development of early childhood providers</li> <li><b>7. Connect Families to Services:</b> Provide families who participate in early childhood programs with access to comprehensive family services, such as job placement assistance and health care</li> <li><b>8. Collect and Disseminate Data:</b> Create data systems that proactively identify children who would benefit from early childhood services and that measure their progress toward school readiness</li> </ol>
DISTRICT	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Conduct Early Outreach:</b> Reach out to parents and childcare providers to help them understand what children need to know and be able to do to be ready for kindergarten</li> <li><b>2. Provide Professional Development:</b> Sponsor high-quality professional development activities that provide early childhood educators with information on recent research and best practices</li> <li><b>3. Sustain Early Gains:</b> Consider the adoption of an “Age 3 to Grade 3” model to sustain the benefits of early childhood education; for more information, visit <a href="http://www.fcd-us.org/usr_doc/PK-3WhatItIsIstandHowDoWeKnow.pdf">www.fcd-us.org/usr_doc/PK-3WhatItIsIstandHowDoWeKnow.pdf</a></li> </ol>
SCHOOL	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Align Early and Elementary Education:</b> Align what children do in early childhood programs with the curriculum, routines, and rituals they will experience in elementary school</li> <li><b>2. Co-locate Programs:</b> Wherever possible, co-locate early childhood and early elementary programs in the same building or in close proximity to build relationships between children, families, and staff</li> </ol>

LEVEL

# Educator Quality

*Great teachers and principals are recruited, prepared, supported, and retained*

**CRITICAL MEASURES:**

- The percentages of teachers and principals who enter the profession with strong academic credentials
- The percentages of teachers and administrators who reflect the cultural diversity of the schools and districts in which they work

OPTIONS FOR CHANGE

LEVEL	STATE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Recruit the Best:</b> Implement a creative and highly visible campaign to recruit talented people into teaching and administration, especially people of color and people with expertise in subject areas facing shortages</li> <li>2. <b>Develop Leaders:</b> Create and sustain leadership development programs that strengthen the capacity of principals, teacher-leaders, superintendents, and school boards to provide all students with the knowledge, skills, and habits for success in postsecondary education and the workplace</li> <li>3. <b>Establish Incentives:</b> Establish incentives and supports to attract educators to high-need schools and subject areas</li> </ol>
	DISTRICT	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Connect Preparation to Practice:</b> Work with colleges and universities to align teacher and administrator preparation programs with district priorities and changing student demographics</li> <li>2. <b>Enhance Induction:</b> Implement high-quality induction programs that provide new teachers with intensive support during their first years in the classroom</li> <li>3. <b>Grow Your Own:</b> Design and implement internal leadership development programs for the principalship and other key positions</li> <li>4. <b>Create Career Ladders:</b> Implement career ladders and other structures that provide educators with opportunities for new challenges and greater responsibility without leaving classrooms or schools</li> <li>5. <b>Empower Leaders:</b> Provide principals with the authority and autonomy they need to develop faculties, programs, and budgets that meet the needs of their students and communities</li> </ol>
	SCHOOL	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Strengthen Schools As Workplaces:</b> Improve retention by measuring, monitoring, and continuously improving the professionalism of the school's work environment, including providing teachers with common planning periods and the opportunity to observe other teachers' classes on a regular basis</li> <li>2. <b>Integrate Professional Development:</b> Make professional development that is collaborative, focused on academic content, and data-driven a part of the everyday jobs of teachers, administrators, and other school staff</li> <li>3. <b>Celebrate:</b> Hold schoolwide celebrations to acknowledge the contributions of teachers and other educators</li> </ol>

# Academic Rigor

*All academic roads are rigorous, and all lead to higher education*

**CRITICAL MEASURES:**

- ▶ The percentages of students in all student groups and the state as a whole who graduate from high school
- ▶ The percentages of high school graduates in all student groups and the state as a whole who go on to earn postsecondary credentials and degrees

OPTIONS FOR CHANGE

LEVEL	STATE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Raise Expectations:</b> Constantly communicate high expectations for every student in clear and compelling terms, stressing that <i>all</i> students can and should master challenging material and go on to complete postsecondary credentials or degrees</li> <li>2. <b>Align Expectations:</b> Integrate college and workforce readiness standards into Minnesota’s K–12 academic standards to ensure that all students are prepared for higher education and high-skill employment after high school</li> <li>3. <b>Spark Innovation:</b> Support the creation of new types of schools and programs that will develop innovative strategies for helping students master high-level knowledge and skills</li> </ol>
	DISTRICT	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Teach 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills:</b> In addition to helping all students meet and exceed state academic standards, develop a districtwide strategy for integrating “21<sup>st</sup> Century skills,” such as critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration into the curriculum; for one promising model, see the Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills at <a href="http://www.21stcenturyskills.org">www.21stcenturyskills.org</a></li> <li>2. <b>Support Planning and Guidance:</b> Utilize counselors, mentors, and technology to help students develop and implement plans that lead to success in postsecondary education and high-skill careers</li> <li>3. <b>Tap the Power of Technology:</b> Invest in high-quality information technology that personalizes and accelerates learning, and that provides students with access to courses and programs beyond their schools, districts, and the state</li> <li>4. <b>Ensure Access:</b> Work with institutions of higher education, government agencies, foundations, and community-based organizations to ensure that all students are able to apply for admission and financial aid at a postsecondary institution</li> </ol>
	SCHOOL	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Reach Out for Rigor:</b> Implement efforts to increase the number and percentage of students of color, low-income students, and English Language Learners who take and succeed in the school’s most challenging coursework</li> <li>2. <b>Create Safety Nets:</b> Provide effective safety nets for students who need more time and different educational strategies to develop high-level knowledge and skills</li> <li>3. <b>Raise the Floor:</b> Eliminate any academic “low roads” that do not aim to help students develop high-level knowledge and skills and prepare for some type of postsecondary education</li> <li>4. <b>Engage the Community:</b> Work with community organizations to launch tutoring and mentoring programs that help students master challenging academic material</li> </ol>

# Family and Community Involvement

*Families and communities are full partners in education*

**CRITICAL MEASURES:**

- ▶ The percentages of students in all student groups and the state as a whole who report on valid and reliable surveys that they regularly talk with their parents and other caregivers about their academic progress and life in school
- ▶ The percentages of students in all student groups and the state as a whole who report on valid and reliable surveys that their parents regularly communicate with their teachers and participate in school events and activities

OPTIONS FOR CHANGE

LEVEL	<b>STATE</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Expand Parent Education:</b> Increase funding for Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) and other effective programs to support targeted services for low-income parents and others whose children face obstacles to success in school</li> <li>2. <b>Engage Employers:</b> Encourage and provide incentives for businesses to offer parent education as a service to employees, and to support employees' involvement in their children's schools</li> <li>3. <b>Support Informed Choice:</b> Implement outreach programs that provide all parents with comprehensive, accurate, unbiased, and understandable information that enhances their ability to select the right school for their child</li> </ol>
	<b>DISTRICT</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Build the Infrastructure:</b> Design school attendance boundaries and transportation systems that promote connections between home and school and provide all families with informed and objective assistance in choosing schools for their children</li> </ol>
	<b>SCHOOL</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Keep Parents Informed and Involved:</b> Regularly provide parents with understandable explanations of what their child is doing in school, accompanied by activities that the parent can do at home and in school to reinforce and extend learning</li> <li>2. <b>Share Leadership:</b> Involve parents and community members in school decision-making through site councils, Parent-Teacher Associations, and other formal and informal structures and activities; proactively work to engage parents and community members from all cultural backgrounds in school leadership</li> <li>3. <b>Build Community:</b> Establish partnerships with families, childcare providers, parks and recreation centers, community organizations and other institutions that integrate formal learning in school with informal learning outside school; for one model, visit the Harvard Family Research Project at <a href="http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/content/projects/complementary-learning.pdf">http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/content/projects/complementary-learning.pdf</a></li> </ol>

# Multicultural Community

*All cultures are included and supported, and connections are made across local and global cultural divides*

**CRITICAL MEASURES:**

- ▶ The percentages of teachers and administrators who report on valid and reliable surveys that they feel well prepared to provide students from diverse cultural backgrounds with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in school
- ▶ The percentages of students from all student groups and the state as a whole who report on valid and reliable surveys that their schools and teachers set equally high expectations for all students and are equally welcoming of all cultures and backgrounds

OPTIONS FOR CHANGE

<b>STATE</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Fund Foreign Languages:</b> Allocate targeted funding to increase the percentage of Minnesota students who study a language other than English and who demonstrate at least intermediate-level proficiency as determined by the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)</li> <li>2. <b>Support Cultural History:</b> Develop and disseminate model curricula that summarize the history, experiences, and accomplishments of the largest and the fastest-growing cultural groups in Minnesota</li> <li>3. <b>Promote Global Awareness:</b> Ensure that Minnesota’s K–12 academic standards provide all students with an understanding of the process of globalization and major trends in the world today</li> <li>4. <b>Benchmark Globally:</b> Promote, administer, and fund the participation of Minnesota students in international assessments that measure students’ knowledge and skills against their peers in other countries</li> </ol>
<b>DISTRICT</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Recruit Staff:</b> Recruit and work to retain educators whose cultural backgrounds reflect not only students in the district but the changing demographics of the entire state</li> <li>2. <b>Enhance Educators’ Cultural Competence:</b> Provide staff with ongoing professional development in effective strategies for helping students from all cultural backgrounds succeed in school</li> <li>3. <b>Put Culture in the Curriculum:</b> Ensure that curricula in social studies and other subjects help students understand the concept of culture and value connections with cultures other than their own</li> <li>4. <b>Expand Foreign Language Study:</b> Develop a strategy for significantly increasing the number of students who study a foreign language and the number of languages being taught in the district</li> </ol>
<b>SCHOOL</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Embrace Diversity As an Asset:</b> Help students understand that in the twenty-first century, working with and learning from people from diverse cultural backgrounds is a critical skill for personal and professional success</li> <li>2. <b>Create an Inclusive Environment:</b> Ensure that the physical environment and interpersonal relationships make the school a welcoming place for students, staff, and families from all backgrounds</li> <li>3. <b>Monitor Program Participation:</b> Regularly monitor and report the demographic breakdown of students in major school programs, such as Advanced Placement, Career and Technical Education, and Special Education</li> <li>4. <b>Support Adult Learning:</b> Create professional learning communities among school staff to examine issues of race and culture that are relevant to the school’s students and community</li> </ol>

LEVEL

# Data and Research

*Educators use data and research to improve teaching and learning every day*

**CRITICAL MEASURE:**

- Full implementation of a statewide data and assessment system that accurately measures the growth that individual students make over time and that informs instructional improvement at multiple levels

OPTIONS FOR CHANGE

LEVEL	STATE	DISTRICT	SCHOOL
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Focus on Growth:</b> Redesign state assessments to measure the achievement growth that the same students make over time rather than comparing the performance of successive cohorts of students; the performance expectation should be at least one year of growth for every year that students spend in the same school—and significantly more than that if students start out behind</li> <li><b>Build a Data Repository:</b> Create a powerful data warehouse of information on student performance from early childhood through higher education that authorized users can access to conduct analyses that identify effective and ineffective practices and strategies</li> <li><b>Promote Benchmarking:</b> Identify schools and systems that reach high levels of performance for some or all students and create opportunities for other schools and systems to benchmark their practices against high performers in Minnesota, across the United States and around the world</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Develop Holistic Measures:</b> Develop ways to monitor school and system quality that include factors not captured by standardized tests, such as family involvement and student engagement in school</li> <li><b>Correlate Data Sets:</b> Help school leaders and community stakeholders reach well-informed conclusions by correlating different sets of data, such as student achievement and attendance rates</li> <li><b>Monitor Trends:</b> Help school leaders and community stakeholders prepare for future student needs, such as shifts in the size and demographic composition of student enrollment</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Make Data-Driven Decisions:</b> Make the review of data and research an indispensable part of decision-making at every level, from planning classroom instruction to setting school and district priorities</li> <li><b>Implement Frequent Assessments:</b> Provide teachers with or help them develop short classroom-based assessments that inform instruction and strengthen student learning</li> <li><b>Help Parents Become Informed Educational Consumers:</b> Provide parents and other caregivers with data and research that help them understand what works in education today and reconsider familiar practices that are unlikely to prepare students for success in the global economy</li> </ol>

# Funding

*Schools are provided with funding that is predictable and sufficient to produce world-class performance*

**CRITICAL MEASURES:**

- ▶ The adoption of a revised state funding formula that provides sufficient funds to help all students reach and exceed state academic standards
- ▶ The percentages of schools and school districts that rely on excess levy referendums to fund core programs that help students meet mandatory state standards
- ▶ The total amount of general education funding that schools and districts allocate to cover the unfunded cost of mandatory special education services

OPTIONS FOR CHANGE

LEVEL	<b>STATE</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Define Adequacy:</b> Utilize research and stakeholder input to define the levels of school funding that are sufficient to help all students reach and exceed state academic standards</li> <li>2. <b>Develop and Fund a New Formula:</b> Implement and periodically review a new school finance formula that provides schools with stable levels of funding that meet the state's definition of adequacy</li> </ol>
	<b>DISTRICT</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Ensure Equity:</b> Allocate funds to school sites using a transparent and understandable formula that reflects the state's new definition of adequacy and also supports strategic efforts to raise student achievement</li> <li>2. <b>Invest in Leaders' Budgetary Skills:</b> Provide professional development for school leaders that enhances their capacity to allocate resources in ways that help all students reach high academic standards</li> <li>3. <b>Advance Accountability:</b> Hold schools and district offices accountable for the effective, efficient, and appropriate use of public resources</li> </ol>
	<b>SCHOOL</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Emphasize Outcomes:</b> Allocate funding within the school community based on students' needs rather than on tradition or standard educational practices</li> <li>2. <b>See the Big Picture:</b> View staff salaries and staff time as the school's primary financial resources, rather than as "fixed costs" that cannot be adjusted or reallocated</li> </ol>

# Time

*Schedules and calendars are designed to help all students reach high standards*

**CRITICAL MEASURE:**

- ▶ The percentage of time that Minnesota students spend on academic work inside and outside school compared with their peers in high-performing U.S. states and foreign countries

OPTIONS FOR CHANGE

LEVEL	<b>STATE</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <b>1. Lengthen the School Year:</b> Provide funding to increase the length of the school year in Minnesota from the current average of 172 days to at least the U.S. average of 180 days; over time, increase the length of the school year to reflect best practices among the world’s highest-performing nations           </li> <li> <b>2. Emphasize Outcomes:</b> Ensure that state standards and credit requirements are based upon student mastery of knowledge and skills, rather than time spent in particular courses or grade levels           </li> </ol>
	<b>DISTRICT</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <b>1. Lengthen the School Day:</b> Increase the length of the school day, especially for students who are struggling academically           </li> <li> <b>2. Create Year-Round Schools:</b> Promote and support efforts to experiment with alternative school calendars and schedules, such as the 45–15 calendar, in which four quarters (45 days) of uninterrupted instruction are followed by a 15-day break during which academic enrichment and support is provided           </li> <li> <b>3. Provide Professional Development:</b> Help teachers adjust instruction to maximize time spent on academic content rather than classroom process or student discipline           </li> </ol>
	<b>SCHOOL</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <b>1. Rethink the Day:</b> Shape time to meet the needs of learning, rather than shaping learning to meet the constraints of time; for example, use double periods to provide students who need it with additional time to master critical skills           </li> <li> <b>2. Connect with Families and Community:</b> Help families and community organizations extend learning time beyond school hours           </li> <li> <b>3. Reduce Distractions:</b> Reduce time in school that is not spent learning, such as time spent out of class due to discipline referrals or time spent in class listening to public address announcements           </li> </ol>

# Special Education

*Services for students with disabilities are proactive, effective, efficient, and adequately funded*

**CRITICAL MEASURE:**

- ▶ The percentage of students with disabilities in all student groups and the state as a whole who meet state academic standards and/or the objectives of their Individual Education Plans

OPTIONS FOR CHANGE

STATE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Emphasize Outcomes, Not Processes:</b> Require schools and districts to help students with disabilities meet and exceed state standards, but do not mandate particular service delivery models</li> <li><b>2. Develop and Implement a New Approach to Funding:</b> Develop and implement a system of funding special education that fully covers the cost of mandated services and that, in so doing, eliminates the need to use general education funding to subsidize special education programs</li> <li><b>3. Share Best Practices:</b> Research and disseminate strategies for providing special education services in Minnesota that produce significant and sustained gains in student achievement</li> <li><b>4. Streamline Paperwork:</b> Reduce the time and resources that schools and districts must devote to paperwork rather than student learning</li> <li><b>5. Advocate at the Federal Level:</b> Work with Minnesota’s congressional delegation and other stakeholders to encourage the federal government to meet its commitment to pay for up to 40 percent of K–12 special education costs</li> </ol>
DISTRICT	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Build Capacity:</b> Provide all staff with guidance and professional development that strengthens their capacity to serve students with disabilities</li> <li><b>2. Recruit and Assign the Best:</b> Ensure that students with disabilities are taught by highly effective and skilled teachers and other staff</li> <li><b>3. Manage Medical Solutions:</b> Work with physicians and families to ensure that the use of medication to manage disabilities is consistent with professional best practices and the long-term interests of each student</li> </ol>
SCHOOL	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Intervene Early:</b> Monitor student progress and provide early interventions that reduce or eliminate students’ later need for special education services</li> <li><b>2. Mainstream When It Makes Sense:</b> Integrate students with disabilities into mainstream classes and programs whenever possible</li> <li><b>3. Discontinue Services When Goals Are Achieved:</b> When possible, special education services should be discontinued if the objectives of a student’s Individual Education Plan have been met</li> </ol>

LEVEL

# Health and Wellness

*Parents and other stakeholders ensure that students come to school physically and mentally ready to learn*

**CRITICAL MEASURES:**

- ▶ The percentages of students in all student groups and the state as a whole who have health insurance
- ▶ The percentages of students in all student groups and the state as a whole who are classified as obese
- ▶ The percentages of students in all student groups and the state as a whole who receive mental health services

OPTIONS FOR CHANGE

LEVEL	<b>STATE</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Provide Health Care:</b> Support medical and dental coverage for all children who live in poverty</li> <li><b>2. Fund School Services:</b> Include funding for mental and physical health services in the state's school finance model</li> <li><b>3. Disseminate Best Practices:</b> Help schools, districts, and community organizations understand and implement best practices in supporting and improving students' physical and mental health</li> </ol>
	<b>DISTRICT</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Help Students Eat Right:</b> Provide students with healthy school meals and eliminate unhealthy options from school vending machines</li> <li><b>2. Invest in Mental Health:</b> Maintain and, wherever possible, increase funding for social workers, counselors, and others who provide students with important mental health services</li> </ol>
	<b>SCHOOL</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Connect with Families:</b> Consistently stress the importance of sending students to school well-nourished, well-rested, feeling loved, and ready to learn</li> <li><b>2. Sustain Physical Education:</b> Maintain and increase support for physical education classes that help students develop a positive lifelong approach to exercise, nutrition, and other elements of health and wellness</li> </ol>

# The Road Ahead



## *Making and Keeping the Promise*

Public education in Minnesota is at a crossroads. In one direction, the road continues down the path we are already on, sustaining the strategies and structures that have made Minnesota an educational leader within the United States.

In a second direction, the road departs from the status quo and heads toward change, but after a short distance it splinters off into many different pathways that lead to many different destinations.

In a third direction, the road also heads toward change, but it does not diverge in different directions. Instead, it leads toward a single destination that is different from and better than the place where the journey began.

*Minnesota's Promise* seeks to put our state on the third road, down which schools and communities can walk together. As we embark on that journey, we must recognize and remember that amid our rapidly rising diversity, we are *all* Minnesotans, and that ultimately we will sink or swim together in the global labor pools of the Information Age.

We chose the name *Minnesota's Promise* for this project for two reasons. The first is that we believe that our young people represent the extraordinary promise of our state. The second is that we promise all of those young people that we will do everything we can to provide them with the knowledge and skills they need to thrive in an age of constant and unpredictable change. We promise that we will never willingly let them down, and that we will put their long-term interests before the short-term ones that too often distract and divide us as adults.

We hope that you will join us in making and keeping *Minnesota's Promise* in the years ahead, and that together we can create and sustain the world-class schools that will keep Minnesota a world-class state in the global Information Age.

PARTNERS IN *MINNESOTA'S PROMISE*

Alliance for Student Achievement  
Association of Metropolitan School Districts  
Education Minnesota  
Greater Twin Cities United Way  
Minnesota Administrators of Special Education  
Minnesota Association of School Administrators  
Minnesota Association of School Business Officials  
Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals  
Minnesota Campus Compact  
Minnesota College Access Network  
Minnesota Community Education Association  
Minnesota Council on the Teaching of Languages and Cultures  
Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association  
Minnesota International Center  
Minnesota Minority Education Partnership  
Minnesota Private College Council  
Minnesota Rural Education Association  
Minnesota School Boards Association  
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities  
Parents United for Public Schools  
Ready 4 K  
Schools for Equity in Education  
Search Institute  
University of Minnesota:  
*Children, Youth and Family Consortium*  
*College of Education and Human Development*  
*College Readiness Consortium*  
Working Family Resource Center



FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT:

[www.minnesotaspromise.org](http://www.minnesotaspromise.org)