

January 27, 2015

Dear Colleagues,

Today, Governor Dayton released his 2015 Budget for a Better Minnesota. In his budget proposal, he puts children and education first by fulfilling the promise he made four years ago: to invest in education every year he is governor – no excuses, no exceptions. The \$373 million investment will ensure that every Minnesota child gets a great start and has the support they need to succeed, and that schools can keep their lights on, their teachers supported and their buses running.

During his first term, the governor and the Minnesota Legislature made historic investments in education by enacting free full-day kindergarten, expanding access to early learning opportunities, and increasing funding for K-12 schools. But there is still more work to be done. That is why Governor Dayton is proposing major new investments that will help narrow our state's achievement gap, strengthen our schools, and ensure all children receive an excellent education.

The budget can be divided into three main parts. First, it proposes raising the per-pupil formula to \$5,948 by 2017. This flexible funding allows you and your school board to make decisions that best meet the needs of the families you serve.

Second, it proposes investing \$109 million over the next biennium to expand public pre-kindergarten education statewide, ensuring that all 4-year-olds can attend a pre-K program in their area. As you know, since 2011 we have worked to increase access to high-quality early learning, from full-day kindergarten to early learning scholarships. This new investment will build on our work, and has the potential of benefitting 31,000 students statewide!

Statewide pre-K is part of our comprehensive early learning strategy to give families more options for their young children. By giving parents many early education options, we are better positioned to make sure every child comes to kindergarten ready to learn.

The budget also includes \$19.4 million to eliminate the current Head Start waiting list. Last year 2,485 of the state's lowest-income children were stuck on that waiting list and denied the benefit of the program's proven record of enhancing cognitive, social and emotional development.

Research shows that breakfast is the most important meal of the day, especially for children. Governor Dayton's budget provides \$28.1 million over the next biennium to give every child from pre-K to third grade access to a nutritious breakfast. After the steps we took last year to provide free lunch to children on free- and reduced-price lunch and breakfast for all

kindergartners, it's a significant milestone to be able to give every youngster a healthy meal at the start of the learning day.

The third part of the governor's budget is a portfolio of targeted supports for the students and schools who need it most. I am pleased that the governor's budget expands the state's Regional Centers of Excellence, where seasoned education professionals become resources to teachers and administrators to identify what is working and what is not, and to provide intensive support to our most struggling schools. This nationally recognized model has caused significant increases in student achievement, and the \$6 million will help us serve up to 200 more schools.

The budget also contains funding for more Reading Corps tutors, expanded funding for our English learners, funding for PBIS—which will support schools in creating positive learning environments by reducing disciplinary incidents and suspensions—and funding to help increase the graduation rate of our American Indian students. For full details of the governor's FY16-17 biennial budget, [go to the MMB website](#).

I truly believe that this budget is a clear statement of Governor Dayton's values, and positions us to continue our quest to deliver a world class education to every student. Thank you all for your steadfast work to support our students and their families. You each play a critical role in Minnesota's future. I am honored to do this work with you.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brenda Cassellius".

Dr. Brenda Cassellius
Commissioner