

2016 LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

Advocating for Greater Minnesota Schools

MREA, comprised of 212 school districts across Greater Minnesota, 12 education districts and additional associate members, supports expanding educational opportunities and closing achievement gaps in Minnesota through the following strategies and initiatives.

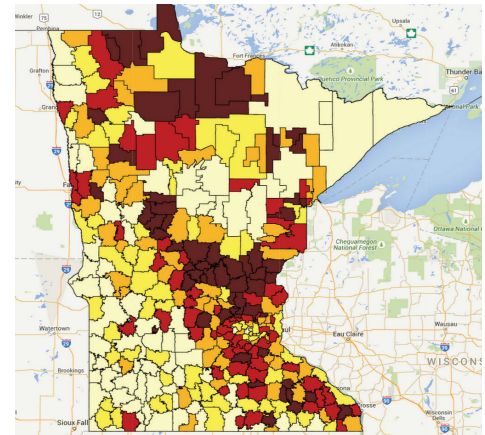
FACILITY FALLOUT

The state share of K-12 building debt is at a historical low of 2.5 percent. Agricultural land values have increased dramatically in 10 years shifting burden for school debt to farmers in rural Minnesota. Rural communities disproportionately struggle to pass bonds to modernize school facilities.

The legislature should:

- Reduce high agricultural taxes for school building bonds while protecting homeowner and business property taxes through a targeted, ongoing, bond credit program called Ag2School. (SF 1995/ HF2122)
- Equalize homeowner tax effort for school facility bonds by linking Debt Service Equalization to a fixed percent of state average ANTC.

ADJUSTED NET TAX CAPACITY BY SCHOOL DISTRICT



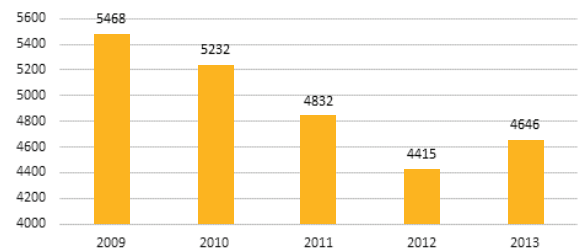
TEACHER RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

Minnesota's 845,000 students need highly qualified licensed teachers, across all grade levels and specialties, guiding them every day. The two greatest factors in students' academic success are parental involvement and the quality of the teachers in their classrooms.

The legislature should:

- Secure adequate, ongoing funding for loan forgiveness to ensure teacher candidates are attracted to and retained in rural Minnesota.
- Provide one-time, start-up funding for teacher education programs for paraprofessionals and mid-career professionals.
- Remove unnecessary barriers to entry to the teaching profession including:
 - o Eliminate the use of cut scores on any single teacher standardized test to determine licensure.
 - o Amend the required passage of state board exams for teacher licensure to the required completion of state board exams with disclosure of results to hiring agencies including school districts.
 - o Commission an independent, longitudinal analysis that studies the relationship of the Minnesota Teacher Licensure Exam (MTLE) score with teacher proficiency in the first three years of a teacher's career.
- Ensure Minnesota students access to education services of skilled specialists in speech language, PT, OT, vision, mobility, and deaf and hard of hearing with qualifications appropriate to educational settings.
- Maintain a stable, defined-benefit retirement plan through a shared responsibility of the state, school districts, teachers and retirees.

New Licenses Granted to Completers of Minnesota Institutions, Teacher Supply and Demand Report 2015



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EARLY LEARNING

While there is widespread understanding and support for the value of early learning and expanded preschool opportunities, Minnesota does not have a consensus on one program model to deliver high quality preschool education to all young children.

The legislature should:

- Expand quality early learning opportunities with fully funded, school-based, and mixed delivery models with flexibility for school districts to respond to wide variations in local settings including family needs, staff and space availability.
- Begin an education funding formula based on 1.2 ADM for 750 hours of instruction, prorated down to a minimum of 350 hours, to enable school districts to provide the highest likelihood for student success and readiness for kindergarten.
- Establish a new, equalized school facilities improvement revenue to replace the lease levy to provide needed classrooms.
- Continue the current school readiness funding to support programs for high needs three-year-olds and their families.

SUPPORT A SEAMLESS SYSTEM OF P-20 EDUCATION

Coordinated early learning investments and seamless transitions between high school and post-secondary education are cornerstones of career and college readiness to develop the World's Best Workforce.

The legislature should:

- Re-examine existing P-20 Partnership.
- Facilitate the ability of MNSCU institutions to partner with high schools to preserve the early college opportunities for juniors and seniors without interruptions in concurrent enrollment.
- Re-examine high school course and standards requirements to best equip young adults with the knowledge and life skills to manage their personal affairs, engage in civic life, and meet the complex challenges of the World's Best Workforce.

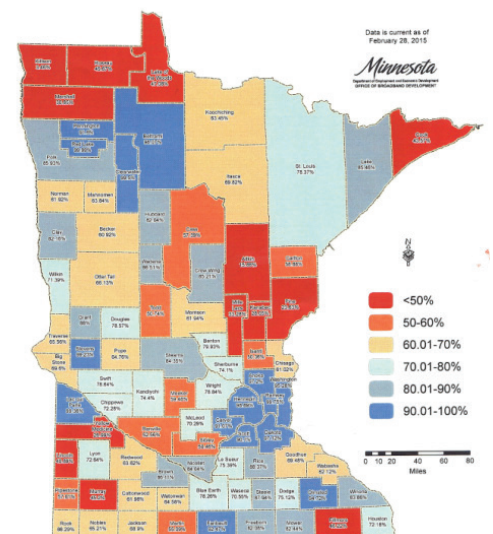
STRENGTHEN RURAL COMMUNITIES

Affordable, robust Internet connectivity for all rural homes is as important in the 21st century as bringing electricity to all rural farms was 80 years ago.

The legislature should:

- Expand funding for the Telecommunications Equity Access (TEA) and Regional Library Telecom Aid (RLTA) programs to ensure cost-effective, high-speed broadband access to learners of all ages.
- Expand broadband development grants to underserved, rural communities to further high-speed broadband Internet access at home for students and families and maximize student success with school based Internet device 1-to-1 initiatives.

At least 10 Mbps Download/5Mbps Upload Speeds
Statewide Availability: 86.46%



Learn more about these issues and others at MnREA.org.