

A Brief on the Rationale For Serving All Students, Including Gifted Students

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A new report from the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis finds Minnesota is one of the worst states in the country for education achievement gaps. Anusha Nath, a research economist with the Minneapolis Fed, said the report reveals Minnesota’s education disparities are not just affecting students of color. Nor are they confined to one area of the state. “There’s a large disparity across socioeconomic status in addition to disparities across race and ethnicity,” Nath said. “It goes beyond just racial and ethnic groups -- it’s a socioeconomic problem as well as a problem across different schools.” She also said the disparities are part of a long-term, persistent trend that affects both rural and urban communities. “Closing our achievement gaps is critical to the success not only of thousands of young people, but also to our economy and our state,” Minneapolis Fed President Neel Kashkari said in a statement. <i>Report ranks Minnesota among worst achievement-gap states Elizabeth Shockman St. Paul October 14, 2019 3:19 p.m.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately, only 120 of 350 districts in the state provide gifted services. But not all programs existing today are equal. <i>Minnesota is less likely to offer gifted programs. Report Provided upon Request</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low-poverty schools are somewhat more likely to have gifted programs than high-poverty schools. Schools in Minnesota are much less likely to have gifted programs than the national average, and high-poverty schools in the state are also much less likely to have gifted programs than the national average. <i>Fordham Foundation. Is There a Gifted Gap. Gifted Education in High Poverty Schools.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “A growing body of research offers evidence that high-ability students from lower-income families are far less likely than wealthier students to be identified for advanced level course work and opportunities.* They are also less likely to achieve at high levels, despite their aptitude. Lacking access to the enriched academic opportunities, differentiated learning, and counseling afforded to wealthier students, high-ability, low-income children are becoming what one team of researchers has termed a <i>persistent talent underclass</i> — underserved and therefore prevented from fully developing their talents. <i>Equal talents, unequal opportunities: A report card on state support for academically talented low-income students. Plucker, Glynn, Healey, and Detmer. (March, 2018). Fordham Foundation.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promising practices in closing the achievement gap have emerged in states over time where gifted funding and a requirement existed. NC, OK, CO, KY, all appear to be doing a better job and closing the achievement gap than others. <i>Excellence Gaps in Education: Expanding Opportunities for Talented Students. Plucker and Peters (2016), Cambridge, MA; Harvard Education Press.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One common element being employed in those states is <i>Universal Screening</i>. It is an emerging practice in districts across the country in an effort to be more inclusive in their identification practices. This legislation includes Universal Screening. <i>(Card and Giuliano’s (2015) “Can universal screening increase the representation of low income and minority students in gifted education?”</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We were also mindful of what colleges and the business community were expecting from our high school graduates. Those instructional strategies include, critical thinking, creative thinking, inquiry learning and problem solving, along with learning strategies for collaborative work. Imagine that across the state, students from K-12 were being taught these skills and kids were mastering those skills throughout their 12 years of learning. We would be better than the World’s Best Workforce’s list of expectations. We would be preparing all students for success in college and in life.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This school year, in Minnesota schools, students of color represented nearly one third of the student population in grades K-12. In three to five years that number will be half of the school population. <i>Tim Strom, Legislative Analysis for the Minnesota legislature.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All five skills addressed in the legislation: critical thinking, creative thinking, inquiry and problem solving, working collaboratively, are grounded in research that demonstrates a positive impact on student achievement. Some of the effect size evidence is strong. All of the studies cited in a larger document that is available and are linked to the narrowing of the achievement gap and closing the “Excellence Gap”.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inquiry-based teaching is a pedagogical approach that invites students to explore academic content by posing, investigating, and answering questions. Also known as problem-based teaching or simply as ‘inquiry,’ this approach puts students’ questions at the center of the curriculum, and places just as much value on the component skills of research as it does on knowledge and understanding of

content. An inquiry-based curriculum develops and validates 'habits of mind' that characterize a life-long learner: It teaches students to pose difficult questions and fosters the desire and skills to acquire knowledge about the world. An inquiry-based curriculum can increase student achievement and narrow the gap between high- and low-achieving students.

- Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) has long supported personalized learning and innovation in education. This initiative addresses those commonly shared goals. Inquiry Learning, grounded in student choice and strength-based learning responds to the individual student. Focusing on critical and creative thinking and including inquiry learning and problem solving, along with collaborative learning, innovates the classroom dynamics with a focus on how we learn rather than what we learn.

- Collaboration is a promising mode of human engagement that has become a twenty-first-century trend. The need to think together and work together on critical issues has increased (Austin, J. E., 2000)

- **Collaboration:** Districts with viable gifted programs could enhance their current programming. Smaller districts could work in collaboration with neighboring districts to share PD training and program leadership. The MDE could facilitate reporting and accountability by arranging state wide purchasing of CogAT, an on line assessment, which would provide for evidence of growth in critical thinking and creative thinking (Welch, M., 1998), causing to stress on from individual attempts to team work and from autonomy to community (Leonard, P. E. & Leonard, L. J., 2001).

- The Economic argument follows: School improvement efforts can benefit individuals' earnings and balance state budgets, says Hanushek. *"As the skills of today's students improve, the skills of tomorrow's workers advance. Realizing these gains does require a sustained commitment on the part of a state's political leaders. But if we are to achieve prolonged economic growth in our nation, we have no choice but to strengthen the skills of all our people."*

- **Why \$39 PPU?** As we began this effort we recognized that the \$13PPU had not incentivized districts to embrace the "May-Must" requirement. Too few districts had chosen to bring their gifted programs into reality. We also recognized that programming for an effective gifted program requires resources not always available in schools. If you wanted to offer your gifted students an opportunity to participate in academic competitions, costs of memberships, materials, registrations, and coaching expenses would quickly exhaust the available funding in the current law. If you were a school of 1000 students, about 100 students would be identified for gifted services. *Destination Imagination* allows 7 team members per team. You could be funding 12 teams. But if a third of those students wanted to learn more about programming you might consider, the *Bit Coding Robot* at \$55 a piece or *VEX Robotics*. Placing 2 young gifted kids with on Robot or a VEX robot, your district costs might be around \$1000 for each pair of students. But if you wanted to give all 30 kids their own Robot, your costs would rise dramatically. To bring *CUE* robots for coding and programming learning into a program, at a cost of \$200 each, would challenge most coordinators to underwrite the opportunity for their students. The \$13 PPU is not sufficient.

- A student given ample experience applying the skills of creativity, critical thinking, inquiry and problem solving, along with how to work collaboratively during their K-12 learning, those students would be better prepared to take on higher paying jobs that had been created after low paying jobs had been replaced through automation. The additional dollars would encourage districts to have proactive counseling for students at all levels. Social Emotional Learning (SEL), will enhance all students to be better prepared for working with others in the emerging workforce.

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