

New London-Spicer

Community Schools

Monday, November 6, 2023

Wildcat Chat: What Does “Record Money for Education” Mean for Education?

Many have read the headlines stating that the Minnesota State Legislature passed a record \$2.2 billion toward education this past session. I am extremely grateful to work in a state that supports education. However, understanding how that money is allocated is more complex than those “record setting” headlines may reveal. Minnesota has the most complicated education funding systems in the country. With this influx of money, schools are not allowed to spend this money as they see fit. Only about one third of the money is allocated toward school operational costs. Operational costs are what we as school districts have flexibility with.



The remaining two thirds of the funding is in the form of mandates. Each mandate comes with a variety of requirements for a school to be deemed in compliance. Here is a “Cliff Notes” version of the recent mandates; it does not include all compliance markers:

- **Free Breakfast and Lunch** - All students will receive one free lunch and one free breakfast per school day.
- **The Read Act** - Schools will adopt Science of Reading practices. Teachers will be trained to implement these practices by 2027. The state will allow schools to only use state approved reading curriculum and reading screeners. Schools must also employ a literacy lead.
- **Non-Exclusionary Practices** - Administrators must adopt non-exclusionary discipline practices and add to their reports non-exclusionary measures utilized with students.
- **New Graduation Requirements** - All levels of school must offer an Ethnic Studies class as well as, classes that engage students on the topic of the Holocaust and Genocide and Civics. High School students must pass a credit of Personal Finance.
- **Menstrual Products** - Schools must supply menstrual products for students grades 4-12.
- **Lead in Water Requirements** - Schools must reduce lead in water to five parts per billion.
- **Special Education Cross Subsidy** - Minnesota will now pay up to 44% of costs incurred from Federal Government Special Education requirements and laws. The amount will increase to 50% in 2027.
- **Library Personnel** - Schools must employ library personnel for school libraries.
- **Unemployment Insurance** - Nine month employees and bus drivers are eligible for unemployment insurance in the summer months.

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- **Paraprofessional Training Requirements** - Paraprofessionals are required to complete certain training before the beginning of the school year.
- **Safe and Sick Time** - Employers are required to allow employees to accrue Safe and Sick time that they can use if certain life situations arise.
- **Teacher Recruitment Pipelines** - The state has put together grants to recruit teachers into hard to fill positions such as special education.
- **ESSR Funds replaced with State Aid** - Schools received state aid to hire additional social workers and counselors during the pandemic. This aid is ending during the 2023-2024 school year. New state aid will allow schools to maintain those additional staff hired during the pandemic.
- **Policy Changes** - New legislation has required school administration and school boards to update and review over 100 policies.

The purpose of this article is to not to criticize, as again, I am very grateful to live in a state that supports education and our next generation. These are just a few of the new legislation that came through last session and I want our stakeholders to have an understanding of the “record spending on education” that headlines have splashed around.

Regardless of the ebb and flow of government spending on education, in my experience, the success of school districts depends heavily on the support of its community. I am continually overwhelmed by the support you provide us each and every day!

I am available to answer any questions you may have via email, boelterj@isd345.org.

In education,

Jamie Boelter, New London-Spicer Superintendent