



Association of Metropolitan School Districts

Amending Minnesota's Constitution to Ensure a Quality Public Education

Former Supreme Court Justice Alan Page and Minneapolis Federal Reserve President Neel Kashkari have initiated an important discussion with their proposal to amend Minnesota's Constitution to guarantee every student a right to a quality public education. AMSD agrees that ensuring a quality public education for each and every student is a paramount duty of the state. For far too long, not all Minnesota students have had equitable access to a quality public education.

Over the past three years, AMSD superintendents have engaged students, parents, cultural representatives, community members, business leaders and other education stakeholders to Reimagine Minnesota and conceptualize a new model of education that is designed for the success of each and every student. All Minnesotans will benefit when we ensure that each and every student has access to a quality education that allows them to reach their full potential. With that context, AMSD believes clarification is needed related to the proposed new constitutional language in the following areas:

Defining a Quality Education

AMSD agrees that the current legal obligation of the state, to provide an adequate education, is insufficient and unclear. However, just as there is not agreement on what constitutes an adequate education, there would be strong differences of opinion among parents, students, educators and state policymakers about the definition of a quality education. The proposed language would determine quality by measuring student performance on uniform achievement standards. Student performance on standardized assessments is an important tool to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools. However, the assessment system must include multiple measures to determine student proficiency and growth. During the Reimagine Minnesota public engagement process, students were clear that they should not be defined by a test score and test scores alone do not indicate whether a student is prepared with the skills necessary for participation in the economy, our democracy and society.

Uniform System of Public Schools

The proposed language would eliminate the requirement that the legislature establish a general and uniform system of public schools. AMSD believes it is critical that this language remain in the State Constitution. All students, regardless of race, ethnicity, family income or geography must have equal access to a clearly defined quality public education. While local communities should have the ability to provide resources that offer students additional opportunities, every public school student must have equal access to the state resources that will provide a quality education.

State Funding

The current State Constitution requires the legislature to establish a general and uniform system of public schools “by taxation or otherwise as will secure a thorough and efficient system of public schools throughout the state.” While this language clearly has not compelled the state to provide the resources school districts need to ensure each and every student has access to an adequate, let alone quality, education, AMSD believes the better course of action is to strengthen this language rather than remove it. Minnesota’s current education funding system requires local taxpayers to contribute significant resources to provide basic programming and services to their students. In fact, more than 90 percent of Minnesota school districts rely on revenue from a voter-approved referendum to ensure their students graduate from high school prepared for college or career. AMSD believes the Constitution should be amended to require the **state to fully fund** public education and not rely on local, voter-approved referendums to provide needed resources.

AMSD stands ready to help clarify and improve the proposed constitutional amendment to ensure that the Constitution makes it a paramount duty of the state to provide each and every child a quality education to ensure they attain the knowledge and skills required to successfully participate in the economy, our democracy and society.

PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

PROPOSED AMENDMENT

EQUAL RIGHT TO QUALITY PUBLIC EDUCATION. All children have a fundamental right to a quality public education that fully prepares them with the skills necessary for participation in the economy, our democracy and society, as measured against uniform achievement standards set forth by the state. It is a paramount duty of the state to ensure quality public schools that fulfill this fundamental right.

CURRENT EDUCATION CLAUSE (ARTICLE XIII, SEC 1)

UNIFORM SYSTEM OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS. The stability of a republican form of government depending mainly upon the intelligence of the people, it is the duty of the legislature to establish a general and uniform system of public schools. The legislature shall make such provisions by taxation or otherwise as will secure a thorough and efficient system of public schools throughout the state.