

MDE’s Role in Addressing the Achievement Gap

Topic Selection Background Information

May 2021

<p>Program Overview</p>	<p>According to a recent study by the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, Minnesota has some of the nation’s largest measurable differences in educational achievement across student race and ethnicity. Statutes require the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) to administer programs that could address this gap, including the World’s Best Workforce and Achievement and Integration programs.</p>
<p>Evaluation Questions</p>	<p>To what extent does state law require MDE to address and assess the achievement gap, and is MDE in compliance with these laws? What measures of effectiveness are used to determine whether MDE is successful in assisting schools or families with reducing the achievement gap?</p>
<p>State Resources <i>Medium</i></p>	<p>MDE administers the state’s K-12 school finance system, and some state funding focuses on closing the achievement gap. For example, the Legislature appropriated about \$82 million for the Achievement and Integration program for Fiscal Year 2020. The Legislature established this program to reduce academic disparities based on students’ race and ethnicity, among other things.</p>
<p>State Control <i>High</i></p>	<p>Statutes and administrative rules specify MDE’s oversight responsibilities for state programs that could be used to address the achievement gap.</p>
<p>Impact <i>High</i></p>	<p>The achievement gap could negatively affect individuals and society, as students may miss out on career and economic opportunities they may have had if there had been no gap. In turn, society may miss out on the larger contributions they might have made.</p>
<p>Timeliness <i>High</i></p>	<p>There has been significant legislative and public interest related to the state’s achievement gap in recent years, and concerns more recently about the long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on student achievement.</p>
<p>Feasibility <i>High</i></p>	<p>We would use standard evaluation techniques, including interviews, quantitative analyses, and surveys, to evaluate this topic.</p>
<p>Balance <i>Medium</i></p>	<p>One other topic on the list involves K-12 education: School Nursing Services. While OLA has not previously evaluated MDE’s role in addressing the achievement gap, OLA released an evaluation of standardized student testing—a related topic—in 2017.</p>
<p>Discussion <i>Timely evaluation with high impact</i></p>	<p>Understanding MDE’s role regarding the achievement gap is an important step toward the state addressing this persistent concern. Given the interest in this topic, it could be a good time for OLA to evaluate MDE’s role in addressing the achievement gap.</p>