

St. Cloud Area School District 742
Board of Education
2023 Legislative Platform

Adopted December 2022

The Constitution of the State of Minnesota, in Article XXIII, section One states:

“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”.

St. Cloud District 742 is a unique district with 57.1% free/reduced lunch (State average is 31.6%), 21.5% special education (State average is 16.9%) and 23% EL student populations (State average is 8.9%). These demographics present challenges to our district that make it difficult to provide a quality education for all our students without adequate funding. Yet, District 742 continues to focus on and work toward the *World’s Best Workforce* Goals of making sure:

- All children are ready for school
- All third graders can read at grade level
- All racial & economic achievement gaps are closed
- All students are ready for career and college
- All students graduate from high school

With those goals in mind, the District 742 Board of Education wishes to focus our legislative platform on the area of greatest concern, and we urge the Governor and Legislators during the 2023 legislative session to prioritize the following:

Goal #1: Eliminate the Special Education and ELL Cross Subsidy.

- **Increase special education funding to a point that fully funds the state share of the cross-subsidy.**

Background:

Minnesota continues to fall woefully short of fulfilling its obligation to adequately fund mandated special education programming. Consequently, school districts are forced to re-direct funds meant for regular classroom instruction to pay for mandated special education programs. Larger cities and regional centers typically have much higher special education populations and therefore much larger special education cross subsidies. These large cross subsidies disproportionately affect these school districts, causing disproportionate funding in regular classroom programming from district to district, statewide. While general formula increases help all districts, they do not help to eliminate the disproportionality of programming caused by mandated and underfunded special education costs. Statewide, the shortfall in funding special education to state standards is now over \$1.5 billion for the biennium, and it is scheduled to rise substantially over the next several years.

In St. Cloud, the Special Education budget is \$40,638,996. Despite every effort to make our Special Education program more efficient and cost-effective, our cross-subsidy for the 2022-23 school year is expected to be \$12,189,515; this is roughly equal to \$1,340 per student. As a Regional Center, our special needs population continues to grow, and addressing the special education and ELL cross-subsidy is vital to sustaining the health and financial stability of District 742! Now is the time, with a projected state budget surplus, to plug this gap, and own up to our promise to ALL our students.