



THE DISTRICT MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

# Special Education Comparative Study

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St. Cloud Area School District # 742

## Executive Summary

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This Special Education Comparative Study commenced in May 2011 with the goal of examining various dimensions of special education enrollment, staffing, and expenditures in St. Cloud Area School District as compared to like districts. St. Cloud Area School District identified the five comparison districts within Minnesota: Grand Rapids, Duluth, Rochester, North St. Paul-Mendota Heights and Mankato, based on a previous report conducted in 2005. The following analysis highlights the key differentiating factors in special education between St. Cloud Area School District and the comparison districts.

Research for this report was conducted using data available from the Minnesota Department of Education Web Database and from SchoolFinance.com. The findings in this report document the trends in special education spending, and identification, as well as the outcomes of special education practices in the district.

St. Cloud Area School District's special education expenditures are high in relation to that of the comparison districts. This is due to a higher number of special education teachers and paraprofessionals. Special education staff are largely utilized to support students with special needs in the general education setting. In addition, St. Cloud Area School District has had a high rate of identification of students with IEPs than comparative districts largely due to higher rates of mild and moderate disabilities. Achievement of students with IEPs and without IEPs is generally lower than like districts.

The district's service delivery model for students with IEPs is characterized by a high number of special education teachers and paraprofessionals. The effectiveness of this model requires additional analysis of in terms of student achievement potential and operational efficiency. The Opportunities Review conducted by DMC in conjunction with this report aims to examine the service model of St. Cloud Area School District and offer recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of support to all students in St. Cloud Area School District.

## ***Findings compared to 2005 Comparative Report***

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In the Comparative Study conducted by SchoolFinances.com over the period of SY2001 – SY2005, the researchers concluded that:

- 1. The district's expenditures for Special Education are still greater than comparative districts.**
  - St. Cloud in FY2005 had 40% more spending in special education than the average of comparative districts. Over 25% of St. Cloud's spending was on special education, the highest of all comparative districts.
  - In FY2010, St. Cloud spent 38% more in special education than comparative districts. In addition, 26% of total spending is in special education expenditures.
- 2. The district has a greater ratio of special education staff members to total staff members than comparative districts.**

### **Percentage of licensed and non-licensed special education staff out of total staff (2004-2005)**

<b>ST. CLOUD</b>	<b>27%</b>
MANKATO	25%
GRAND RAPIDS	19%
DULUTH	17%
NORTH ST. PAUL	14%
ROCHESTER	7%

- In FY2005, the average percentage of special education staff to total is 14% for comparative districts.

### **Percentage of licensed and non-licensed special education staff out of total staff (2009-2010)**

<b>ST. CLOUD</b>	<b>25%</b>
MANKATO	25%
GRAND RAPIDS	22%
DULUTH	19%
NORTH ST. PAUL	18%
ROCHESTER	17%

- In FY2010, the district continues to have the highest percentage of special education staff to total staffing compared to other districts.

- 3. This increased number of staff members is a direct result of having a greater percentage of students identified to receive special education services.**
  - This study notes that the increased number of staff members is due to a service model for students with IEPs which deploys a greater number staff than average districts.

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## The District Management Council

## ***Review of public and non-public enrollment comparisons (2010-2011 data)***

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St. Cloud has the highest percentage of non-public enrollment compared to like districts.

### **Public and non-public enrollment comparison**

	<b>Total public and non-public enrollment</b>	<b>Non-public enrollment only</b>	<b>% non-public enrollment of total</b>
<b>ST. CLOUD</b>	<b>12,166</b>	<b>2,506</b>	<b>21%</b>
NORTH ST PAUL	13,324	2,652	20%
ROCHESTER	18,947	2,617	14%
DULUTH	10,339	1,225	12%
MANKATO	8,506	957	11%
GRAND RAPIDS	4,074	156	4%

Non-public enrollment information is voluntary and therefore may not be a complete picture. Given the available information, however, St. Cloud area non-public schools serve a similar profile of need compared to like districts. However, St. Cloud non-public schools do have the largest number of students eligible for these services. Students eligible for limited English proficiency services data does not accurately reflect the number of students who may be receiving these services.

### **Percent of non-public students eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch**

	<b>% Free and reduced lunch eligible</b>
<b>ST. CLOUD</b>	<b>8%</b>
MANKATO	18%
GRAND RAPIDS	12%
NORTH ST PAUL	7%
ROCHESTER	5%
DULUTH	3%

Although St. Cloud Area School District has a high percentage of students in non-public enrollment, it has the average percent of non-public students receiving special services according to data submitted. St. Cloud non-public students receiving special services has stayed stable around 2.5% over the past 5 years. Other districts, except Mankato, have seen slight increases in the percentage of non-public students receiving special services.

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## **The District Management Council**

**Percent of non-public students with IEPs (of total non-public enrollment)**

**Percent non-public students receiving special services**

<b>ST. CLOUD</b>	<b>2.6%</b>
<i>AVERAGE</i>	2.5%
MANKATO	6.2%
GRAND RAPIDS	5.8%
ROCHESTER	2.4%
DULUTH	2.1%
NORTH ST. PAUL	1.1%

Since St. Cloud serves a large number of non-public students with IEPs, the percent of non-public students with IEPs out of total students with IEPs is slightly higher than the average of like districts. However, North St. Paul and Rochester have a greater percentage of non-public students with IEPs that make up their total number of students with IEPs.

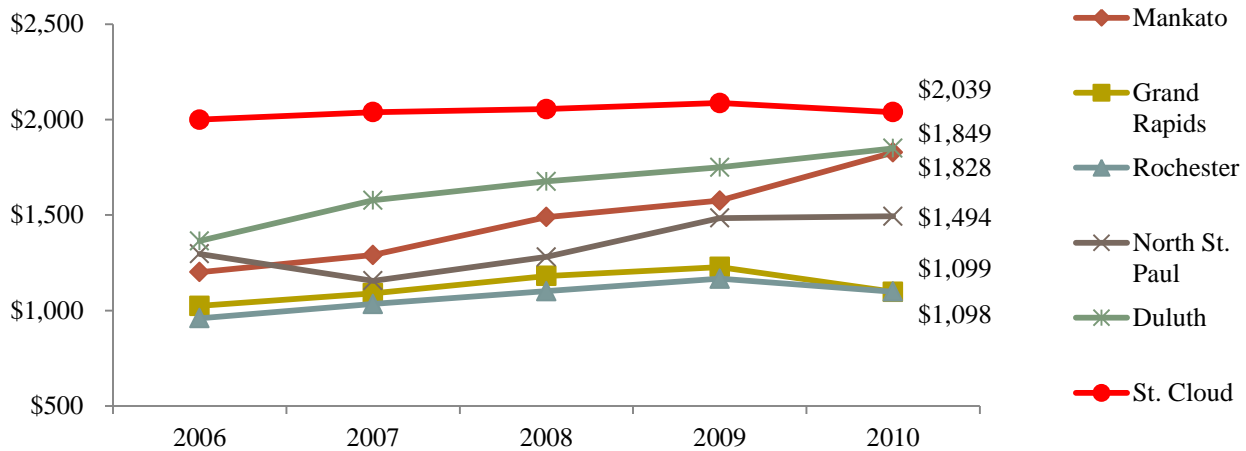
**Percent of total non-public students with IEPs of total students (public and non-public) with IEPs**

**Percent non-public students with IEPs of all students with IEPs**

<b>ST. CLOUD</b>	<b>2.9%</b>
<i>AVERAGE</i>	2.5%
NORTH ST. PAUL	3.9%
ROCHESTER	2.9%
DULUTH	1.7%
MANKATO	1.6%
GRAND RAPIDS	1.6%

***1. St. Cloud Area School District has higher special education expenditures than comparative districts.***

**Special education expenditures per adjusted pupil units<sup>1</sup> (APU)**



Source: UFARS FY2006 – FY2010 from MDE Website (FY 2010 is preliminary data)

St. Cloud Area School District has had consistently higher special education expenditures per APU since FY2006. In FY2010, St. Cloud Area School District spent approximately 38% more in special education than the comparative districts spent on average. This percent difference has been decreasing since FY2006, when St. Cloud Area School District spent 71% more per APU than comparative districts. The decrease in the percent difference between St. Cloud Area School District Area Schools and comparative districts is due to increasing expenditures in comparative districts and relatively stable expenditures in St. Cloud Area School District.

**Special education expenditure comparison to average of comparative districts**

	<b>St. Cloud Area School District Expenditure</b>	<b>Average Expenditure</b>	<b>Percent Spend Above Average</b>
2006	\$2,000	\$1,169	71%
2007	\$2,039	\$1,230	66%
2008	\$2,055	\$1,346	53%
2009	\$2,087	\$1,441	45%
<b>2010</b>	<b>\$2,039</b>	<b>\$1,474</b>	<b>38%</b>

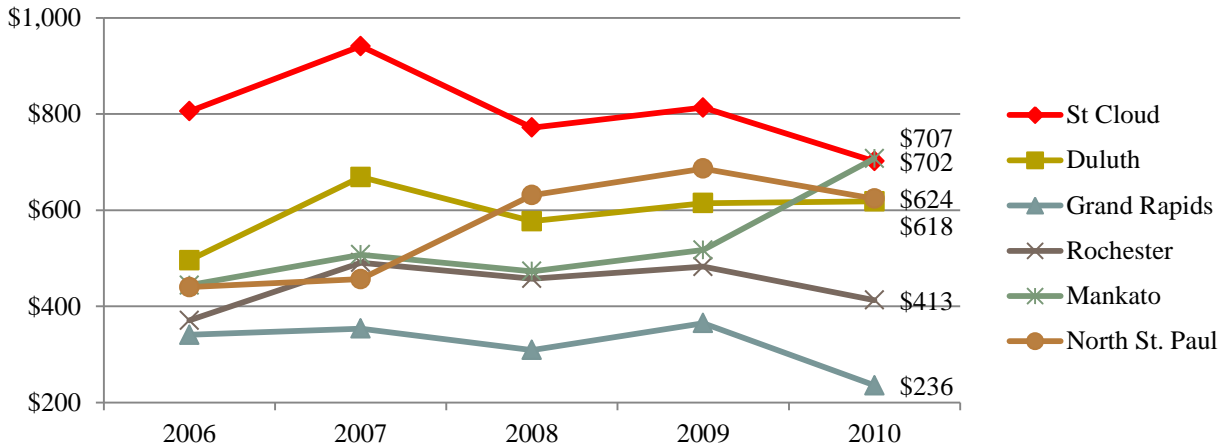
- At 38% greater spending, St. Cloud Area School District spends approximately \$6 million more in special education expenditures than comparative districts.

<sup>1</sup> The sum of pupil units served plus pupil units whom the district pays tuition under an agreement with another district, minus pupil units for whom the district receives tuition under an agreement with another district. (UFARS 2010 Description)

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***1a. As a result of increased special education expenditures, the district has had the highest special education cross-subsidy across comparative districts.***

**Adjusted net cross subsidy per APU**



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The adjusted cross subsidy for special education is derived from the following formula:

$$\{\text{Special Education Expenditures}\} - \{\text{Categorical Revenue}\} - \{\text{Attributed General Education Revenue}\}$$

- St. Cloud Area School District spends approximately 38% more than comparative districts.
- St. Cloud Area School District receives approximately 48% more categorical revenue for special services.
- St. Cloud Area School District has 35% less attributable general education revenue than comparative districts.

A detailed analysis of the cross-subsidy can be found in the appendix.

<sup>2</sup> FY2008 reduction in Adjusted Net Cross Subsidy due in large part to a 2007 legislation increasing special education funding thus reducing the cross subsidy. FY2010 decreases come in large part to a one-time federal stimulus.

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***1b. A majority of St. Cloud Area School District's increased spending comes from a higher number of teachers and paraprofessionals providing special education services.***

Special education spending is largely comprised of staff, transportation and out of district costs. St. Cloud Area School District does not spend significantly more than comparative districts in transportation and spends less on out of district costs.

- St. Cloud Area School District spends approximately 7% more in special education transportation.
- St. Cloud Area School District spends approximately 25% less in out of district tuition and transportation than comparative districts.
- Expenditures for teachers and paraprofessionals combined account for nearly 80% of St. Cloud Area School District's higher spending in special education compared to comparative districts.

**Special education teachers and paraprofessionals per 1,000 students (UPDATED 2010-2011)**

	<b>Special education teachers (public only)</b>	<b>Special education teachers (Inc. non-public)</b>	<b>Special education paras (public only)</b>	<b>Special education paras (Inc. non-public)</b>
DULUTH	15	13	11	9
GRAND RAPIDS	9	10	16	15
MANKATO	12	11	22	19
NORTH ST. PAUL	11	8	12	10
ROCHESTER	9	8	10	9
<b><i>Average</i></b>	<b><i>11</i></b>	<b><i>10</i></b>	<b><i>14</i></b>	<b><i>12</i></b>
<b>ST. CLOUD</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>16</b>

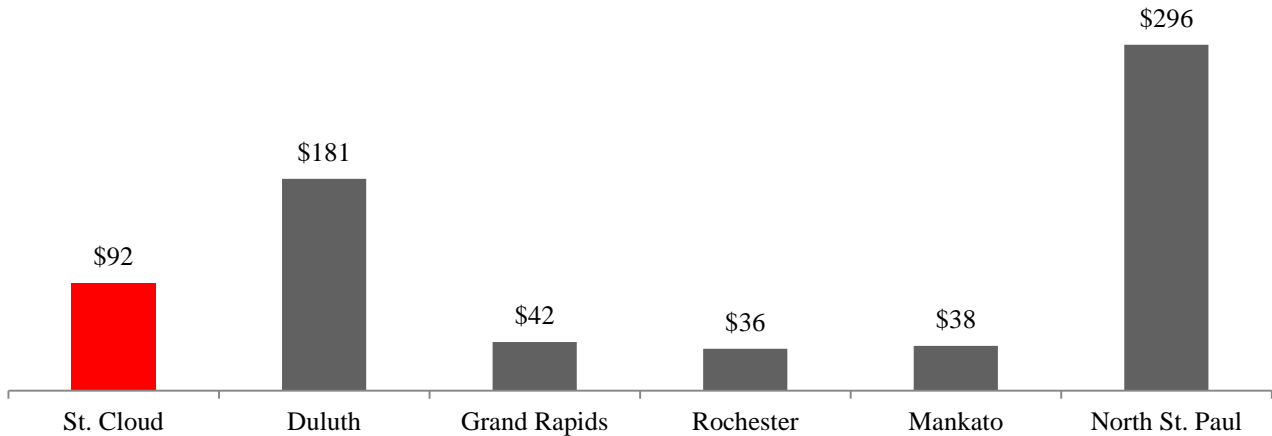
- St. Cloud Area School District spends approximately 55% more on special education teachers and 45% more on special education paraprofessionals than comparative districts<sup>3</sup>.
- The average salary for special education teachers and paraprofessionals in St. Cloud Area School District is comparable to other districts.
- Higher spending in staff is directly related to a higher number of special education staff.

<sup>3</sup> Cross subsidy data from 2010 information available through MDE. Pupil counts were weighted pupil counts provided by MDE.



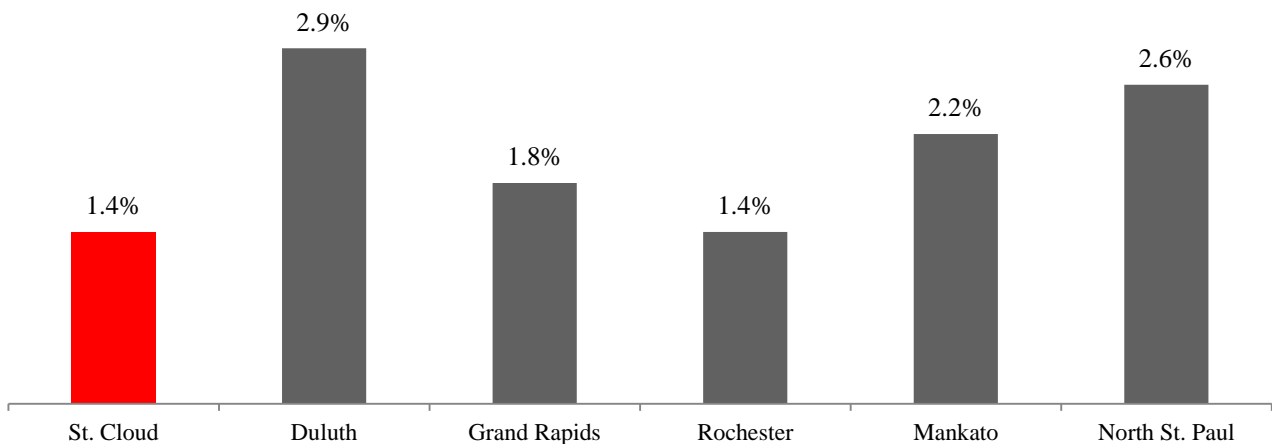
**1c. St. Cloud Area School District deploys the majority of special education teachers and staff to support students in the general education setting within the district.**

**Total spending of resident students served out of district per ADM**



- St. Cloud Area School District spends 25% less on tuition and transportation for resident students to be served in out of district placements than comparative districts.
- Out of district placements are typically for students with high needs and severe disabilities which are not adequately served in district.
- Lower spending in out of district placements signifies adequate support in district for resident students with disabilities.

**Percent of total students served outside general education for 60% or more**



- St. Cloud Area School District serves 22% fewer special education students in substantially separate settings than comparative districts.
- Most students with IEPs in the district are served in a general education setting.

**The District Management Council**

**2. St. Cloud Area School District identifies a relatively larger proportion of students with IEPs than comparative districts.**

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**Comparison of students with IEPs<sup>4</sup>**

<b>Percent of public and non-public students with IEP</b>	
ROCHESTER	10.9%
NORTH ST. PAUL-M	13.4%
GRAND RAPIDS	14.2%
DULUTH	14.5%
<b>ST. CLOUD</b>	<b>17.0%</b>
MANKATO	18.0%

- The district serves approximately 10% more students in special education than comparative districts.
- If non-public enrollment and out of district students are removed from the overall count, and non-residents students served in the district included, St. Cloud Area School District then has the highest identification rate of 21% compared to the average of 16%. <sup>5</sup>

The wide variation in rates of identification can lead to dramatic staffing and spending differences as detailed above. St. Cloud Area School District has 1.3 times more paraprofessionals and 2.4 times more speech and language therapists than like districts.

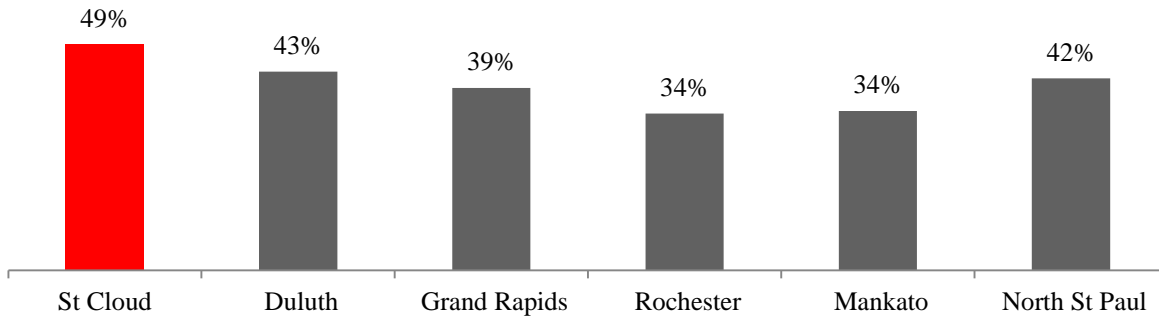
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<sup>4</sup> Source: District annual December 1 Unduplicated Child Count reports (Report #4 - Retrieved from <http://education.state.mn.us/MFRSystem/index.do>), and includes all students ages 0-21, in both public and private enrollment, receiving service.

<sup>5</sup> Using MARSS Data versus the Unduplicated Child Count. The difference in these data sets are point in time (Oct vs. Dec), non-residents served in district, residents served out of district, and non-public enrollment.

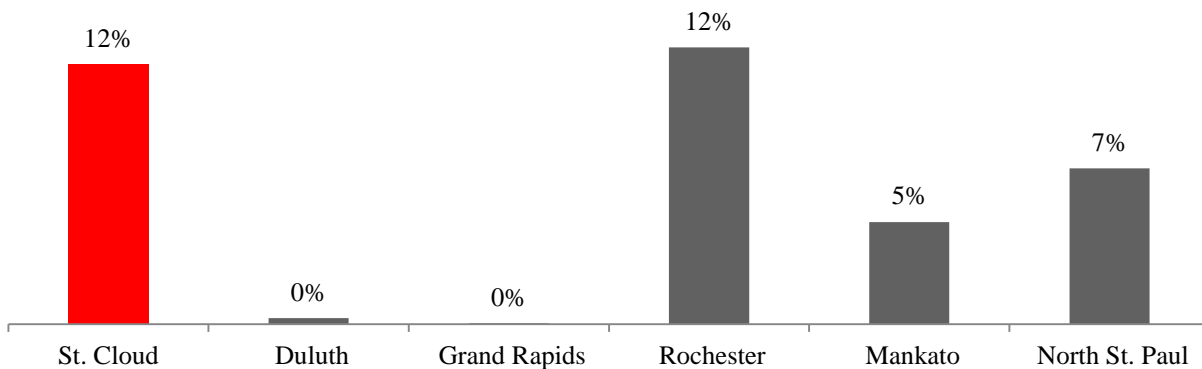
*2a. St. Cloud Area School District serves a relatively similar profile of student to comparative districts and does not disproportionately identify students of color, with limited English proficiency or eligible for free and reduced lunch.*

**Percentage of students receiving free / reduced price lunch in 2010**



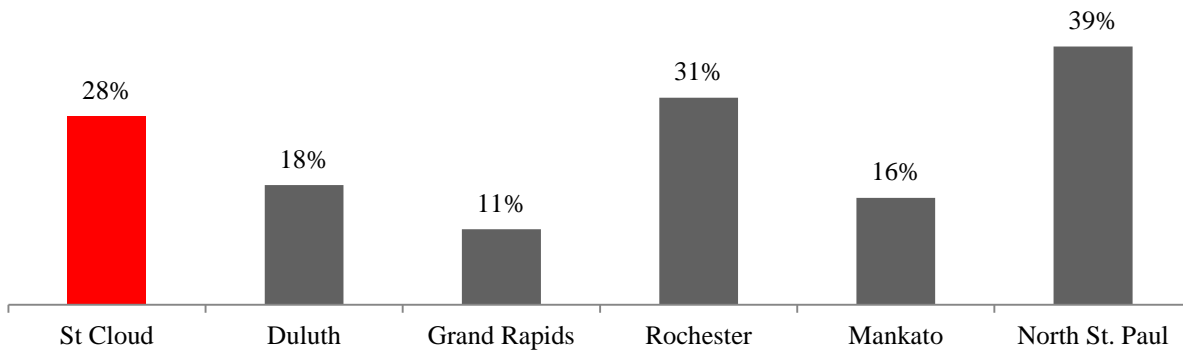
- St. Cloud Area School District has a slightly higher rate of students receiving free and reduced lunch but not significantly so.

**Percentage of students with limited english proficiency in 2010**



- St. Cloud Area School District has the same percentage of students with Limited English Proficiency (12%) as Rochester.

**Percentage of minority students in 2010**



- St. Cloud Area School District has fewer minority students than both North St. Paul and Rochester but has 10 percentage points more minority students than the average of the comparative districts.

The district does not show significant disproportionality among race, gender, language levels and economic status.

**Students with IEPs by subgroup (public grades K-12)**

		Percent with IEPs	Percent of total enrollment
<b>Race</b>	African American Students	18%	19%
	Latino	23%	4%
	Asian	13%	4%
	White	19%	71%
	American Indian	26%	1%
<b>Income</b>	Free and reduced lunch eligible	20%	50%
<b>Language status</b>	Limited English Proficient status	10%	12%
<b>Gender</b>	Male	25%	52%
	Female	12%	48%

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*2b. St. Cloud Area School District has the highest percentage of students with IEPs in mild/moderate disabilities compared to other districts.*

**Comparison of students with disabilities (St. Cloud as a multiple of comparative districts)**

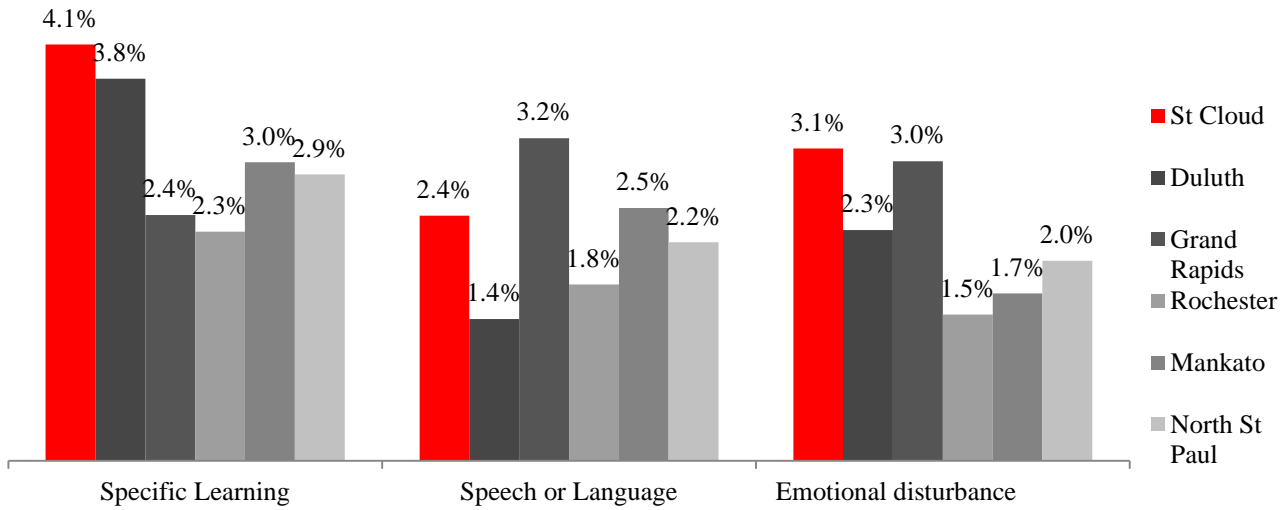
	Duluth	Grand Rapids	Rochester	Mankato	North St. Paul
Specific Learning	1.1	1.7	1.8	1.4	1.5
Speech or Language	1.7	0.8	1.4	1.0	1.1
<b>Subtotal - specific learning and speech/language</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>1.3</b>
Autism	1.1	1.7	1.7	0.8	1.0
Developmental Delay	0.8	0.8	1.6	0.6	1.5
<b>Subtotal - autism and developmental delay</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>1.2</b>
Emotional disturbance	1.4	1.0	2.1	1.9	1.6
Mental retardation	1.0	0.7	1.3	1.8	1.1
Other health impairments	1.9	4.6	1.2	0.5	1.0
Multiple disabilities	0.8	5.3	1.1	1.5	2.0
Orthopedic impairments	1.0	0.8	0.8	1.2	1.4
Traumatic brain injury	4.0	1.6	2.0	1.3	1.0
Hearing impairments	1.0	2.5	0.6	0.6	1.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>1.3</b>

Note: This table compares the percentage of students with disabilities out of total enrollment in St. Cloud Area School District to the percentages in other districts. For example, the 1.7 listed for Duluth under Speech or Language signifies that St. Cloud Area School District has 1.7 times the percentage of students needing speech or language services compared to Duluth.

- St. Cloud Area School District has a consistently higher percentage (greater than 1.0) of students identified with specific learning disabilities and emotional disturbance than comparative districts.
- The "learning disability" diagnosis exceeds the comparative districts by 45%. This diagnosis is most subject to individual judgment.
- The emotional disturbance diagnosis exceeds like communities by 50% and also has a high degree of subjectivity. Compared to other similar communities statewide, St. Cloud Area School District has 1.4x the percentage of students with emotional disturbance. Compared to nationwide averages of like districts, St. Cloud Area School District has 3.2x the percentage of students with emotional disturbance.

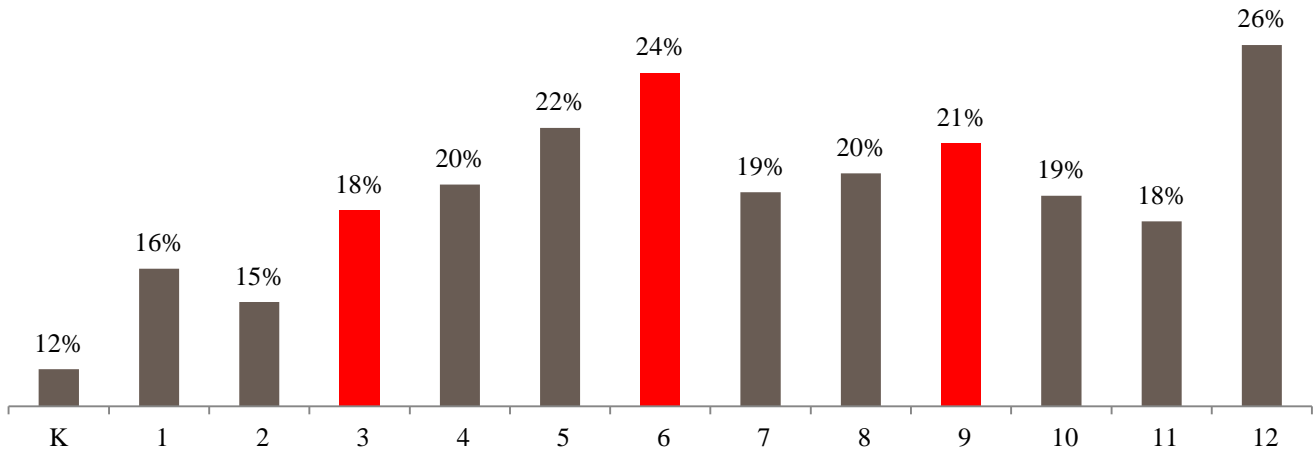
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**Percentage of students by disability in most frequent disabilities in St. Cloud Area School District**



- The majority of the district’s students with IEPs are diagnosed with Specific Learning Disabilities, Speech or Language Disabilities, or Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities. St. Cloud has a high percentage of these students relative to the comparative districts.

**Percentage of students with IEPs by grade in St. Cloud Area School District**

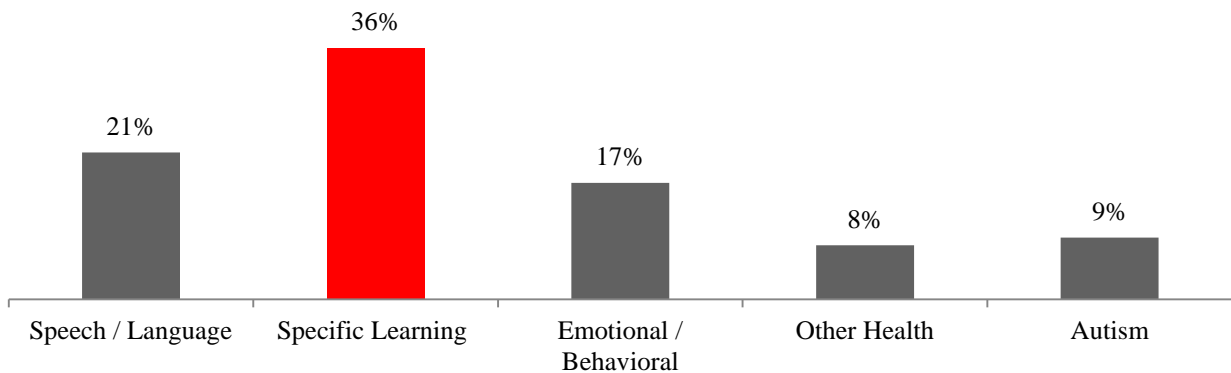


- St. Cloud Area School District’s identification rate jumps in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, 6<sup>th</sup> grade, and 9<sup>th</sup> grade.
- The most common trigger to end services is when a student transitions from elementary to middle school, or middle school to high school. For St. Cloud Area School District, the peaks in students with disabilities occur at precisely these transitions.

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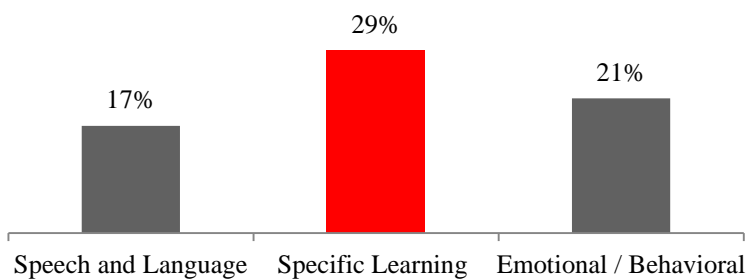
- A high percentage of students identified in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades, where the district has an increase in identification, typically struggle in reading.
- Identification in specific learning disabilities and speech and language are often the most prominent disability categories associated with difficulty in reading.

**Distribution of students with IEPs by disability in St Cloud’s 4<sup>th</sup> grade students**



- The majority of St Cloud 4<sup>th</sup> Graders (who are generally age 10) with IEPs have been diagnosed with Specific Learning Disabilities and Speech and Language Impairments. These disabilities are generally mild / moderate and are closely tied with deficits in reading and literacy.

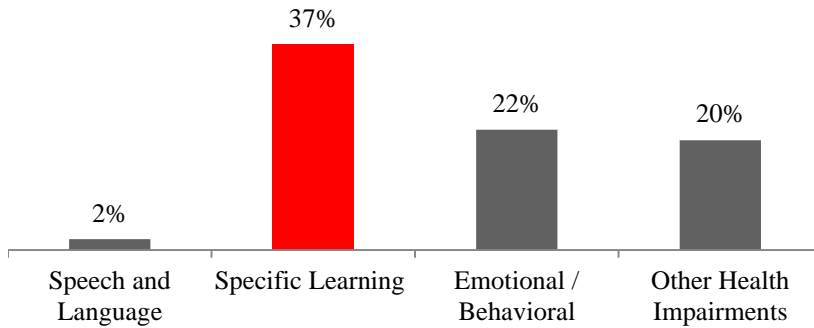
**Distribution of students with IEPs by disability in St Cloud’s 6<sup>th</sup> grade students**



- Most students with IEPs in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade have Specific Learning Disabilities, Emotional Disabilities or Speech and Language Impairments.
- The identification of emotional issues begins increasing at the transition to middle school and continues to increase into the high school grades.

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**Distribution of students with IEPs by disability in St Cloud's 9<sup>th</sup> grade students**



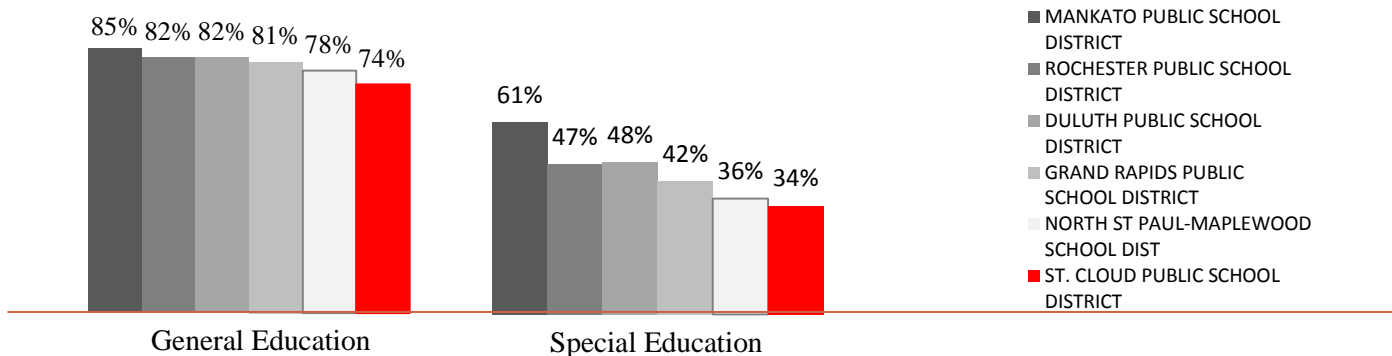
- The percentage of students with specific learning disabilities jumps in the transition to high school to 37%.
- Speech and language services decrease significantly in high school which is aligned with like districts and expected compared to national and state levels.



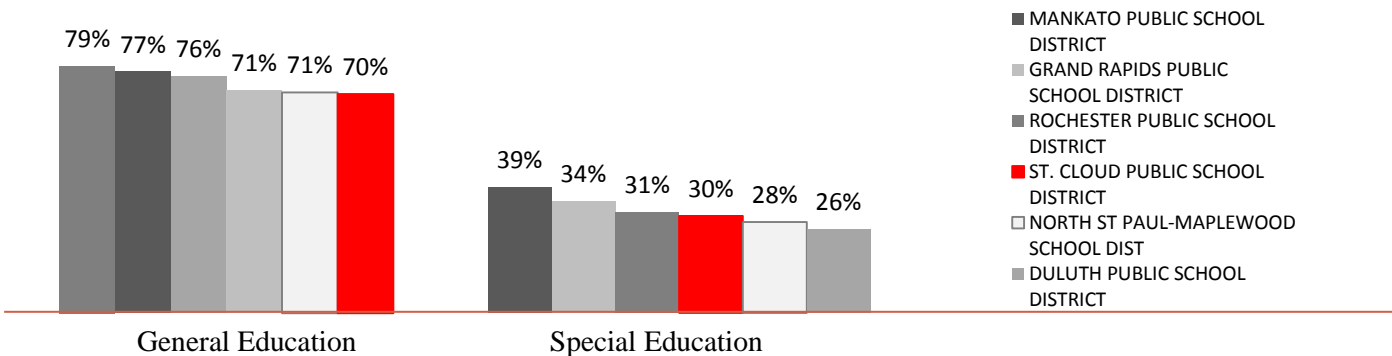
**3. St. Cloud Area School District’s achievement is below or at the average of comparative districts.**

St. Cloud Area School District’s student achievement falls lower in reading and around the average of comparative districts in mathematics. In particular, students with special needs are not achieving as well as could be desired. The achievement gap between students receiving special education services and those not receiving such services have generally been increasing in St. Cloud Area School District more so than in comparative districts. Students with special needs have increased proficiency, however, not as much as students not receiving special education services.

**Elementary Reading**

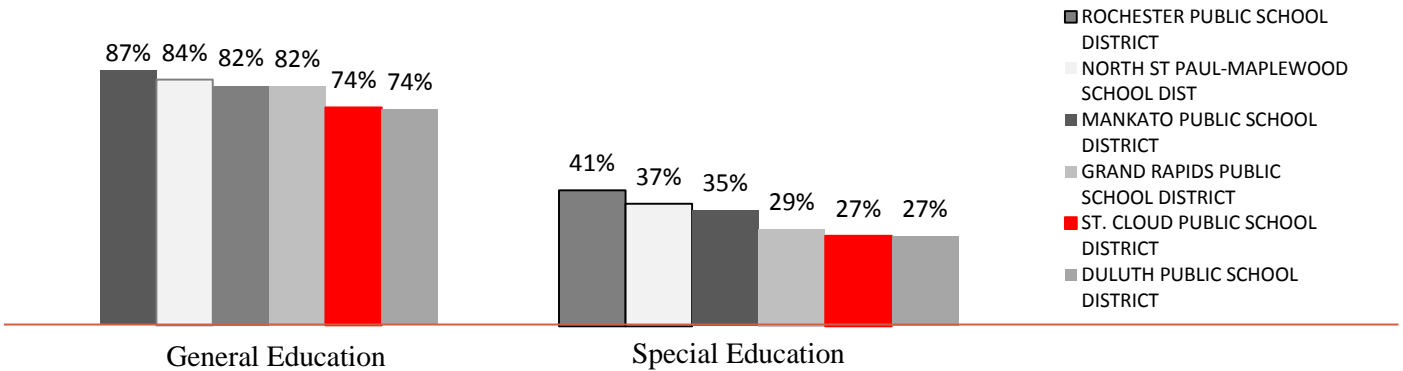


**Middle Reading (Gr. 6-8)**

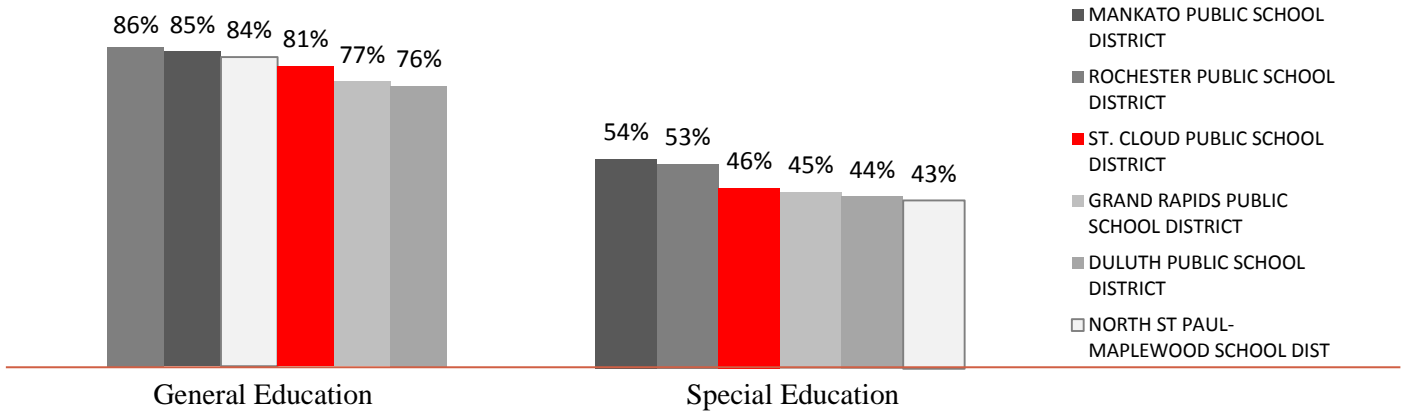


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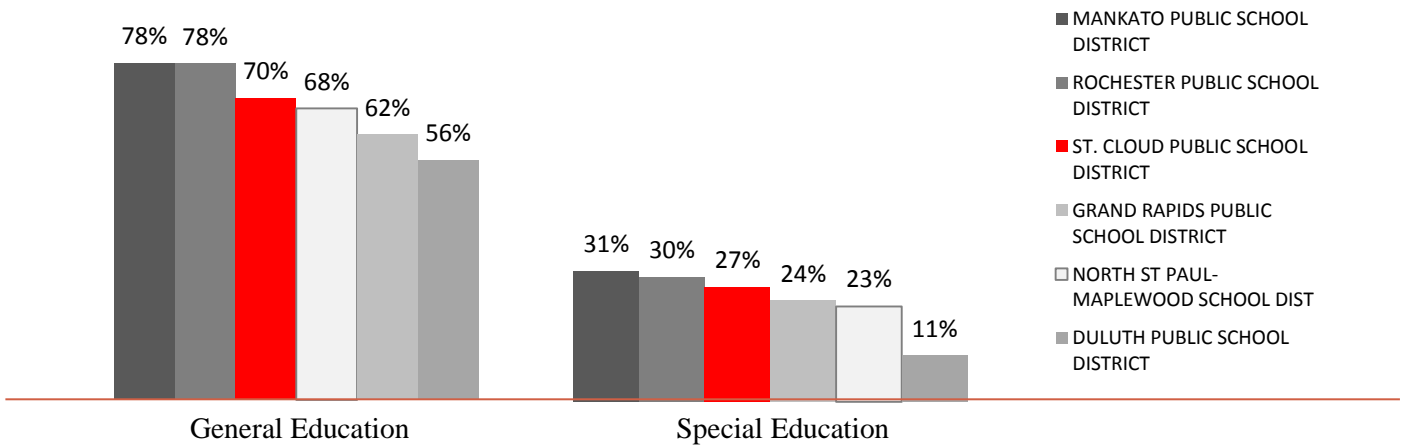
## High Reading



## Elementary Math

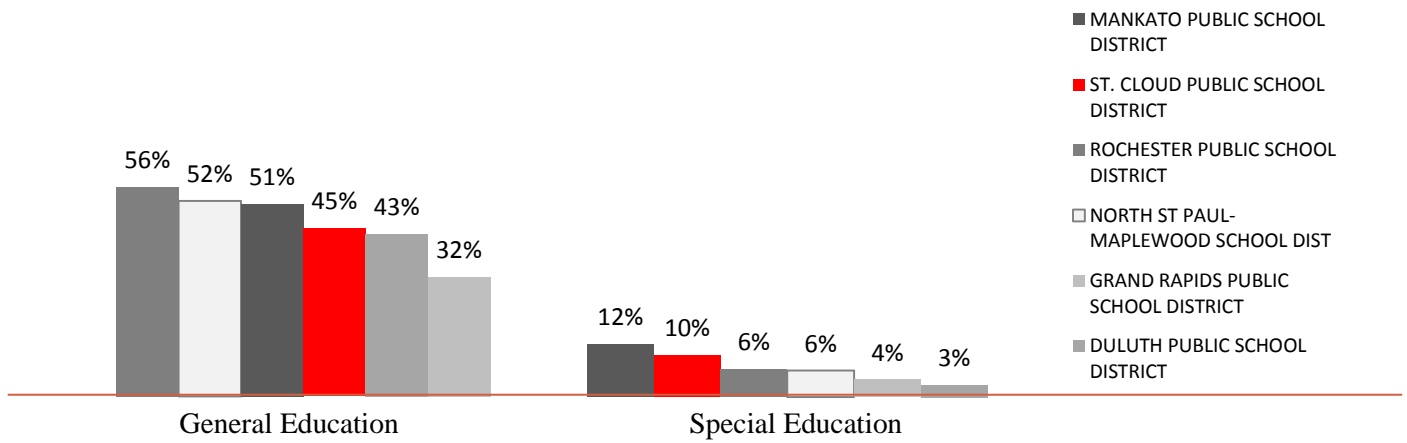


## Middle Math (Gr. 6-8)



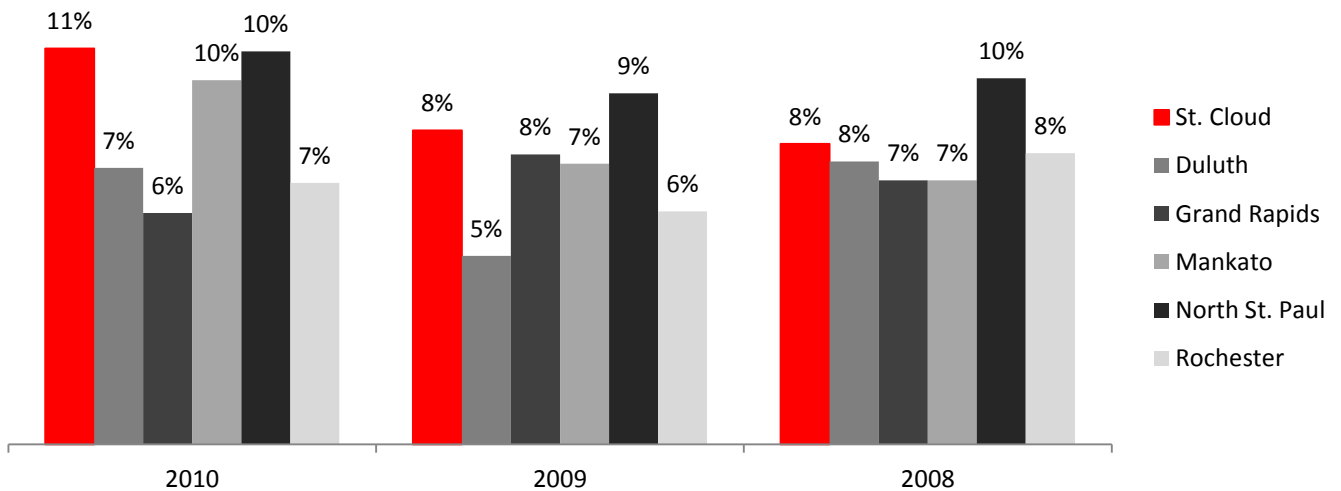
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**High Math**



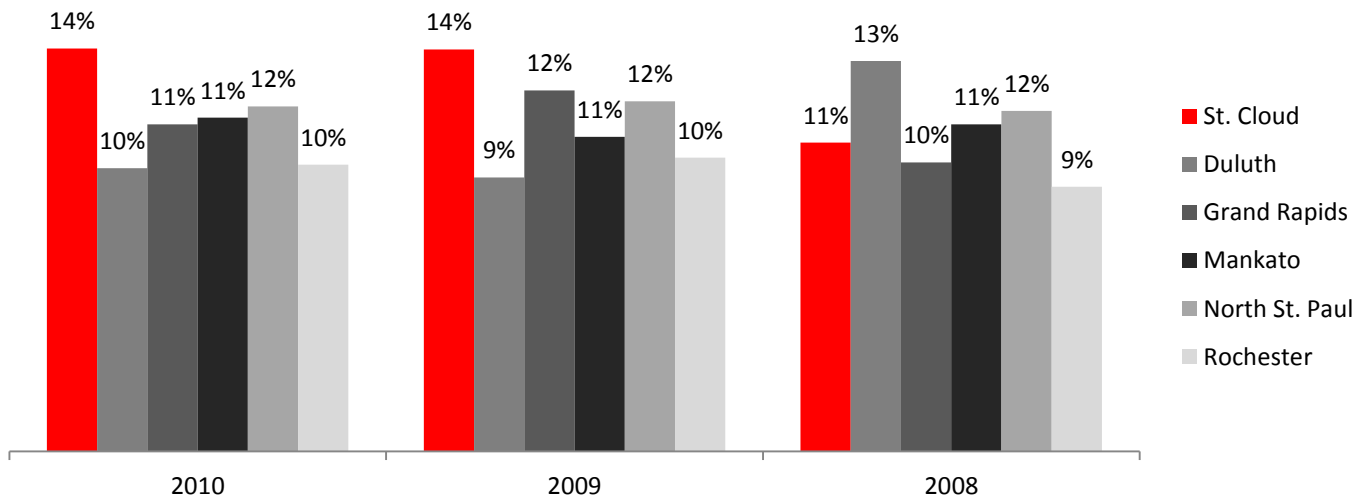
The district has made advances with students identified as “Not Proficient” but show high growth on the Minnesota assessments.

**Elementary Not Proficient but High Growth in Reading**



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**Secondary Not Proficient but High Growth in Reading**



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