

Legislative Study Session  
Meeting Agenda  
1/21/25

1. Introductions

Guests:

Senator Melissa Wiklund

Representative Julie Greene

Mayor Mary Supple

City Manager Katie Rodriguez

2. Purpose of Meeting

3. Presentation of RPS Legislative Platform

4. Information from Legislators

5. Q&A

## Richfield Public Schools 2025 Legislative Platform

### CONTINUE TO SUPPORT FULL FUNDING OF REQUIREMENTS

- Provide permanent funding for future compensatory revenue left in jeopardy due to universal free meals.<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>
- Establish ongoing funding for unemployment insurance and paid family medical leave costs.<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>
- Fully close the gaps in funding for English Learner and Special Education programming.<sup>1,3</sup>
- Provide for universal prekindergarten through a single, unified funding source.<sup>3</sup>

### DIVERSIFY STAFF WORKFORCE AND PROMOTE EQUITABLE OUTCOMES

- Enact protections for immigrant and refugee families in MN.
- Ensure that districts can maintain student and staff data privacy.
- Continue to expand programs and incentives to attract, develop and retain teachers of color.<sup>1,4</sup>
- Increase funding for targeted services and allow funding to cover culturally responsive and innovative summer programming.<sup>1</sup>

### REDUCE MANDATES AND ENHANCE LOCAL CONTROL

- Protect school districts' ability to support all students, particularly those who could be negatively impacted by new federal policies.
- Fund existing mandates and oppose new unfunded mandates.<sup>1,2,4</sup>
- Allow districts to choose which standardized tests to complete at the high school level.<sup>1,2,4</sup>
- Reduce special education paperwork requirements to allow teachers to spend more time with students.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Aligned to the AMSD Legislative Platform

<sup>2</sup> Aligned to the MSBA Legislative Platform

<sup>3</sup> Aligned to the MASA Legislative Platform

<sup>4</sup> Item remains the same from the RPS 2024 Legislative Platform

## Richfield Public Schools 2025 Legislative Platform Additional Notes Document

### CONTINUE TO SUPPORT FULL FUNDING OF REQUIREMENTS

- Provide permanent funding for future compensatory revenue left in jeopardy due to universal free meals. <sup>1,2,3,4</sup>
  - During COVID, free/reduced eligibility dropped 9% in RPS due to universal free meals, resulting in about a \$1 million reduction in annual compensatory funding. This flipped back in the 22-23 year with the return to the previous meal model.
  - In 23-24, with universal free meals, there was a 5% drop in free/reduced eligibility, with funding temporarily held harmless.
  - In 24-25, there was a further 4.2% drop in eligibility, which will bring a projected \$1.4 million decrease in compensatory funding compared to the 22-23 year.
- Establish ongoing funding for unemployment insurance and future paid family medical leave costs. <sup>1,2,3,4</sup>
  - In the summer of 2024, 74 RPS employees claimed unemployment benefits, for a total cost of \$205,982.78.
  - The costs of future paid family medical leave are unknown.
  - Short-term funding has been allocated, but in the long term, districts and staff members will have to shoulder the cost.
- Fully close the gaps in funding for English Learner and Special Education programming. <sup>1,3</sup>
  - Despite increased funding last year, RPS still has a shortfall of \$3.1 million for special education and EL programming that must be covered by the general education budget.
- Provide for universal prekindergarten through a single, unified funding source. <sup>3</sup>

- RPS had been offering free half-day PreK, but families must now pay a fee for PreK unless their student meets the eligibility criteria for free programming.
- PreK funding is currently accessed through a combination of program sources that are separated from K-12 funding.

## DIVERSIFY STAFF WORKFORCE AND PROMOTE EQUITABLE OUTCOMES

- Enact protections for immigrant and refugee families in MN.
  - RPS enrollment of new-to-country students has increased significantly in the past two years.
- Ensure that districts can maintain student and staff data privacy.
  - RPS collects private family identification data through free/reduced eligibility forms, student health data through RHRC, student behavior data, etc.
  - We would not be able to serve our students as effectively if we cannot ensure that this data will remain private.
- Continue to expand programs and incentives to attract, develop and retain teachers of color.<sup>1,4</sup>
  - Despite funding support and programming, Minnesota has only increased from 4% to 6% teachers of color.
  - RPS teachers of color have increased from 11% (2018) to 18.5% (2024).
- Increase funding for targeted services and allow funding to cover culturally responsive and innovative summer programming.<sup>1</sup>
  - RPS has cultivated partnerships that provide culturally relevant and engaging programming during the summer. These partnerships cannot be covered by current targeted services funding.
  - RPS must write grants and find external funding to support relevant, engaging and enriching programming, such as the 21<sup>st</sup> Century grant (approx. \$50,000 for last summer).

## REDUCE MANDATES AND ENHANCE LOCAL CONTROL

- Protect school districts' ability to support all students, particularly those who could be negatively impacted by new federal policies.
  - RPS has an equity policy and a gender inclusion policy that have been approved by the board. Our autonomy as a

district to enact and carry out these policies should be protected by the state.

- Fund existing mandates and oppose new unfunded mandates.<sup>1,2,4</sup>
  - ESST, universal free meals, summer unemployment, family medical leave, READ Act, period products, etc. are all new requirements that have not had full funding behind them.
- Allow districts to choose which standardized tests to complete at the high school level.<sup>1,2,4</sup>
  - The high school MCA has few, if any direct benefits to students (could be used for course placement at some post-secondary institutions). Overall, it is designed to assess the school, not the individual student.
  - The ACT and SAT are no longer consistently required by most postsecondary institutions. A shorter version of the ACT is scheduled to come out this spring, which may be more utilized.
- Reduce special education paperwork requirements to allow teachers to spend more time with students.<sup>4</sup>
  - Current requirements from the state include additional paperwork beyond federal expectations.

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