

May 9, 2022

Greetings EGF Families and Staff Members,

There seems to be constant chatter at the Legislature about the \$9.25 billion surplus and it is time to end Minnesota's special education cross-subsidy.

Many organizations want a piece of the surplus, but the first thing the Legislature needs to do is pay for services that school districts are required to provide, but which have never been fully funded. For many years, the state and federal government have "mandated" programming and services for students with special needs (which is good) but have grossly underfunded these mandates (which is bad), forcing districts to use "regular" education funds to pay for the mandated special education programs. These unfunded mandates have impacted the educational programs in districts across the state unequally and unfairly.

Imagine, the additional educational programming East Grand Forks ISD 595 could offer if there were **\$1,651,300** of available funding that now must be spent to meet the special education mandates! Again, the mandated services for students are needed and appropriate. No one is questioning the need for the services, but the legislature is obligated to fund them, especially at a time when the funding is available.

Every school district in Minnesota has a special education cross-subsidy. It may be \$20,000 in Lanesboro or \$25 million in Osseo. Each school district must pull money from their general fund, which could pay for much needed counselors, social workers, or other staff.

Earlier this session HF 2657, a bill submitted by St. Cloud Rep. Dan Wolgamott, was heard in the House Education Finance Committee. And the Senate companion bill (SF 4124) has been introduced by Sen. Kari Dziedzic. The bill would eliminate the special education cross subsidy that every school district in Minnesota is experiencing. This would cost about \$750 million but would, in my opinion, be the best things the state Legislature could do for public education in Minnesota! For the first time, we now have the funds to eliminate this unfunded mandate!

Please contact your local legislators (listed below) and encourage them to support fully funding the special education cross subsidy. We need to encourage the fight for public education funding of mandated programs so that all districts are on equal grounds, all taxpayers receive equal educational benefits from their tax payments and all students have a fair opportunity for a quality education.

Numerous Minnesota education organizations will host a joint press conference at 1:00 p.m. today at the Minnesota Capitol Press Room to address special education funding shortfalls and the Legislature's responsibility to pay their obligations.

After the press conference, advocates including parents, school board members, school administrators, and others are encouraged to reach out to their legislators and legislative leaders urging them to eliminate the cross-subsidy and pay the past due amounts to make our districts whole.

Thank you for making a difference!

Mike Kolness

EGF Superintendent of Schools

Local Legislators Contact Information

Rep. Debra Kiel (R) District: 01B



255 State Office Building *
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-296-5091
Toll Free: 800-339-9041
E-mail: rep.deb.kiel@house.mn

Senator Mark Johnson (01, R)



95 University Avenue W.
Minnesota Senate Bldg., Room 3111
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-296-5782
E-mail: [Use Mail Form](#) or sen.mark.johnson@senate.mn

