



MDE Response to Office of the Legislative Auditor Report

Dr. Heather Mueller | Commissioner of Education

Ten Minnesota Commitments to Equity

1. Prioritize equity.
2. Start from within.
3. Measure what matters.
4. Go local.
5. Follow the money.
6. Start early.
7. Monitor implementation of standards.
8. Value people.
9. Improve conditions for learning.
10. Give students options.



MDE's Key Takeaways

- MDE believes in continuous improvement and the continuous improvement process.
- We appreciate the report highlighting the work that MDE does through our Regional Centers of Excellence.
- Report demonstrates that **people matter** in providing support to schools.

- The **achievement gap is complex** and the full scope of the work MDE has undertaken to support public schools in closing the achievement gap in Minnesota is far greater than is indicated by the title of the report.
- MDE engages in a **wide range of activities** to support all 544 districts and charter schools, approximately 900,000 prekindergarten through grade 12 students, 82,000 adult learners, and more than 52,000 licensed teachers and countless school staff.

As schools work to close gaps, MDE's support includes **much more than three statutorily required programs and Regional Centers of Excellence**. The over-arching supports include:

- Academic strategies and supports.
- Supporting and expanding early learning opportunities.
- Safe and healthy schools.
- Inclusive and welcoming teaching and learning environments.
- Community and family engagement.

Important Note: Local Control

- Minnesota has **locally elected schools boards** who hold the majority of the authority to partner with school leaders to set the vision, align resources and set policies to meet the needs of every student in their schools. These officials represent the voices of their communities.
- This often places MDE in the position of **recommending and strongly encouraging** evidence-based practices that support closing the achievement gap, **without the ability to require public schools to implement them.**

The Department receives funding from both the federal and state government, and as a result, both the federal and most of the state funds are tied to specific programs.

- **60% (\$60 million) of MDE's budget are dedicated federal funds.**
- **40% (\$41 million) are state funds, most of which are appropriated by the Legislature.**

7 of MDE's 412 FTEs do the work of those three programs.

MDE receives \$41 million per year in state funding:

- \$19 million are dedicated program funds.
- \$22 million are general funds.
 - \$15.5 million (139 FTE).
 - \$6.5 million (Rent, utilities, fleet, IT services, employee development, and all our other fixed costs).
 - \$3 million devoted to IT to support both external and internal facing work.

Achievement & Integration

- We agree that Achievement and Integration programs could benefit from more statutory clarity around deadlines and the MDE and district partnership focusing on plan improvement.
- However, a deeper role for MDE in the development of districts' achievement and integration plans is not feasible under the current administrative funding model in statute for the Achievement & Integration program.

Achievement & Integration Funding

MDE receives \$290,000.00 dedicated funding to operate the Achievement and Integration Program.

- 3 Total FTE:
 - 0.2% grant administration funds 2.2 FTE and MDE funds a .8 through MDE general funds.

World's Best Workforce Review

- MDE and the Legislative Auditor have differing interpretations about the requirements of the World's Best Workforce review.
- The plain language of the statute does not state that the reviews must occur annually.
- This three-year period, the Department understands, was specifically intended to mirror the requirements of the three-year review required under the federal ESSA.
- MDE has met, and will continue to meet, the three-year review requirement.

World's Best Workforce Funding

MDE receives no dedicated state funding to operate the World's Best Workforce program.

- All 544 Minnesota school districts and charter schools submit plans.
- 1 Total FTE:
 - MDE funds the position through Title IV (federal) funds.

American Indian Education Strategic Plan

- The Department disagrees with the assertion in the report that the Office of American Indian Education does not have a strategic plan specific to American Indian education.
- The agency-wide strategic plan encompasses the Department's whole vision for education in Minnesota, and each of the objectives, goals and key strategies were designed with the requirements in mind.
- The Department's strategic plan focuses on American Indian Education, and includes specific goals, strategies and action steps that are aligned with the work and mission of the Office of American Indian Education.

American Indian Education Funding

- **MDE receives no dedicated state funding to operate the Office of American Indian Education.**
 - 3 FTE's from the agency general fund operating funds.
 - For historical purposes:
 - FY12: 0 FTEs for the Office of Indian Education.
 - FY13: 1 FTE on board.
 - FY14 – FY21: funded 3 FTE's from the agency general fund operating funds.

Overall MDE Strategic Plan

- MDE respectfully disagrees with the OLA on its assessment of MDE's overall strategic plan.
- MDE has **measurable goals, evidence-based strategies and specific action steps** delineated by what is required under statute and what can be achieved administratively by MDE.
- The plan is evidence of the **leadership, partnership and support** provided to all Minnesota public schools.

Thank you

Dr. Heather Mueller
Commissioner of Education