**2015 LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

***WHO WE ARE***

The Minnesota State Academies (MSA) are a state agency under the Executive Branch of government. Two very distinct school fall under the MSA umbrella: the Minnesota State Academy for the Blind (MSAB) and the Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf (MSAD). Both Academies – located a half mile apart in Faribault – have been educational destinations for students who have a significant vision or hearing loss since the Civil War. From the earliest days, residential life has been a key component of the Academies. Life in the dormitories provides many opportunities for socialization that are simply unavailable to most students in their home communities. MSA is currently replacing one of the two dormitories on the MSAD campus though a bonding appropriation approved during the 2014 legislative session.

***SCHOOL DISTRICT AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS***

MSA is identified by its public school district number 160. MSAB and MSAD are defined as public schools by Minnesota Statute 125A.61. The schools provide a broad range of educational options for students from infancy through high school. All students meet special education criteria and receive services that are identified in their Individual Education Plan (IEP). Teachers and administrators are licensed by the Minnesota Department of Education. The curriculum is based on state standards with state mandated tests administered to students. Last year 28 students graduated from the Academies.

***FUNDING***

The Minnesota State Academies are not funded like other public school districts. Each fiscal year, the Academies receive allocations from the legislature based on recommendations from the Governor’s office. The allocations are for operational expenses, asset preservation, and bonding projects like the new dormitory. Examples of operational expenses include salaries and benefits, educational materials, software, professional development, and summer school. The operational allocation is based on a student enrollment of 175 students and is not adjusted because new initiatives like The World’s Best Workforce or Q-Comp. Unlike most school districts, the Academies are not allowed to carry a general fund balance forward from one biennium to another.