

Goal #1: Prize first-string teachers: Keep high-performing teachers in the game

Teachers are the most important in-school factor for students' success.¹ When school districts encounter million-dollar deficits teacher layoffs are inevitable. But we don't look at how good or bad a teacher is when deciding which to keep and which to let go. Under Minnesota's "last in, first out" mandate, schools are compromised by the inability to choose which teachers will best serve their students.

Experienced teachers can be highly effective, but the number of years a teacher spends in the classroom provides little indication of the quality of teaching. In 2011, Minnesota law HF-26 laid the groundwork for a statewide teacher evaluation system to recognize, reward and retain teachers who perform well. The system encompasses a three-year professional review cycle: peer reviews, summative assessments, value-added assessment models that measure student growth, portfolios of teacher and student work, and established improvement timelines for ineffective teachers.² Minnesotans must end seniority-based layoffs and use our new teacher evaluation system to keep our best teachers in the classroom. Performance matters.

Goal #2: Scout Minnesota's MVPs: Most valuable principals

For Minnesota's public school teachers, the leadership, culture, vision and support their principals provide matters a lot. Academic research shows that next to the quality of instruction that teachers provide, the quality of the principal is the second most influential in-school factor when it comes to improving student outcomes.³ Moreover, leadership in "turnaround" situations represents a vital part of any school improvement strategy.⁴

In 2011, Minnesota created a smart new path to recognizing and supporting our principals: The legislature called for the annual evaluation of principals and established a work group to develop a performance-based principal evaluation model. We applaud these efforts. Principals are vital to our children's education, and their capacity and know-how are necessary to solving our biggest challenges, including Minnesota's staggering achievement gaps. It is our responsibility to make student and teacher performance explicit components in the evaluation, and sustain a system that develops and supports strong instructional school leaders.

Minnesota's new statewide annual principal evaluation system is an incredible opportunity. The Principal Evaluation Work Group, composed of principals, superintendents, academic researchers and other stakeholders including MinnCAN, has met with experts and educators from around the country to help inform the creation of Minnesota's system. The group will propose an evaluation system to the legislature in early 2012.

Goal #3: Launch the achievement power play

Minnesota stakeholders deserve to know where the best school models are in their communities and why it is important make sure all children have access to excellent public schools no matter what zip code they live in. MinnCAN will showcase top-notch schools and encourage the community to see them in action. We will also work with community stakeholders to use data in making critical decisions, align resources to identify and support promising models of schools and early learning, prioritize results and reward achievement.

¹ Kain, Hanushek, and Rivkin (2005)

² Minnesota House File 26 (HF-26; 2011)

³ Marzano (2005)

⁴ Berends, Kirby, Naftall and McKelvey (2001)



We're talking about specific measures that can help schools:

- Provide the community with a report card on how our schools are doing and promote an environment where we settle for nothing less than the best schools for all Minnesota children. We will showcase Minnesota public schools that are out pacing other schools in student achievement and make transparent the best practices and results they demonstrate.
- Advocate for collaboration between high performing charter and district schools and ensuring that resources are available to cultivate, identify, and replicate promising school models and programs. MinnCAN will work to seed an achievement kick-start fund, renewing our focus and commitment to innovation in schools while prioritizing results and achievement for children.
- Advance and accelerate the connection between high-quality early learning programs and schools by ensuring innovative early childhood funding and policies continue to thrive.