

2017 Policies

POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Minnesota's highly skilled, talented and reliable workforce has been a competitive economic advantage for generations. As demographics shift and the need for greater numbers of skilled workers accelerates, effective education and workforce development programs and curriculum must be successfully delivered at every level and to more students.



BUSINESS EDUCATION NETWORKS

The Minnesota Chamber has launched a private-sector initiative to better synchronize workforce skills with the needs of our changing economy. With employers at the heart of this effort, we aim to connect students and prospective employees to current workforce needs, required skills and job opportunities in their communities. The Business Education Networks initiative will measure the impact of these efforts and the number of jobs filled in high demand industries.

OUR GOALS

To enhance the state's global economic competitiveness, there must be a strong alignment of education and workforce development with employer needs. Too often, publicly funded workforce programs are difficult for employers to utilize. Therefore, we support private-sector initiatives to increase employer engagement in the training of workers in addition to supporting policies that ensure student readiness. Also needed are reforms to our federal immigration system, recognizing that immigrants are a critical source of workers and entrepreneurs for Minnesota's economy.

OUR KEY PRIORITIES FOR THE 2017 SESSION INCLUDE:

- Align K-12 and postsecondary education.
- Offer more affordable, efficient postsecondary education and workforce development programs that align with industry-needed skills.
- Build collaboration, drive innovation across education and workforce training providers.

ALIGN K-12 ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENTS

The standard for high school graduation must be that all students are ready – both practically and academically – for college and career. Minnesota K-12 academic standards, especially in STEM areas, must measure students' academic mastery of grade-level standards, and students must demonstrate mastery of state standards to receive a high school diploma. Together, the K-12 system and postsecondary institutions must identify common thresholds for college readiness and assess student progress toward those thresholds.

EXPAND POSTSECONDARY OPTIONS FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Postsecondary option programs provide high school students with opportunities to earn credit toward certificates and degrees from high schools, two-year colleges and four-year universities. Postsecondary enrollment options must be available to all students including postsecondary enrollment options, early college, concurrent enrollment, advanced placement, international baccalaureate, career and technical education, and college level examination placement.

REDUCE REMEDIATION AND UTILIZE PRIOR LEARNING

Postsecondary remediation is duplicative of the responsibilities of the K-12 system, increases student costs and is associated with reduced completion rates. High schools should administer and utilize standard assessment testing and provide targeted services to ensure students reach postsecondary readiness. Students in need of support at the postsecondary level, such as returning learners, should be offered intensive support through college or program readiness courses. The costs of remedial courses should be minimized, and some costs of remediation should be borne over time by school districts producing significant numbers of students in need of remediation, especially in reading, writing and mathematics.

EXPAND STATE GRANT PROGRAM

State funding should help students who, without state aid, would not be able to access postsecondary education. The Minnesota State Grant Program, the state's need-based aid program, should be utilized to help lower and middle-income students access and afford postsecondary education, or training, beyond a high school diploma at the postsecondary institution of their choice.

USE DATA TO BETTER UNDERSTAND TRAINING NEEDS AND HIGH DEMAND CAREERS

To produce certificates and degrees in areas of greatest demand, postsecondary institutions and workforce programs need to more closely track and adapt to changes in the labor market and workforce needs. We support expansion of data-driven efforts detailing workforce supply and demand projections, and tracking the outcomes of workforce programs including projected shortage areas, high-growth employment sectors, and significant skills gaps by industry sector. Paired with reporting on degree/certificate attainment, employment and earnings by public and private institutions, data will help inform which programs are producing outcomes and align programs with the state's economic needs. Programs and institutions should provide transparent and accessible information to allow students to make informed decisions on the institutions and programs that best fit their needs.

IMMIGRATION

Minnesota businesses value the contributions of immigrants to our communities and to our workforce. Demographics show that as our population ages (by 2020 the number of people 65 and older will surpass the grade-school population) and as the economy grows, Minnesota we will not have the number of people available to fill labor needs. Immigrants are a key solution to this challenge. There must be comprehensive federal reform of the immigration system to synchronize the flow of immigrants with U.S. economic conditions. We must resolve the status of the immigrants who are now here without authorization; and, ensure uniformity in the law to avoid a patchwork of state laws. Successful federal reform will modify immigration policies without creating more obstacles for workers to connect with employers.