



Legislative Priorities 2023 January 23, 2023

School Finance/State Aid – Special Education Funding

Create statutory language that recognizes and fully funds Special Education Birth - Age 21 programming so we may use previously expended cross subsidy money to support student learning, intervention and mental health needs in an effort to help students be ready for Kindergarten, reading at grade level by third grade, and graduate on time and with a viable post-graduation plan.

Background

Special education services are an important, yet underfunded mandate. Our students with special needs are coming to us with ever more complicated and expensive programming needs. Bloomington Public Schools spends roughly \$12 million of general fund dollars, every year, to cover the unfunded cost of our special education programming. This is needed, essential and legally mandated programming.

Rationale

Fully funding special education would allow our district to direct previously expended funds to keep class sizes reasonable, fund mental health supports, and stabilize our finances in general.

School Finance/State Aid – English Learner Funding

Create statutory language that recognizes and fully funds English Learner (EL) programming at the age 3-12th grade level so districts can provide more early intervention and programming in an effort help students be ready for Kindergarten and reading at grade level by third grade.

Background

We currently receive \$704 for each English Learner student. We also receive EL concentration funding based on an MDE formula. This is for K-12 students. Bloomington's current EL cross subsidy amount (the amount we spend to provide the service vs what we receive to fund the service) is \$3+ million dollars.

Rationale

Full funding for English Learner staffing and programming, ages 3-21, would allow districts to increase services, particularly at the early childhood and primary grade levels and increase the likelihood that English Learner students will be ready for Kindergarten and reading well by third grade.

School Finance/State Aid – Basic Formula Allowance

Increase the basic formula allowance by 5% per year for the next two years and link future increases to inflation.

Background

We rely on the state basic formula allowance to fund the bulk of our operations. The state approves that allowance every two years and typically approves increases at the roughly 2% range. As everyone who buys gasoline or eggs knows, inflation is running much higher than 2%. While we appreciate 2% increases, that increase fails to cover our ongoing commitments. Bloomington and other Minnesota school districts then need use fund balance to cover our deficit spending.

Rationale

Approving 5% and 5% over the next two years, with future year increases tied to inflation will allow us to budget more effectively, cover costs that increase due to inflation, meet our obligations, and stabilize our fund balance.