

## 2010 Legislative Platform

### Special Education Funding

*MASE supports adequate and predictable funding for Minnesota's public schools that includes a cost-based, fully funded revenue system for special education.*

- MASE believes paying for federal and state mandates to provide free and appropriate services for students receiving special education is a complex and expensive undertaking that requires significant state support. MASE supports adoption of the funding framework proposed by P.S. Minnesota, as it reflects a comprehensive formula for adequately funding Minnesota schools.
- MASE believes that access to timely, accurate data is necessary in order to make strategic decisions regarding allocation of resources. MASE supports the development and implementation of a modern, integrated database to replace the fragmented and outdated data systems employed by MDE (i.e., MARSS, UFARS, EDRS, STARS, EMAP) and the various student, financial and other data management systems utilized by districts.
  - MASE believes an integrated database would eliminate duplication of data entry by districts, saving countless hours of district staff time.
  - MASE believes that adopting a single, state-wide integrated database would result in significant long-term financial savings as districts would no longer need to purchase separate student, financial and other data management systems that do not communicate directly to MDE databases.
- MASE believes there has been significant shifting of responsibilities and costs for providing services to children and youth with disabilities and their families from state, county and local agencies onto school districts. These shifts have occurred slowly, over time for a variety of reasons, and have included mental health, medical, family support and other services that historically have been the responsibility of other agencies. MASE requests the Legislative Auditor be authorized to conduct a study of the impact of these shifts.
- MASE believes providing dedicated categorical aid for early identification and intervention programs for at-risk students will help reduce the need for and the cost of long-term special education services.
- MASE believes adequate funding for special education preserves the integrity of general education funding.
- MASE believes changes regarding a resident district's obligation to transport individual students must be enacted to reduce the rising costs of providing special transportation.
  - Increasingly, parents are electing to open enroll children who receive special transportation as a special education related service into another district or

charter school, and the resident district is billed for individually transporting that child to and from their home to school, regardless of the distances involved.

- Districts must transport students to and from care and treatment facilities (i.e., mental health, drug and alcohol dependency, eating disorders, etc.), regardless of the distances involved, even when placement is initiated by the parent or a non-education agency.
  - The McKinney-Vento Act requires that districts transport homeless students to and from school who temporarily reside in locations that may be located far beyond the district's boundaries.
- MASE believes requirements that exceed federal mandates increase costs to local districts.

## **Coordinated Services**

*MASE supports a thorough review of the roles and responsibilities of all public agencies involved in the provision of services to children with disabilities and their families.*

- MASE believes that collaborative support from agencies fulfilling their statutory responsibilities greatly assist public schools in the improvement of educational outcomes for students with disabilities.
- MASE believes that school district responsibilities for the provision of transition services should be limited to the attainment of educational outcomes that lead to a diploma and that transition requirements in Minnesota align with Federal requirements.
  - MASE supports the clarification of educational standards and expectations that lead to a diploma and determination of "aging out".
  - MASE supports legislation that clarifies when and how graduation expectations can be reasonably modified for students with disabilities.
  - MASE recognizes the importance of transition needs identification and evaluation which for such purposes may be a "stand alone" evaluation.
- MASE believes that non-education agencies can play a larger role in ensuring self-sufficiency of individuals with disabilities by providing adequate funding and non-school supports outside of the school day.
  - MASE suggests the creation of standards under which county representatives would be empowered to authorize the expenditure of funds to serve students at the time of the IEP meeting or other school based meeting.
  - *MASE encourages increased accountability for agencies that are listed as service providers on an IIP/IEP with transition services.*
- MASE believes the Minnesota State Academies should be recognized as the "serving district" for the purpose of procedural due process requirements and safeguards.

- MASE believes increased funding for children’s mental health services is essential.

*MASE supports the on-going work of the NAMI group in the development of Care and Treatment education legislation with the goal of increasing collaborative efforts among multi-agencies in the provision of services to children and youth who are in need of such services.*

- MASE believes such legislation must define District and Agency responsibilities in the placement of youth for care and treatment including tuition costs and transportation responsibilities.

## **Licensure and Teacher Retention**

*MASE supports efforts to increase the number and retention of licensed special educators.*

- MASE believes due process requirements that exceed federal mandates add stress to special education teachers and place Minnesota districts at the breaking point in terms of recruiting and retaining quality special education staff.
- MASE believes in the expansion of special education training programs and alternative educational paths to special education licensure to address the current and future demands of districts for qualified, licensed special education teachers.
- MASE believes that the continuation of community expert status, limited licenses, and variances for those who meet the qualifications to fill the numerous vacancies in special education when a qualified license applicant is not available is important for providing service to students with disabilities due to the shortage of licensed special education teachers.
- MASE believes retention of existing teachers is critical and supports the findings in the Workload Considerations for Effective Special Education to provide a supportive environment and increase the retention of special education staff.
- MASE believes it is not necessary to go forward with paraprofessional credentialing because it does not add value to the system and will increase the difficulty districts currently have in filling paraprofessional positions.
  - MASE believes credentialing initiatives currently proposed will add significant costs for districts.
  - MASE believes No Child Left Behind and IDEA already set high standards for paraprofessionals.
  - MASE believes a strong focus on training at the local district level is the key to successful paraprofessional support for students with disabilities.

*MASE supports expansion of special education training programs and the development of alternative educational pathways to special education licensure.*

- MASE believes in providing more flexibility to focus on student needs rather than disability labels by creating a multi-disability special education license.

- MASE believes that the creation of a multi-disability license covering teachers serving students with disabilities will provide the flexibility to focus on student needs rather than disability labels.
- MASE believes that there should not be any additional disability specific licenses and focus be placed on appropriate training and professional development.

## **Alignment with Federal IDEA Regulations**

*In the provision of special education and related services, MASE supports the alignment to the maximum extent possible of Minnesota standards with federal requirements.*

- MASE believes regular, comprehensive review should be completed by special education stakeholders comparing Minnesota Special Education Rules and Statutes to federal requirements and standards.
- MASE believes the expansion of Minnesota rules and regulations beyond federal standards often translates into increased procedural requirements including paperwork. These add burdens directly impact the amount of instructional time for staff working with students with disabilities and their families.
- MASE believes effectively utilizing the collective wisdom of parents and special education professionals and follow a consensus driven decision making model in future rule making initiatives is essential.
- MASE believes the MDE complaint investigation process and procedures should be conducted with due regard to Minnesota Statute section 125A.091.