

Education

The DFL House continued to make education a priority in the 2010 session – protecting the K-12 classroom from direct budget cuts, giving school districts additional flexibility to weather the current economic crisis and enacting meaningful reforms to improve student achievement. The original House proposal contained no cuts to classrooms and contained policy provisions to narrow the achievement gap and improve teacher preparation and training. It also streamlined regulations to help districts save money and steer more resources to classrooms and provided for stable funding and continued innovation in future years with phased-in implementation of the New Minnesota Miracle. The bill also ensured timely repayment of the \$1.7 billion school shift.

The House also passed a high school end-of-course algebra assessment to measure college and career readiness. With an increasingly global and competitive economy, it is critical that students are well prepared to enter college and the workforce.

I supported several measures from the Governor’s Teaching Transformation Act to strengthen teacher preparation programs including: aligning preparation standards with K-12 student standards; requiring teachers to pass a reading, writing and math skills exams before being granted an initial teaching license; requiring teachers to complete at least one online teaching course; and eliminating the Board of Teaching’s ability to grant a one-year teaching license to someone who has not passed the basic skills exam.

(An education bill was not enacted in 2010, so none of these provisions became law.)

I supported statewide physical education standards developed by the National Association for Sport and Physical Education for Kindergarten through 12th grade. With the growing obesity epidemic it is critical children are taught healthy habits to ensure lifelong health.

I also supported the “Kyle Herman” bill that requires the Education Commissioner, when investigating a report of alleged child maltreatment in a school facility, to notify the parent of the child who is the subject of the report within 10 days.

Early childhood programs were once again protected from budget cuts. The early childhood omnibus bill made important steps to improve the quality of early care and education and to create a system of accountability that helps target funding resources more efficiently. The bill included: improvements to the quality of care and education for Minnesota’s youngest learners; created a system of accountability to help target resources to proven early learning programs; started the process of creating an early childhood report card to evaluate how our youngest learners are doing; and began looking at methods to effectively screen and assess children to better prepare them for success in school.

Higher Education also remained a top concern of legislators. The House DFL made some reductions to the University of Minnesota and MnSCU in order to balance the budget, but did so in a careful strategic way to preserve existing federal funding. ***Once again the House made students its top priority and focused efforts on restoring the \$42 million deficit in the state grant program due to increased enrollment and increased eligibility for student aid due to***

families earning less. In an effort to mitigate the significant grant proration that will be triggered by the shortfall, the Legislature eliminated the 9th semester of eligibility which brought the shortfall to \$36 million. ***The Legislature did vote to restore the remaining \$36 million deficit if additional federal funding were provided to the state, but Governor Pawlenty opposed the provision so it was not enacted.***

Minnesota remains a competitive place to do business because of our state's well trained workforce. In order to better meet the needs of students and industry to continue to produce a well trained workforce, MnSCU will be working with businesses and unions to study options to lower credit credentials recognized by employers that could be combined into an educational career path leading to a diploma or degree. MnSCU was also directed to improve the credit transfer process for students.

The House approved \$100 million of bonding at the University of Minnesota and \$240 million at MnSCU. Not only will hundreds of Minnesotans be put back to work, these projects will ensure Minnesota's colleges and universities remain world-class institutions and facilities.