

# FACT SHEET | Tackling the Achievement Gap

*2015 Budget for a Better Minnesota*

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Every child deserves an excellent education, and the support they need to succeed in school. But right now, Minnesota has one of the nation's most glaring achievement gaps. That is why Governor Dayton is proposing bold new investments in proven strategies to prepare every child for kindergarten, and give them the tools to succeed in school and life.

## A Multi-Layered Approach

- **All-Day Kindergarten is Underway** – This school year, more than 55,000 of Minnesota's youngest learners will benefit from free all-day kindergarten, while others will benefit from high-impact initiatives designed to improve student literacy and close the achievement gap.
- **Free Statewide PreK** – Since 2011, Governor Dayton has worked to expand access to high-quality early learning across Minnesota. From full-day kindergarten to early learning scholarships, the state's youngest learners have more access to high quality early learning than ever before. The Governor's budget proposal would invest \$109 million to expand voluntary public Pre-Kindergarten education statewide, ensuring that all Minnesota four-year-olds can attend a PreK program in their area.
- **Eliminating the Current Head Start Waiting List** – Head Start promotes school readiness for low-income children by enhancing their cognitive, social, and emotional developments, and by providing their families health, educational, nutritional, and other services. While 12,070 children benefit from Head Start services, 2,484 children are stuck on the waiting list. A \$19.4 million investment would work toward eliminating the waiting list and ensure no child is denied service.
- **Intervening Early** – The Governor's budget would invest \$2 million to strengthen the Help Me Grow initiative – a nationwide effort that helps states organize and leverage existing resources in order to best serve families with at-risk children. The funds would create a statewide system focused on detecting problems for at risk children, age 0-8, and connecting those kids with essential services. Early interventions are shown to decrease the need for more costly services in the future.
- **Helping Kids Read** – The Minnesota Reading Corps provides trained tutors for students who are struggling with their literacy skills. The Governor's budget would invest an additional \$10 million in the program, focusing resources on PreK through first grade. Reading Corps would be able to grow from 1,200 to almost 1,700 AmeriCorps members, and increase the number of children served to 44,000 each year.
- **Investing in English Language Learning** – Currently, there are over 68,000 students in Minnesota for whom English is not their first language. In 2014, the Governor and Legislature extended the numbers of years schools can serve these students from 5 to 6 years. This year, the Governor is proposing an additional \$7.9 million investment to continue supporting Minnesota's EL students by extending funding from 6 to 7 years.
- **Helping American Indian Students** – Governor Dayton is seeking to better support Minnesota's American Indian students by investing in the Success for the Future program. This initiative helps eligible schools develop plans to support academic achievement, decrease the dropout rate, and improve the school climate for American Indian students. Last year, out of the 66 schools eligible, only 32 received funding. This proposal would invest \$4.5 million over the next biennium to provide the grants necessary for supporting 34 remaining schools, and an additional 5,300 students.
- **Investing in Community Partnerships** – The Governor's budget proposal would provide wrap-around services for children and families within the Northside Achievement Zone and St. Paul Promise Neighborhood. Both programs partner with families and the community to permanently close the achievement gap.