



The Hopkins Public Schools Legislative Action Coalition has been reviewing the proposed Constitutional Amendment to address the achievement gap put forth by former Supreme Court Justice Alan Page and Federal Reserve Bank President Neel Kashkari. The proposed language would replace Art. XIII, Sec. 1 of Minnesota's constitution in its entirety, and reads:

EQUAL RIGHT TO QUALITY PUBLIC EDUCATION. *All children have a **fundamental right to a quality public education** that fully prepares them with the skills necessary for participation in the economy, our democracy, and society, as measured against **uniform achievement standards** set forth by the state. It is a **paramount duty of the state** to ensure quality public schools that fulfill this fundamental right.*

It would replace our current amendment which has been part of our state constitution since 1857:

UNIFORM SYSTEM OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS. *The stability of a republican form of government depending mainly upon the intelligence of the people, it is the duty of the legislature to establish a **general and uniform system** of public schools. The legislature shall make such **provisions by taxation** or otherwise as will secure a thorough and efficient system of public schools throughout the state.*

Along with MSBA, Education MN, lawmakers and community groups, we appreciate that education and the disparate impact it has on our communities is taking center stage through this conversation.

We agree with the broader goal of this amendment to close the achievement gap. Indeed, Hopkins was one of the first districts in the state to initiate collaborative work to address this issue through ReImagine MN. In this spirit, we provide the following areas of discussion we are having as a district to further our collective conversation around this important issue.

We agree that this proposed new language:

- Elevates our collective conversation by inserting more aspirational and current language into our constitution
- Establishes education as a fundamental right and a paramount duty of the state, a bold and necessary change
- Initiates a state-wide conversation about the disparities inherent in our educational system, the outcomes of which are determined by a social system based on race and socio-economic status
- Inspires us to grapple with a civil rights issue which is a moral imperative of our time
- Has the potential to bring together all of MN around the issue of equity in education
- Lends the weight of the constitution to the recommendations of ReImagine MN, ensuring that all districts work toward this common goal

We wonder about the outcomes of this proposed new language:

- By removing the taxation language will schools no longer be seen as entitled to tax dollars, thus opening up the state to wide-spread use of public dollars by private entities (vouchers) and having the unintended consequence of further gutting public schools
- Other states that have made this change - Florida, Louisiana and Washington - show alarming trends in new laws that privatize education, schools receiving public funds that select which families they will serve and defunding of the public schools that do serve all families, generating a system of have and have-nots that perhaps the "uniform" language in our constitution safeguards against
- By inserting the "Standards of Measurement" language into the constitution are we codifying testing as teaching and removing the ability of schools to innovate and meet the unique needs of their communities
- Replacing "general and uniform" with "quality" may be replacing vague language with more of the same, thus forcing the courts to interpret; case law has been established in MN around "general and uniform;" new language would reset that precedent thus miring school districts in costly and lengthy legal proceedings

The Hopkins LAC believes that Minnesota's public schools need to change. The state cannot continue to fail large groups of our students. That is why we take this proposed amendment and the conversation it inspires seriously. We look forward to the work to refine this amendment, to ensure that public education is a "paramount duty" of this state and that all families experience a quality educational experience.