



Talking Points

*For use by school leaders in presentations
about important issues related to public education*

Challenging the Challenges

Despite the difficult financial times our state, our schools and our citizens are facing, we must continue to improve public education to meet the needs of our learners and our futures. Schools need creative and committed partners to make this happen.

Children need **parents or guardians** to ensure that kids begin their school careers prepared to learn, and with some basic knowledge and skills. This is not only the right thing to do, but is also very important for the future of children and the economy of our state. *Research shows that early childhood learning is essential to future success. A state investment in early childhood education is likely to show a benefit of \$10 for every \$1 invested.* Parents and guardians can do this by:

- Providing early childhood education opportunities.
- Reading to children daily.
- Introducing new words, shapes, colors, letters, and numbers daily.
- Exposing children to a variety of positive experiences.
- Talking with children about their experiences.
- Playing with children and demonstrating respectful and collaborative.

Kids of all ages need **parents or guardians** to:

- Establish boundaries and expectations.
- Model constructive ways to resolve conflicts and solve problems.
- Show love consistently and appropriately.
- Be actively involved in education at home and at school.
 - Become familiar with school policies, programs, curriculum and activities.
 - Become involved where possible and appropriate.
 - Set and support high academic and social goals.
 - Monitor homework.
 - Limit screen time.
 - Require daily reading time.
 - Discuss current events.
 - Talk about what your child is learning in school.
 - Share visions and concerns with teacher(s).
- Limit unsupervised time and encourage some positive group involvement.
- Establish household routines, i.e. mealtime.
- Model and encourage healthy life skills and habits, i.e. exercise, nutrition, money management, conflict resolution.
- Help kids identify their strengths and potential.

Kids of all ages need **communities** willing to provide support for kids' healthy development. *Search Institute studies of more than 2.2 million kids show that the more assets kids have in their lives, the more likely they are to have life success and to avoid high risk behaviors.*

Communities can do this by:

- Exploring new ways of interacting with schools and school programs.
- Providing various opportunities and spaces for involvement in supervised activities, i.e. sports, arts, religious programs, clubs, etc.
- Participating in building a strong neighborhood climate that supports kids' healthy development and sense of belonging.
- Developing mentorship, tutoring, and internship opportunities for kids in a variety of interest areas.
- Providing meaningful community opportunities for service to others.
- Ensuring a safe and secure community environment.
 - Addressing issues of bullying, racism, gangs, or other violence.
 - Inviting teens to become involved on public safety committees.
 - Expecting and participating in a caring and safe school climate.

Successful public schools of the future will require actively **supportive citizens, educators, and lawmakers** working together. The state of Minnesota is facing a \$5.7 billion deficit in the next biennium. We will need all of the creative resources available to assure that our schools meet the increasing challenges of learners with severely limited resources. Together we must:

- **Recognize** that if the current system is not adequately funded, the system will have to change. That could impact many things like staffing, class size, use of technology, curriculum options, administration, transportation, food services, school district autonomy, athletics, and other activity programs.
- **Be open** to restructuring schools in ways that focus on the main mission of public education: teaching and learning for the future.
- **Be willing** to examine the value of some of the auxiliary services that schools have provided in the past.
- **Be flexible** and encourage others to be flexible.
- **Understand** that research does show a link between investment in public education, including quality teachers and administrative staff, and student outcomes.
- **Understand** that our success as a state and a nation are highly dependent upon our educating all of our children to contribute at the highest possible level to the future.
- **Communicate** priorities and values to principals, superintendents, and legislators.

Note to school Leaders: It is critically important that you communicate with your publics to help them understand that the current design of schools will not be possible with increasingly inadequate funding. More efficient schools will be different schools. As you identify changes, your greatest support is likely to come from stakeholders that are informed and understand the impact of the state deficit on public education.

