

# CLOSING MINNESOTA'S TERRIBLE ACHIEVEMENT GAPS

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OF MINNEAPOLIS**

## EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT GAPS IN MINNESOTA

- Minnesota has some of the largest gaps in the nation by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.
- Disparities are not confined to race and ethnicity; low-income white students significantly trail higher-income white students across Minnesota.
- Disparities span all parts of the state and all types of schools, whether district or charter schools.
- Achievement gaps are evident across a variety of measures, including standardized test scores, graduation rates, and college readiness indicators.

**Minnesota has reduced inequality in some inputs, such as per pupil spending and class sizes. However, despite years of effort, disparities in education outcomes remain.**

# WHY A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT?



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## WHY A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT?

- The teachers haven't failed. The children haven't failed. **Minnesota's political system has failed our children.**
- For decades, leaders from both parties have focused on the achievement gap – yet we've made zero progress.
- Why have we failed? Politics has gotten in the way. One party has a set of preferred solutions. The other party has different solutions. The result: status quo.
- Other states are making substantial progress. This problem is not impossible to solve.
- Creating an individual civil right to a quality public education can break through the political gridlock and drive real change.



## LEGISLATURES CAN RECOGNIZE THEIR OWN LIMITATIONS

### – BRAC EXAMPLE

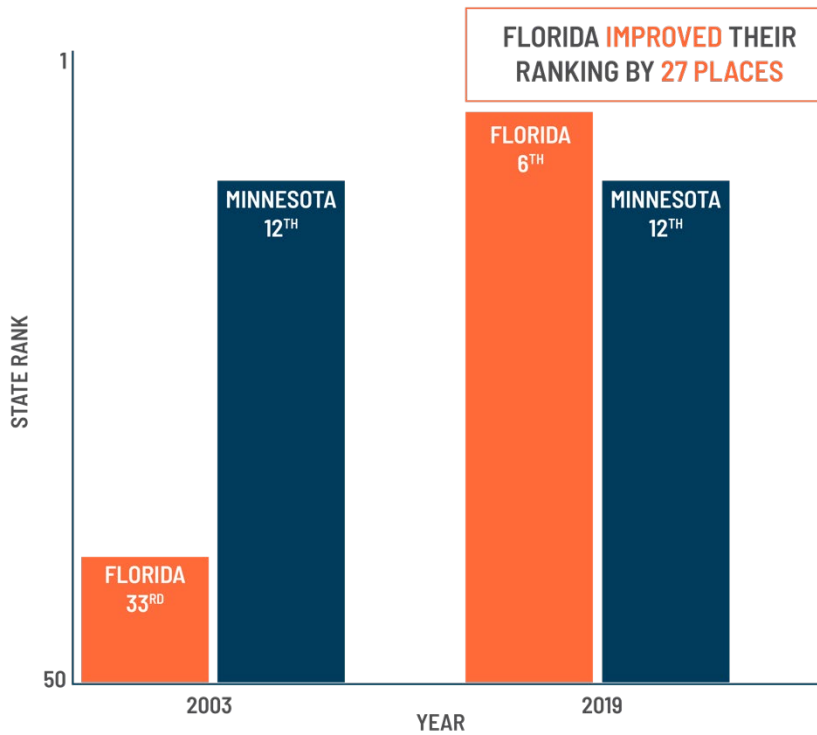
- After the Cold War, the U.S. military needed to downsize the number of bases.
- Congress realized it couldn't make the decisions because each Member would need to look out for his/her own district.
- In 1990, Congress passed the Defense Base Realignment and Closure Act (BRAC), which created a bipartisan commission to make a comprehensive set of recommendations.
- The process is widely viewed to have worked – by putting the needs of the country above politics.



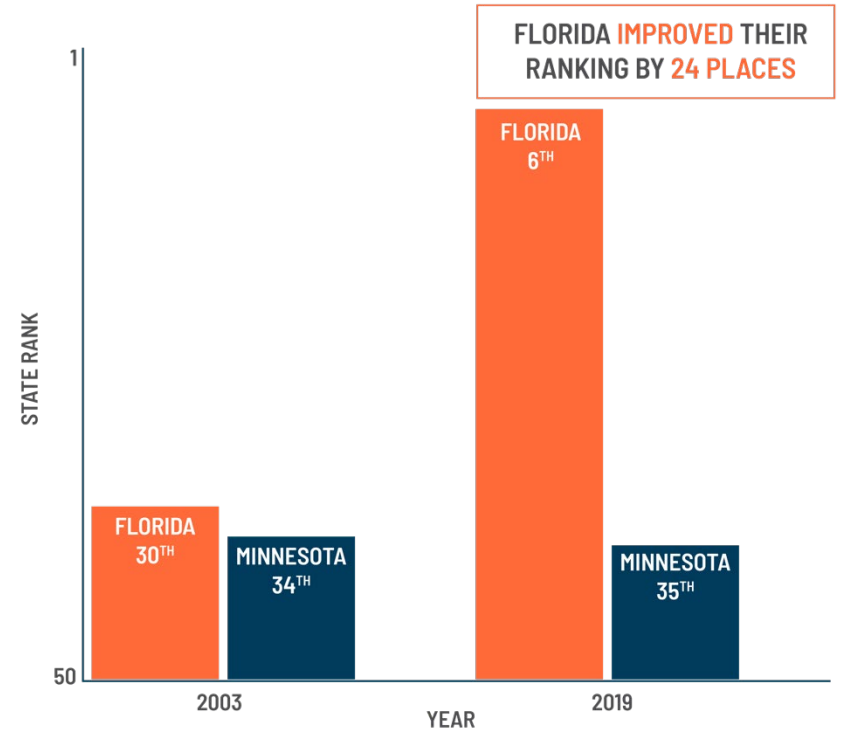
# FLORIDA IS PROOF THAT REAL PROGRESS IS POSSIBLE

## Example: Grade 4 Reading Scores

NATIONAL RANKING FOR AVERAGE TEST SCORES



TEST SCORE GAPS ACROSS SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS



# EDUCATION CLAUSES IN STATE CONSTITUTIONS

- The U.S. Constitution does not address public education.
- Each state constitution includes an education clause.
- There is large across-state variation in strength of language.
- Minnesota's constitutional language was written in 1857, when slavery was still legal in the United States and women could not vote.
- It was intended to provide education to the children of white land owners.
- **Our education system today appears to be working exactly as intended in 1857.**

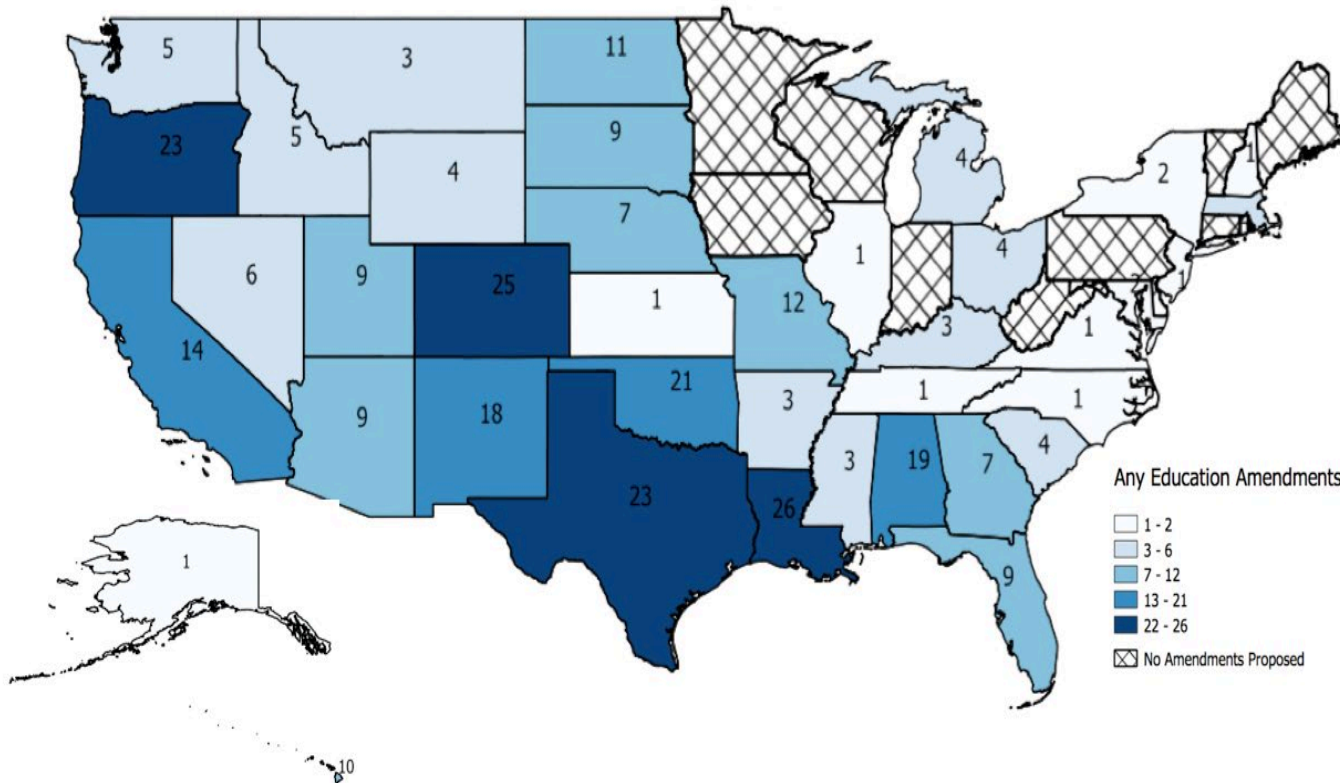


# LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION CLAUSE OF CURRENT STATE CONSTITUTIONS

Provision	States
Uniform	Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Indiana, <b>Minnesota</b> , Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming
Thorough/Efficient	Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, <b>Minnesota</b> , New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas, West Virginia, Wyoming
Equal Rights	Florida, Indiana, Illinois, Louisiana, Michigan, Montana, Washington
Paramount/Primary Duty	Florida, Washington
High-Quality Education	Florida, Illinois, Virginia
Requires standards of quality	Oregon, Virginia



# PROPOSED EDUCATION AMENDMENTS ON STATE BALLOTS (1990-2018)



Since 1990, there have been 312 education amendments on ballots around the country – but zero in Minnesota

# PROPOSED AMENDMENT

## PROPOSED AMENDMENT

### 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.

## CURRENT EDUCATION CLAUSE

### (ARTICLE XIII, SEC 1)

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.



## WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT DO?

- Creates an individual civil right to a quality public education for every Minnesota child.
- Shifts the focus from systems and inputs to include children and outcomes.
- Literally puts children first in the eyes of the law.
- Raises the standard from adequate to quality.
- Makes education a paramount duty of the state (not just the legislature).
- Holds the state accountable to outcomes.
- Supports the full range of policy options that can be tailored by community needs.
- Will be a catalyst for the legislature and executive branch to act.
- Creates an enforcement mechanism for families to drive change.



## CIVIL RIGHTS HAVE LED TO TRANSFORMATION OF SOCIETY OVER TIME

- Bill of Rights (1791)
- 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment abolishing slavery (1865)
- 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment giving men of color the right to vote (1870)
- 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment giving women the right to vote (1920)
- Brown vs. Board of Education (1954)
- Civil Rights Act of 1964

**In each of these cases, opponents raised numerous arguments about courts, separation of powers, individuals' capacity to handle the new right – these arguments were often cover for racism and sexism.**



## WHAT DO THE CRITICS SAY ABOUT OUR AMENDMENT?

- Opens the door to vouchers for private schools

Answer: **False. The amendment says “public” three times.**

- Cuts funding for public education

Answer: **False. The amendment makes quality public schools a paramount duty of the state (no higher duty). If anything, it will lead to more funding not less.**

- Can only be used by rich families who can afford lawyers

Answer: **False. The history of civil rights in America is that one family can bring one case and create change for everyone. Landmark civil rights cases have been typically brought by poor families.**



## WHAT DO THE CRITICS SAY, CONTINUED?

- Will lead to an onslaught of frivolous lawsuits
  - **Answer: False. This has not happened in other states that have amended their constitutions. If substantive lawsuits drive change, that would be positive.**
- Gives judges too much power over education; encroaches on legislature’s responsibility
  - **Answer: False. The constitution created three co-equal branches of government. Each has a role to play. The legislature and executive branches would have the primary responsibility to decide policy.**
- Creates a “positive right”
  - **Answer: False. Minnesota’s current constitution already establishes a positive right to an adequate education system. This amendment would require “quality” as opposed to “adequate.”**

## WHAT IS THE ALTERNATIVE?

- Critics have offered no credible plans of their own to close these terrible gaps.
- Some groups just want more money with no accountability for improved outcomes. The research is clear: pouring more money into the same schools with no reforms does not lead to better outcomes.
- Other groups just wants one party to control the House, Senate and Governor's office and then pass preferred policy changes, as in Florida in 1999. When is that going to happen?

**If only 34% of rich white children could read at grade level,  
we would be treating this like the crisis that it is.**

## GIVE THE VOTERS A CHANCE TO DECIDE

- There is nothing more democratic than letting the people of Minnesota decide.
- We are asking you to put this amendment on the ballot to let the voters decide if they want to make quality public education a civil right for all children.
- We trust the people.





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