

PRINCETON

PUBLIC SCHOOLS



2025 LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

About Us

Princeton Public Schools is a small, hardworking district located 50 miles north of Minneapolis and 30 miles east of St. Cloud. **We serve over 3,200 students** from Princeton, Zimmerman, Baldwin and the surrounding townships of Glendorado, Dalbo, Spencer Brook, Wyanett, Bogus Brook, Greenbush, Milo, Blue Hill, Princeton, and Santiago. Our six schools work every day to provide students with the education they need to thrive in a changing world.

But like many Minnesota districts, we are facing tough challenges. **State funding has fallen behind inflation for over 20 years.** Princeton receives \$3,000 less per student than the state average, which means fewer resources for classrooms, larger class sizes, and fewer opportunities for our kids. These funding gaps are making it harder to maintain the quality education our students deserve.

PRINCETON PUBLIC SCHOOLS IS AN INNOVATIVE LEADER IN INSTRUCTION, DEVELOPING IN EVERY LEARNER THE ABILITY TO SUCCEED IN AN EVER-CHANGING WORLD.

Our Priorities

- 1** Ensure Stable, Predictable, and Fair Funding
- 2** Expand and Stabilize Student Safety
- 3** Respect Local Control and Reduce Barriers
- 4** Expand the Educator Workforce



Princeton Career Academy
Business, Management, & Administration

A Child's Zip Code Shouldn't Define Their Education

1 Ensure Stable, Predictable, and Fair Funding

- **Raise the Basic Formula:** Increase the funding formula by 3% for FY2026 and raise the inflationary cap from 3% to 5%.
- **Support Equity:** Increase Local Optional Revenue (LOR) to \$974 per pupil and expand equalization of operating referendums, local optional levies, and debt service levies.
- **Fully Fund Mandates:** Cover the cost of Paid Family Medical Leave, Earned Sick and Safe Time, the READ Act, and Unemployment Insurance to prevent further budget strain.
- **Eliminate Cross-Subsidies:** Fully fund the special education cross-subsidy to protect general education budgets.

2 Expand and Stabilize Student Safety

- **Increase Safe Schools Funding:** Raise the levy from \$36 to \$108 per pupil and expand its use for training, restorative practices, and mental health resources.
- **Stabilize Mental Health Support:** Provide consistent funding for school social workers, psychologists, and wellness-focused community school models.
- **Upgrade Facilities for Safety:** Increase the Long-Term Facilities Maintenance (LTFM) allowance and allow essential safety improvements to qualify under Health & Safety.

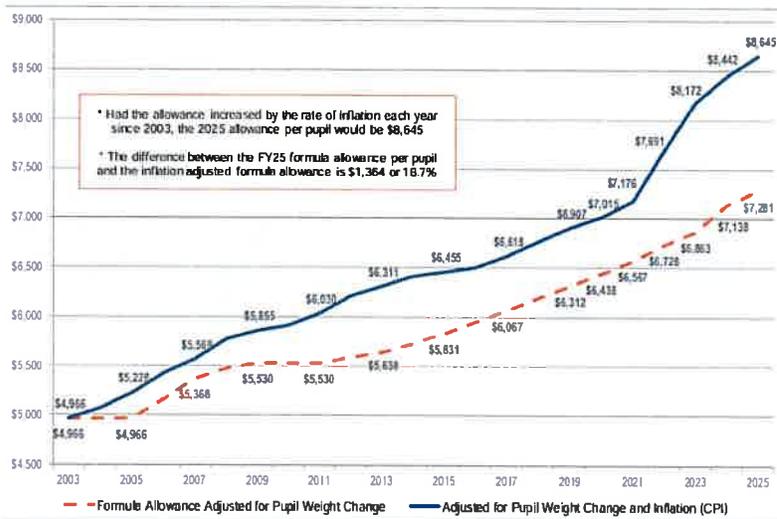
3 Respect Local Control and Reduce Barriers

- **Empower Local Governance:** Allow school boards to approve or renew capital project levies after a public hearing, without requiring a ballot initiative.
- **Foster Flexibility:** Enable districts to create school calendars that align with community needs and implement innovative learning models like e-learning days and competency-based education.
- **Oppose One-Size-Fits-All Mandates:** Advocate for decision-making at the local level to reflect unique district priorities.

4 Expand the Educator Workforce

- **Broaden Pathways:** Expand alternative licensure programs, including "Grow Your Own" and paraprofessional-to-teacher pipelines.
- **Support Teacher Preparation:** Require training in the science of reading to ensure teachers are equipped with evidence-based practices.
- **Remove Barriers:** Offer stipends and incentives for student teachers to reduce entry barriers into the profession.

General Education Formula Allowance, 2003-2025
Adjusted for Pupil Weight Change and Inflation (CPI)



Source: MDE June 2024 Inflation Estimates and Minnesota Laws 2023

From the Superintendent



Princeton Public Schools is proud of our strong tradition of providing a high-quality education for our students. Our teachers, staff, and families work hard to support every child's success, and our students continue to achieve great things in academics, athletics, and the arts. But behind these successes lies a harsh reality: Princeton is facing significant financial challenges that threaten the opportunities we can provide to our students.

According to the 2023 Fiscal Disparities Report, Princeton ranks in the **bottom 10% for per-student funding statewide**, receiving approximately **\$3,000 less per student annually** than the state average. With 3,200 students, that amounts to a **\$9.6 million shortfall every year**. Unlike many districts, Princeton does not have a voter-approved operating referendum, which means we rely almost entirely on state funding to meet our needs. This funding gap leaves us with fewer resources, larger class sizes, and difficult choices when it comes to staffing and programming.

While the state made historic investments in education last year, the truth is that decades of underfunding have created a gap that cannot be closed overnight. Rising costs from inflation, new state mandates, and increasing student **needs continue to outpace the resources available to our schools**.

This is why we need your help. As legislators prepare for the upcoming session, we ask you to support a platform that ensures stable, predictable, and fair funding for all schools:

- Raise the basic education funding formula to match inflation and address the \$3,000 per-student gap.
- Fully fund mandates passed in the last session to prevent further strain on already stretched budgets.
- Increase equalization aid to ease the burden on local taxpayers and bring greater equity to districts like Princeton.

We are not asking for special treatment—we are asking for fairness. Every child, no matter where they live, deserves access to the resources they need to succeed. A child's zip code should not dictate the quality of their education.

At Princeton, we remain committed to doing everything we can to stretch every dollar, but we cannot solve this alone. Education is the foundation of our community and our future. With your support, we can ensure that Princeton students receive the same opportunities as their peers across the state.

Thank you for your partnership and your commitment to Minnesota's students.

Sincerely,

Ben Barton

Ben Barton
Superintendent, Princeton Public Schools

