



Director's Update

Jim Zacchini, Executive Director



Greetings school leaders,

As March approaches and our premature spring soon officially arrives, I hope you are doing well and enjoying the rest of your school year. On the update front...

We will be sending out a survey soon for your feedback on what is working and what is not so we can better support you in these perpetually busy times. I would also like to applaud Debbie for the Guild newsletter's new look. We will be featuring a portfolio school each month so please keep sharing your updates and newsletters highlighting special events and/or successes you have going on. We are proud of all of our schools and love sharing the best of your work both far and wide.

On a different note, please have a look at the MN Department of Education and the Minnesota Charter Schools sections below as they are packed full of important legislative changes important for school leaders. We fondly remember Eugene Piccolo, the recently retired Executive Director of MACSA. He was a strong supporter of school choice

throughout his life and had a significant influence on the charter school movement across the nation. His absence will be deeply felt.

With gratitude for all you do, --Jim

Google Classroom Submission Tips by Buddy Ferrari

A friendly reminder to all schools that the current MDE Charter School Website Requirements Checklist can be found [here](#). This checklist includes everything the law requires charter school websites to have along with the statute each requirement comes from. Note that the recent legislative changes brought about a few new website requirements, most notably the need to post information on mental health services and lead testing. See the checklist document for details, and if you have questions about any of the items please don't hesitate to reach out to buddy.ferrari@guildschools.org.



Google Classroom



ACRONYM OF THE MONTH: [DIRS](#)

Minnesota statutes require school districts and charter schools to report data regarding dismissals, physical assaults of district employees by students, and dangerous weapons through DIRS, MDE's electronic reporting system. [Minn. Stat. § 121A.53](#) and [§ 121A.06](#). Data reported through DIRS includes in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, expulsions and exclusions, dangerous weapon incidents, referrals to law enforcement, and school-related arrests. Interim alternative educational placements for special education students and withdrawals or transfers related to a school disciplinary incident for all students are also reported in DIRS. [Enter disciplinary incident information on MDE's DIRS web page](#). For questions regarding DIRS data reporting, [email mde.incident-reporting@state.mn.us](mailto:email.mde.incident-reporting@state.mn.us).



This month we are highlighting Rosa Parks. The following is a brief overview of the school's mission and philosophy they maintain that fosters and supports their students learning experience and environment.

New Era, New Approach

Boasting Small Class Sizes, The ROSA Staff Adapts To Each Individual Student's Cognitive, Psychological, And Social Learning Needs.

Invigorating Our Students' Curiosity, Courage, And Compassion, We Cover The MN State Standards, Achieve Their Benchmarks, And Provide All The Courses And Credits Required To Graduate. More Importantly, We Help Young Adults To Better Understand Themselves, Make Sense Of Their Lives, And Establish A Worldview.

In All These Facets, The ROSA Academic Model Is Aligned With The Humanities Standards Practiced In Higher Education.



We Help Them Find Their Voices And Live Their Promise.

We Teach The Whole Person.

IMPORTANT DATES

March 1, 2024 Website Compliance Deadline



As your authorizer we want you to know we are here to support you. If you would like to bounce ideas off someone, or need a sounding board, we are happy to be that person. Please feel free to email us whenever you need additional support, we are here to listen.

Please send an email to one of the addresses listed below:

Jim Zacchini, MN Guild Executive Director

jim.zacchini@guildschools.org

Debbie Weckman, MN Guild Administrative Assistant

debbie.weckman@guildschools.org

Buddy Ferrari, MN Guild Project Tech

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Thank you and as always, we appreciate all you do.

MN Guild Resources & Partners

Leading the way to excellence



Status in the House for the 93rd Legislature (2023 - 2024).

A bill for an act relating to education; modifying charter school provisions; amending Minnesota Statutes 2022, sections 124E.01, subdivision 1; 124E.05, subdivisions 2, 5; 124E.07; 124E.10, subdivision 4; 124E.12, subdivision 2; 124E.14; 124E.17; Minnesota Statutes 2023 Supplement, sections 124E.02; 124E.05, subdivision 4; 124E.11.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA:

Here is the [Proposed legislation](#) from MACS that has significant changes in legislation that directly impact the charter sector. The introduction and first reading of the proposed bill took place on Feb-12., 2024.



Eugene Piccolo

With a heavy heart, I wanted to pass on the news that former MACSA Executive Director, Eugene Piccolo has passed away December 1, 2023.

Eugene dedicated his life to improving standards and accountability for charter schools in Minnesota. As an influential figure in the education sector, he worked tirelessly to ensure that every child had access to a high-quality education. His commitment to excellence and his unwavering belief in the power of education made him a beloved figure among his peers and colleagues.

Born and raised in Minnesota, Eugene Piccolo's passion for education was evident from a young age. After completing his own education, he embarked on a career that would shape the lives of countless students. As the Executive Director of the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools, he played a pivotal role in shaping the policies and regulations that govern charter schools in the state.

Eugene's dedication to his work was unparalleled. He believed that every child deserved the opportunity to succeed and worked diligently to create an environment where they could thrive. His efforts to increase standards and accountability in charter schools were widely recognized and appreciated.

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### Cruz Guzman Lawsuit Update ~

Filed in 2015, the Cruz-Guzman lawsuit claimed that the rights of Minnesota children were being violated by patterns of segregation in Minneapolis and St. Paul schools

In 2023, the case went back to the Supreme Court for a final stop before trial. The court's decision set the parameters for what comes next. They ruled that racial imbalance on its own does not violate the state constitution. What does matter is whether it impacts the quality of education the students receive—even if the racial imbalance is not the result of state policy.

[Cruz Guzman Slides](#)



## Charter School Day at the State Capitol - Wednesday, March 13, 2024

Charter School Day at the Capitol is an opportunity for the entire charter school community (administrators, board members, educators, and parents) to come together, meet with legislators, tell the story of Minnesota's charter schools, and advocate for public policy affecting charter schools and students.

**ALL of Minnesota's charter schools are invited to participate, and MACS will help set up the appointments with your legislators.** To assist, MACS will hold information sessions on meeting protocols and talking points on issues for scheduled meetings. On **Wednesday, March 13th** we will also have a room in the Capitol to meet with schools and help with materials, guidance, and any questions participants have.

It's critical for every chartered public school to have a relationship with their legislators to make sure legislators know their school's story and understand the important charter school policy priorities for each school community. Please sign up to meet with your local legislators below.

[Click here to register](#) - Deadline February 28, 2024

## NEW: WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE SESSION UPDATES

In addition to the Minnesota Charter Advocate, we are returning this year to our Weekly Legislative Session Update on **Friday mornings at 9am via Zoom**, starting **Friday, February 23rd**. The update sessions will **only be 15 minutes** in length. We will send out the Zoom link next week - please contact [Genevieve](#) if you need it.

## 2024 LEGISLATIVE SHORT SESSION

The Legislature is on a short session this year with a theme of tempered expectations and little appetite to spend money, particularly for anything with ongoing costs.

Concerns are being raised that inflation will put a dent in the projected \$2.4 billion dollar projected surplus for this biennium and potentially lead to a deficit in the next biennium. This year is also an election year with all 134 house seats on the Ballot.

This week however, bills are already being heard and moved through the committee process. **It is clear the focus for this session is on** improvements and changes to legislation passed last year, policy focused bills without money attached, and passing a bonding bill to fund public infrastructure projects across the state.

There are two committee deadlines set for the 2024 session: on **March 22nd** policy bills and on **April 19th** appropriation and finance bills must be finished. These tight timelines create narrow pathways and very limited hearings for bills to be heard this session.

## NEW LEGISLATION INTRODUCED

In this section, we are highlighting many of the relevant bills to education out of the hundreds that have been dropped since the beginning of session last week. REMINDER: These bills have not passed and many may not get a hearing, but we are sharing so you can be aware of some of the possibilities for future hearings.

**HF3863** – Would prohibit fees for school milk and increase reimbursement rate.

**HF4007** – Would increase special education cross subsidy reduction aid.

**HF3995** – Would create a special education licensure reciprocity working group.

**HF3960** – Would require parents to be notified when students are pulled out of the classroom.

**HF3863** – Would require schools participating in state school milk to provide daily milk to students in kindergarten through grade 12 and cannot charge a fee. This bill would appropriate funding to schools.

**HF3811** – Would amend the Read Act by further defining "science-based reading research," requiring reading teachers to pass an exam to measure their ability to teach science-based reading, and require teacher preparation programs to teach the science of reading to their students.

**HF3744** – Would amend the Read Act amended by added a culturally responsive pedagogy definition, clarifying training requirements, and defining “word study,” to name a few provisions.

**HF3722** – Would require physical and sexual abuse education for students.

**HF3745** – Would enhance and provide funding for children's mental health services as a pilot program.

**HF3742** – Would require mental health screening for students and provide funding.

**HF3595** – Would require the state to increase the amount paid to resident district schools for unreimbursed special education costs.

**HF3476** – Would modify the short-call substitute teacher pilot program by allowing the payment amount to be the same rate as other short-call substitute teachers within the district.

**HF3384** – Would modify the transportation sparsity revenue percentages.

**HF3360** – Would expand access to driver education programs for low income students.

**HF3803** – Would require student teachers to be paid a stipend for their service.

**HF3553** – Would increase the general education basic formula allowance by two percent for fiscal year 2025.

**HF3751** – Would clarify course requirements and state academic standards for Personal Finance, and a seal for teacher licensure for those teaching the subject.

**HF3635** – Would increase the special education and English learner cross subsidy aid by Consumer Price Index increase (tie it to inflation).

**HF3546** – Would require sexually transmitted infections and diseases program resources to be medically and scientifically accurate and unbiased.

**HF3424** – Would require schools to adopt a major food allergen policy.

**HF3373** – Would require schools to have a first aid plan and provide funding to do so.

**HF3148** – Would create a legislative study group on student attendance and truancy.

#### **SENATE EDUCATION POLICY COMMITTEE ACTION:**

**SF3534** (HF3489) – Would remove school resource officers (SRO) from being classified as “agents of the school” thus removing them from new legal limits on using certain holds and prone restraints with students; remove the requirement that injury or death be “imminent” before school staff can use reasonable force on a student to prevent injury or death; require schools with SROs to enter contracts that meet new requirements in this bill; require training requirements for SROs; require a SRO model policy to be developed and law enforcement agents to adopt a compliant policy with the model policy; and appropriate money to the Department of Public Safety to hire additional staff and provide training required in this bill. *Passed and referred to Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Committee.*

#### **HOUSE EDUCATION FINANCE COMMITTEE ACTION:**

##### **MDE PRESENTATION TO HOUSE EDUCATION FINANCE COMMITTEE**

On Wednesday and Thursday, the MN Department of Education (MDE) presented to the House Education Finance Committee their implementation of the 2023 Education Finance Budget. The presentation included updates on grants management, MDE's Office of the Inspector General (OIG), non-exclusionary discipline (NED), special education teacher pipeline grants, READ Act, mental health, and the free school meals program. **Highlights:**

- **Grants:** 64 grants were appropriated for FY24 (83% increase on FY22) with 24 competitive grants appropriated for FY24 (118% increase on FY22).
- **Full-service community grants:** currently being revised and MDE will share more information in their school leader newsletter.
- **Office of Inspector General:** established a tip line for community to report fraud, waste, and abuse in effort to improve accessibility.
- **Special Education Teacher Pipeline:** set to serve over 900 teachers and non-licensed staff, FY25 competition start date is July 1, 2024 with \$10M in funds available.
- **Non-Exclusionary Discipline:** up to \$150K Round 1 NED grants awarded per district for training, technical assistance, and evaluation – two charter schools were awarded.
- **READ Act Year 1:** MN Service Coops are establishing Regional Literacy Networks (RLN) to support READ Act implementation and facilitate statewide testing, coaching, and more. MDE partnering with higher education institutions to ensure teachers are being prepared with READ Act.
- **Student Support Personnel:** MDE seeking to increase student support personnel in schools through a comprehensive school mental health systems structure.
- **Free Meals:** Significant increases in free meals for students under Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) program.



## The Loop!

Please welcome our new partner at the MN Guild, The Loop.

### What is The Loop?

We disrupt harmful practices, reimagine possibilities, and build pathways for sustainable change. Our process for deep learning includes four key phases that generate conditions for a transformed classroom and workplace.

### Why Choose Us?

We share 25 years of classroom instructional experience in multiple contexts and understand the power of collectivism. We intentionally choose to work together as a consulting collective because transformative change requires collective wisdom and labor. Our team approach allows us to collaborate and work with our clients, not for them.

New Episode

 **LISTEN NOW!**

 **WHAT IF STUDENTS REWROTE THE NARRATIVE OF SCHOOL?**

ft. Breana Jacques + Shannon Finnegan



["What if Students Rewrote the Narrative of Schools" Podcast link](#)



### **Girls Who Code Joins Rep. Ocasio-Cortez at Student Resource Fair**

At a recent student resource fair in the Bronx, Girls Who Code found the opportunity to connect one-on-one with students, community members, and public leaders.

The annual event, coordinated by Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and hosted at Lehman High School, aimed to introduce students – especially those from underrepresented communities – to exciting career opportunities, including computer science.

With application deadlines for Summer Programs fast approaching, Community Partnership Manager Claudia Hampton seized the moment to spread the word in an [interview with local reporters](#) at News 12 The Bronx.

"We are so focused on getting diverse students into the tech space," explained Hampton. "We're really excited to share programs here for 9th-12th graders."

Community Partners can help high school girls and non-binary students apply to Girls Who Code's free virtual Summer Programs by sharing the [digital program flyer](#) or requesting flyer packs to distribute at the link below.

[SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT SUMMER PROGRAMS](#)

## Judge approves new social studies standards, including ethnic studies



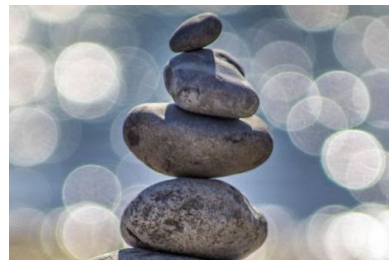
**What's happening:** New social studies standards will go into effect in 2026 after an administrative law judge approved all but one of 26 standards proposed by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE).

- **On that last point:** The judge found clarification was needed to correct the sole standard at issue—amounting to as little as a net one-word change.

**What's next:** MDE must respond. We urge they adopt the first of two remedies offered by the judge—clarifying the standard without materially altering it.

**As I told [Sahan Journal](#)** yesterday: “The process is behind us, and we can look forward to this opportunity for students to learn standards that are more honest and equitable, that honor their humanity and help them see themselves and see one another better in their social studies education.”

“If you want  
to go fast  
go alone.  
If you want  
to go far  
go together.”  
-African Proverb



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