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July 31, 2026

Governor Tim Walz
130 State Capitol
75 Rev Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Governor Walz,

I am writing to express my deep concern about the troubling decline in Minnesota's educational performance. For many years, Minnesota was recognized as a national leader in K-12 education, consistently ranking among the highest-performing states in student achievement. Today, that standing is eroding, and Minnesotans deserve a clear explanation for this decline.

According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation's 2026 Kids Count Report, Minnesota's education system has fallen in the national ranking from #7 in 2021 to #21 in 2026.¹ These concerns extend beyond rankings alone.

Between 2019 and 2024, the share of fourth graders who weren't proficient in reading rose seven percentage points in Minnesota compared to the national average, which was four points. During the same period, the share of eighth graders not proficient in math rose 10 percentage points in Minnesota.² Furthermore, in 2025, less than half of all students tested as grade-level proficient on either math or reading state tests.³

You took office in 2019 after a career that included serving as a teacher and have consistently identified education as one of your top priorities. During your tenure, statewide academic outcomes have shown little improvement, and several key performance indicators remain below the state's historical benchmarks.

States that historically ranked near the bottom in educational performance, such as Mississippi and Louisiana, have pursued substantial reforms and achieved measurable gains in student achievement. In contrast, Minnesota has largely questioned those approaches rather than undertaking comprehensive policy reforms of its own. Given these differing trajectories, it is

¹ <https://www.aecf.org/resources/2026-kids-count-data-book>.

² <https://www.axios.com/local/twin-cities/2026/06/08/minnesota-kids-count-education-schools>.

³ <https://www.americanexperiment.org/minnesotas-national-education-ranking-falls-to-21st/>.

reasonable to ask whether Minnesota's current education strategies have produced the results they were intended to achieve.

Alarminglly, your administration has instead been focused on using taxpayer dollars on poor initiatives like providing transgender dolls for children ages 4-10.⁴ Our students deserve resources to be leveraged for programs that address students' testing shortfalls and the state's continuous slip in the rankings, instead of on wasteful programs like providing transgender dolls to our young children.

I urge your administration to conduct a comprehensive review of current education policies, strengthen accountability for academic performance, expand literacy and mathematics instruction, and ensure taxpayer investments translate into higher student achievement.

Minnesotans have long expected their schools to be among the nation's highest performing. Restoring that standard will require the State to recognize the decline in student outcomes and pursue reforms that prioritize student achievement over political considerations. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Brad Finstad
Member of Congress

⁴ <https://www.foxnews.com/us/transgender-dolls-available-minnesota-schoolchildren-young-4-under-walz-backed-program-report>.