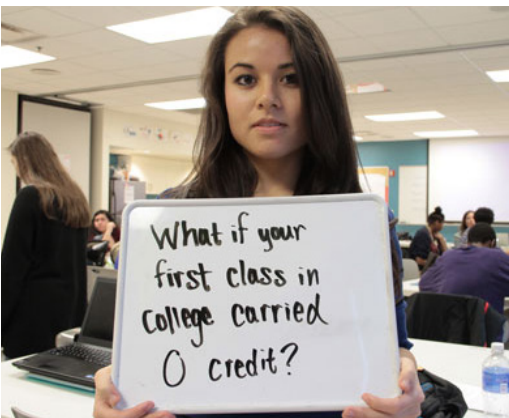




The Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi Foundation for Children has awarded more than \$17.7 million in grants since 1999. More than three quarters of that amount has supported educational programs and organizations, with most of the remainder dedicated to social justice and public health. The Foundation serves as a catalyst for creative, innovative, and systems-changing programs to achieve long-term impact in promoting equitable education and opportunities for Minnesota’s children and youth.



Members of Students for Education Reform, a Foundation grantee, want colleges to change how they deliver remedial courses.



Focus Area:

Building a sense of urgency to close the opportunity gap

Minnesota has many great schools—but the state is also known for having some of the widest opportunity gaps in the nation. White students tend to do relatively well, but many students of color are not thriving. These disparities have huge implications, especially since Minnesota’s population is rapidly becoming more diverse. To ensure a prosperous future for Minnesota, all students must have the preparation they’ll need for college and careers, regardless of their race, family income, or neighborhood.

Change won’t happen on its own; improving the state’s education system will require coordinated advocacy and community engagement. The Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi Foundation for Children helps by supporting Minnesota students, parents, and other community members who are working together to demand that all children have access to an excellent education.

Here are two examples of how Foundation grants are making a difference:

MinnCAN

\$125,000

Through communications, research, and advocacy, The Minnesota Campaign for Achievement Now (MinnCAN) is working to ensure that every child in the state can attend an excellent school. MinnCAN partners with teachers, parents, school leaders, and policymakers to advance educational practices and policies that will help all students thrive. Since it started in 2011, MinnCAN’s work has included lobbying for increased funding for early childhood education scholarships through the MinneMinds campaign.

During the 2015 legislative session, MinnCAN’s top priority was streamlining licensure for teachers trained and licensed outside Minnesota. Building clear pathways for experienced out-of-state teachers is critical for the state’s school system. Making it easier for great teachers to work in Minnesota would help schools address teacher shortages, fill hard-to-staff positions, increase teacher diversity, and empower principals to hire the best candidates. The K-12 education bill ultimately passed by lawmakers included several meaningful changes on this front, including language to:

- provide transparency and clarity to the process used by the Minnesota Board of Teaching when it reviews out-of-state teacher licensure applications;
- honor “similar” out-of-state licenses;
- grant licensure to experienced out-of-state teachers without a requirement that they complete redundant student teaching; and
- permit school districts to retain effective educators who do not yet hold standard Minnesota teaching licenses.

A \$125,000 grant from the RKMC Foundation for Children is helping MinnCAN continue to lead statewide advocacy efforts to make education more equitable.

In its most recent grantmaking cycle, the RKMC Foundation for Children awarded more than \$1.35 million in grants for 2015. Grant recipients include an array of schools, education programs, and nonprofits serving Minnesota’s children.

The awards reflect three key priorities:



Expanding **great schools** and school networks



Increasing **parent demand** for schools that provide excellent education outcomes for all students



Creating a **sense of urgency** to address the extreme disparities that exist in educational outcomes between students of color and white students in the Twin Cities



Students for Education Reform

\$50,000

Students for Education Reform (SFER) trains college students to fight for educational justice by sharing their K-12 public education experience and organizing their peers to demand better outcomes for their communities. SFER primarily works with students who have overcome education inequality themselves, and many are first-generation college students.

In the past three years, SFER has built a broad membership base in Minnesota through grassroots organizing on more than a dozen college campuses. The group has influenced legislation, reached thousands of community members, and earned significant media attention. In 2013, SFER members co-authored an amendment to an education bill in the Minnesota Legislature, defining high school counselors’ responsibility to provide college and career readiness information to students. When Minneapolis teacher contract negotiations were closed to the public in 2014, more than 100 SFER members organized a “Don’t Shut Us Out” campaign, demanding that negotiations remain transparent.

During the 2015 legislative session, the group pushed for passage of a remedial coursework bill to reduce the burden on students who earn a high school diploma only to discover that their coursework did not prepare them for college, and that they must pay for remedial classes covering K-12 material. While lawmakers did not pass the bill this spring, they did adopt language supported by SFER in a new requirement that Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (the MnSCU system) develop a plan to encourage students to complete their degrees. The plan may include replacing some remedial courses with “co-requisite” courses—credit-bearing, college-level courses that also incorporate supplemental academic support.

A \$50,000 grant from the RKMC Foundation for Children is helping SFER continue its work helping college students develop the skills and resources to become grassroots leaders for education reform in their communities.

“ Minnesota needs schools and educational programs that prepare all students for college and careers, regardless of their race, family income, or neighborhood. ”

- Michael V. Ciresi
Foundation Board Chair

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The RKMC Foundation for Children partners closely with The Minneapolis Foundation to leverage their investment services, operating support, and community expertise.