






The Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi Foundation for Children has awarded over \$20 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.



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In its most recent grantmaking cycle, the RKMC Foundation for Children awarded more than \$1.3 million in grants for 2016. The 14 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



Focus Area:

Building a Sense of Urgency to Close Gaps

Minnesota is known for leading the nation in ACT college entrance exam scores during the last decade, and for ranking second in the nation in terms of the percentage of adults age 25 or older with an associate degree or higher. Yet the reality is that, while Minnesota has many excellent K-12 schools, the state’s education system struggles with stark racial and economic disparities. White students in Minnesota tend to do well compared to their peers nationwide, but many students of color – especially those from low-income families – do not complete school with the preparation they need to succeed in college and careers.

Closing these opportunity gaps is critical to the state’s future. To remain economically competitive, Minnesota must ensure that today’s students grow into a workforce equipped to meet tomorrow’s needs. That’s why the Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi Foundation for Children invests in organizations and initiatives that help ensure all Minnesota students have access to an excellent education.



MCTC Grant will Expand Access to Scholarship Program

A \$75,000 grant recently awarded by the RKMC Foundation for Children to Minneapolis Community and Technical College (MCTC) will expand access to the Power of YOU, Minnesota’s oldest guaranteed tuition scholarship program.

Expanding access to the Power of YOU is an integral part of MCTC’s plans to help close the city’s unemployment gap. The college’s phased expansion of the program will make it available to all Minneapolis residents who are Minneapolis high school graduates or obtain a GED.

“We believe that MCTC represents the breakthrough needed for urban populations seeking to close the opportunity gap,” said Orlando Flores, a Medtronic executive and member of the MCTC Foundation’s board. “With heroic community leadership from Mike Ciresi and Roberta Walburn, we are now moving to expand the tuition-free opportunity that has allowed thousands of high school graduates to attend two years of college without paying tuition by sustaining and expanding our Power of YOU program”.

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Launched in 2006, the Power of YOU covers tuition and fees for students from families that earn less than \$75,000 a year. The program served 450 students at MCTC in 2015. In addition to funding for tuition and fees, students receive support services including tutoring, intensive advising, and assistance accessing social services.

MCTC plans to expand the Power of YOU this year to serve 50 more students. By 2018, the college anticipates that the program will serve 218 additional students.

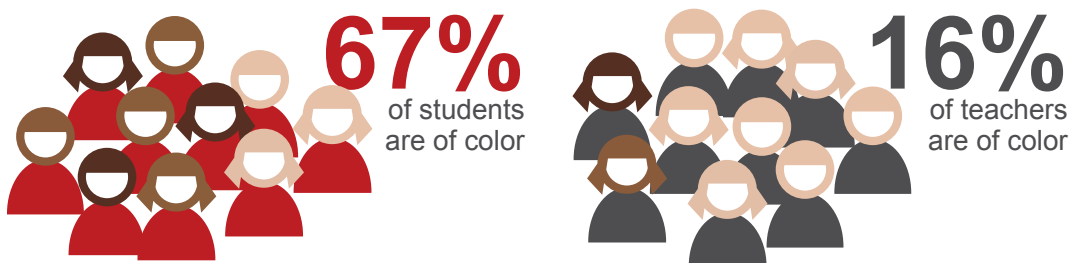
According to the college, Power of YOU participants are more than twice as likely as their peers at MCTC to graduate with an associate degree in three years. The program has a 70 percent retention rate, and more than half of graduating students transfer to a four-year program or transition into a career. Many Power of YOU students go on to work for MCTC's employment partners, which include Children's Hospitals and Clinics of Minnesota, Fairview Health Services, Hennepin County Medical Center, U.S. Bank, and Wells Fargo.

By expanding access to this scholarship program, the RKMC Foundation for Children is helping more students get access to the resources they need to succeed in college and careers.

Using Data to Drive Education Reform

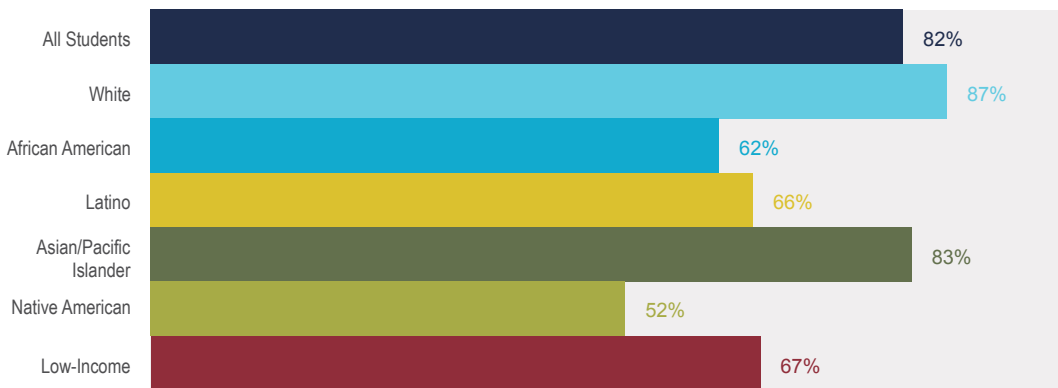
Before educators and families can expand what works and overhaul what doesn't in Minnesota schools, they need solid data. The RKMC Foundation for Children recognizes this important fact and has supported organizations such as Educators 4 Excellence and MinnCAN, which raise awareness of the disparities that impact our state's education system. These organizations also supply that data to the public in reports such as "[Closing Gaps: Diversifying Minnesota's Teacher Workforce](#)" and "[The State of Minnesota Public Education](#)." Here's a snapshot of how Minnesota's schools and students are faring on key issues.

The Current State of Teacher Diversity in Minneapolis



Source: Educators 4 Excellence

Minnesota Graduation Rates, 2014-2015



Source: MinnCAN

Focus Area: Building a Sense of Urgency to Close Gaps

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