

## OUR MISSION

We strive to capture the spirit of the community through its stories while inspiring deeper conversations. Above all, we stand for integrity in our pursuit to inform and engage our readers.

## THE RUBICON

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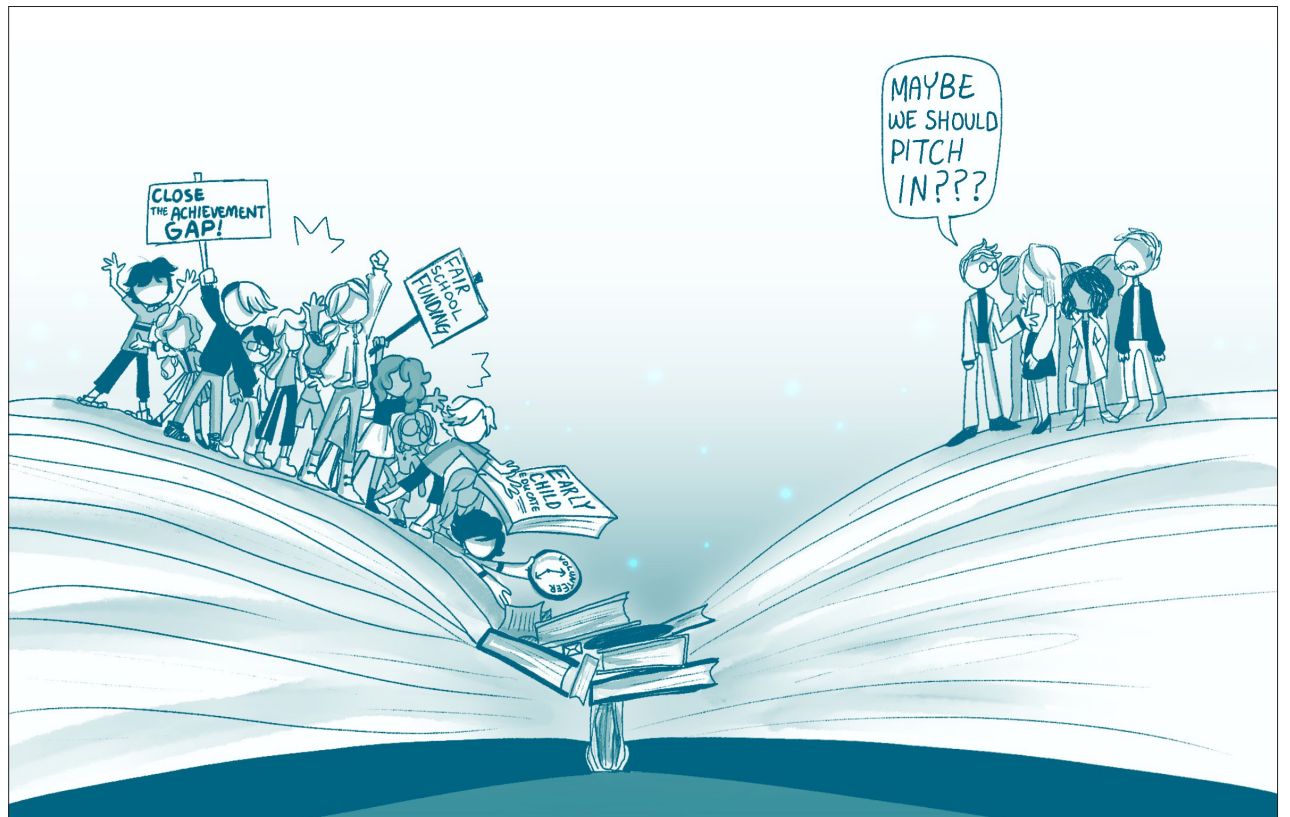
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EDITORIAL CARTOON: Annika Kim

**YES WE CAN.** Student activism and volunteering will help close the achievement gap, but only if there are structures put in place at a legislative level by voting adults that create the conditions for success.

100% of the staff agree

# Work to close the achievement gap

## EDITORIAL THE RUBICON STAFF

Living in the state with the largest achievement gap between white and BIPOC students, it is important to recognize the reasons and significance behind the disparities to find ways to close the divide.

While attending a private school does not necessarily contribute to the achievement gap, it does provide advantages. Independent school funding provides access to top-tier curricula and facilities, in addition to networking connections and low student teacher ratio. College acceptance rates are at 100%. It is crucial to understand that this is not the case for most, especially along racial and socioeconomic lines. At SPA, for example, 66% of students are white. Socioeconomically, we come from neighborhoods with resources and families that feel empowered to make school choices. What we do with this advantage can contribute to closing the achievement gap for others.

Being educated on the reasons behind the achievement gap in Minnesota is crucial in beginning to make a difference.

The NPR podcast NPR Early Risers hosted by Dianne Haulcy, explains how early childhood plays a huge role in how children process trauma and ways in which the achievement gap can be changed in Minnesota. Early childhood (birth to age five) is a crucial time for brain development. The education a young child receives—from books at home to daycare and preschool—has a major impact on learning at grade level. Consider volunteering at and/or raising money for organizations that support early childhood learning.

Data also shows that kids surrounded by other smart kids can have huge benefits. Peer tutoring at an after school program or running a book club through a local library is another way to use independent school education to increase reading and math proficiency for other students in Minnesota.

The next part has to do with public policy.

Advocating for a shift in property tax allocation at the state level is one way to close the gap. Public schools are funded by property taxes collected by respective districts, and since most schools are connected to neighborhoods, this creates large funding disparities. Minnesota has one of the widest gaps between white and BIPOC homeownership, a significant determinant of wealth. More white families have homes in richer neighborhoods, which means they have a better chance of sending their children to better-funded schools. One of the major factors for racial disparities in school systems is historic racial segregation, redlining, and the disadvantages many BIPOC people continue to face. If the state took all property taxes, and divided that money evenly amongst all students, the per pupil funding, one significant determinant of success, would be equal, giving each student an equal number of tax dollars to cover the cost of books and supplies, nutrition, and support staff regardless of their address.

Voting for candidates and public figures that are working to close the achievement gap, not just in Minnesota but across the nation, can make a huge difference. While many students are not old enough to vote, using a quality education to work to change public policy is effective. Keep up with legislation. Intern for candidates who support education in campaigns.

Using personal access to quality education to provide others with similar opportunities, working to change public policies, or simply learning more about why the achievement gap is so severe are all great ways to help mend the disparities within the education systems in Minnesota.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND THAT NOT EVERYONE HAS THE SAME EXPERIENCE.