

**Association of Metropolitan School Districts  
2008 Legislative Platform**

## Make Education and Funding Click

### **Provide Adequate Funding**

The funding bill approved during the 2007 legislative session took some positive steps toward restoring previous cuts to various education programs. The most significant restoration occurred in the area of special education. However, even with this additional investment the state is falling short of funding its own special education formula. Furthermore, the vast majority of the approved funding was for the first year of the biennium -- the 2007-2008 school year. The average metropolitan school district will see a mere 1.2 percent increase in funding for the 2008-2009 school year under current law. It is essential that the Governor and Legislature provide supplemental funding during the 2008 session to avoid major school district budget shortfalls for the 2008-2009 school year. Specifically, the Governor and Legislature should:

- Increase the basic formula by an additional 2 percent – to \$5,226.00 - for the 2008-09 school year
- Fully fund the state special education formula
- Direct the Department of Education to present recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature by November 1, 2008 for implementing a location equity index to recognize market-based labor cost differentials

### **Protect and Preserve School Buildings and Infrastructure**

It is important that school districts have the ability to maintain school facilities to preserve public assets and ensure the safety of students and staff. In addition, school districts must have the capacity to invest in technology that will enhance student achievement and prepare our students for the workplace. Specifically, the Governor and Legislature should:

- Increase access to the Alternative Levy and Bonding Program by eliminating the square footage threshold for participation in the program
- Increase Deferred Maintenance Revenue to \$100.00 per pupil to ensure that school districts are able to properly maintain and operate safe buildings
- Increase lease levy authority to \$150.00 per pupil so school districts can meet their facilities needs in a strategic, cost effective manner. Likewise, increase the lease levy authority available to Intermediate School Districts through their member districts from \$25 per pupil to \$50 per pupil
- Provide a reliable and sustainable funding stream for technology infrastructure, software and ongoing staff development

## **Reduce Mandates and Preserve Local Control**

Reduce mandates and allow locally elected school boards and administrators to work with their communities to address unique local needs and challenges. Specifically, the Governor and Legislature should:

- Continue to allow school districts to have local control and flexibility in designing benefit plans that meet the needs of their employees
- Allow local school boards to determine when it is necessary to conduct a primary election for school board races
- Eliminate reports that are of little value such as the annual superintendents targeted passage rate report
- Repeal the requirement that school districts provide information and application forms to each student on the availability of Minnesota health care programs
- Simplify and clarify the ballot language required for operating referendum renewal elections
- Repeal the prohibition of starting the school year before Labor Day