

August 2011
vol 8 ♦ no 9

Learning Beyond the Classroom in Hopkins

AMSD Calendar

August 12, 2011

Board of Directors Meeting, 7:00 a.m., TIES Building, St. Paul
Guest speaker:

Dr. Bill Morris

August 26, 2011

Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting, 7:30 a.m., TIES Building, St. Paul

September 9, 2011

Board of Directors Meeting, 7:00 a.m., TIES Building, St. Paul

September 30, 2011

Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting, 7:30 a.m., TIES Building, St. Paul

Samantha Franko spent a portion of her senior year mapping her chromosomes in a lab at HCMC (Hennepin County Medical Center). Senior Elizabeth (Biz) Washko, on the other hand, fed sharks and sea turtles, and wrote material for interactive exhibits at Sea Life Minnesota. The two students are both part of ProPEL (Professionals Providing Experience for Life), a 36-week program that allows students to explore a career path before entering college.

In the spring of 2011, 19 students had unique mentorships through ProPEL, which is led by Hopkins High School teachers Jesse Theirl and Kirsten Slinde. The first part of the year is focused on teaching students how to do “work,” which includes team-building exercises, résumé writing, stress management, interview skills, and other skills that help prepare them for life outside high school. Students choose a career path that they would like to explore and establish their mentorships by identifying and contacting prospective mentors.

Slinde said the most rewarding part of the experience is seeing the excitement in the students. “Some of the students say this is the best experience they have had in high school,” she said.

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Samantha Franko with advisor Kristen Slinde at her HCMC mentorship.

From the Chair:

The unprecedented size of the education payment shift used to balance the state budget cast a long shadow over the recently completed special legislative session. The State of Minnesota now owes our public schools almost \$3 billion - \$2.2 billion due to the school aid payment shift and another \$660 million due to the property tax recognition shift. While the use of the shift helped prevent direct cuts to education, it will mean school districts throughout the state will be forced to engage in short-term borrowing and incur millions of dollars in borrowing costs.

The shift overshadowed some otherwise helpful provisions that were included in the Omnibus E-12 Education Bill. Several AMSD priorities were included in the bill that offer much needed relief from state mandates. In addition, the bill maintains funding commitments to special education and the integration revenue program. The bill wisely did not include proposals to implement a voucher system or expand tax credits for private school tuition – initiatives that lacked accountability and have not proven successful in increasing student achievement in other states.

It has been an honor and a privilege to serve as AMSD chair for the past year. I am constantly impressed by AMSD board members’ dedication and commitment to our students. Important work remains in front of us. Critical task forces on integration and teacher evaluation will be appointed and charged with developing recommendations over the interim. It is imperative that AMSD members remain engaged in these efforts and I have no doubt that they will do so.

Patsy Green, school board member from Robbinsdale Area Schools, is chair of AMSD.

AMSD’s Mission

To advocate for state education policy that enables metropolitan school districts to improve student learning.



Association of
Metropolitan School Districts

Hopkins mentorship program allows students to test drive a career before college

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A passion for genetics

The ProPEL experience confirmed Franko's passion for genetics. She plans to attend the University of Minnesota College of Sciences in the fall.



Elizabeth Washko feeds a sea turtle at Sea Life Minnesota.

"I love genetics and have been interested in science since my ninth-grade biology class," said Franko. "I just want to figure it out—it's like a puzzle. I can now see this as something that I want to do for the rest of my life."

This is the first year HCMC has taken on a high-school intern, and it took effort to get Franko in the door. Privacy laws prevent unauthorized personnel from working with patient information. Four people had to sign off on Franko's mentorship before she was authorized to be in the lab, and she could only work with her own DNA. Dr. Fink, Franko's mentor, has been impressed with Franko's ability and interest in the subject. He attributes her success in part to the number of AP (Advanced Placement) classes that she has taken.

Samantha is ahead of where a lot of high-school students may be, and her knowledge base is very strong," said Fink. "She is very bright and motivated, and I have been impressed. I am teaching her the same stuff that I teach residents."

Team work and sea turtles

Washko's ProPEL experience is quite different from Franko's, but she has the same positive feelings about the program. Washko said her favorite part of the job is waking up at 6 a.m. and heading to her Saturday morning shift at Sea Life Minnesota, where she starts her day cutting up fish and feeding them to the sharks and the sea turtles who live in the aquariums. She would not have it any other way. "I enjoy working with the animals," said Washko. "I have learned what they eat and how they behave. I would say this has been an immersion experience for me."

Washko's mentor, Trish Ruf, is more than satisfied with the ProPEL experience.

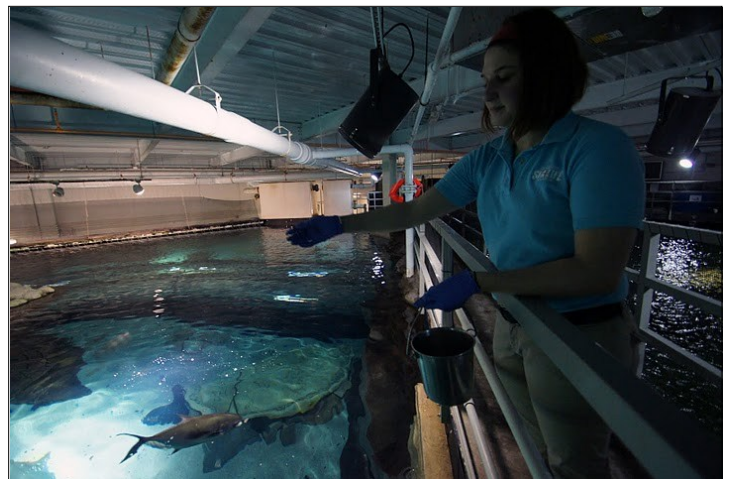
She attributes Washko's success to her ability to take initiative from day one. "She seemed to have a really good sense for reality when she came in and was excited to do any of those jobs," said Ruf. "She is ready to go and an active team member."

Ruf was particularly impressed with Washko's willingness to do any task, whether it be wiping down tanks, explaining exhibits to customers, or feeding the animals. Ruf looks for these traits when making hiring decisions and offered Washko a part-time summer job as a result of her ProPEL performance.

Washko is still firming up her post-graduation plans, which will most likely lead her out of Minnesota—at least for a while. She is looking to pursue a degree in wild-life management at a handful of out-of-state colleges, and is also considering joining the US Coast Guard to pursue marine science.

Other ProPEL mentorships

This year, the following companies are participating in ProPEL mentorships: Center Drug in Hopkins, Octagon, University Minnesota, Bio Fuels Lab, Hopkins Center for the Arts, Minnesota Timberwolves, Event Marketing Department at Mall of America, Caplan & Tamburino Law Firm, Gatewood Elementary, Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce, Citizens Café, The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, 3M, KARE 11, HGA Architects and Engineers, Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare, Rogue Set Media (Film Production), and Children's Hospitals and Clinics of Minnesota (Radiology).



Elizabeth Washko feeding sharks in the aquarium at Sea Life Minnesota.

This month's member spotlight was submitted by Jolene Goldade, Public Relations/Communications Coordinator, Hopkins Public Schools.

Another Education Payment Shift Part of Budget Agreement

After the regular 2011 legislative session adjourned without a budget agreement between Governor Dayton and the legislature, educators were left to wonder when a resolution would appear. Many capitol insiders speculated a shutdown was inevitable. Sure enough, after a month of budget negotiations, the June 30 deadline passed without a budget agreement and many state government services were shut down. Thanks to favorable court rulings, school districts continued to receive general education aid, property tax credits, debt service equalization and state and federal aids supporting special education. However, the Minnesota Department of Education was virtually shuttered. This meant that teacher licenses could not be renewed and state assessments could not be given. In addition, school districts with summer construction projects were faced with not being able to have the required safety inspections performed which threatened to bring some projects to a halt.

Finally, the path to ending the shutdown was opened when, on July 14, Governor Dayton announced he would accept an offer legislative leaders had made on June 30 with some contingencies. This set the wheels in motion for what was to be a long weekend of negotiations on budget bills and policy issues. Behind closed doors and without public input, the budget bills were assembled by agency staff, legislators and the Governor's office over the weekend and into the beginning of the week.

On Tuesday, July 19, 2011, the Governor announced he was calling legislators into special session. Advocates all stood by waiting for the bills to become public. One by one they were made available on the legislature's website. The K-12 Education bill, the last to arrive, made its appearance on the website around 1:30am and the bill was passed a short time later. In total, the legislature passed 12 budget bills to put an end to the shutdown. The shutdown lasted 20 days; the longest shutdown in national history.

While the increased delay in education aid payments was a major disappointment, the final education bill included several AMSD priorities and initiatives.

Specific provisions in the bill include:

- Education shift increased to 60/40
- \$50 per year increase on the formula
- Special education growth factors remain at current law levels
- January 15th deadline and penalty are repealed
- Safe schools maintenance of effort requirement is repealed
- 2% staff development set aside is waived for 2 years
- Integration aid continues but program, as it currently exists, is phased out after this biennium
- An integration aid replacement task force is created to develop recommendations for re-purposing integrations funds
- Inter-district transportation is funded at \$14.9 million in FY 12 and \$16.6 million in FY 13
- Magnet school grants are repealed
- Home school mandate relief was included
- Early graduation scholarships are included

AMSD Initiatives Adopted

- January 15th deadline and penalty are repealed.
- Safe schools maintenance of effort requirement is repealed.
- 2% staff development set aside is waived for 2 years.
- Fund transfer flexibility.
- Simplified ballot language for renewal of capital project levies.

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Education bill includes AMSD priorities

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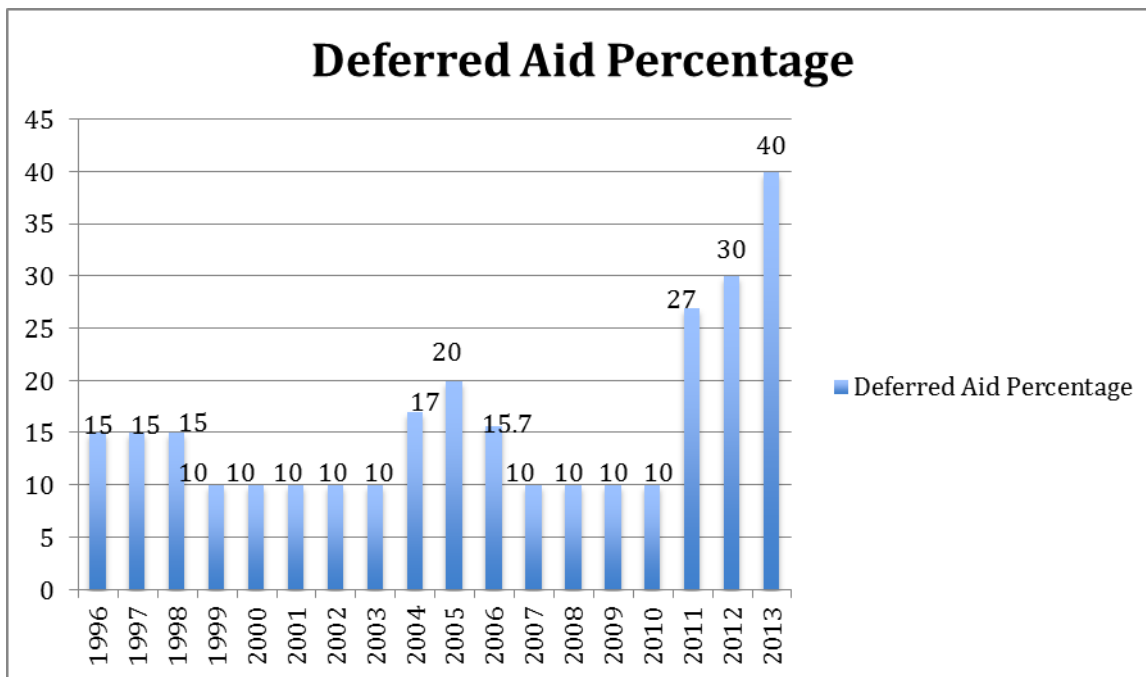
- Expanded use of operating capital revenue – leasing vehicles and costs associated with closing a school facility
- New requirements for evaluation of probationary teachers
- Principal evaluation process established
- Literacy incentive aid established
- Tiered licensure advisory task force established
- Funding for early childhood literacy programs
- Prone restraint allowed under specified conditions until August 1, 2012
- School district not obligated to serve non-resident student in Care and Treatment facility who does not have an IEP
- Streamlined health and safety process
- Simplified ballot language for renewal of an existing capital projects levy
- Fund transfer flexibility

Supporting Public Education:

- No vouchers or expansion of private school tax credit.
- Special education and integration funding maintained.

Perhaps the most troubling aspect of the final budget agreement is the reliance on \$1.4 billion in one-time money to close the budget gap. As you can see from Figure 1, the reliance on school aid payment deferrals as a one-time budget fix continues to be a tool in the policy maker’s tool box. The unfortunate reality is that this “tool” simply kicks the proverbial can down the road instead of solving the budget with reliable and sustainable funding streams.

Figure 1: Deferred Aid Payment Percentage Since 1996



Source: Tim Strom, *Minnesota School Finance: A Guide for Legislators* (St. Paul: Minnesota House of Representatives Research Department) 110.

AMSD Members: Anoka-Hennepin, Bloomington, Brooklyn Center, Burnsville-Eagan-Savage, Columbia Heights, East Metro Integration District 6067, Eastern Carver County Schools, Eden Prairie, Edina, Elk River, Fridley, Hopkins, Intermediate District 287, Intermediate District 917 (Associate Member), Inver Grove Heights, Mahtomedi, Minneapolis, MSU Mankato Center for Engaged Leadership (Associate Member), Minnetonka, Mounds View, North St. Paul/Maplewood/Oakdale, Northeast Metro District 916 (Associate Member), Northwest Suburban Integration District (Associate Member), Orono, Osseo Area Schools, Richfield, Robbinsdale, Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan, Roseville, Shakopee, South St. Paul, South Washington County, Spring Lake Park, St. Anthony/New Brighton, St. Cloud Area, St. Louis Park, St. Paul, Stillwater, TIES (Associate Member), Wayzata, West Metro Education Program, West St. Paul, and White Bear Lake.