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Statewide Task Force Drafts Policy Recommendations for Minnesota Integration Funding

AMSD Calendar

February 4, 2011
Board of Directors Meeting, 7:00 a.m., TIES Building, St. Paul

February 25, 2011
Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting, 7:30 a.m., TIES Building, St. Paul

March 4, 2011
Board of Directors Meeting, 7:00 a.m., TIES Building, St. Paul

March 25, 2011
Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting, 7:30 a.m., TIES Building, St. Paul

April 8, 2011
Board of Directors Meeting, 7:00 a.m., TIES Building, St. Paul

AMSD's Mission

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



Association of
Metropolitan School Districts

East Metro Integration District (EMID) #6067 is an educational collaborative that fosters voluntary integration among Saint Paul Public Schools and nine suburban school districts in the eastern Twin Cities metro area. To support and enhance voluntary integration in our 10 member districts, we provide two public magnet schools — Harambee Elementary in Maplewood and Crosswinds Arts and Science School in Woodbury — as well as valuable staff and student outreach efforts through our Office of Equity & Integration. Recently, Kathy Griebel, EMID's director of teaching and learning and president of the Minnesota School Integration Council (MSIC), participated in the efforts of the Statewide Task Force on School Integration.



During the last session of the Minnesota Legislature, the 2010 Omnibus State Budget Bill contained language supporting the creation of a taskforce to study the state's integration funding. The failure of the bill paired with a belief in the importance of such a study inspired the Minnesota School Integration Council (MSIC) to convene the Statewide Task Force on School Integration. The task force's charge was to clarify outcomes of the integration revenue program and identify measurable indicators of success.

"There is not much clarity about results because we don't know what we are trying to accomplish," says Griebel. "It's been problematic. Everyone from legislators to those responsible for

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From the Chair:

Over the last two months we have heard from the Governor and Education Commissioner on the need for Minnesota businesses to adopt Minnesota schools. We have also heard presentations from the business community at the legislature on education reform. The interest on behalf of the business community in participating in education policy reform and adopting our schools is welcomed with open arms. School districts depend on business leaders in their community to be active participants in their schools and to work together on establishing sound education policy that creates a prepared workforce.

Business owners understand the importance of strategic and long-term planning to ensure a successful enterprise. Unfortunately, the volatility of the current education funding system greatly limits the ability of school districts to engage in long-range planning. Instead, school districts across the state have seemingly moved from one financial crisis to the next over the past decade. Stagnant state funding and an increasing reliance on local operating referenda have created a financial climate that is not very conducive to long-range planning.

A partnership with the business community to work not only on important education reform initiatives but also on reforming the current funding system would be a tremendous benefit for the students of Minnesota.

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

Task force recommendations focus on results

implementation are frustrated by lack of clarity and lack of accountability for these targeted dollars. Therefore, the real driver is the need for tangible results tied to the dollars and the programs these dollars support.”

The big issue was that the law was written when districts with significant numbers of students of color were limited. Therefore, school integration was primarily an urban concern, explains Julie Sweitzer, the director of leadership initiatives within the University of Minnesota’s College Readiness Consortium and a member of the task force. “Today there isn’t a county across the state that hasn’t seen a demographic shift and isn’t experiencing an increase in the number of students of color, immigrants, and other demographic changes,” she says. The College Readiness Consortium works in partnership with K-12 educators and others to increase the number and diversity of Minnesota students who graduate from high school with the knowledge, skills, and habits for success in higher education.

Seeking Input from School Districts, Community Partners

With the blessing of the Minnesota Department of Education but no financial support, task force conveners set to work developing a process, identifying task force members, and establishing a meeting schedule. Members were not reimbursed in any way for their participation, which included four extensive meetings between October 2010 and January 2011 and countless hours of independent research. Task force members represented public school districts, parent organizations, higher education, and non-profit organizations.

“When we started our work, I hoped we would come up with an effective and rational model for integration funding,” says Sweitzer. “I think it’s critical work and the existing model wasn’t going to survive. It was time to look at it under today’s conditions and today’s reality.”

According to the final report, MSIC utilized a participatory process to provide opportunity for rich dialogue and deep examination of the issues. National and local experts provided data and resources for review and consideration. The process included significant outreach to invested school districts and community partners. To support the work of the task force, MSIC facilitated five regional listening sessions. These public meetings provided a forum to include a variety of perspectives related to essential questions guiding the work of the task force. Listening sessions were held in Willmar, Rochester, Duluth, Minneapolis, and St. Paul. Over 150 students, parents, and community members provided input.



In addition to the listening sessions, the task force gathered input through an online feedback survey. Over 200 respondents from across Minnesota completed the survey. Respondents were 70% female and 90% white. A majority of respondents were affiliated with a school or school district — parents, students, teachers, administrators, and school board members. Task force members reviewed demographic data, examined social science research, and studied current practices — local, regional, and national. The report, which was released in mid-January, states, “The recommendations in the report reflect key issues and opportunities that emerged from listening to many voices.”

Moving Forward with the Recommendations

According to Griebel, MSIC is working with the chairs of the education committees in the Minnesota House of Representatives and the Minnesota Senate to have their committees hear the recommendations — with the ultimate goal of finding someone willing to author legislation to move the recommendations forward in bill language. “I hope the legislature enacts a new bill that is based on the recommendations in the report,” says Sweitzer. “I hope the report is used as foundation for making improvements to the integration revenue law.”

Griebel says it was the opinion of the task force members that it was important to release the policy recommendations without attaching dollars to it. In particular, she wants stakeholders to understand that this is a statewide issue rather than focusing initially on the budget impact on their particular interest. “We do need to get clarity about what an appropriate funding mechanism would be to support the policy recommendations,” Griebel emphasizes.

For East Metro Integration District, the task force recommendations reflect efforts within the district to place a greater emphasis on results. “How can we be more focused on setting our targets? How do we assess our progress to results? How can we identify those natural intersections where we can collaborate — at the classroom level all the way to the district level — with one another?” asks Griebel. EMID’s goal, Griebel says, is to work more effectively, efficiently, and synergistically together as members of a collaborative. “And these concepts are well defined and reflected in the task force recommendations.”

- To read the full report and recommendations, go to www.emid6067.net and select “Statewide Task Force on Integration Report and Recommendations” from Current News.
- The Minnesota School Integration Council (MSIC) is a statewide organization committed to equity and excellence for all. MSIC exists to convene and advocate on all matters related to integration and educational equity in the state of Minnesota.
- For more information about the Statewide Taskforce on School Integration, visit <http://integrationtaskforce.blogspot.com/>.

This month’s member spotlight was submitted by Carrie Ardito, Communications Director, East Metro Integration District.

Adopting Our Schools: Seeking Partnerships With Minnesota Businesses

At the 2011 Association of Metropolitan School Districts (AMSD) Legislative Preview, Brenda Cassellius, Minnesota Department of Education Commissioner, told the room of education leaders, “If people can adopt a highway, I think they can adopt a school.” The recent discussion of businesses adopting schools has taken off over the last month since Governor Mark Dayton, in his inaugural address, encouraged businesses to adopt schools across the state. Dayton further defined his initiative at the AMSD Legislative Preview by announcing a Governor’s program to recognize such business leadership.

School districts across the state are ready for such an adoption. Superintendent Sandra Lewandowski, Intermediate District 287, quickly responded and posted a message on the district’s welcome sign, “To All Businesses: Our District 287 schools are eager to be adopted.”



Photo Courtesy of Intermediate District 287

Intermediate District 287, one of three intermediate school districts in the metro area, has grown to serve approximately 10,000 students. The press release seeking business sponsorship indicated that businesses would have many opportunities to join forces and work on issues in their district related to innovation, technology, literacy and performance.

A quick survey of AMSD districts indicates limited existing business partnerships, but an interest in establishing new relationships. Relationships with businesses in the schools have traditionally been through the writing of a check for scholarships, carnivals, advertisements and athletic programs. This role is starting to change as businesses and schools form adoptions and start to partner on specific issues, especially technology and sciences. Stillwater Area Public Schools, in connection with post-secondary schools, manufacturing businesses and workforce development groups have started two programs: the Robotics Academy and Precision Manufacturing Career Exploration Program. The partnership was created to address the need for a skilled workforce as well as stay competitive in the global marketplace. The programs encourage students’ interest in science, technology, engineering and math and show the teachers the skill requirements for the manufacturing industry.

Financial business partnerships aren’t the only way that businesses are engaging in education. The Minnesota House of Representatives and the Minnesota Senate Education Committees both started their agendas in 2011 by discussing the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce’s “Prepared Workforce and Education Reform” project. The project has been a culmination of studies and meetings across the state concluding with statements on educational problems and potential

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AMSD Members: Anoka-Hennepin, Bloomington, Brooklyn Center, Burnsville, Columbia Heights, East Metro Integration District 6067, 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, Intermediate School North St. Paul/Maplewood/Oakdale, Northeast Metro District 916 (Associate Member), Northwest Suburban Integration District (Associate Member), Orono, Osseo Area Schools, Richfield, Robbinsdale, Roseville, Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan, Shakopee, South St. Paul, Spring Lake Park, St. Anthony/New Brighton, St. Cloud, St. Louis Park, St. Paul, Stillwater, TIES (Associate Member), Wayzata, West Metro Education Program, West St. Paul, and White Bear Lake.

State must focus on jobs/skills mismatch

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reforms. The reform project has three priorities: “an effective teacher in every classroom, requiring reading at grade level by the time a students exits third grade and an increase in high school graduation requirements.”

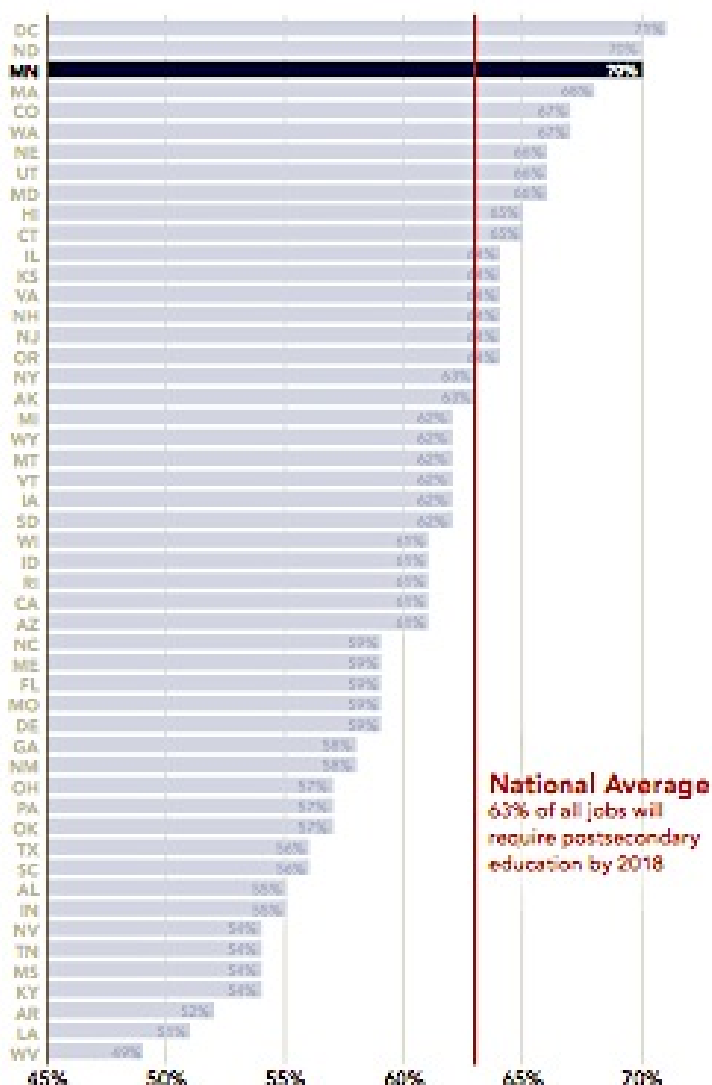
The Minnesota Business Partnership and Itasca Project have also proposed education reform initiatives. In their publication, “Minnesota’s Future: World-class Schools, World-class Jobs,” they prioritized initiatives that: “improve traditional teacher preparation programs, recruit top talent to teaching, provide leadership development for principals and ensure data is available and useful for continuous improvement.”

Continuing its interest in furthering the discussion on education policy reform, the Minnesota Chamber hosted an event on January 21, 2011: “Best in Class: Building a world-class education system.” In a room filled with over 700 education and business professionals, Arne Duncan, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education told the group, “We are paying the price for lack of focus and lack of quality,” continuing, “the business community can be a voice.” At the 2011 Association of Metropolitan School Districts Winter Conference, Dr. Tom Stinson, Minnesota State Economist and Dr. Tom Gillaspay, MN State Demographer highlighted several notable points about the future of education and Minnesota’s workforce:

- During 2010-2015, the labor force is expected to decline .75%;
- 60% of MN K-12 teachers are currently over 40;
- Percentage of minority enrollment in K-12 education was 17.1% in 2000-2001 and was 25% in 2009-2010;
- By 2020, there will be more 65 year olds than school children.

Dr. Stinson concluded by saying the biggest challenge that Minnesota faces is a “jobs and skills mismatch.” A recent report from Georgetown University’s Center on Education and the Workforce confirms Stinson’s concern. The report highlighted a stunning fact about Minnesota’s future workforce: “70% of all jobs in Minnesota (2.1 million jobs) will require some postsecondary training beyond high school in 2018.” Clearly, it is critical that business leaders, education leaders and state policymakers work together toward adopting funding and policy reform measures that will ensure Minnesota school districts are positioned to prepare all of our students for post-secondary training.

Percentage of jobs in 2018 that will require a postsecondary education, by state.



Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, “Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements through 2018.”