

CONNECTIONS

News and Updates from the Association of Metropolitan School Districts

May 2011
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In Spring Lake Park, System of Interventions produces impressive results

The Spring Lake Park School District's hybrid System of Interventions program provides academic and behavior support to students most in need. It has been refined over time and is now producing impressive results.

AMSD Calendar

May 6, 2011

Board of Directors

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

Guest Speakers:

Tom Nelson, Co-Chair, Education Finance Working Group

Rose Hermodson, Asst. Commissioner, MDE

May 13, 2011

Legislative Committee

Meeting, 7:30 a.m., TIES Building, St. Paul

May 27, 2011

Board of Directors

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

June 17, 2011

Executive Committee

Meeting, 7:30 a.m., TIES Building, St. Paul

July 15, 2011

Executive Committee

Meeting, 7:30 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

Tier I

Core instruction for all students

Universal Screening in essential academic areas to determine each student's level of proficiency (3 times per year)

Large scale whole group change to classroom instruction

Tier II

Prevention/ Proactive supplemental instruction

Some students Rapids Response

High efficiency

Formatively measured skill acquisition

Flexible short term group

Tier III

Standard treatment protocol intervention matches identified student need

Small group of students (up to 6)

High intensity of service

Frequently weekly formative assessment – inform instruction

Longer intensity (8-12 weeks)

In addition to Core Curriculum

Tier IV

Problem solving model with specific scripted intervention

Individual student intervention 91-3 in a group) very high intensity

Frequent weekly assessment

Longer duration (8-12 weeks)

Flexible grouping

In addition to Tier I-III systems

Tier V

Evaluation for special Education services

In academics, instruction is matched to student needs, progress is frequently monitored, instruction adjusted, and child response data is applied to all important educational decisions.

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From the Chair:

Governor Dayton and legislative leaders should be commended for making education a top priority in their respective budget proposals. They understand that our public schools have made painful budget reductions over the last several years and they are working hard to mitigate the cuts that school districts will need to make for the 2011-12 school year.

The Governor's proposal to expand access to full-day kindergarten would help close the achievement gap. In addition, the Governor's proposal recognizes the impact the special education cross-subsidy has on Minnesota's school districts by retaining the growth factors in the special education funding formulas.

The legislative proposals offer important mandate relief and increased flexibility for school boards and administrators. In addition, the House and Senate propose to reform the collective bargaining process to make sure students aren't penalized when there is an impasse in negotiations.

It is important that the final education bill distributes the available resources in an equitable fashion. As the charts on the following page show, metropolitan school districts and rural regional centers fare considerably worse than charter schools or rural school districts under the House and Senate proposals. Metropolitan legislators need to insist that the final package is more equitable.

The elements to develop a sound compromise are on the table. Here's hoping our state policymakers get the job done!

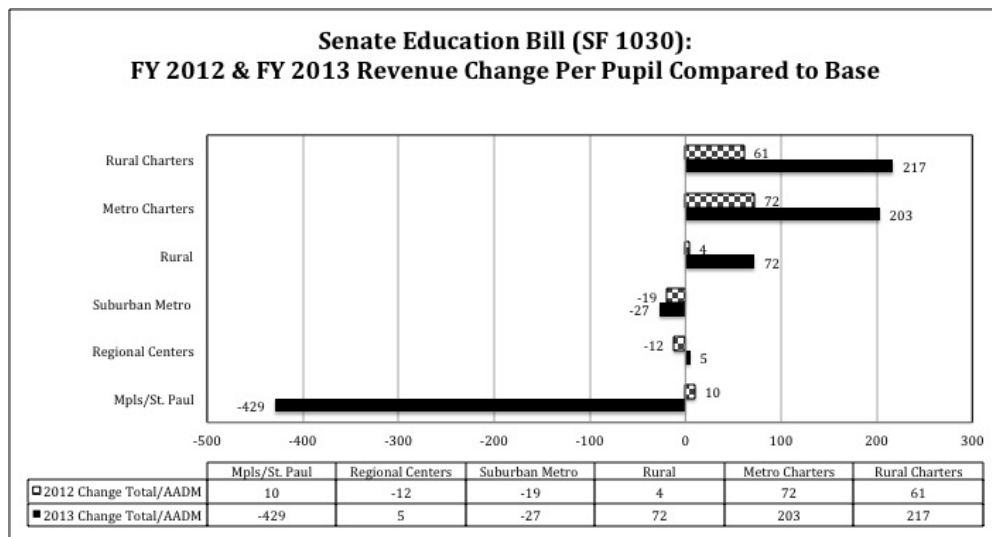
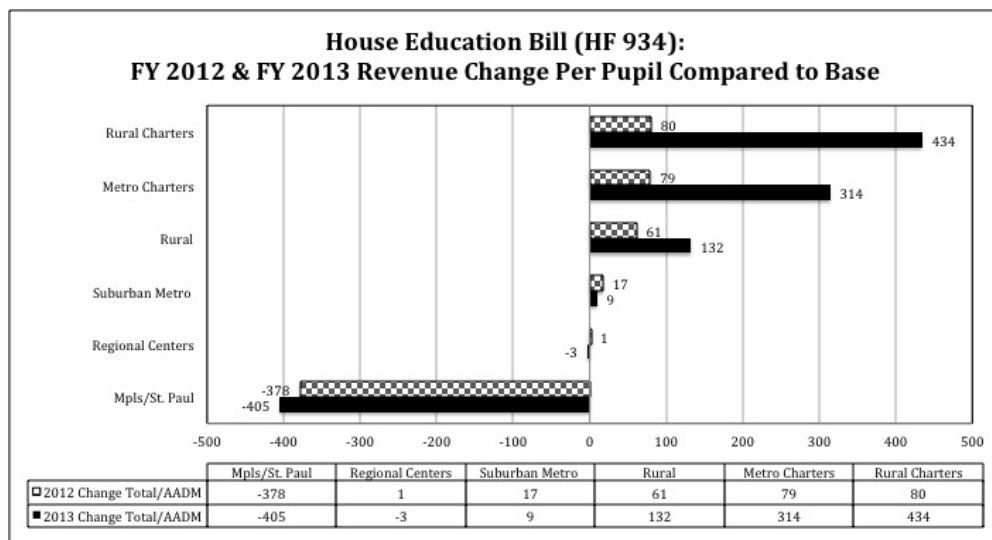
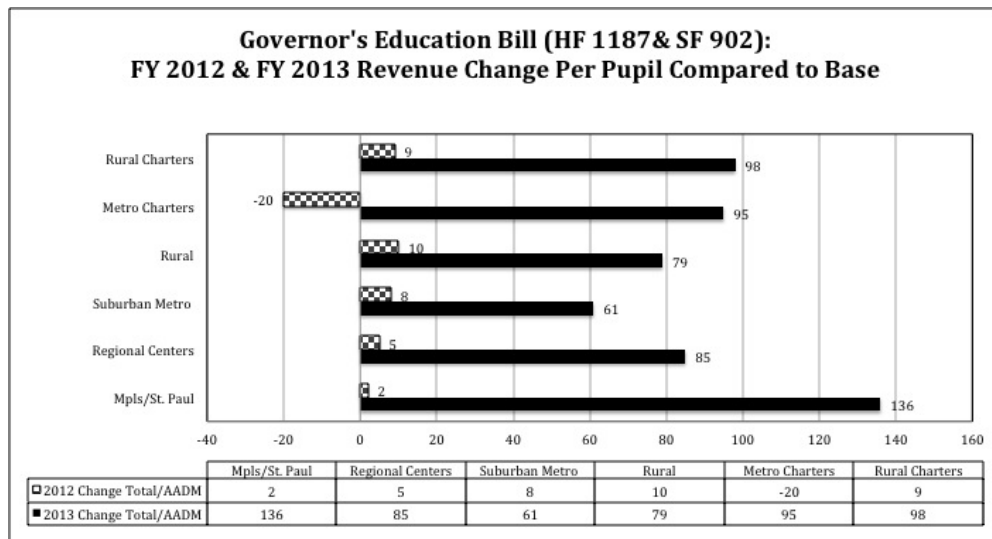
Patsy Green, school board member from Robbinsdale Area Schools, is chair of AMSD.

From the Chair:

FY 2012 & FY 2013 Revenue Change Per Pupil Compared to Base

Prepared by the Association of Metropolitan School Districts

April 25, 2011



Sources: Minnesota Department of Education: Governor's Bill Data Runs; Minnesota House Research and Fiscal Offices: HF 934 Data Runs; Minnesota Senate Research and Fiscal Offices: SF 1030 Data Runs.

No Evidence to Support School Vouchers

The public debate over school vouchers has ebbed and flowed over the years. The debate intensified in 2002 when the United States Supreme Court upheld the Cleveland school voucher program. Vouchers, according to the ruling, do not violate the U.S. Constitution’s prohibition against a government establishment of religion. This ruling paved the way for states to determine the role of vouchers within their states based on the state’s constitution. The Minnesota constitution clearly prohibits the state from directing public money to sectarian schools. Article XIII, Section 2 of the Minnesota Constitution reads as follows:

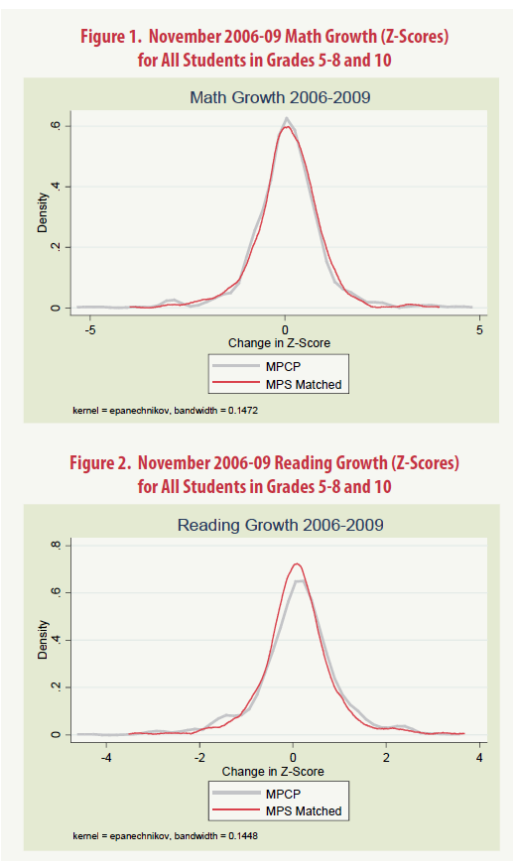
“PROHIBITION AS TO AIDING SECTARIAN SCHOOL. In no case shall any public money or property be appropriated or used for the support of schools wherein the distinctive doctrines, creeds or tenets of any particular Christian or other religious sect are promulgated or taught.”

Despite the clarity of the state constitution and the lack of credible research showing vouchers increase student achievement; legislation establishing vouchers has advanced at the State Capitol. The House Omnibus Education Finance Bill, HF 934, includes a provision allowing students who attend low performing schools in the cities of the First Class and whose family income does not exceed 175% of the poverty level, to be eligible to receive a voucher to attend a nonpublic school.

SF 27, the Omnibus Tax bill, contains a section that adds nonpublic school tuition payments to the list of eligible expenses for which low-income Minnesota taxpayers may claim a tax credit. The tax credit comes at a cost of almost \$11 million over the next biennium.

Proponents argue that vouchers increase student achievement despite the lack of research or evidence to support such a claim. In fact, a recent report on the voucher program in Milwaukee (Milwaukee Parental Choice Program-MPCP) revealed that there was no “statistically significant difference in math and reading achievement growth” between the MPCP students and public school students.¹ In Figure 1, you can see two figures from the MPCP report, depicting the research.²

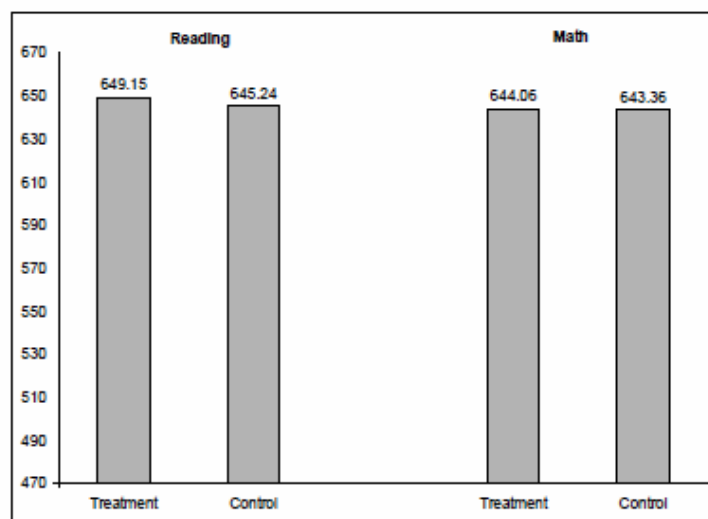
Figure 1: MPCP and Public School Student Achievement



Source: John F. Witte and Deven Carlson, MPCP Longitudinal Educational Growth Study Fourth Year Report.

Figure 2: OSP and Public School Student Achievement

Figure ES-2. Achievement (SAT-9 Scale Score Points) After At Least Four Years



NOTES: Results are for cohort 1 five years after random assignment and cohort 2 four years after random assignment. The possible range of SAT-9 scale scores varies by grade level. The value at which the x-axis intersects the y-axis in this figure (470) represents the minimum average reading score possible given the grade composition of the control group sample in the final year. The minimum average math score possible for the control group sample was 502. The maximum possible reading score and math score was 835 and 832, respectively. Valid N for reading = 1,328; math = 1,330. Separate reading and math sample weights used.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, *Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program*.

¹John F. Witte and Deven Carlson, MPCP Longitudinal Educational Growth Study Fourth Year Report (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas, 2011) ii.

²Witte 10.

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This report isn't alone in its critique of the proclaimed effectiveness of vouchers; the U.S. Department of Education released a report in June 2010 evaluating the Washington, D.C. voucher program (DC Opportunity Scholarship Program-OSP) and found that "there is no conclusive evidence that the OSP affected student achievement."³ In Figure 2, from the OSP report, the achievement between the OSP and public school students are highlighted, showing no statistically significant differences.⁴ These recent studies are consistent with previous studies that show when you compare student achievement of students from similar demographic backgrounds; traditional public school students perform as well or better than their charter and private school counterparts.⁵

While it may be true that vouchers expand parental choice, credible studies conducted by unbiased researchers have consistently shown that vouchers do not enhance student achievement. In a time of scarce resources, Minnesota's students would be best served if state policymakers focused their attention on fulfilling their constitutional obligation to provide a general and uniform system of public education.

³U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences. *Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program*. (Alexandria: State of Virginia, 2010) xv-xvi.

⁴U.S. Department of Education xx.

⁵Examples of previous studies include the following:

-National Center for Education Statistics, "A Closer Look at Charter Schools Using Hierarchical Linear Modeling," August 2006. Available at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2006460>

-National Center for Education Statistics, "Comparing Private Schools and Public Schools Using Hierarchical Linear Modeling," July 2006. Available at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2006461>

-Bifulco and Ladd, "The Impacts of Charter Schools on Student Achievement: Evidence from North Carolina," forthcoming in *Education Finance and Policy*. Available at <http://www.educationnext.org/unabridged/20054/60.pdf>

-Roy and Mishel, "Advantage None: Re-Examining Hoxby's Finding of Charter School Benefits," Economic Policy Institute Briefing Paper. Available at <http://www.epi.org/content.cfm/bp158>

-Lubienski and Lubienski, "Charter, Private, Public Schools and Academic Achievement: New Evidence from NAEP Mathematics Data," Columbia University. Available at http://www.ncspe.org/publications_files/OP111.pdf

Spring Lake Park sees success with System of Interventions

Continued from page 1

Social, emotional, and behavioral interventions support accurate and sustained implementation through outcome-based and data-guided decision-making.

"Research journals are full of empirical and anecdotal evidence that education as an institution is resistant to change," said Denise Waalen, Director of Educational Services. "Change, however, was exactly what happened to our system as we responded to the need for providing immediate response and support for students who struggle in academic or social areas in our Spring Lake Park Schools.

By challenging our mental mindset and traditional systems that previously required students to demonstrate significant discrepancy in their level of achievement and performance; we have experienced significant success with our students.

"In the Spring Lake Park School District," Carolyne Zieske, Coordinator of Equity, English Language Learners, and Federal Funds said, "monitoring and bench-marking" takes place at least four times per year. For some kids it is done weekly."

It's hard to not notice the success of the comprehensive System of Interventions program

"In reading alone, which is the number one need for interventions," said Tom Ambrasas, Director of Special Education, "there are numerous signs of measurable improvement for district students."

He listed the following:

- Early intervention support helped referrals to Special Education decrease 81 percent in a year-and-a-half.
- The number of students who exited the program, who were no longer considered at-risk, increased 26 percent in one year.
- In one year, students receiving reading interventions who became grade-level readers or advanced two levels on MCA-II Reading went from 15 to 25 percent.
- The number of students needing to access reading intervention support decreased from 502 in 2008-09 to 418 in 2009-10 to 387 in the first half of 2011-11.

"The improvements in our data support the efforts our teachers have made and provide additional reasons for the energy and enthusiasm centered on the System of Interventions to continue," concluded Waalen. "Our efforts have evolved over the past several years—from initial implementation and planning to expanding—so that the notable success our students have experienced this year will continue in the years to come. The System of Interventions is just one more example of what continuous improvement means in Spring Lake Park."

This month's member spotlight was submitted by Jim Elert, Communications Coordinator, Spring Lake Park Schools.

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.