

September 2011  
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## AMSD Calendar

**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**

**October 7, 2011**

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

**October 28, 2011**

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

**November 4, 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

## Intermediate District 287 Launches County-wide Effort to Ensure "Everyone Gets a Meaningful Diploma"

Intermediate District 287 will open a new, rigorous and highly personalized Area Learning Center (ALC) model this fall with a clear, singular vision: everybody is getting a meaningful diploma. The model is informed by the collective brainpower of 18 Hennepin County public school superintendents and their staffs; Hennepin County Commissioners and their department practitioners; and TIES, an education technology collaborative. All parties are working together to dramatically increase the County's high school graduation rate.

### Scope of The Problem

According to data from the Minnesota Department of Education, an estimated 3,800 students drop out of Hennepin County schools annually. They are disproportionately low-income and students of color. Estimated earnings losses are \$1.1 billion over the students' lifetimes, and social services costs are estimated at \$430 million. Those numbers have sounded alarm bells for leaders concerned about both the social and economic implications for the region. Both County Commissioners and school district superintendents agreed that in order to fix the problem, they needed to blur boundaries and reinvent how school districts and government services work together to address dropouts.

### Graduation Rate Issue Crosses Boundaries

In a series of discussions convened by District 287, leaders committed to share data and solutions to increase the County's six-year graduation rate from 68 to 80 percent by 2015. Since the joint dialogue began in Fall 2009, all school boards have passed resolutions supporting the work.

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## From the Chair:

This is such an exciting time of year! A new school year brings new opportunities and a new beginning. Parents, students and staff have gone through their checklists in preparation for the new school year.

Unfortunately, another item on that checklist for many parents and staff is preparing for a referendum campaign. Fourteen AMSD school districts will be conducting a referendum this fall. The Minnesota School Boards Association estimates over 130 school districts statewide will have at least one question on the ballot.

While the Governor and legislators went to great lengths to protect education funding last session, the fact remains that school funding has not kept pace with inflation over the past decade. The simple reality is that the operating referendum has become an essential component of our education funding system. Many school districts will be conducting an election simply trying to renew an existing referendum and hang on to current funding. Other districts will seek an increase in their referendum level in an attempt to make up for diminishing state support.

It is critical that voters educate themselves about the details of their local referendum. School officials are always happy to answer questions and provide data to their citizens because they know that an informed voter is very likely to be a "yes" voter. As Bill Morris noted at the last AMSD Board meeting, 60 percent of Minnesotans feel that school districts are not being funded correctly. It is now up to school board members, staff and parents to educate your communities about the need for additional funding for education. We wish you the very best!

*Pam Langseth, school board member from Minnetonka Public Schools, is chair of AMSD.*

## Intermediate District 287 to open Area Learning Center model this fall

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The work builds on A-GRAD (Accelerating Graduation by Reducing Achievement Disparities), Hennepin County's commitment to setting policy and making investments to ensure youth graduate from high school.

"Our hope is that by examining and changing our practices to achieve our vision, we will provide a model that will inform others' efforts across the County," said Intermediate District 287 Superintendent Sandy Lewandowski.

While drop out rates vary from district to district, leaders are interested in tackling the issue jointly to make the most of limited resources and to make significant inroads on the issue.

"This issue crosses boundaries," noted Osseo Area Schools Superintendent Kate Maguire. "Many students attend high school in multiple districts, so it makes the most sense for us to work together to solve it. We have a shared interest in helping all students be successful."

### New Model Tackles "Dropout By A Thousand Cuts"

District 287 has held three "Innovation Incubators" – working groups of cross-sector practitioners, including the Minnesota Department of Education, whose research and expertise helped to identify the essential components of a new ALC model. Practitioners agreed that a successful model would need to be distinctly different from current high schools and include:

1. Re-engagement Center
2. Individual/Continuous Learning Plan
3. Shared Data Systems
4. Personalized Instructional Programming
5. Wrap-Around Community and County Resources
6. Career and Post-Secondary Pathways

This summer, District 287 used the work done in these "incubator" meetings to transform the six ALCs they operate. A significant change includes an orientation week for students. During this discovery phase, a number of assessment-driven activities will help staff determine a student's strengths and deficits. The assessments will inform a detailed online personalized learning plan, which can be shared from district to district in the event the student moves. All District 287-sponsored ALC program staff received training in the new personalized learning plan this summer.

"We learned that when a student moves from district to district, the requirements for getting a diploma change with the geography," noted Lewandowski. The new online plan, supported by TIES software, will provide a host of detailed information, including the number of credits by district the student has and needs to receive a diploma.

"This is a group of young people who are highly mobile, at-risk and have no one to advocate for them," said Lewandowski. "They are attempting to navigate multiple systems and every one is slightly different. There are complex and multiple ways our systems overwhelm and shut out our kids. It's dropout by a thousand cuts."



Four students, pictured above, from SECA (South Education Center Alternative) in Richfield are an inspiring reminder of the importance of reaching all students. Team SECA achieved the highest rating among 350 entrants from around the country with their Porcupine Sliders recipe in First Lady Michelle Obama's Recipes for Healthy Kids contest. The competition required students to develop creative, nutritious, kid-approved recipes that schools could easily incorporate into school lunch program menus.

A small, alternative school, SECA provides education for high school students who need to recover high school credits, work on the development of basic skills, and who are pregnant or parenting.

"A recipe competition may not be a traditional path toward school success. But that is precisely the point," noted Intermediate District 287 Superintendent Sandy Lewandowski. "Many students do not fit the traditional model of school." The contest challenged students to learn about teamwork, collaboration, time management and public speaking.

## Commissioner pledges support for 287's regional effort

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### Shared Data and Shared Solutions

In addition to the new ALC model, leaders are keeping a close eye on the outcomes of three pilots currently underway, including:

- **Shared Data:** Last year, Corrections, Human Service, Community Agencies, District 287, Brooklyn Center, and Bloomington piloted a TIES system that provides real-time, integrated school and County service information about students. The system could be the basis for a more predictive analysis of students across the region. Four additional districts have chosen to join the data sharing effort in 2011-12.
- **Shared Social Work Project:** The Project's purpose is to build a bridge between the County and its school districts that results in better services for students and families. Shared funding between the County and District 287 provides four social work positions. Over the next three years, they will design sustainable, systems-level solutions to improve the coordination between County and school district social work activities. Intended results include increasing efficiencies in service acquisition and decreasing barriers between County and district resources.
- **ALC Plus:** Dramatically increased school attendance for chronic truants is an early outcome in this model using "System Navigators" and County funded care coordination, behavior support, chemical health, and mental health supports in ALCs. In 2010-11 over half of the referrals were placed in programs within member districts. For 2011-12 the County is expanding its support to include another 40 students. In addition, Minneapolis Public Schools has contracted with District 287 to include up to 60 students in the ALC Plus model.

### Attracting Support

Education Commissioner Brenda Cassellius has already pledged support for the regional effort. Possible steps could include: identifying barriers in practice or statute and working to amend laws; standardizing credits needed to graduate among districts for students who are most at risk; "unhooking" seat time from funding, and considering a regional diploma.

District 287 has begun to cultivate external partners in this work. Lewandowski expects continued conversations with community and business leaders who share an interest in increasing the County's graduation rate.

"Hennepin County and the schools have taken steps toward a regional effort by adopting supportive policies," said Commissioner Mike Opat, chair of the Hennepin County Board. "The next step is to continue to innovate together to demonstrate our shared commitment to higher graduation rates."

Lewandowski echoed his sentiments. "We can and must come together to help ensure all students graduate from high school, no matter where they live. It is a moral and economic imperative."

For more information about efforts to increase Hennepin County's graduation rate, please visit [www.district287.org](http://www.district287.org) > About 287 > Dropout Prevention. For more information about A-GRAD, please visit [www.hennepin.us/agrad](http://www.hennepin.us/agrad)

*This month's member spotlight was submitted by Cheri Reese, Public Relations, Intermediate District 287*

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**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, Lakeville Area, 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.

## STEM on a Stick at the Minnesota State Fair

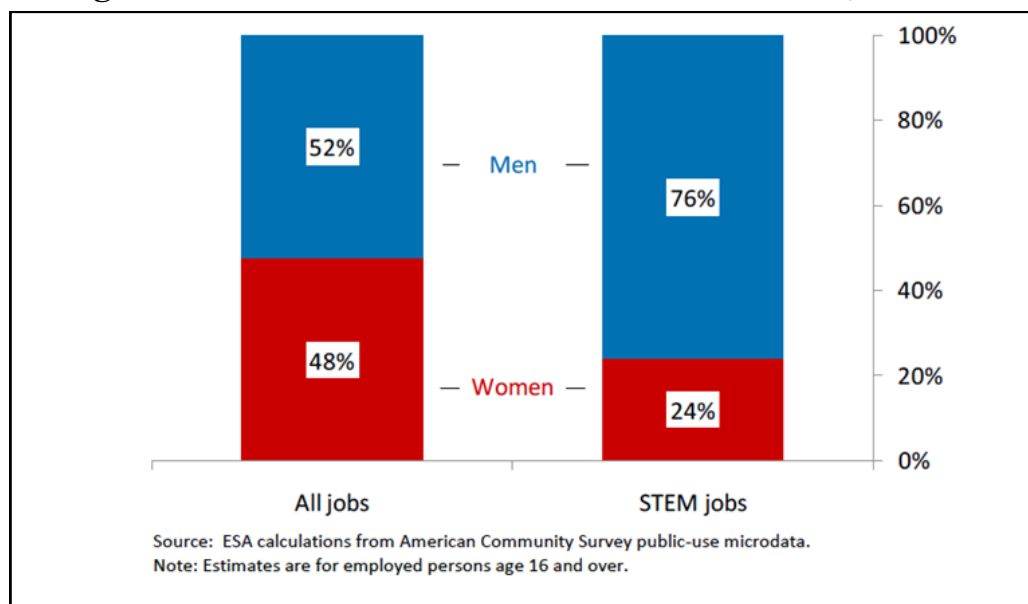
On Thursday, August 25, 2011 the front gates of the Minnesota State Fair opened for the first day of the fair. While many Minnesotans scurried to get their favorite food on a stick, there was another “stick” feature at the fair that had many students and parents buzzing--the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) on a Stick Day. For the second year, STEM returned to the Minnesota State Fair to show students, teachers and parents how to engage in STEM.

Over 30 organizations, teams and schools set up hands-on activities and demonstrations. Visitors watched performances on the main stage which featured fun science experiments. A common theme among the booth participants was an overwhelming amount of pride for their group’s work, but also a striking enthusiasm for educating everyone on the different STEM programs. Ben Miller, a student from Eagan High School and member of the FIRST Robotics team said, “We’re here at the Minnesota State Fair to get people more interested and fired up about robotics!” Luke Davies, also an Eagan High School student noted that best part of robotics was being a programmer. Davies, an emerging leader on the robotics team, enjoys teaching others at the State Fair about science and technology and is currently recruiting other deaf students to participate in robotics.

STEM has become a buzzword of sorts and there is good reason for its popularity. According to the STEM Education Coalition and the US Department of Labor, 15 of the 20 fastest-growing occupations for 2014 will be STEM related. Thus, STEM backgrounds and training will continue to be key to our nation’s future economic growth. This reality lays the foundation for the push to support and grow STEM programs inside and outside the classroom in the United States. The message isn’t just coming from businesses and STEM organizations; President Obama has called for preparing 100,000 STEM teachers over the next decade.

The Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, released a report in June 2010, entitled, “Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements through 2018.” The report estimates that 6% of the jobs in 2018 in Minnesota will be STEM related.<sup>1</sup> The National Research Council released a report this summer highlighting proposed goals for STEM education in the United States as well as identifying successful STEM programs. The report identified 3 main goals for STEM: 1) Expand the number of students who ultimately pursue advanced degrees and careers in STEM fields and broaden the participation of women and minorities in those fields; 2) Expand the STEM-capable workforce and broaden the participation of women and minorities in that workforce; 3) Increase STEM literacy for all students, including those who do not pursue STEM-related careers or additional study in the STEM disciplines.<sup>2</sup>

**Figure 1: Gender Shares of Total and STEM Jobs, 2009**



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<sup>1</sup>Anthony Carnevale, Nicole Smith and Jeff Strohl, Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements through 2018 (Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, Washington, D.C. 2010) 58.

<sup>2</sup>National Research Council, Successful K-12 STEM Education: Identifying Effective Approaches in Science, Technology Engineering and Mathematics (National Academies Press, Washington, D.C. 2011) 4-5.

## STEM on a Stick at the Minnesota State Fair

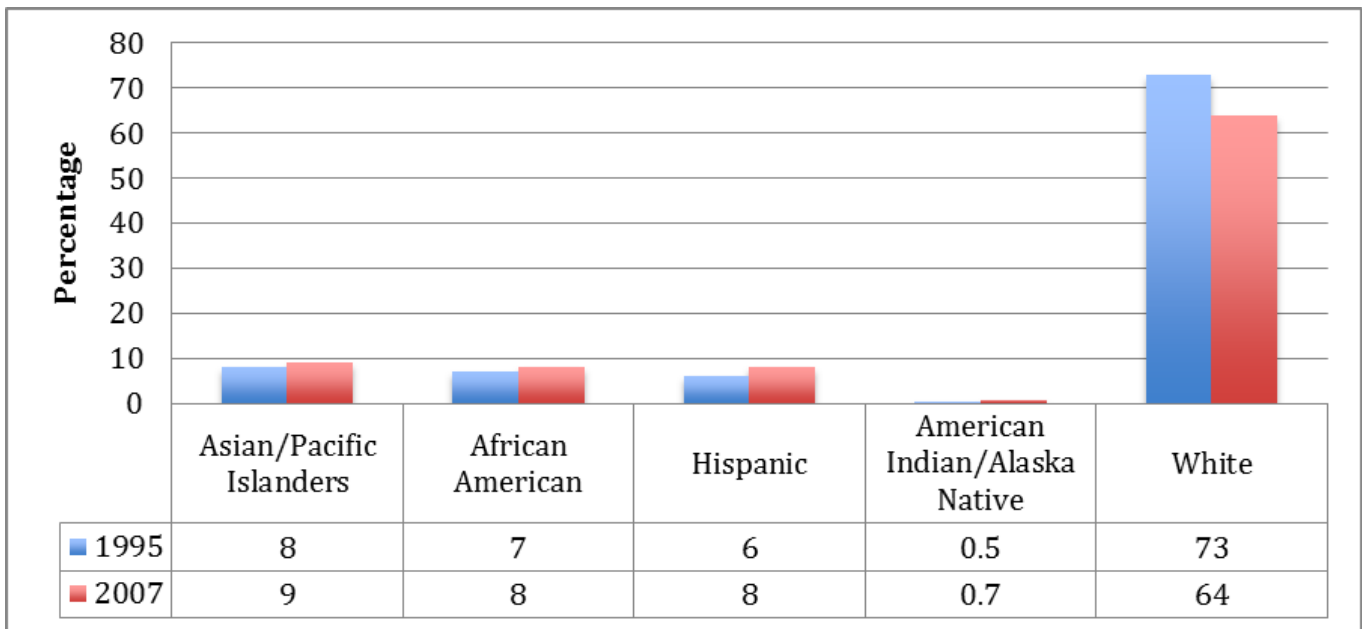
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The second goal of the report highlights an emerging gap that observers are seeing in STEM participation and eventual career choice. The United States Department of Commerce issued a report last month, “Women in STEM: A Gender Gap to Innovation” and found that “although women fill close to half of all jobs in the U.S. economy, they hold less than 25 percent of STEM jobs (shown in Figure 2). This has been the case throughout the past decade, even as college-educated women have increased their share of the overall workforce.”<sup>3</sup>

In addition, the report found that women working in STEM jobs earned 33 percent more than comparable women in non-STEM jobs – considerably higher than the STEM premium for men. As a result, the gender wage gap is smaller in STEM jobs than in non-STEM jobs.<sup>4</sup> At the STEM event at the State Fair, SciGirls, the Society of Women Engineers and St. Thomas Engineering students had a booth set up to get young women excited about STEM by making “squishy circuits.” Adine Thoreen, Outreach Specialist for SciGirls, shared that one of the challenges is the gap between young girls and boys in engineering, physics and earth sciences. “We’re trying to help the girls catch up,” noted Thoreen.

In addition to the gender disparity, there is a significant gap between the number of white students and the number of students of color receiving a STEM related degree. Irving Pressley McPhail, president and chief executive of National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering Inc. (NACME), calls this the “New American Dilemma.” McPhail noted in a commentary to the Washington Post on January 31, 2011, that African Americans, Latinos and Native Americans account for 34 percent of the U.S. population age 18 to 24 but earn only 12 percent of undergraduate degrees in engineering. Some progress has been made according to the Science and Engineering Indicators report of 2010. As shown in Figure 2, the percentage of students of color obtaining a Bachelor’s Degree in science and engineering fields has increased noticeably between 1995 and 2007.

**Figure 2: Percentage of Science and Engineering Bachelor's Degrees by Ethnic Group**



Source: Science and Engineering Indicators Report 2010. Total percent does not equal 100 due to “other” race categories.

Greater gains need to be made and, Ann Bernard, 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher from District 196 believes STEM programs can play a role. “We are making connections with kids on a level that is important for their understanding of the world and what they are going to be doing as they get older,” she noted.

<sup>3</sup>U.S. Department of Commerce, “Women in STEM: A Gender Gap to Innovation Executive Summary,” [ESA Issue Brief #04-11](#) (August 2011): 1.

<sup>4</sup>U.S. Department of Commerce, 1.