

# AMSD

# CONNECTIONS

News and Updates from the Association of Metropolitan School Districts

November 2011  
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## AMSD Calendar

**November 18, 2011**  
**Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting,**  
7:30 a.m., TIES Building,  
St. Paul

**December 2, 2011**  
**Board of Directors Meeting,** 7:00 a.m., TIES Building, St. Paul

**December 16, 2011**  
**Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting,**  
7:30 a.m., TIES Building,  
St. Paul

**January 6, 2012**  
**Legislative Session Preview**  
8:00 AM—10:00 AM  
TIES Building, St. Paul

**January 17, 2012**  
**AMSD Winter Conference**  
8:00 AM—1:30 PM  
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

## PBIS Goes District-wide in Robbinsdale Area Schools

Too much of a good thing is bad? When it comes to student engagement in learning and student achievement, Robbinsdale Area Schools doesn't think so. That's why the district has fully embraced Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), a research-based framework of school wide interventions designed to keep students in class.

Because of the framework's firm grounding in research, and the possibilities it provides for students and staff to be proactive when it comes to expectations and behavior, Robbinsdale Area Schools decided to implement PBIS in every one of its

schools, creating a district implementation plan that provides opportunity for sharing ideas, strategies, and solutions. This district-wide implementation has caught the attention of other educational leaders and fits well with Robbinsdale's goals and expectations of high academic achievement and learning environments characterized by mutual respect and personal responsibility.

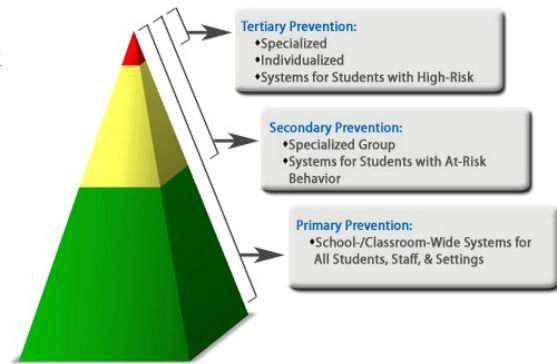
### Helping the District Continue to Do What it Already Does Well

PBIS has been a way for Robbinsdale Area Schools to organize what the district's schools already do well. It provides a common language for every staff member and helps schools to be very intentional about helping students learn expectations and positive behaviors, which in turn increases student engagement, responsibility, and a sense of belonging. Research shows time and again that increased engagement and a sense of belonging helps to improve student achievement for all students.

PBIS is not a curriculum or a program. It's a framework designed to guide implementation of academic and behavioral practices which will improve outcomes – both academic and behavioral – for all students. It uses four components: data, which guide decision-making; outcomes, which

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Continuum of School-Wide Instructional & Positive Behavior Support



## From the Chair

Over one-third of AMSD member school districts have a referendum question on the ballot today. As this month's research article highlights, passage of these referenda is critical to help prevent even more devastating budget reductions and staff layoffs.

Some people have questioned the need for these referenda, but the results of the AMSD budget survey make it abundantly clear that school districts continue to face daunting budget challenges. While state policymakers made a tremendous effort to protect education while solving a historic budget shortfall last session, state funding continues to lag behind inflation. The unfortunate reality is that our school districts rely on referendum revenue to provide the basic programming our students need to meet state and federal requirements.

I hope those voters who have a school referendum question on the ballot today have taken the time to learn about the referendum and why it is on the ballot. Most importantly, I encourage citizens to get to the polls and vote! We wish all districts the best of luck in this election!

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

## Robbinsdale Area Schools PBIS Program Designed to Keep Students in Class

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are measurable and evaluated by data; practices, which are supported by evaluation; and systems, which support implementation.



### A System That Works

Robbinsdale Area Schools was intrigued by the systems component of PBIS, and leaders knew that the district could use that systems approach to implement the framework across the district, which it began in school year 2009-2010. There are PBIS coordinators at each school, and each year groups of schools participate in the Minnesota PBIS training. The coordinators have formed a district-wide Professional Learning Community (PLC) dedicated to the implementation of PBIS, so the schools and the staff can learn from each other, analyze data, and offer ideas. The 13-member PLC meets monthly to share their stories and ideas, and will look at data quarterly in order to identify trends.

Each school has a PBIS team, which is organized by the school's PBIS coordinator. This team takes the lead in training the building staff. All staff participate in the training: nurses, custodial staff, lunchroom staff, teachers and educational assistants all learn the culture of expectations, and how PBIS relates to each school's and the district's core values. Each school has adopted three to five positively

stated expectations which align with the district's mission and vision. These expectations are taught, practiced and positively reinforced throughout the school year. For example, Northport Elementary School in Brooklyn Center is BEAR country (Belong, Empathize, Achieve and Respect); that message is everywhere in the school and the students take that message to heart. At Noble Elementary in Golden Valley, the Lions have adopted a "PAWS-itive Hero" award when students stand up for others and do what is right. "The kids at this school are awesome," states Lori Sundberg, the principal of Noble who has just started her eighth year at the school. "But we believe in catching kids early enough to nip some behaviors in the bud." Robbinsdale Middle School CAREs (Courteous and respectful – Accepting – Responsible – Excited for learning) and the students are embracing this message fully, participating in activities to help the expectations become engrained in everyday life. (Visit their door contest at <http://rms.rdale.org/>)

Robbinsdale Area Schools is utilizing SWIS – the Schoolwide Information System – a web-based information system designed to help each school's PBIS team use office referral data to monitor patterns of behavior across the school, make informed decisions regarding interventions, and identify trends that may have previously been unclear. In order to effectively utilize SWIS, Robbinsdale Area Schools created a district-wide referral form that is used in all schools. It has been tweaked slightly to reflect the natural differences in elementary and secondary schools – for example, the elementary schools have "recess" listed as one of the locations – but otherwise, the form is the same. "One of the best things about this form is the category of 'Possible Motivation'," explained Gayle Walkowiak, Executive Director of Teaching and Learning. "People behave a certain way at a certain time for a reason. This category provides the opportunity to reflect on what that reason could be." Once information on the common referrals is entered into SWIS, a "Big Five" report can be generated monthly. "Big Five" stands for Date, Location, Behavior, Time of Day and Number of Students. The PBIS team shares this information with staff, and the coordinators bring information to their district PLC. No one works in isolation. The staff is working proactively and collectively to help students learn positive behaviors that will benefit them throughout their lives.



### Schools and Families Working Together

Positive behavior transcends school. Students benefit the greatest from strong connections between school and family. Robbinsdale Area Schools revamped their Student Behavior Handbook for the 2011-2012 school year to reflect the district-wide implementation of PBIS. Included in the handbook is a section on Shared Responsibilities, in order to increase respect, responsibility and engagement. Outlined in that section are roles each important stakeholder must play for success, including students, parents/families, teachers, non-teaching staff, and administrators. The handbook carefully outlines student rights and opportunities, and with those rights and opportunities, the responsibilities that go hand-in-hand.

Also included in the Student Behavior Handbook are two sample Behavior Expectation Matrices: one for elementary students and one for secondary students. "This handbook is a perfect example of how the district is embracing PBIS," said Lori Simon, Executive Director of Educational Services, and the person responsible for development of the handbook. "We start with positive behaviors and the expectation that students, staff and families will exhibit those positive behaviors. Of course, consequences are outlined for behavior infractions. But if we take a proactive approach and teach, model and reinforce the expectations explicitly, we are showing respect to all of the stakeholders and that we do, in fact, believe in them."

*This month's member spotlight was submitted by Tia Clasen, Marketing/Communications Program Director, Robbinsdale Area Schools.*

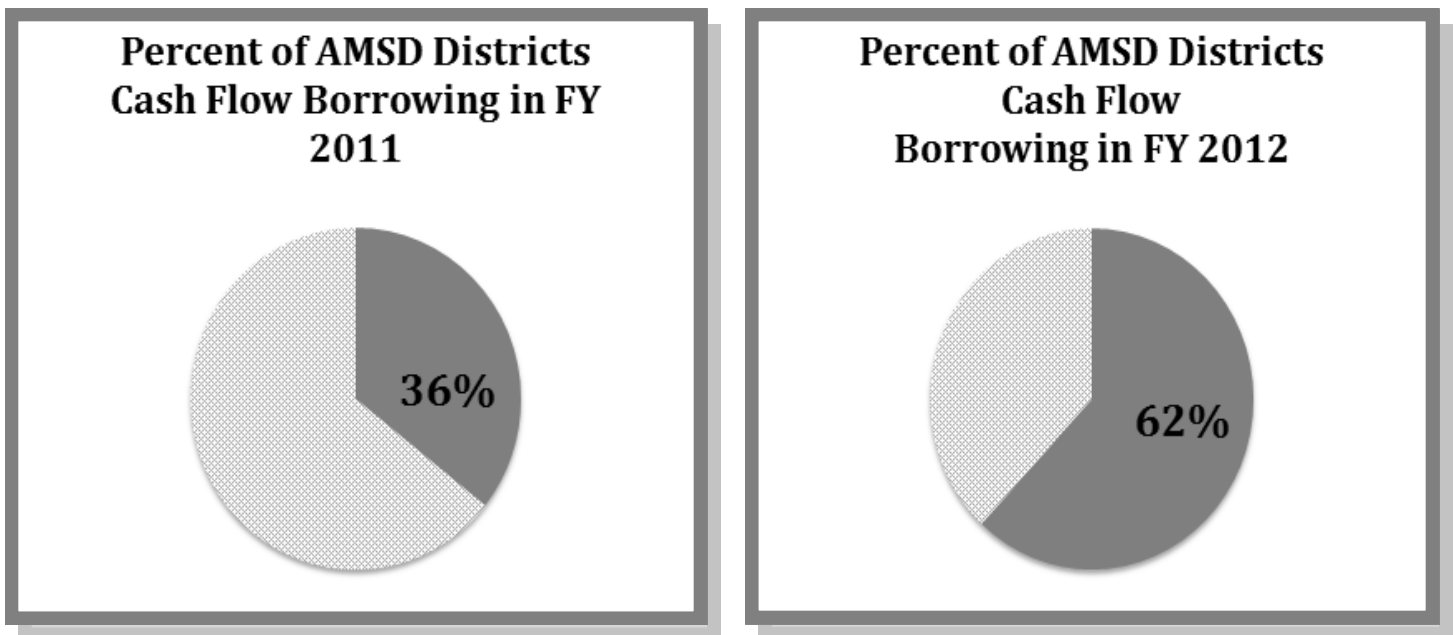
## **Annual AMSD Budget Survey Reinforces Need to Reform the Funding System**

The Association of Metropolitan School Districts completed its annual budget survey of member districts in October. The survey, containing data from 42 AMSD districts (36 metro school districts, three intermediate districts and three integration districts), sheds light on the financial decisions metropolitan districts are currently making to survive in an extremely challenging environment.

The AMSD budget survey results continue to reinforce the need for the Legislature to move beyond short-term band aid solutions, to finding long-term answers to solve budget deficits. Despite some level of protection from the Governor and Legislature during the July 2011 Special Session, districts continue to face significant budget challenges. The \$50 increase per pupil on the formula does not address inflation, or even begin to address increasing special education costs.

Most revealing from the survey is that 26 of AMSD’s 42 member districts will be forced to engage in short-term borrowing during the current school year in order to meet financial obligations. This is a significant jump from the 15 districts that were required to borrow last year. As shown in Figure 1, a total of 36% of AMSD districts engaged in short-term borrowing in FY 2011. This number will increase to 62% in FY 2012.

**Figure 1: Percent of AMSD Districts Cash Flow Borrowing in FY 2011 & FY2012**



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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.

## School Districts Depend on Referendum Revenue

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According to the survey, AMSD member districts are expected to borrow approximately \$382 million with interest costs close to \$3 million (about the equivalent of 60 teaching positions).

The increase in the number of districts borrowing is a reflection of the education bill approved during the July special session, which increased the education aid payment shift to an unprecedented 60/40 payment schedule. With 40 percent of state aid delayed to the following fiscal year, speculation that a majority of school districts would be forced to engage in short-term borrowing to meet financial obligations has proven to be correct according to survey results.

In addition to borrowing, the survey shows that AMSD districts are also making significant cuts to manage budget conditions. Table 1 below shows that AMSD school districts collectively reduced budget reserves by almost \$55 million and made an additional \$61 million in budget reductions for the 2011-12 school year. The budget reductions included over 600 staff reductions, of which 437 were licensed staff.

### Table 1: AMSD Budget Survey Results 2011-2012

		FY 2012 Staff Reductions				
FY 2012 Budget Reserve Reductions*	FY 2012 Budget Reductions	Licensed (FTEs)	Non- licensed (FTEs)	Staff Reductions (FTEs)	Amount of borrowing	Cost of Borrowing
\$54,683,444	\$61,239,977	437.27	170.455	607.725	\$381,609,026	\$2,996,872

\*Budget Reserve Reductions numbers are reductions to unassigned, assigned, and committed general fund balances

In addition, 15 AMSD member school districts are seeking approval of a referendum question on the ballot this fall. Of these districts, 10 districts are attempting to renew their operating referendum just to hang on to existing funds. Voter-approved referenda has become a critical component of education funding in Minnesota as school districts rely on this revenue to provide core programming for their students.

The State must step forward and commit to its share of education funding and stop relying on one-time budget solutions. Until then districts will continue to depend on voter-approved funding for the basics and spend money to cover short-term borrowing interest costs that should be better used to meet the educational needs of students.