

## Mark Your Calendar!

**JULY 15**  
AMSD Executive & Legislative Committee Meeting  
7:30 – 11:30 AM  
TIES Building

**AUGUST 5**  
Executive & Legislative Committee Meeting  
7 AM, TIES Building

**AUGUST 12**  
Annual Board of Directors Meeting  
7-9 AM, Sheraton Hotel, Bloomington

## AMSD's Mission

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



AMSD Chair Keith Broady and State Representatives Alice Seagren and Mindy Greiling take questions from attendees of the Building Advocacy from the Ground Up Workshop hosted by AMSD on June 16.

## Building Advocacy from the Ground Up Workshop a Success

Over 100 representatives from nearly all 26 AMSD districts attended the Building Advocacy from the Ground Up...Preparing for the 2005 Legislative Session Workshop held June 16 at the TIES Building in St. Paul. Superintendents, board members, public relations directors, parents and business people attended to get new ideas and strategies about how to make a difference in the upcoming legislative session.

“The workshop highlighted how important it is for parents, community members and business people to get involved in grassroots efforts now to make a difference in elections this fall,” said Keith Broady, AMSD chair. “It is absolutely crucial to have parents, community members and business people asking candidates where they stand when it comes to investing in public education, and then supporting only those candidates who will advocate and commit their support.”

Members of the Hopkins Legislative Action Coalition (LAC), consisting of Superintendent Michael Kremer, Eileen Harvala, public relations coordinator, Barbara Klaas, Hopkins and AMSD Board member, Yvonne Selcer, Hopkins Board member and school liaison coordinator and Ward Eames, president of the National Theater for Children and business member leading the LAC's newly-formed

## From the Chair

### Bashing Public Schools Says More About Bashers than Schools

*The following piece ran as a Counterpoint article in the June 26, 2004 Star Tribune. We are running it in its entirety to reinforce the need to advocate for our public schools like never before. As we approach the upcoming November elections and legislative session, we must look for every opportunity to get our message out that investing in public education programs that work is desperately needed to serve the needs of all students in our districts.*

It has become popular sport for a small cadre of persons to engage in bashing of public schools at any opportunity. The latest example is Ron Eibensteiner's June 13, 2004 diatribe, full of vulgar and derogatory comments about Minneapolis and St. Paul Public Schools. The tactics of the bashers are predictable. Ignore successes, misuse statistics, blame schools for societal problems, compare schools that serve vastly different populations, and above all, advocate for blowing up the system rather than investing in proven programs.

Investments made in public education during the

1960s through the 1990s have paid huge dividends for all of Minnesota. During this period when we were investing in public education, the per capita personal income in Minnesota increased by 800%, far greater than the national average. We continually outpaced our neighboring states in the number of jobs added and new companies started. Yet the bashers ignore the undeniable connection between strong public schools and an educated workforce that attracts employers with high paying jobs.

Bashers also ignore the fact that Minnesota has more public school choice than virtually any state in the nation. Open enrollment, charter schools, post-secondary enrollment options and tax credits and deductions have given Minnesotans' unprecedented options.

Today we face a new set of challenges. Children that come from poverty, are highly mobile, or don't speak English cost more to educate than students who were born into a middle or upper middle class family and have stable housing. Some public schools serve student bodies that have more than 75% of their students coming from poverty and have a turnover in student population of up to 40% during each school year. If society (not only the schools) reduces poverty and

mobility of students, student achievement will increase. We cannot expect that poverty and high student mobility will be eliminated. However, we can reduce the achievement gap by investing in programs that work.

Early childhood education, full-day kindergarten, summer school programs, attracting and retaining quality teachers, value-added assessments and local control are essential to increasing the achievement of students affected by poverty and mobility. Economists have recognized that the earlier we

invest in our children's education, the greater the economic gain. The bashers do not support investing in these proven programs because it runs contrary to their agenda to blow up the system. Who will be the champions for our youngest and most vulnerable students, the children who do not have a parent or adult advocate capable of serving their needs or making the best choices for them? Not the bashers.

Minnesota has not achieved its past successes by bashing its public schools or following the illogic, anger

and vulgarity of bashers. Many of our past leaders, Republican, Democrat, and Independent alike, understood that an investment in children and in public education is an investment in our future. Minnesotans must not allow the small cadre of bashers to lead us astray.

*Keith Broady, board member for the St. Louis Park Public Schools, is chair of the Association of Metropolitan School Districts.*

## Building Advocacy from the Group Up... (continued from page 1)

Business Task Force, shared their experience and expertise with attendees highlighting the importance of:

- ▶ Sustained commitment;
- ▶ Dedicated resources of time and talents;
- ▶ Strong leadership from the superintendent and school board;
- ▶ And a multi-tiered committee structure designed to fit people's varied interests and time commitment needs.

Superintendents Gary Prest and Bev Stofferahn also shared strategies for building relationships and support with all legislators

and local elected officials. In addition, Mary Ceccone of Parents United updated the group on efforts to connect parent advocacy efforts statewide. And Representatives Alice Seagren and Mindy Greiling shared how to best communicate and build relationships with legislators stressing the importance of parents and other constituents identifying themselves in all correspondence, especially e-mails. Seagren and Greiling stressed the impact that handwritten correspondence and personal visits have on legislators.

For more ideas about how to build grassroots advocacy in your district, visit the Hopkins Legislative Action Coalition's Web site at [www.hopkins.k12.mn.us/pages/district/commun/legislative.html](http://www.hopkins.k12.mn.us/pages/district/commun/legislative.html) or AMSD's Web site at [amsd.org](http://amsd.org)

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Members of AMSD include: Bloomington, Brooklyn Center, Burnsville, Chaska, Eden Prairie, Edina, Fridley, Hopkins, Intermediate District 287, Inver Grove Heights, Mahtomedi, Minneapolis, Minnetonka, Mounds View, North St. Paul/Maplewood/Oakdale, Orono, Richfield, Robbinsdale, Roseville, Shakopee, South St. Paul, Spring Lake Park, St. Anthony/New Brighton, St. Louis Park, St. Paul and Wayzata.