

Mark Your Calendar!

AUGUST 11

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

SEPTEMBER 1

Legislative Committee Meeting, 7 a.m., TIES Building, St. Paul

SEPTEMBER 8

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



Pictured with Governor Pawlenty are members of the Minnetonka School Board and Superintendent Dennis Peterson.

Governor Discusses Education Bill in AMSD Districts

Governor Tim Pawlenty visited two AMSD districts, Minnetonka and Mounds View, in a series of roundtable discussions he is holding throughout the state. Governor Pawlenty was seeking feedback on education initiatives including Q-Comp, enhancing rigor and high standards for American schools, and inspiring all children to exceed their own expectations. He complemented the outstanding public school system in Minnesota, but also added we can do better. He expressed concerns about the large number of high school seniors who seem to “check out” during their senior year. Minnetonka middle school teacher Mary Benson was impressed with what she heard. “I like what he said about the need to have higher expectations for all kids in our schools.”

Governor Pawlenty acknowledged parents, administrators and legislators for their efforts during the legislative session, which produced an \$800 million increase for education and Minnesota’s children. While pleased with the outcome of the education bill, Pawlenty said, “I want to talk about where we go from here.” Pawlenty talked about the need for a world-class education system to serve the hyper competitive global market our children will face.

From the Chair

What a year it has been! In my final column as chair of AMSD, I would like to recognize the significant efforts member districts have made to expand and enhance the grassroots lobbying efforts in your districts. Since the workshop AMSD held in June 2004, efforts to organize parental lobbying efforts have skyrocketed. Districts who were organized in the past made more impact than ever before and several of our districts organized lobbying efforts for the first time. And parents’ voices were heard like never before! Significant gains were made to begin making public education a priority and we can’t lose our steam now. AMSD will continue to support district and parental efforts as we move forward to put kids and education first. Thank you for your hard work and dedication. I have been proud to serve as chair of AMSD. I would also like to thank Scott, Katy, Darla, Amy, Kris and Chris. They are quite a team and are strong support for our AMSD members!

Lori Grivna, board member for the Mounds View Public Schools, is chair of the Association of Metropolitan School Districts.

AMSD's Mission

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



Association of
Metropolitan School Districts

Overview of the 2005 E-12 Education Bill: A Step in the Right Direction

On July 14th Governor Pawlenty signed the E-12 Education Omnibus bill into law and ended an extended period of uncertainty about education funding over the next biennium. While the new funding provides welcome relief after three consecutive years of declining resources for schools, it is important to note that school districts will not be in a position to restore previous cuts or even totally remove the need for further budget reductions.

Nonetheless, parents, school board members and administrators from AMSD districts should feel proud that legislators responded to their phone calls, letters, and emails. Many AMSD legislative platform priorities were included in the final bill. Among other things, the bill increases the basic formula allowance, expands levy authority for locally-elected school boards and raises the referendum cap. The bill is also note-worthy for what is does not contain: a mandatory health insurance pool, delinking categorical funding formulas from the basic formula and several other proposed new mandates. The chart provides an overview of highlights from the session.

Increasing the basic formula allowance was the top priority for AMSD. The E-12

Significant Provisions adopted in the K-12 and Early Childhood Omnibus Bill	
Basic Formula	Increases 4% each year of the biennium.
Special Education	Excess Cost Aid increased by \$23 million. Referendum is phased out of the excess cost calculation over 3 years.
Referendum	Cap increased from 18.6% to 26% of the basic formula allowance. Grandfathered districts receive \$200 in cap relief. First tier equalization increased to \$600 per pupil unit in FY07 and \$700 per pupil unit in FY08.
Levy Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equity/Discretionary Levy - School districts with referendum revenue below the 95th percentile for their region (metro or non-metro) receive an additional \$46 per pupil in board approved equalized discretionary levy. Districts that are above the 95th percentile in their region receive \$23 per pupil. The judgment, lease, and unemployment levies were restored to 100%. Deferred Maintenance - Beginning in FY08 districts not eligible for the alternative facilities bonding and levy program are allowed to levy \$60 per pupil for deferred maintenance.
Q-Comp	Qualifying districts receive \$260 per pupil (\$190 in aid and \$70 in levy).
Early Childhood	Early childhood programs receive \$10 million, significantly less than the \$18 in the original House bill and \$35 million in the original Senate bill.
Gifted and Talented	The bill develops a new categorical for Gifted and Talented. It provides \$4 per pupil in FY06 and \$9 per pupil in FY07.
2% staff development set-aside	The 2% set-aside resumes in FY06; however, qualifying districts can use the set aside for implementation of Q-Comp.
Rigorous Course Waiver	School boards are allowed to waive graduation requirements for rigorous courses such as AP and IB.
Get Ready Get Credit	Get Ready Get Credit funded at \$12 million.
School Start Date	The Omnibus Economic Development Bill contains the provision effective FY07, school cannot start before Labor Day.
Ballot language	The AMSD proposal to simplify ballot language was adopted.
Significant Proposals NOT adopted in the K-12 and Early Childhood Omnibus Bill	
Mandatory Statewide Health Insurance Pool	The mandatory statewide health insurance pool was not adopted.
Delinking	Compensatory and other categorical formulas remain linked to the basic formula.
Minneapolis-St. Paul Voucher Plan	The proposal to allow "access grants" for low-income students in Minneapolis and St. Paul was not adopted.
Physical Education Course Requirement	The proposal to significantly increase the number of required hours of physical education and health education starting in the 2008-09 school year was not adopted.
Extracurriculars and Charter Schools	The proposal to require districts to allow resident charter school students to participate in MSHSL-sponsored activities was not adopted.
Governance of extracurricular activities	The proposal to prohibit schools from offering extracurricular activities (other local units of government would have had to oversee them) was not adopted.

education bill increases the basic formula by 4% each year of the biennium. This translates into an increase of \$182 per pupil in FY06 and \$191 per pupil in FY07. The increase helps restore a portion of the buying power lost to inflation since 1992; however, the basic formula would have had to increase by an additional \$500 per pupil over the biennium to restore purchasing power lost to inflation since 1992.

Another highlight of the E-12 Education bill was the additional levy authority granted to locally elected school boards in many of the areas advocated by AMSD. Under the new equity/discretionary levy, school districts with referendum revenue below the 95th percentile for their region (metro or non-metro) receive an additional \$46 per pupil in board approved equalized discretionary levy. Districts that are above the 95th percentile in their region receive \$23 per pupil. The bill also includes another long standing AMSD initiative, deferred maintenance levy authority for districts not eligible for the alternative facilities bonding and levy program. Under the bill, districts not eligible for the Alternative Facilities and Levy Program will be able to levy up to \$60 per pupil for deferred maintenance purposes. This program starts in FY08. In addition, AMSD's initiative to restore the judg-



Several AMSD Board members and parents were in attendance as Governor Tim Pawlenty signed the education bill into law.

ment, lease, and reemployment levies, was included.

Another AMSD plank addressed in the bill was increasing the referendum cap. The scope and breadth of operating referenda have expanded significantly since the legislature first allowed the voter-approved levies thirty years ago. As state aid for schools has lost pace to inflation, school districts have relied more heavily on the referendum to fund core programs. This session, the legislature acknowledged the importance of the referenda by increasing the cap from 18.6% to 26% of the formula and providing \$200 in cap relief for "grandfathered" districts. The bill also increases first tier equalization to \$600 per pupil unit in FY07 and \$700 per pupil unit in FY08.

Sometimes educating legislators about the reasons a

bill should not pass is just as important as advocating in favor of legislation. This session AMSD helped defeat several bills that would have had negative implications for metropolitan schools and students. The mandatory statewide health insurance pool was not adopted and the proposal to delink compensatory and other categorical aids from the formula also failed. Both of these would have had significant negative fiscal implications for school districts. Proposals for new, unfunded mandates related to physical education and health curriculum requirements and extracurricular activities also failed.

Clearly the advocacy efforts of AMSD board members, staff, parents, and students had a significant impact on the outcome of the bill. A large portion of AMSD's plat-

form was adopted and several proposals opposed by AMSD were defeated. Still, there were a few disappointments and challenges clearly remain.

The absence of additional special education funding was one of those disappointments. The special education growth factors were not restored to try to keep pace with inflationary pressures and the subsidization of special education programs with revenue from other programs will get worse before it gets better.

A second disappointment was the failure of the legislature to recognize market-driven operating cost differentials among school districts. However, AMSD made tremendous progress in educating legislators about the importance of recognizing cost differentials. The bill received extensive hearings in both the House and the Senate.

While challenges remain, the final outcome of the 2005 session produced a solid E-12 education bill. AMSD Chair Lori Grivna notes, "The bill will not reverse many of the cuts districts have been forced to implement in recent years; however, it does offer a positive step to restoring Minnesota's reputation as a leader in educational investment."

Members of AMSD include: Bloomington, Brooklyn Center, Burnsville, Chaska, East Metro Integration District 6067, 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, Wayzata, West Metro Education Program, Joint Powers School District 6069 and West St. Paul.