

AMSD Calendar

APRIL 6, 2006

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

APRIL 13, 2006

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

The Board of Directors meeting will be held in the Grand Hall of the TIES Building. Goff & Howard lobbyists Kris Amundson and Chris Georgacas will provide a legislative update.

APRIL 20, 2006

Legislative Committee Meeting, 7 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

St. Anthony-New Brighton Plans for a Bright Future

As we look to the future, we are all aware that education is changing. School districts across the state are facing educational and financial challenges that will change how we do business in the coming years. With increasingly limited resources, we must strive to meet the growing needs of our students and community.

As part of its effort to thoughtfully and proactively plan for the future, St. Anthony-New Brighton (SANB) School District implemented its Blueprint for a Bright Future. This three-phase planning process not only helped the district identify its key priorities but also will help it focus time, energy, and limited resources on those identified priorities for the future.

“The purpose of the process,” explains Robert Duncan, SANB’s superintendent, “is to make certain we are continually evaluating what the district is doing, seeking input from district residents and from best-practice research, and making changes that are necessary to provide the high-quality education that taxpayers and parents expect.” According to Duncan, the Blueprint planning process is cyclical, much like curriculum review, where



Blueprint for a Bright Future:

13 Areas of Responsibility

- Buildings and Grounds
- Buildings and Grounds Space Utilization
- Communications (Public Relations)
- Community Services
- Computer Technology
- Curriculum and Instruction
- Evaluation
- Finance
- Food Service
- Staff Development
- Student Activities
- Student Services
- Transportation Services

(continued on page 3)

From the Chair

Inadequate federal funding to cover mandates in areas such as special education and the No Child Left Behind Act continues to take a toll on Minnesota school districts. Each year we are hopeful that the federal government will finally step up and provide the funding necessary to cover the programs mandated by Congress and the President and each year we are left disappointed. Unfortunately, it appears this year will be no different and if the President’s proposed budget is any indication, we may actually move backwards.

In early February, the administration released its proposed budget for fiscal year 2007. The good news is that Minnesota will receive increased funding in certain line items to support new initiatives in the areas of high school reform and math and science instruction for elementary and middle school students. The bad news is that special education funding is scheduled to remain flat, Title I grants will be reduced even further and state grants for vocational and tech-prep education will be elimi-

(continued on page 3)

Increasing Fees Result of Inadequate Funding

In February, the Minnesota Department of Education submitted a report on school district and charter school student fees. Legislation passed during the 2005 special session mandated the examination of these fees and a submission of the report to the Legislature prior to the 2006 session. Predictably, the data indicate that districts have responded to diminished State support by relying on increased student fees.

In total, student fees increased an average of 15.04% annually during fiscal years 2002-2005. The sources of the increased fees included revenue from patrons (charges or rental payments for musical instruments, athletic equipment or other), admissions and gate receipts to school events, and sale of materials to students (such as lumber for industrial arts courses). These fees increased annually by averages ranging from 9.8% to 17.8%.

When examined by program, the data show that districts have increased fees for certain school functions more than others. In particular, transportation fees have been increased annually by an average of over 60%, followed by several program categories where

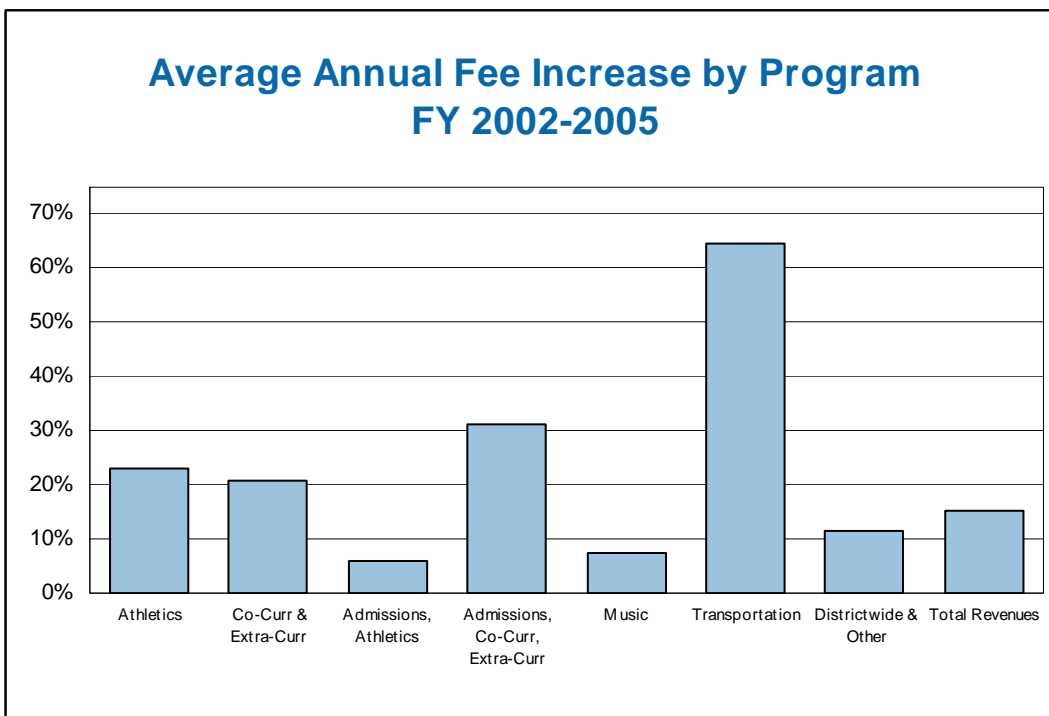
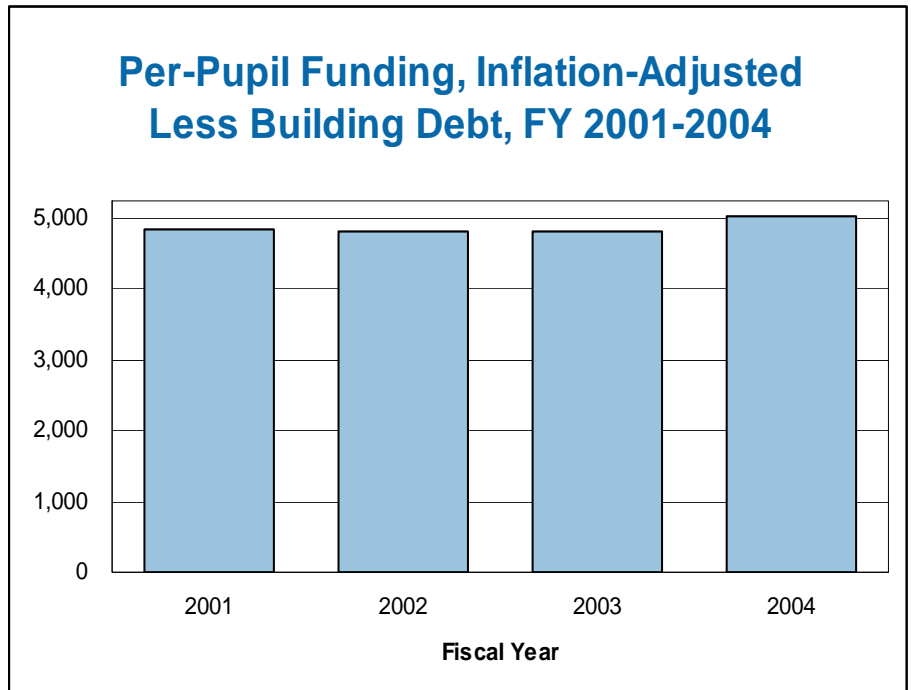
fees increased annually at rates over 10% (see graph below).

The rise in student fees detailed in the report should prompt a discussion at the Legislature about the gap between the cost of providing education in Minnesota and the revenue available to do so. Statewide, districts raised

fees over \$21.1 million in the three fiscal years ending 2005, in response to flat per-pupil funding combined with increasing costs and declining average enrollments. According to House of Representatives Research, after adjusting for inflation and removing funding for debt service, per-pupil revenue has increased by a mere 3.41% from fiscal year 2001 to 2004—an average of 1.13% per year (see graph above).

An analysis of special education funding also sheds light on school district fee increases. According to the Department of Education, the adjusted net special education cross-subsidy has increased 21.1% (to \$377.5 million) from fiscal year 2001 to 2004.

“There’s no mystery to this,” said AMSD Chair Carol Bomben after reviewing the report. “School districts have been forced to look at fee increases in response to inadequate funding from the state and federal governments.”



St. Anthony-New Brighton...

there is no end but rather a consistent framework through which the district may routinely evaluate its efforts and priorities.

Phase I of the planning process identified 13 areas that reflect the district's responsibilities — and opportunities — as a school district (see the graphic on page 1 of *Connections* for the 13 Areas of Responsibility). In short, Phase I answered the question, "How are we doing right now?" in those 13 areas and thus provided a foundation for Phase II. The second phase focused on identifying

needs, setting priorities, making recommendations, and developing action plans. Phase III focuses on the implementation of Phase II action plans, monitoring progress, and evaluating results.

Throughout the process, the district and school board have invited district residents to share their views, ask questions, and actively participate in the planning process. Thanks to this involvement, the district can be assured that it is acting upon the needs, priorities and future as determined by its community.

"The Blueprint planning process has been an ongoing, living process," says Mike Volna, chair of the SANB School Board. "Unlike other strategic planning processes that produce ideas that end up sitting on a shelf unused, this process has resulted in action plans and deliverables. As I look back at the process over the last three years, the number of Blueprint recommendations and action items that have been implemented is amazing. And as we continually review and refer back to the Blueprint on a regular basis,

it will continue to influence our priorities and action plans for the district."

For more information about St. Anthony-New Brighton School District and its Blueprint for a Bright Future initiative, please call Susan Bodurtha at 612.706.1002 or visit www.stanthony.k12.mn.us.

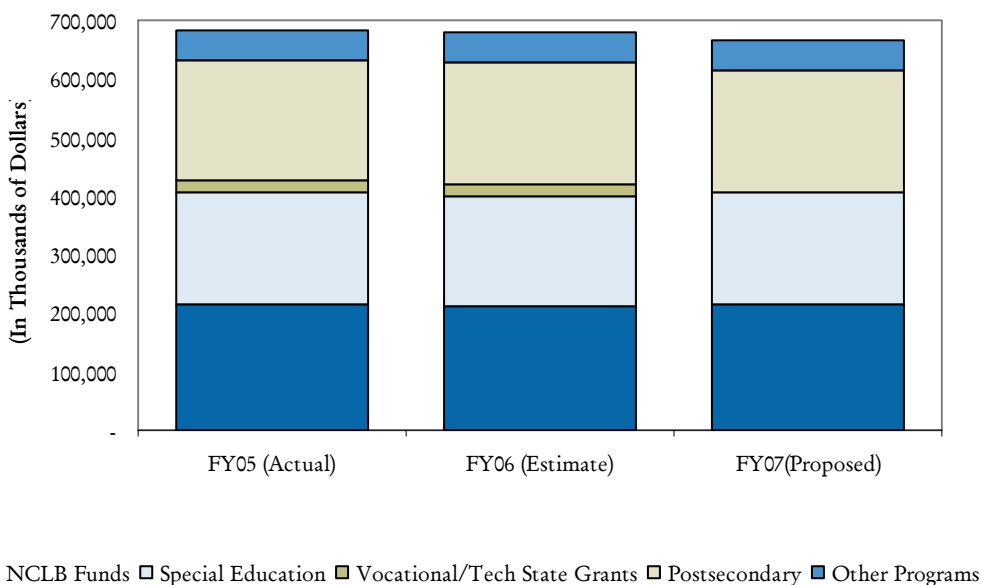
This month's district spotlight was submitted by Carrie Smith, a communications consultant who has been working with St. Anthony-New Brighton School District on the communications portion of the Blueprint for a Bright Future.

From the Chair...

nated entirely. In addition, cuts in health and human services would further reduce programs for children's mental health leaving an even greater burden on our schools.

The bottom line is that the current federal budget proposal will cause Minnesota's education community to lose another \$12.9 million in much needed funding for schools. We all know this means additional stress on both a state and local level. So, what is the answer? Since there is no magic wand, we must rely on what we know works best—rolling up our sleeves, convincing our state and national representatives to do the right thing and never giving up! It is imperative that school leaders, parents and concerned citizens contact their state and congressional representatives to urge them to provide

Summary of Minnesota Discretionary Funds, President's Proposed FY07 Budget



the funding necessary to cover the costs of the programs they mandate! Our future depends on it.

Carol Bomben, board member for Eden Prairie Public Schools, is chair of the Association of Metropolitan School Districts.

Members of AMSD include: Bloomington, Brooklyn Center, Burnsville/Eagan/Savage, Chaska, East Metro Integration District 6067, Eden Prairie, Edina, Elk River, 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 Program-Joint Powers School District 6069 and West St. Paul.