

AMSD

CONNECTIONS

News and Updates from the Association of Metropolitan School Districts

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AMSD Calendar

DECEMBER 8, 2005

Board of Directors Meeting, 7 a.m.

TIES Building, St. Paul

The guest speaker will be Louis Jambois, Executive Director of the Association of Metropolitan Municipalities.

JANUARY 6, 2006

AMSD Parent Advocacy Workshop

8:00 a.m.— Noon

More information coming soon!

FEBRUARY 17, 2006

AMSD Conference Controlling Health Care Costs

8:00 a.m.— Noon

Keynote speaker will be former United States Senator David Durenberger. More information coming soon!

AMSD's Mission

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



**Association of
Metropolitan School Districts**



Beijing high school students proudly show off their school to Dr. Debra Bowers, Superintendent of St. Louis Park Public Schools.

Minnesota Educators Learn From, Share Ideas With Chinese

As the world becomes smaller and “flatter,” it is increasingly more important to prepare students to become responsible world citizens and compete in a global economy. That’s one reason St. Louis Park Public Schools’ Superintendent Dr. Debra Bowers pursued the opportunity to join the Minnesota Trade Mission to China last month to learn all she could about the Chinese and their educational system.

Bowers, along with Superintendents Melissa Krull of Eden Prairie Schools and Kathy Leedom of Willmar Public Schools, toured schools in Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong as part of the education delegation, led by University of Minnesota President Robert Bruininks.

The trip, coordinated by the Minnesota Trade Office, aimed to increase trade with China, an emerging economic powerhouse where capitalism is taking root. Although a significant Minnesota presence already exists in China, there is an urgent call to action regarding positioning Minnesota as an economic player.

“People are people wherever you go,” said Bowers upon her return. “We are all interrelated. I have developed a greater appreciation for interdependency as a way

(continued on page 3)

From the Chair

Last week, AMSD joined forces with Schools for Equity in Education (SEE) and the Minnesota Rural Education Association (MREA) to release the initial findings of the “Determining the Cost of Education in Minnesota” report. As a school board member, I am often asked what it costs to educate a student to Minnesota’s standards. This study begins to answer that important question and provides vital information to our state policy makers as they work to reform our education funding system. Using data from the Governor’s Education Funding Reform Task Force Report released in 2004, the report finds a nearly \$1 billion gap between the investment Minnesota has been making in education and what is required in order for students to meet the state’s mandated academic standards. The next step in the process, scheduled to be completed in the spring of 2006, will be to further examine the cost of delivering state standards using additional research tools beyond the scope of

(continued on page 3)

Study Finds Minnesota Schools Under-Funded by Nearly \$1 Billion

In 2003, the Governor’s Education Task Force released the report “Investing in our Future: Seeking a Fair, Understandable and Accountable 21st Century Education Finance System for Minnesota.” By the Task Force’s own admission, the group stopped short of measuring the final funding level necessary to ensure that each Minnesota student has the opportunity to meet state and federal student performance expectations. This fall, the Association of Metropolitan School Districts (AMSD), the Minnesota Rural Education Association (MREA) and Schools for Equity in Education (SEE), hired Augenblick, Palaich and Associates, Inc (APA) to finish the Task Force’s work. On December 2, the APA report was released and the results showed that Minnesota schools were under-funded by nearly \$1 billion in the 2003-04 school year.

“In an unprecedented effort, AMSD joined forces with SEE and MREA to finish the important work

of the Governor’s Task Force and to answer the frequently asked question about how much it costs to educate a student to meet state and federal accountability requirements,” said Carol Bomben, AMSD chair.

In the newly commissioned report, “Determining the Cost of Education in Minnesota”, APA completed the first phase of a two-phase study to determine the cost of education in Minnesota. APA drew upon a national database of school finance information and extended the work of the Governor’s Task Force to project both base level student costs and recognized adjustment factors. APA also found that some elements, such as transportation, were glaringly missing from the estimates of the Governor’s Task Force. APA attempted to adjust for these omissions whenever possible. Phase two of the APA study will fully account for elements missing in the Governor’s Task Force report.

The APA study found that, once

the data is “unpacked” and appropriate special needs are factored in, the actual cost of education services necessary to achieve state standards is approximately \$8 billion. The state actually spent nearly \$1 billion less than that in 2003-04. The APA findings suggest that Minnesota schools are significantly under funded.

Phase two of the APA study will examine the cost of delivering state standards using additional research tools beyond the scope of the Governor’s Task Force. Phase two will also examine implementation issues such as an adjustment for labor cost differentials among school districts from economically diverse areas of the state. This is work, which, as the Governor’s Task Force concluded, “We cannot delay.” It is the intention of AMSD and other education organizations to continue this task in order to define the adequate level of education funding needed in Minnesota.

Total Operating Expenditures	2003-04 Cost Using Governor’s Task Force Base + APA Adjustments	2003-04 Actual Expenditures Comparable	Difference
Without Transportation and Capital	\$7.25567 billion	\$6.30278 billion	\$952.89 million
With Transportation and Capital	\$7.99843 billion	\$7.04554 billion	\$952.89 million

China Trade Mission...



Students at the Royal School in Beijing were happy to receive letters from Minnesota second graders.

to raise the global standard of living and increase our knowledge by learning from each other.”

In China, English instruction begins in grade three, and it is the main foreign language offered in the curriculum where emphasis on math is very strong. Compulsory education goes through grade nine.

“Staff and students are proud of their schools in China, just like we are here in Minnesota,” said Bowers.

Exams are used to sort and channel students early in their academic experience. They are only given one chance, whereas American students have multiple opportunities and pathways to achieve academic success.

Learning in China centers around rote memory, but there is a new emphasis on developing more creative and critical thinking skills.

Bowers will give pres-

entations to share what she learned about Chinese culture and education. She plans to explore the possi-

bility of integrating Chinese Mandarin language into school curriculum, adding one more international dimension in a district where students are already taught to think globally. St. Louis Park offers a Spanish immersion elementary school, and an International Baccalaureate (IB) program in its high school. It is also investigating extending its IB program to elementary students.

This month's district spotlight was submitted by Linda Asche, Communications Specialist for the St. Louis Park Public Schools.

From the Chair...

the Task Forces' effort. This will build the base upon which a new system of funding Minnesota's schools should be created. More information about this important effort is featured in this month's Research Notes on page 2 of *Connections*.

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



Members of the education delegation gather in front of the golden key to unlock the door of knowledge at a high school in Shanghai.

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.