

AMSD Calendar

FEBRUARY 9, 2006

Board of Directors Meeting, 7 a.m.

TIES Building, St. Paul
Metro legislators are invited to attend for an overview of AMSD's 2006 legislative priorities. In addition, Superintendents Melissa Krull, Debra Bowers and Kathy Leedom will share their experiences as members of the Minnesota Trade Mission to China. This month's meeting will be held in the Grand Hall of the TIES Building.

FEBRUARY 17, 2006

AMSD Conference Taking Control of Rising Health Care Costs 8:00 a.m.— Noon

Keynote speaker will be former United States Senator David Durenberger. The conference will be held at the Radisson Hotel—Roseville.

AMSD's Mission

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



Association of
Metropolitan School Districts



Westwood Elementary is one of four high performance, energy efficient schools recently constructed in the Elk River Area School District.

Constructing Energy Efficient Schools Is a Priority for Elk River Area School District

For more than 10 years, the Elk River Area School District has been experiencing annual enrollment increases of about four percent, or 500-600 new students each year. This trend is expected to continue for at least another 10 years when the district's enrollment will top more than 16,000 students.

The district has built and will continue to build several new schools in the coming years to accommodate more and more students. In the 1990s, the district built schools the same way that most school districts built schools – fast and economically. A shift in this philosophy occurred a few years ago when the district began examining the possibility of constructing “sustainable school buildings”, or high-performance structures that would be healthier and more energy efficient. The district has constructed three schools with this philosophy and has one more under construction.

The first school to be constructed with the high-performance philosophy was Rogers High School. Construction began on the school in 2001 and it opened for students in the fall of 2003. The two-story building was constructed with extra insulation, large windows to allow for

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From the Chair

Mark your calendar for February 17 to join us for AMSD's winter conference, *Taking Control of Rising Health Care Costs*. The conference promises to be both informative and practical, focused on the goal of providing school employees with quality, affordable health care in an era of dwindling resources. Former Senator David Durenberger and other experts will share their insights on state and national health care trends and challenges, as well as practical ideas for controlling health care costs. This is a conference you can't afford to miss! AMSD board members should work through their superintendents office to register. Contact AMSD at 651-999-7325 for more information. Please note that the conference location has changed this year to the Roseville Radisson Hotel.

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

Warmer Winter Doesn't Necessarily Equal Savings

It is no secret that school district budgets have been especially hard hit as a result of double-digit energy cost increases. With fixed budgets determined primarily by state funding formulas, districts have had no choice but to make adjustments to their budgets to deal with these soaring costs.

So will the mild winter Minnesotans have been experiencing thus far have a positive impact on natural gas prices? According to a recent article in the *Wall Street Journal* the answer is: not necessarily. The article states that although natural gas futures are down more than 40% from all-time highs in December, it's also true that a drop in natural-gas commodity prices doesn't necessarily translate into a lower price for natural gas on consumers' bills. In fact, it could be

months before many consumers see natural gas bills decline even slightly, if at all.

"The warm spell has certainly helped prevent a bad situation from becoming even worse. Nonetheless, school districts have been dealing with skyrocketing energy costs since last summer and those costs continue to put pressure on budgets," stressed Carol Bomben, AMSD chair. Even with the recent fall in the futures market, energy costs are still considerably higher than last year. While earlier projections of increases in excess of 70 percent may not come to bear, school districts are still experiencing costs that are running 30 to 40 percent higher than a year ago.

In addition to higher heating costs, school districts have been hit with the double whammy of higher transpor-

tation costs. The warmer weather has not had an impact on fuel costs which continue to run significantly higher than last year.

Minnesota is certainly not alone in facing this challenge. According to a recent National Conference of State Legislatures' survey, 17 states reported they expect to consider or make supplemental appropriations to address higher fuel and heating costs in general, or for school districts in particular.

Addressing these increases is an important part of AMSD's legislative platform this year. "We are hopeful that the Legislature will take action in the upcoming session to provide our districts with much needed assistance to deal with increased energy costs," said Bomben.

Starting February 15, Jon Commers will join AMSD staff as the new research director. "Jon brings strong quantitative and qualitative research skills and we are looking forward to his contributions to AMSD," said Scott Croonquist, executive director. Commers has been employed by Springsted Public Finance Advisors since 2000 and has extensive experience working with local units of government. He holds a BA in history and political economy from Carleton College in Northfield and a MBA in finance from the University of St. Thomas.



Jon Commers is AMSD's new Research Director.

Energy Efficient Schools...

more natural light and an improved ventilation system to improve air quality. Even though the facility was constructed to use 35 percent less energy than a traditional school building, the district was convinced it could do even better.

The lessons learned at Rogers High School were applied to the construction of Westwood Elementary School. One of the components of Westwood was an energy recovery system that takes exhaust air from the building and uses it to heat the incoming outside air without mixing the two. This system reduces the amount of energy used by the heating system to heat the incoming air. This school used about 50 percent less energy than a traditional school building, which allows funds to be allocated for expenditures that directly affect classroom instruction.

"The perception that it costs more to build a high-performance school is not true," said Ron Bratlie, the district's director of special projects. "By using more passive mechanical and electrical systems, you can use funds for other items, such as more efficient windows and roofs that save operating costs over the long run."

Westwood has become a national and international model of a high-performance school. In August 2004, it became the first building in Minnesota to earn LEED (Leadership in En-

ergy and Environmental Design) certification from the U.S. Green Building Council. Westwood is one of only four schools in the nation to earn this certification. The award recognizes buildings that meet the highest performance standards through environmentally conscious design, energy efficiency, resource conservation and dedication to indoor air quality.

Hassan Elementary School was the third school with a high-performance design and is also using about 50 percent less energy than other school facilities. The school opened for students in September 2005 and is projected to have more than \$100,000 in energy savings this year. The district is currently constructing its fourth high-performance school, Twin Lakes Elementary, which is set to open in September 2007.

For more information about the district's high-performance schools, contact Ron Bratlie, director of special projects, 763-241-3402, rbratlie@elkriver.k12.mn.us, or Bob Noyed, assistant to the superintendent for community relations, 763-241-3419, bnoyed@elkriver.k12.mn.us.

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.