

AMSD

CONNECTIONS

News and Updates from the Association of Metropolitan School Districts

June 2006
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AMSD Calendar

JUNE 15, 2006
Executive Committee Meeting, 7 a.m.
TIES Building, St. Paul

JULY 13, 2006
Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting, 7 a.m.
TIES Building, St. Paul

AUGUST 3, 2006
Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting, 7 a.m.
TIES Building, St. Paul

AUGUST 10, 2006
Board of Directors Annual Meeting, 7 a.m.
TIES Building, St. Paul



Jean Andrews, Fridley Education Association President, Mark Robertson, Superintendent, and School Board Member Gordon Backlund accepted a check for Q Comp from Alice Seagren, Commissioner of

Exciting Changes Underway in Fridley Public Schools

The 2005-06 school year has been a year of incredible change and growth for Fridley Schools. A series of planned and anticipated events, along with a number of “unplanned” opportunities have converged together to change the face of Fridley Schools for the next number of years.

Fridley Schools is in the second year of implementation of the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme (IBMYP) for grades 6-10, with anticipated “official” authorization expected in the spring of 2007. This major educational shift has produced a make-over of the physical buildings in Fridley, along with a revamped, better-articulated curriculum, a change in instructional approaches, and many new courses to meet the IBO requirements.

The implementation has been funded largely by a federal magnet schools grant, which in turn, has required a significant increase (90 hours per teacher) in annual professional training, and better quality data tracking to demonstrate success. The IBO implementation has essentially changed how the district functions as a whole.

Besides the IBO implementation, other new initiatives are being started, some of which are due to the

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From the Chair

“Stadiums” is the word that summed up the focus of the 2006 legislative session. Unfortunately, the focus on stadiums overshadowed everything else, including the on-going needs of our students and our schools.

State policymakers set low expectations for additional investments in public education going into the 2006 session and they lived up to those low expectations. There were modest investments provided in early childhood education and adult basic education. And a very small amount of relief was allocated to help school districts address energy costs. Unfortunately, the energy assistance approved by the Legislature does not begin to address the actual increases experienced. On a bright note, AMSD was largely successful in keeping new unfunded mandates from being approved. High on the list was the mandatory statewide insurance pool. Thanks to everyone who made their voices heard.

Our schools continue to face significant budget challenges. The coming November elections and the 2007 legislative ses-

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AMSD's Mission

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



Association of
Metropolitan School Districts

Technology Reports Indicate Significant Policy Work Needed

Education Week magazine recently released “Technology Counts 2006,” a study of school technology infrastructure in each of the nation’s states. The report was greeted with consternation in Minnesota, where some stakeholders were surprised to find the state graded “D” in school technology, ranking next-to-last in the country.

A task force recently convened by the Minnesota Department of Education (the Online by ’09 Advisory Committee) agreed with the findings on several fronts. Still, there is room for discussion about the specific measures used in the *Education Week* analysis, and the weighting of each, in ranking the states.

The objectives of enhanced technology use in schools fit into two broad categories. First, technology may give students a broader reach of educational opportunities as well as develop-

ment of valuable skills for future use in the classroom and in the workplace. Second, technology may allow teachers, administrators and policy makers to enhance and broaden curriculum or inform decisions on a school, district or state level. “Technology Counts” assigns roughly equal weights to each of these categories in its evaluation of each state.

The report indicates that Minnesota students have access to computers at a level at or somewhat below the national average. Forty-four percent of the 256 Minnesota districts surveyed for Internet access by the Online by ’09 committee indicated that the number of available connections is inadequate. In the *Education Week* measures related to computer and Internet access, Minnesota’s ratio of students per computer ranked higher (less favorably) than the national median, but at neither extreme (see graph below).

Studies conducted in recent years have been inconclusive about what contribution the use of computers and online technology brings to a student’s academic development. Research is underway on programs to give middle school and secondary students laptop computers in Berkshire County, Massachusetts, and in Henrico County, Virginia, to evaluate the benefit of this capital-intensive strategy. This research will continue to inform stakeholders about how to most effectively use technology to stimulate the educational process and enhance student achievement.

The potential for administrators and policy makers to use technology to measure outcomes and tailor curriculum is the second broad objective addressed by the “Technology Counts” report. In this series of measures, the absence of technology from Minnesota’s tests for students and instructors and

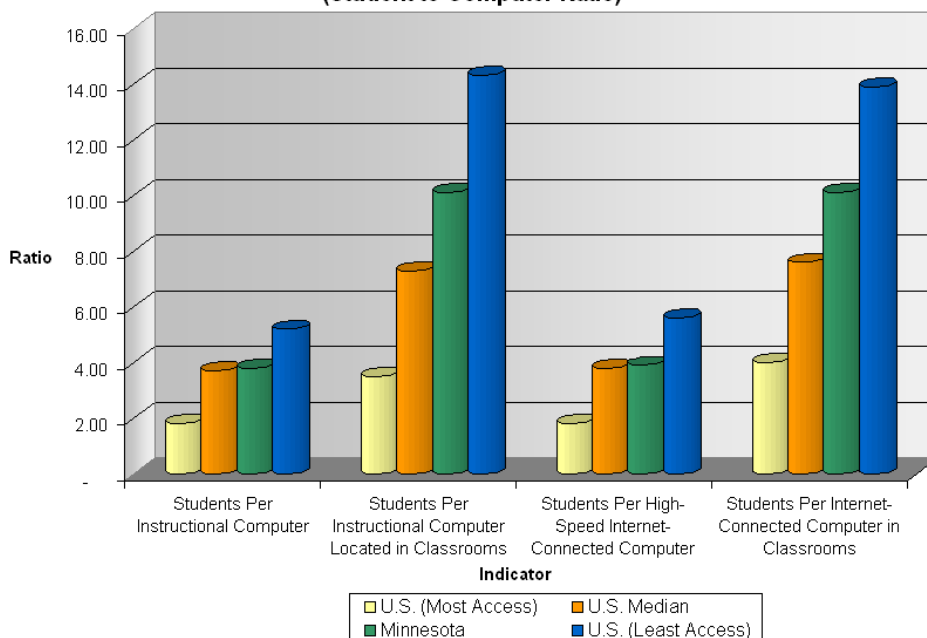
the omission of technology from state standards produce a low ranking for the state.

The prospect of using technology to accelerate and enhance the utility of testing has been the focus of the Online by ’09 committee, which issued 10 recommendations in April after six months of work. The recommendations include clarifying districts’ technology needs, defining state standards for technology, continuing planning and a pilot test schedule, and providing stable funding for school district technology requirements. The prospect of increasing use of computers for testing has been widely welcomed, presuming adequate funding to districts. The reporting requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act, the increased speed of results, and the potential for more accurate results in disciplines including science have contributed to a push for state assessments to be conducted online by 2009 or soon thereafter.

While some may argue that the low grade Minnesota received in the *Education Week* study is misleading in its simplicity, the Online by ’09 report indicates that even in areas where the most consensus exists around technology, significant policy work remains for stakeholders in public education.

For more information, visit the *Education Week* report at <http://www.edweek.org/ew/toc/2006/05/04/index.html>.

Minnesota Student Access to Computers vs. Nationwide Figures (Student to Computer Ratio)



Exciting Changes Underway in Fridley...

passing of a second levy question in November 2005. Fridley residents approved additional funding to provide every day, all day kindergarten as an option district-wide, and plans are underway for initiation of that program by next fall. The levy is also providing the funding for our district to begin implementation of the IB Primary Years Programme during the 2006-07 school year. The levy is also allowing our district to research and implement an improved model for delivering gifted and talented services for the future. In addition to the levy initiatives, Fridley is also beginning to implement the Project Lead the Way curriculum, a pre-engineering program that meets the technology component of the IBMYP.

Fridley Schools was the 7th school district in the state to be approved as a Q Comp District. Beginning with the second trimester, full implementation of the Fridley Alternative Compensation Plan began with

the hiring of several half-time instructional leaders to assist in making the program a success. The Fridley plan has four basic components including a ramped up (weekly) focused professional development plan, individual growth plans linked to teacher (and ultimately student) growth needs, a building or program student achievement goal component, and a teacher evaluation component based on the Charlotte Danielson model.

The Q Comp program has had a high level of success, and is changing the culture of our schools, with an increase in professionalism, better understanding of how to use data to make educational decisions, an increase in collaboration among staff, and a significant increase in professional growth. Q Comp is being used as the engine that is driving the other significant district, school or program priorities, and is truly changing the way Fridley

Schools operate. Initial student achievement results in the targeted areas have shown significant gains, much of which can be attributed to the approach used in the Fridley Plan.

With the eventual goal of becoming a K-12 International Baccalaureate School District by the end of the 2010 school year, Fridley Schools is off to a great start. The addition of Q Comp to provide the resources, time and methodology to get there has been a great asset. Besides the pace of change, one of the other major challenges has been to ensure that all of the initiatives are coordinated and that the parts fit into the district's mission of becoming "A World-Class Community of Learners."

This month's district spotlight was submitted by Mark Robertson, superintendent of the Fridley Public Schools.

From the Chair...

sion will be more important than ever. A recent national poll conducted by the National School Boards Association offers us some hope. It shows public sentiment is solidly behind investing in education.

The poll indicates that there is a significant disconnect between the current federal investment in education funding and what voters want spent. Nearly three out of four likely voters think Congress is not doing a good job setting spending priorities. On top of that, nearly 88 percent of those polled think that if Congress can spend billions on pork-barrel projects, then it can afford to fulfill promises on funding federal education programs.

In addition, 61 percent of voters would be more likely to vote for a member of Congress who voted to restore education funding to the authorized and promised levels. It is important to note this sentiment cuts across party lines.

Let's make sure Minnesota congressional and legislative candidates hear this message loud and clear this campaign season. Please consider supporting and working for candidates who have our schools at heart.

Have a great summer!

Jane Eckert, school board member from St. Anthony/New Brighton, is chair of the Association of Metropolitan School Districts.

Retiring Superintendents Will Be Missed

"Education will deeply miss the contributions of these three men," commented AMSD Chair Jane Eckert as she and fellow board members honored Superintendents Ken Dragseth (Edina), Robert Duncan (St. Anthony/New Brighton) and Gary Prest (Bloomington), who will be retiring in June. At the AMSD May Board of Director's meeting, each of the retiring superintendents spoke about their positive experiences working with AMSD, the importance of metro school districts working together and the significance of building strong relationships with legislators.



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.