

AMSD Calendar

MARCH 2, 2006

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

MARCH 9, 2006

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

MARCH 23, 2006

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



Westenley Alcenat, Katherine DeSantis and Rance Palmer received scholarships to support their dream of a college education from the Children's Defense Fund Minnesota at the 14th annual Beat the Odds Awards Dinner.

Minneapolis Students Honored with Beat the Odds Scholarships

Three Minneapolis Public Schools' seniors were honored at the 14th annual Beat the Odds Awards Dinner presented by the Children's Defense Fund Minnesota (CDF) on February 15. Westenley Alcenat, Katherine DeSantis and Rance Palmer received \$4,000 scholarships to support their dream of a college education.

Dreaming of a better life was the common motivating force for the three MPS students selected for their amazing stories of academic excellence and giving back to their schools and community while overcoming major hurdles.

For Westenley Alcenat of Southwest High School, it was the desire to overcome a series of tragic events during his childhood in Haiti that propelled him to make a plan for a successful life. His strategy included a move to the United States, citizenship and getting an education. Alcenat maintains a 3.2 GPA at Southwest while volunteering at hospitals, schools and working with immigrant and inner city children. His dream is to attend Macalester College, pursue a career in health care and ultimately return to Haiti to help others.

Katherine DeSantis from Washburn High School had one wish during her young life – a quiet place to study. But her family circumstances, which included violence and living in shelters, didn't allow for such luxuries. DeSantis was steadfast in her goal to do well in school because she believed that education was the key to a better future. She maintains a 3.4 GPA at Washburn while participating in student council, National Honor Society, drama, choir, Gay Straight Alliance, GLBT support

(continued on page 3)

From the Chair

AMSD's winter conference, *Taking Control of Rising Health Care Costs*, provided all who attended with a wealth of information and ideas to consider. While it is clear that there is no silver bullet to solve the problem of rising health care costs, it is equally apparent that there are things that we can do as school leaders to make a difference. In fact, many AMSD districts are already seeing the positive results that can happen when employers and employees work together to get the job done. We learned that a more consumer-driven approach is needed and that it is im-



Keynote speaker Senator David Durenberger provided insights into Minnesota's health care choices and challenges.

(continued on page 3)

AMSD's Mission

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



Association of
Metropolitan School Districts

New Study Confirms Vouchers are Misguided

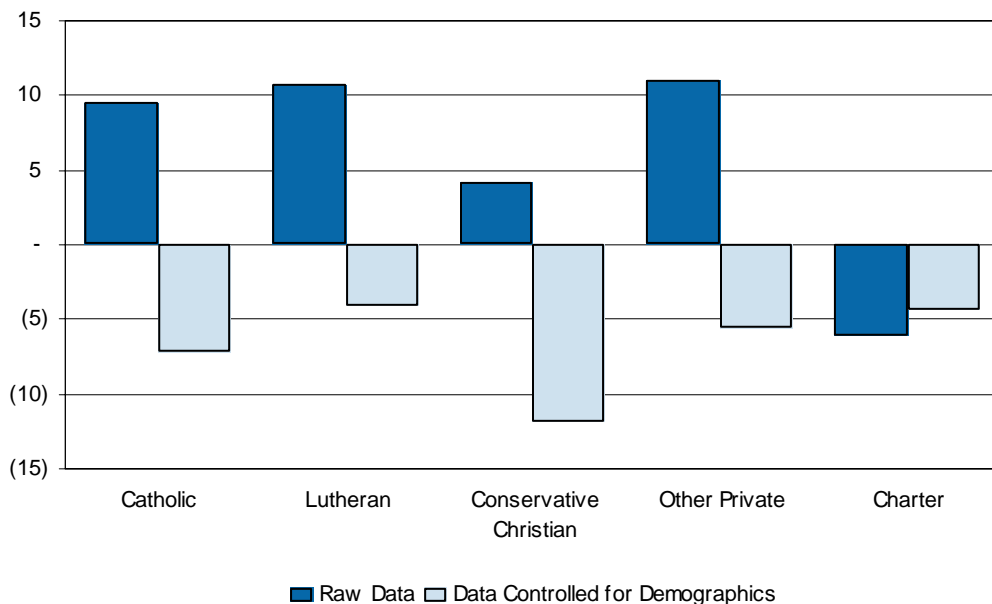
A major study released last month sheds new light on the school voucher debate. The study, “Charter, Private, Public Schools and Academic Achievement,” provides evidence that public school students generally outscore their counterparts in private schools after accounting for social and geographic differences.

Supporters of establishing a voucher program in Minnesota have argued that transferring from a public to a private school will improve a student’s academic development, and that the threat of lost per-pupil revenues will result in improvement in public school raw scores. This new study, conducted by two professors of education at the University of Illinois, exposes a fundamental flaw in this argument.

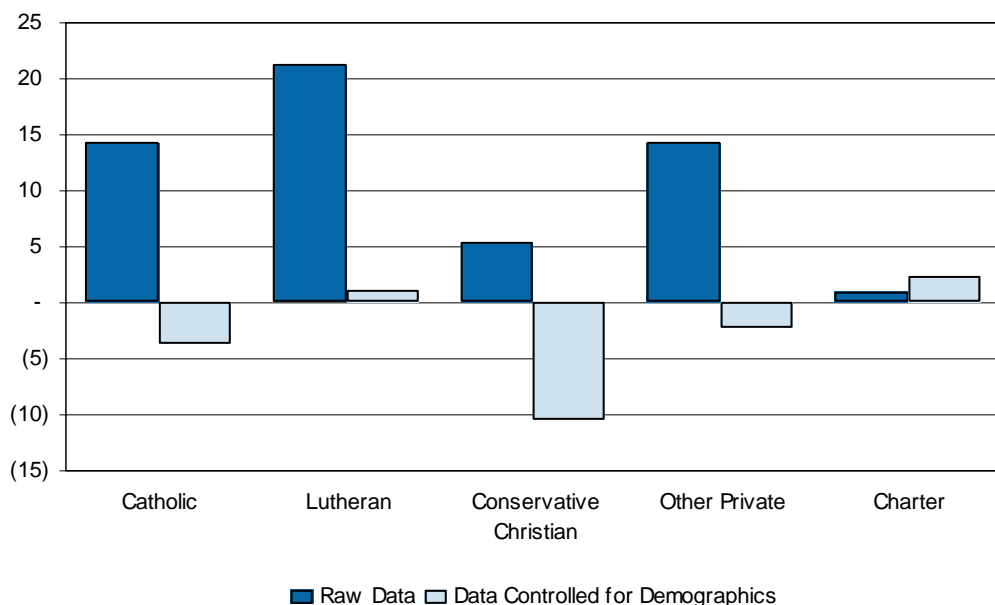
The study examined representative samples of six types of schools – charter, public (non-charter), Catholic, Lutheran, conservative Christian and other private schools.

The researchers considered a fourth-grade sample (190,147 students in 7,485 schools) and an eighth-grade sample (153,189 students in 6,092 schools), which is the largest body of data used to date in such an evaluation. The analysis used 2003 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) mathematics testing data as the basis for

Graph 1: Fourth-Grade Math Achievement In Comparison to Public Schools



Graph 2: Eighth-Grade Math Achievement In Comparison to Public Schools



the findings, largely because previous research indicates math skills are among the most sensitive to in-school instruction as opposed to instruction received more informally at home.

In its raw form, the data show that fourth grade private school students outperformed their public-school counterparts, who in turn outperformed charter school pupils. However, when an apples to apples comparison of students was used looking at how students from similar backgrounds compared,

(continued on page 3)

MPS Students Honored...

group and varsity cheerleading. Her dream is to earn degrees in political science and sociology.

Rance Palmer of Patrick Henry High School has met many challenges in his life, including a parent's alcoholism, poverty and his own personal identity struggles. At Henry, Palmer maintains a 3.7 GPA, participates in math club, Gay Straight Alliance, National Honor Society, student council, drama club, Admission Possible, writes for the school newspaper and also works and volunteers. His dream is to study theatre or Asian studies at Hampshire College in Western Massachusetts.

The CDF and this year's scholarship recipients were recently featured on the nationally syndicated Dr. Phil Show. The Dr. Phil Foundation has teamed up with CDF Minnesota to support the Beat the Odds program.

For more information, contact Lee Hayes, chief of communications & public affairs for the Minneapolis Public Schools at 612-668-0227 or Lee.Hayes@mpls.k12.mn.us.

From the Chair...

perative that employees are better educated about the costs of health care. Employees must be involved in designing their health care plan and share in the costs. Finally, the statistics on obesity, heart disease and other ailments spoke volumes about the importance of wellness programs and living healthier lifestyles. Tackling these issues is not easy but it is vital that school boards, administrators and employee groups work together to bring health care costs under control. We don't need new state mandates or law changes to accomplish this but we do need to collectively roll up our sleeves and work together.

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



Paula Klinger, president of the Hopkins Education Association, presented strategies her district has used to control health care costs.



Panel members Senator Don Betzold, Representative Barb Sykora, Commissioner Cal Ludeman, Dr. Judy Shank and Kim Thompson answered questions from conference attendees.

Research Notes...

the findings indicated that public school fourth graders tested at statistically significant higher levels than both their private and charter school counterparts (see Graph 1).

Using the same methodology to account for student background, the study produced results for eighth grade students which indicate a narrower performance difference among the school types, with Catholic and conservative Christian schools scoring materially lower than public schools, charter

schools slightly better, and Lutheran and other private schools statistically even with public school scores (see Graph 2). On each grade level sampled, the study's results undermine the stated rationale for school vouchers.

"This study offers new evidence that vouchers are misguided and do not deliver on the promises espoused by their proponents," said Scott Croonquist, executive director of the Association of Metropolitan School Districts. "Legislators should instead focus

their attention and efforts on funding mandated programs like special education and investing in proven programs like full-day kindergarten and early childhood education."

For more information, call the AMSD office at 651-999-7325 or access the report online at http://www.ncspe.org/publications_files/OP111.pdf.

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.