

AMSD Calendar

AUGUST 2, 2007
Executive/Legislative
Committee Meeting,
7 a.m.
TIES Building
St. Paul

AUGUST 16, 2007
Board of Directors
Meeting, 7 a.m.
Bloomington Sheraton
in conjunction with
MSBA Summer Seminar

SEPTEMBER 7, 2007
Legislative Committee
Meeting, 7 a.m.
TIES Building
St. Paul

SEPTEMBER 14, 2007
Board of Directors
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**



Hopkins Public Schools and many groups in the community are working to provide families living along Blake Road with safe, educational, and enriching summer experiences, including Afternoon Replay for students in first through ninth grades.

Hopkins Schools part of effort to offer summer programs for students

The African proverb, “It takes a village to raise a child,” is being lived out in the Hopkins Public Schools community. In December 2005, Hopkins Police Chief Craig Reid approached Hopkins’ Family Services Collaborative, School and Communities in Partnership (SCIP), with a concern about families living in neighborhoods along the Blake Road corridor, which links Hwy. 7 and Excelsior Boulevard in Hopkins.

Blake Road is a multi-family neighborhood with a high concentration of apartments and duplexes.

The police chief said there was a lack of recreation activities for children and young people and the neighborhood had experienced an increase in crime.

In response to the police chief’s concerns, the community formed a group made up of staff members from the

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From the Chair

On August 16, I will preside over my last Board of Director’s meeting as chair of AMSD.

It has been an honor to serve as chair of an organization that is so dedicated to advocating for metropolitan schools and their students. AMSD board members have resisted attempts by some policy-makers to divide us along geographic or demographic lines and instead have acknowledged and respected our differences and focused on the many issues we have in common. We have made great strides in recent years in speaking with a unified voice to better represent and advocate for our schools and students. We can truly be proud of our schools.

While there is always work to be done, our successes in education can be found in the following facts and figures:

- According to the only nationwide uniform assessment, the National Assessment of Education Progress, Minnesota’s schools have consistently outperformed schools in

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Summer break contributes to achievement gap

Study demonstrates correlation between poverty, loss of reading skills

A study recently released by researchers at Johns Hopkins University has stoked policy discussions nationally about the roots of the achievement gap and the most effective ways to create educational opportunity for all children. As educators and students transition in August from the summer schedule to the coming school year, the study deserves consideration by advocates for Minnesota children.

The study, “Lasting Consequences of the Summer Learning Gap,” was undertaken at the hands of researchers Karl Alexander, Doris Entwisle and Linda Steffel Olson, all from Johns Hopkins. The researchers tapped a random sample of 790 Baltimore students ages six through twenty-two, involving socioeconomic data and reading test data administered twice annually. The subjects of the study are students or past students of twenty Baltimore public schools. The source of the test data

is the reading portion of the California Achievement Test, administered in the fall and spring in the Baltimore Public Schools.

The study identified a significant correlation between the socioeconomic status of a student’s household and the summertime trend in reading test scores. Using multiple years of test data for the sample of students, the researchers analyzed the cumulative difference in test scores between grades one and nine, commonly recognized as the achievement gap. Of a 116.05-point difference observed between low socioeconomic status, non-college track students and their higher socioeconomic status, college track counterparts, 76.48 points are attributed to summer gains – or lack thereof. The improvement in reading scores varied widely, from substantial improvement over the summer to flat or moderate declines in reading scores recorded by fall testing.

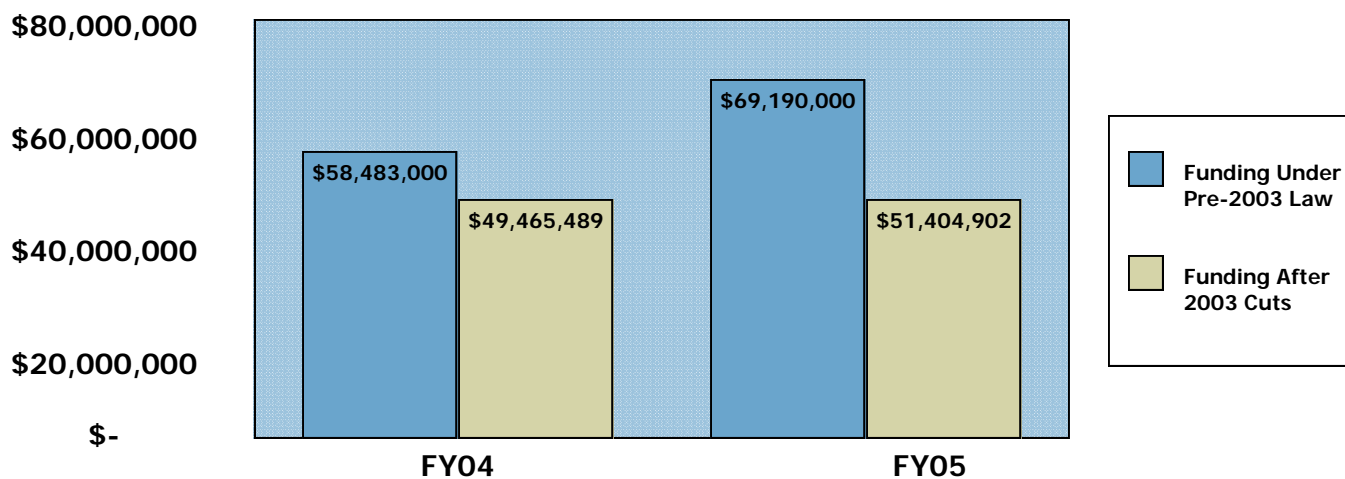
The study builds on a body of

related work, including a 1978 book, *Summer Learning and the Effects of Schooling*, by NYU sociologist Barbara Heyns, which posited that gaps among students by race and class widen during summer vacation periods. In 2000, the Gallup Organization conducted a poll asking parents if their school-age children were reading books in the Harry Potter series. Poll results indicated that responses of participants were closely correlated with household income levels.

In its examination of the cumulative nature of the achievement gap, the study presents education advocates with challenging evidence about the legacy of inequality in the early years of formal education. “Achievement assessed (in ninth grade) mainly reflects skill differentials already in place when children enter first grade, as well as skills built up in elementary school,” write

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Learning Year/Extended Time Aid, FY04-05



Source: Minnesota Department of Education, Program Finance division

Answers lie in addressing poverty, providing programs

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the study's authors. Lower achievement than peers (as measured by standardized tests) in ninth grade can lead to tracking away from advanced placement or other programs, diminish likelihood of graduation and college matriculation, and tarnish a student's sense of confidence.

What course of action should Minnesota's educators and policy-makers take in light of the Baltimore research? The authors point not only to the broader issues of addressing family and youth poverty, and school reform, but also to providing quality after-school and summer programs targeted to at-risk students.

In recent years, Minnesota has

become less well positioned to put these findings into action. In 2003, the Legislature and Governor cut support for the extended time program; in 2005, school districts were prohibited from starting school before Labor Day. Legislation to extend the Minnesota school year to a minimum of 180 days was extinguished early in the 2007 session.

In addition to issues of equity, a compelling public interest exists to ensure that every Minnesota student has the opportunity to pursue a successful academic career from elementary and secondary school, into one of a range of post-secondary choices. The Johns Hopkins study points to the importance of ensuring

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**Karl Alexander, Doris Entwisle
and Linda Steffel Olson**
**"Lasting Consequences of
The Summer Learning Gap"**

that quality after-school and summer enrichment programs are widely available if we are serious about closing the achievement gap.

Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan and Intermediate 916 welcomed to AMSD

Two districts have recently joined the Association of Metropolitan School Districts. District 196, Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan, has joined AMSD and Northeast Metro Intermediate District 916 has joined as an associate member. Superintendent John Currie and School Board Member Kevin Sampers will represent District 196 on the AMSD Board. Superintendent Connie Hayes will represent Intermediate 916 and a school board representative will be appointed in the near future. Please join us in welcoming our new board members.

Minnesotans can be proud of schools

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other states. In 2005, the most recent statistics available, Minnesota ranked second in the nation in both fourth- and eighth-grade math scores. Additionally Minnesota ranked seventh in fourth-grade reading and ninth in eighth-grade reading.

- In 2006, Minnesota again had the highest average ACT score among states testing more than 20 percent of students.
- Speaking of graduates, Minnesota's graduation rate is fifth highest in the nation according to 2005 data from the National Center for Education Statistics. Nearly 85 percent of all freshmen entering high school in Minnesota go on to graduate which is well above the national average of 75 percent.

While it seems that we too often focus on the negatives, it is a necessary exercise to continually strive to improve and challenge ourselves to become even better. AMSD and our member school districts have not shied away from that challenge and I am proud of that. Thank you for the opportunity to serve as chair and best wishes to you as you prepare for a new school year!

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

AMSD Members: Bloomington, Brooklyn Center, Burnsville, Chaska, East Metro Integration District 6067, Eden Prairie, Edina, Elk River, Fridley, Hopkins, Intermediate District 287, Intermediate District 917 (Associate Member), Inver Grove Heights, Mahtomedi, Minneapolis, MSU Mankato Center for Engaged Leadership (Associate Member), Minnetonka, Mounds View, Northeast Metro Intermediate School District 916 (Associate Member), North St. Paul/Maplewood/Oakdale, Orono, Richfield, Robbinsdale, Roseville, Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan, Shakopee, South St. Paul, Spring Lake Park, St. Anthony/New Brighton, St. Louis Park, St. Paul, Wayzata, West Metro Education Program, and West St. Paul

Hopkins program provides activities for needy students

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city of Hopkins and Hopkins Public Schools, neighborhood watch group leaders, faith community leaders, youth program leaders, parents, concerned citizens and human service organization representatives from Hennepin County, the Ridgedale YMCA and Hopkins Minnetonka Parks and Recreation Services.

This group, called the Blake Road Stakeholders Collaborative, meets regularly to create short- and long-term plans for supporting a safer and healthier neighborhood for Blake Road residents. Chief Reid and Tsehai Wodajo, Hennepin County School Success coordinator, led the collaborative.

Last summer, 170 children participated in enrichment programs at Hopkins Public Schools Summer School, YMCA camps and city recreation sports camps. The Park Nicollet Foundation, SCIP, Hopkins Rotary, and Rotary District 5950 provided \$32,500 in grants that funded scholarships, bus transportation, and interpreters. Hopkins Public Schools Community Education Department coordinated the program.

This summer, about 150 students in first through ninth grades participated in Afternoon Replay.

Afternoon Replay was developed under the leadership of Deb Ukura, Hopkins Community Education youth programs coordinator, and other SCIP collaborative members. Afternoon Replay included enrichment classes such as cooking, chess, pottery, swimming, open gym, recreation room activities, and community service opportunities. Lunch and transportation were provided. In addition to a SCIP out-of-school time grant, the Park Nicollet Foundation and local Optimists Club provided funding for Afternoon Replay.



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Hopkins Public Schools' Community Education Department, Ridgedale YMCA, Hopkins Minnetonka Parks and Recreation Services Department, and Zion Lutheran Church in Hopkins coordinated other efforts to provide recreation and educational enrichment opportunities for Blake Road children such as camps and playground activities.

Most of the children who live along the Blake Road corridor have barriers to registering and participating in traditional school and community summer enrichment activities, including economic, transportation, or parents who are not fluent in English. Before the summer 2006 program was organized, most of those children spent their days in their apartments.

As part of long-range planning efforts, Wilder Research recently completed the first phase of an assessment of the Blake Road corridor, which included a review of information supplied by Hopkins Public Schools and Hopkins Police Department, an online survey of collaborative members, and a series of five focus groups with residents, renters, homeowners, business owners and landlords.

These results will be used to guide a second phase of research,

which will involve gathering feedback from more residents, and comparing the recommendations to results of other local and national community revitalization efforts.

"One of our hopes is that we will be able to secure funds to create a safe and convenient recreation space in the Blake Road corridor neighborhood," said Barb Westmoreland, Hopkins Public Schools volunteer and partnerships coordinator. "Youth enrichment organizations will then be able to offer drop-in programming that fits the needs of the families in this area, without the high cost of transportation, without expensive fees, and without the confusion of knowing when, where, and how to register the children for out-of-school enrichment activities."

Westmoreland credits the entire community for working together to address the needs of Blake Road's students and families. "We have much work to do, but much work can be done when concerned people reach out and help others in their communities. The support for this effort has been amazing."

This month's member spotlight was submitted by Hopkins Public Schools Director of Public Relations Eileen Harvala, APR.