

## AMSD Calendar

**DECEMBER 7, 2006**

Executive/Legislative  
Committee Meeting,  
7 a.m.

TIES Building, St. Paul

**DECEMBER 14, 2006**

Board of Directors  
Meeting, 7 a.m.

TIES Building, St. Paul

**JANUARY 5, 2007**

Legislative Preview  
Session, 8 to 10 a.m.

TIES Conference Center  
Grand Hall, St. Paul

Metropolitan area legislators have been invited to a legislative preview presentation by AMSD. Topics will include AMSD's 2007 legislative priorities, results of our recently updated tax effort study and other issues impacting metropolitan school districts.

## AMSD's Mission

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



Association of  
Metropolitan School Districts

## NSBA to visit Minnetonka schools for a lesson on technology integration



**A Minnetonka student demonstrates the use of a SMARTBoard, an interactive white board with a touch screen that allows students and teachers to pick up words and move them on a document, access Web sites with the touch of a finger, display computer information large enough for all students to see, perform interactive demonstrations on-screen and more.**

Last May, school district representatives from around Minnesota toured Minnetonka Schools for a close-up look at their innovative use of technology in the classroom. This May, the rest of the country will have a chance to find out how technology enhances learning in Minnetonka. As a national leader in technology integration, Minnetonka has been invited to host a National School Board Association (NSBA) Technology Site Visit May 7 – 8, demonstrating its technology immersion classrooms for school representatives from all over the United States.

Last May's tour drew more than 140 representatives from two dozen Minnesota school districts, including Cloquet, Mankato, Duluth, Alexandria and several from the Metro area. Among the attendees were a superinten-

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## From the Chair

November was quite a month for advocates of education. Most of the legislative candidates who were elected on Nov. 7 called for significantly increasing the state's investment in public education during the campaign. In fact, many listed it as their top priority. At the same time, the P.S. Minnesota coalition has worked to develop a funding framework to serve as a guideline for state policy-makers as they work to modernize Minnesota's education funding system. (For more on this framework, see Page 2.) What's more, a greatly improved economic forecast provides hope that we can make significant progress toward this goal.

I am pleased that AMSD's proposed 2007 Legislative Platform reflects these exciting developments. With the goal of educating Minnesota students to a level of global excellence, and the understanding that there is an investment necessary to do so, our platform calls for:

- Modernizing Minnesota's Education Funding System

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## Report offers new funding formula for education in MN

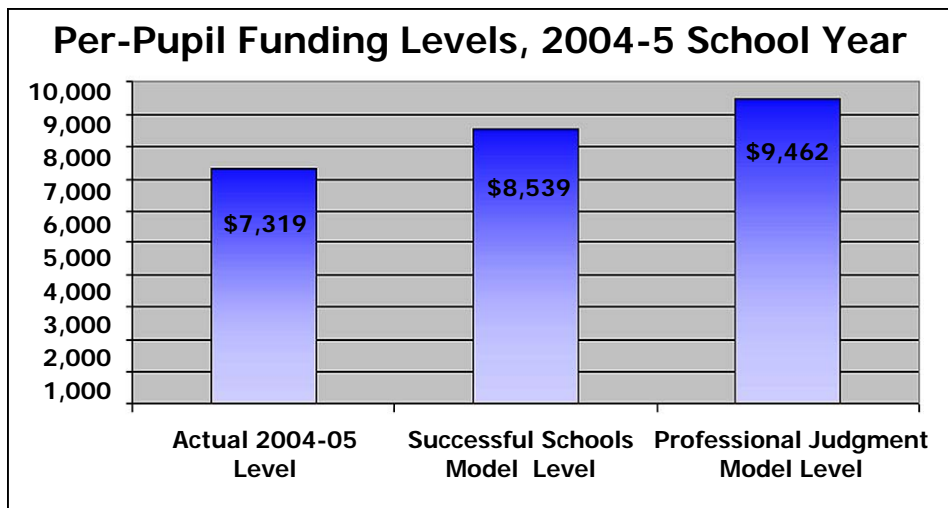
Disagreement isn't hard to find in the public education debate, but consensus has been reached on a fundamental issue: The current K-12 funding system is outdated, convoluted, and fails to align funding with student needs in a rational way.

Governor Pawlenty established a School Funding Task Force shortly after his election in 2002 that sought to answer the question of whether Minnesota is providing adequate funding for students to meet state and federal performance mandates currently in place. The task force did extensive work and compiled valuable data. However, it stopped short of answering the question of whether or not Minnesota is adequately funding K-12 education. In 2005 a broad coalition of public education advocates assembled to complete the picture of funding adequacy in Minnesota.

On Dec. 1, the coalition, "P.S. Minnesota," released the findings of an adequacy study undertaken by Augenblich, Palaich, and Associates ("APA") of Denver, Colo., to fulfill this goal. The study confirmed that our state needs to commit additional funding to provide the support necessary for every Minnesota student to perform to established standards. Compared with the actual 2004-5 per-pupil spending of \$7,319 (excludes capital, food service, transportation and referendum revenue), the two methodologies used by the APA study call for \$8,539 and \$9,462 per pupil, respectively (see graph). While the lower figure represents a current base level required for sufficiency today, the higher figure represents the investment required for all students to reach proficiency mandates by 2013-14.

That schools need additional support is not news to policy makers or voters, but establishing how much additional support is required to reach state and federal standards represents an important departure. The APA report utilizes four distinct methods to measure the education infrastructure needed to put Minnesota on track to meet state and federal standards passed in law.

Policy makers in Washington and in St. Paul have set academic performance



standards, determined how measurement will take place and established penalties or incentives for school districts to reach mandates. However, no effort has been undertaken to identify the costs that are part and parcel of this type of standards-based reform, or to fully compare these to our current level of investment. The APA study represents Minnesota's first full perspective on where we stand since the adoption of standards-based reform at both state and federal levels.

Minnesota students differ from one another in a multiplicity of ways: Family wealth, first language, race and ethnicity, potential need for special education services, property wealth and cost of living in their home district, for example. Providing additional resources under a modernized funding system is needed to give each student optimal support to reach federal and state mandates. P.S. Minnesota's deliberation over the last year has provided a framework for construction of such a system, based on four critical elements:

- A "learner component" is needed to reflect the particular needs of an individual student, such as limited English language skills, risk factors such as family poverty, and need for special education services.
- A "district instructional services component" addresses the differences among school districts that have direct bearing on students' abilities to reach standards. Primary

examples are market-based labor cost differentials, problems associated with small districts and economies of scale, and declining enrollment observed in many districts statewide.

- A "district support services component" needs to provide funding for uses including capital maintenance, transportation, technology, desegregation efforts and targeted initiatives.
- Discretionary levy authority for school boards and voters should also be included in the new funding system to allow for local initiatives and community expectations. In addition, a capital construction formula should be developed to provide fair and affordable access to educational facilities. Each of these revenue streams should be equalized for differences in district property wealth.

Providing a quality education to more than 800,000 students is not a simple exercise. However, our students deserve a system that rationally links funding to student needs. AMSD and our partners in P.S. Minnesota truly hope that the APA study will form the basis for a call for modernization of our funding system and a recognition of the investments needed to truly ensure that we leave no child behind.

To access the full APA study or learn more about P.S. Minnesota, visit [www.psmnnesota.org](http://www.psmnnesota.org).

# Minnetonka technology to take national stage this spring

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dent, school board members, teachers and district technology directors. After hearing an overview of technology use in Minnetonka classrooms, they toured an elementary school, a middle school or Minnetonka High School, observing technology tools such as interactive whiteboards, wireless teacher sound systems, science probes, a high school Computer Assisted Design lab and an ergonomically designed K-2 computer lab.

When it was over, there was high praise for both the technology and the staff. "Please continue to offer these visits" was a typical response on evaluation forms. "I have four pages of notes and ideas," said another.

There will be even more to see at this spring's national site visit. Minnetonka recently purchased its 200<sup>th</sup> SMARTBoard, an interactive white board that is a key component to technology immersion classrooms. The SMARTBoards allow students and teachers to literally pick up words and move them on a document, access Web sites with the touch of a finger, display computer information large enough for all students to see, perform interactive demonstrations on-screen and much more. In addition to the SMARTBoard and a projection unit, each of Minnetonka's technology immersion classrooms contains a sound system that supports voice distribution; a VCR/DVD player; and remote management tools. The remote tools enable technical support staff to troubleshoot by viewing or controlling a user's computer desktop without sending a technician to the site.

Beyond classroom technology, a Web content management system allows all teachers to easily post home-



**Minnetonka has more than 200 interactive white boards, called SMARTBoards, in use in its technology immersion classrooms.**

work, notes and announcements to the Web for parents and students. Students may participate in class discussion boards, submit homework electronically and even have high school papers checked for plagiarism before being graded by the teacher. Minnetonka has been a leader in integrating educational technology since the community passed a \$3 million/year, 10-year technology referendum in 2002.

For more information on technology use in the classroom, visit [www.minnetonka.k12.mn.us/visit](http://www.minnetonka.k12.mn.us/visit).

*This month's member spotlight was submitted by Janet Swiecichowski, Executive Director for Communications at Minnetonka Public Schools.*

## From the Chair: Legislative platform calls for funding reform

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- Fixing the Special Education Funding System
- Increasing Student Achievement by Eliminating the Readiness Gap
- Attracting and Retaining High Quality Teachers
- Maintaining Local Control and Reducing Mandates

Our proposed platform is ambitious. But if our federal and state policymakers are serious about all

students meeting the performance expectations set forth under the No Child Left Behind Law, it is imperative that they provide the necessary resources in a manner that logically links those resources to student achievement.

*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, Inver Grove Heights, Mahtomedi, Minneapolis, MSU Mankato Center for Engaged Leadership (Associate Member), 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 Education Program, and West St. Paul