

AMSD Calendar

FEBRUARY 8, 2007

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

FEBRUARY 15, 2007

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

MARCH 1, 2007

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

MARCH 8, 2007

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

MARCH 22, 2007

Legislative Committee 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

Fifth graders learn Chinese

Eden Prairie pilot program breaks new ground

Most are only ten years old, and they're already saying full sentences in Mandarin Chinese. You hear students saying, "Wo you lan se yan jin," which means, "My eyes are blue." They're also singing "Tou, jian bang, xi gai, jiao," another name for "Head and shoulders, knees and toes. It is impressive enough that these students are mere fifth graders, but they're speaking this much Chinese after only 21 days in the class.

"It was a little challenging at first, but it got to be easier and easier," said Carly Post, one of the fifth grade Eden Prairie Schools students taking this new class.

If the students are the judges, so far Oak Point Intermediate School's pilot fifth grade Mandarin Chinese program is going quite well. This year, every fifth grader will take the class. The district will use input from the pilot program to determine if Chinese should become a permanent part of the district's World Language offerings.

"We look forward to seeing how our students and parents feel about this unique language opportunity," said Dr. Melissa Krull, Eden Prairie Schools Superintendent. "We are in the second year of our new Eagle Heights Spanish Immersion School, and, if this pilot is successful,

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A native of China, instructor Qiuxia Welch has taught U.S. students Mandarin Chinese for a number of years. Currently, she is teaching fifth graders at Oak Point Intermediate School in 12-week sessions.

From the Chair

Governor Pawlenty's proposed education budget includes a number of laudable proposals including restoring funding for the extended time program, an investment in classroom technology, increased funding for Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs and an increase in the operating capital equalizing factor to provide school property tax relief.

However, it is very clear that the Legislature will need to improve on the Governor's budget recommendations if metro school districts are to avoid budget reductions. On a statewide basis, the Governor's budget proposal would result in a 1.8 percent increase for schools in operating revenue in the 2007-08 school year. In fact, most metropolitan school districts would realize an even smaller increase.

The Governor's proposal is not sufficient to cover projected inflation as measured by the Implicit Price Deflator for State and Local Government Purchases (IPD) – the index recommended by the

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Governor's proposal falls short of projected inflation

Governor Pawlenty recently released his proposed E-12 budget for the 2008-9 biennium, featuring a modest increase in the basic formula allowance and special education formula, a high school reform initiative, one-time performance bonuses and tax relief. The funding provided by the budget, apart from the targeted "Successful Schools" and "3R High Schools" programs, would add about 1.80 percent in increased funding for each year of the biennium.

Basic Allowance & General Education Funding

The proposal increases the basic allowance from \$4,974 to \$5,074 in 2008 and \$5,176 in 2009. This represents a nominal increase of \$202 or 4.06 percent in the basic formula allowance over the biennium. However, it is important to keep in mind that the basic formula allowance represents only a portion of school district revenue.

The proposal also increases revenue linked to the basic formula, such as compensatory, transportation sparsity, shared time and nonpublic transportation. While not linked, the Governor recommends increasing LEP and extended time revenue by 2.00 percent per year, and increasing the maximum extended time ADM from 0.2 to 0.5. The "Q Comp" program is proposed to be linked to increases in the formula, and to increase 10 percent annually starting in 2009, reaching \$24 million by 2011. Finally, the Governor's proposal to amend the equity revenue formula will, for AMSD districts, convert all equity revenue to transition revenue.

Special Education

The proposed budget calls for 2.00 percent annual increases in the State special education appropriation cap for 2008 and 2009. Projections from the Department of Education show that this will not reduce the special education cross subsidy, but merely reduce its rate of growth. The Department of Education projects that school districts will reallocate \$518 million in general education revenue during the 2006-07 school year in order to meet state and federal special education mandates. That figure will continue to grow under the Governor's budget.

Initiatives and Pilot Programs

The proposed budget introduces one-time grants for school districts for particular purposes. The "Successful

Schools" initiative would provide school districts an average of \$107 per student in schools meeting either math or reading AYP requirements. In 2006, 66.9 percent of AMSD schools would have qualified for the one-time bonus. Under the proposal, funds received could be used for nearly any purpose except permanent salary increases. The Governor also proposed a statewide total of \$19 million in technology grants, and \$18 million for various programs under the "World-Class Students" rubric including funding for AP/IB, alternative calendar planning, and Mandarin Chinese courses.

The "3R" high school program introduced by the Governor, a central theme in the education budget and his State of the State address, proposes \$75.0 million for the biennium for high schools that adopt six themes related to post-secondary preparation and district development. If approved, the program would provide districts \$68 per pupil in a planning year and \$200 per pupil in an implementation year.

Property Tax Relief

A proposed increase in the equalization factor for the operating capital facilities levy, from the current \$10,700 to \$17,590, is a vehicle to deliver roughly \$40 million of property tax relief statewide. AMSD districts would receive roughly \$17.3 million of tax relief, or around \$62 per pupil.

Early Childhood and Kindergarten

The proposal includes \$28.5 million annually starting in 2009 for early childhood scholarships of up to \$4,000 per student, with families under 180 percent of federal poverty guidelines eligible for the program. The funds would be designated for use in the year preceding kindergarten enrollment, at public or private early childhood programs meeting state standards. The Governor's proposal does not call for full-day kindergarten in Minnesota, nor provide for facilities and staffing support that might assist in a transition to an all-day program.

The study of the Special Education Cross Subsidy for Fiscal Years 1999-2009 and the AMSD Member Survey on Governor's Budget is available on AMSD's website at http://amsd.org/research_stats.html.

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, 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

Students report learning Chinese is challenging but fun

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we could once again consider expanding World Language opportunities for our families.”

So far, the fifth grade Mandarin Chinese program appears to be exceeding expectations. Early results show that the students are learning about the Chinese culture, more than 100 Mandarin vocabulary words, and they’re enjoying the class, too.

“I really, really like it,” said Courtney Leivermann, another one of the Eden Prairie fifth grader who’s taken the Chinese class. “I want to learn more.”

“It’s a good age to teach Chinese,” said Qiuxia Welch, the teacher of this new class.

“The students are open to it and can retain a lot.” Qiuxia was born in China. She has taught Chinese here in



Welch says fifth grade students are very adept at learning and retaining a new language. She says her goal is to show them that learning Chinese is easier than they might think and that it can be fun.

Minnesota for many years and last year lived in China where she taught English.

“My goal is to show them that it’s not as hard as they might think,” said Qiuxia. “I hope they have fun learning this language and will consider learning more in the future. Sparking some interest, that’s what I’m doing.”

It appears to be working. Now that Courtney’s 21-day rotation in Mandarin Chinese is over, her parents hope to have her tutored in Chinese after school this winter because she’s now so interested in the language.

“We learned about the culture, too,” added Courtney. “We learned the body parts, numbers, colors, foods, greetings. It’s a lot of fun.”

This month’s member spotlight was submitted by Eden Prairie Schools Director of Communications Camie Melton Hanily.

Budget proposal creates shortfalls for most metro school districts

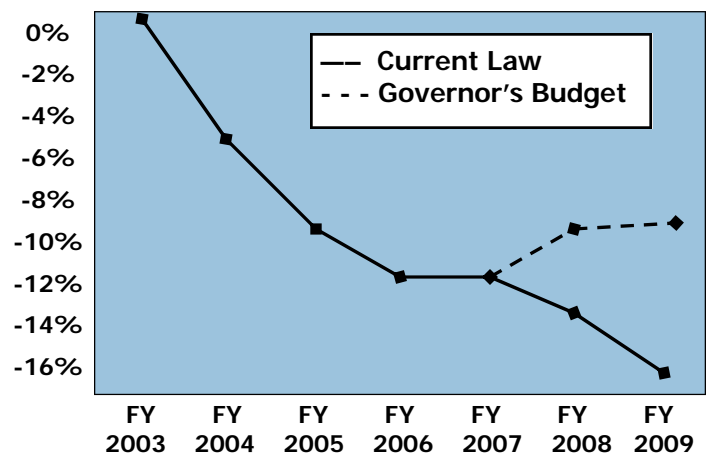
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Council of Economic Advisors. Adoption of the Governor’s budget as proposed would result in budget shortfalls in excess of \$58 million based on the results of a survey of AMSD’s member school districts. Further compounding the problem is the fact that the special education cross-subsidy will continue to grow under the Governor’s budget proposal. In the current school year, school districts in Minnesota will reallocate \$518 million in general education revenue to federal and state mandated special education programming. While the recent rapid growth in the special education cross subsidy would be slowed, the cross subsidy will continue to rise under the Governor’s budget recommendation.

As the accompanying graph demonstrates, state aid has failed to keep pace with inflation since 2003. The Governor’s budget would level out the drop, but state aid would still be about 9 percent less than it was five years ago on an inflation-adjusted basis.

Clearly, it is important that AMSD Board Members and concerned citizens communicate with their local legislators and let them know that they need to improve on the Governor’s budget recommendations. Our schools are not immune from the impact of inflation. If we are truly committed to enhancing achievement for all

Percent Change Since FY 2003 in State Aid to MN School Districts Under Current Law & Governor’s Budget in Inflation-Adjusted Dollars Per Pupil



Revenue data from Price of Gov’t reports; inflation adjustment based on PGSL; enrollment data from MN DoE (ADMs)

students, the state budget needs to recognize that simple reality.

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