

AMSD Calendar

MARCH 8, 2007

Board of Directors Meeting, 7 a.m.

TIES Building, St. Paul

Guest speakers: Rep. Mindy Greiling, Chair of the House K-12 Finance Division and Sen. Terry Bonoff, Vice-Chair of the Senate E-12 Finance Division

MARCH 22, 2007

Legislative Committee Meeting, 7 a.m.

TIES Building, St. Paul

APRIL 12, 2007

Executive Committee Meeting, 7 a.m.

TIES Building, St. Paul

APRIL 19, 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**



As members of the 2007-08 kindergarten class, these students can participate in Richfield's Dual Language Immersion Program, scheduled for implementation in the fall. About half of the program participants will be students whose first language is Spanish and the other half will be students whose first language is English. The goal is for program participants to become bilingual and bi-literate in both English and Spanish, perform at or above grade level, and develop positive cross-cultural attitudes and behaviors.

Richfield Public Schools to offer Dual Language Immersion Program

Parents registering their children for kindergarten in the Richfield Public Schools will have an exciting new program option. Beginning in 2007-08, Richfield will become the first suburban district in Minnesota to establish a Dual Language Immersion Program (DLI), also referred to as a "two-way immersion" program. Implementation will begin with kindergarten and one grade will be added each year thereafter, through grade five.

The Richfield DLI Program will focus on English and Spanish. About half of the program participants will be

(Continued on page 3)

From the Chair

To no great surprise, the February budget forecast showed virtually no change from the November forecast. Nonetheless, many people had held out hope that the forecast would show a bigger surplus and an easier path to adequately funding public education. It is clear that the Legislature must significantly improve on the Governor's budget proposal for E-12 education. A January survey showed that AMSD districts would be facing a cumulative budget shortfall of \$58 million under the Governor's proposed budget.

Indeed, the newspapers are littered with stories of districts throughout the metro with plans to close schools, lay off teachers, cut activities as well as other "creative" solutions such as increasing walking distance by students to cut down on transportation costs and eliminating substitute janitors. These cuts come at the same time policymakers are placing increased expectations on our schools. Dozens of bills containing new mandates

(Continued on page 4)

All-day kindergarten students reap ongoing benefits

Multi-year study conducted in Burnsville reinforces previous studies

The Burnsville-Eagan-Savage School District recently released data collected during the latest stage of its multi-year study of the impact of all-day kindergarten on student achievement. The results reinforce the conclusion of multiple previous studies of all-day programs – that students enrolled in all-day kindergarten programs reap ongoing benefits in their academic careers. At the same time, the results do not suggest that kindergarten instruction, no matter the length of contact time, promises to eliminate the achievement differential between majority and minority students, clearly observable in the kindergarten data.

The Burnsville Schools initiated the all-day kindergarten study with students enrolled in the 2003-4 school year, providing universal-access all-day kindergarten services to students of appropriate age. These students, called the “universal all-day cohort” in the study, are today third graders. Of the 813 students in the universal all-day cohort, 539 students remain enrolled in the district, providing the data for the multi-year study.

In the budget process for the 2004-5 school year, the district was not able to maintain funding for continued universal-access all-day kindergarten, and families chose between fee-based all-day kindergarten, or half-day kindergarten at no cost. The tests employed to measure student progress are the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests (“Gates”) and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, as well as teacher surveys in the district and in another control district. While the truncation of the universal cohort reduces the quantity of data available, the District’s study continues to yield provocative results.

All-day kindergarten works.

Students in the universal all-day cohort exhibited considerable growth during the kindergarten year, in measures ranging from recognition of letters and sounds to mastery in counting. Teachers reported that their instruction could be more individualized in the all-day setting, and that content could be visited in more detail.

These students started first grade with an average Gates test score of 55.93 (61st percentile), and climbed to 65.46 (77th percentile) by the spring, representing a statistically significant shift. Had these students progressed at a

These students started first grade with an average Gates test score of 55.93 (61st percentile), and climbed to 65.46 (77th percentile) by the spring, representing a statistically significant shift. Had these students progressed at a rate equal to the national average, they would have remained at the 61st percentile level.

rate equal to the national average, they would have remained at the 61st percentile level. In the second grade, the universal all-day cohort continued to perform between 61.6-61.8, indicating sustained achievement above the national average. In the fall of 2006, at the outset of third grade, the 539 students still in the universal all-day cohort in the Burnsville district scored 55.61 on the Gates test, indicating a potential dilution of the effects previously observed.

Students of color, those eligible for free and reduced lunch and English language learners all showed improved achievement that mirrored the success of the universal all-day cohort as a whole. However, while improving, the achievement levels of these students did not rise at rates aggressive enough to close the persistent achievement gap. For example, the difference in Gates scores for students eligible and not eligible for free and reduced lunch remained flat between fall of first grade and fall of third grade. The gap between white students and Hispanic students, who scored the lowest in the cohort, increased slightly during the same period. A comparable dynamic applied for the English language learners.

Students enrolled in the fee-based all-day kindergarten in the 2004-5 school year exhibited comparable benefits as in the universal all-day cohort, as well as comparable differences in achievement associated with race and poverty. The half-day kindergarten student scores reveal improvement, but at reduced levels that are statistically significant. Of note, the universal full-day cohort scores in second grade were significantly higher than the fee-based full-day students enrolled in kindergarten the following year (average scores of 61.82 versus 56.35).

(Continued on page 4)

Program aims to foster multilingualism, cultural learning

(Continued from Page 1)

students whose first language is Spanish and the other half will be students whose first language is English.

DLI programs are rigorous. The goal of DLI programs is *two-way* immersion, so that participants will become bilingual and bi-literate, are able to perform at or above grade level across all content areas in both languages, and to develop positive cross-cultural attitudes and behaviors.

The DLI program grew out of a feasibility study funded by an Innovative Programs Grant from the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE). Dr. Tara Fortune, immersion projects coordinator at the University of Minnesota's Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition, has served as a resource to the DLI study committee.

Addressing the Richfield Board of Education, Dr. Fortune observed that, with Latino students making up about a third of Richfield's elementary enrollment, "Richfield is incredibly well-positioned to sponsor this program." She also highlighted DLI program benefits based on research that shows "phenomenally impressive results."

- The DLI program is a response to national interest in multilingualism. Participants in dual language immersion programs develop a high level of second language proficiency and are well positioned to study a third or fourth language in the future.
- DLI programs strengthen intercultural awareness and help build cross cultural connections. Dr. Fortune stated, "It shows great respect to say, 'I want to learn about your language and culture.'"
- Research suggests that DLI program participants perform as well as or better than their same language, non-immersion peers on standardized tests taken in English.
- DLI is the most effective program model for Latino English Language Learners in the development of academic English skills. In addition, participating language minority students are more



Dr. Tara Fortune, immersion projects coordinator at the University of Minnesota's Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition, told the Richfield school board, "Richfield is incredibly well-positioned" to sponsor a Spanish/English DLI Program.

likely to graduate from high school and go on to post-secondary education.

- Participants in DLI programs tend to like school, feel good about themselves, and experience academic success.
- DLI programs attract and hold families in public schools.

Parent input through surveys, informational meetings and written communications reflects strong interest in the program.

One parent wrote, "Providing opportunities to become truly bilingual is one way to effectively prepare our children for the multi-cultural, international opportunities that will exist in their lifetimes."

A second parent, who interprets for the deaf, emphasized that learning another language helps us "connect, relate and make a difference with each other."

A third parent commented, "The thing that interests me the most is the idea that she will be learning more than ever from her classmates."

Other parents concluded that the DLI Program will provide a "quality learning experience" that will "raise the quality of our schools, attract new families and keep existing families."

For more information, go to www.rschoolday.com/rps/CIT and click on the Dual Language Immersion tab on the left, or contact DLI Coordinator Luis Versalles at 612-798-6028.

This month's member spotlight was submitted by Richfield Public Schools Superintendent Barbara Devlin.

"Providing opportunities to become truly bilingual is one way to effectively prepare our children for the multi-cultural, international opportunities that will exist in their lifetimes."

Richfield Public Schools Parent

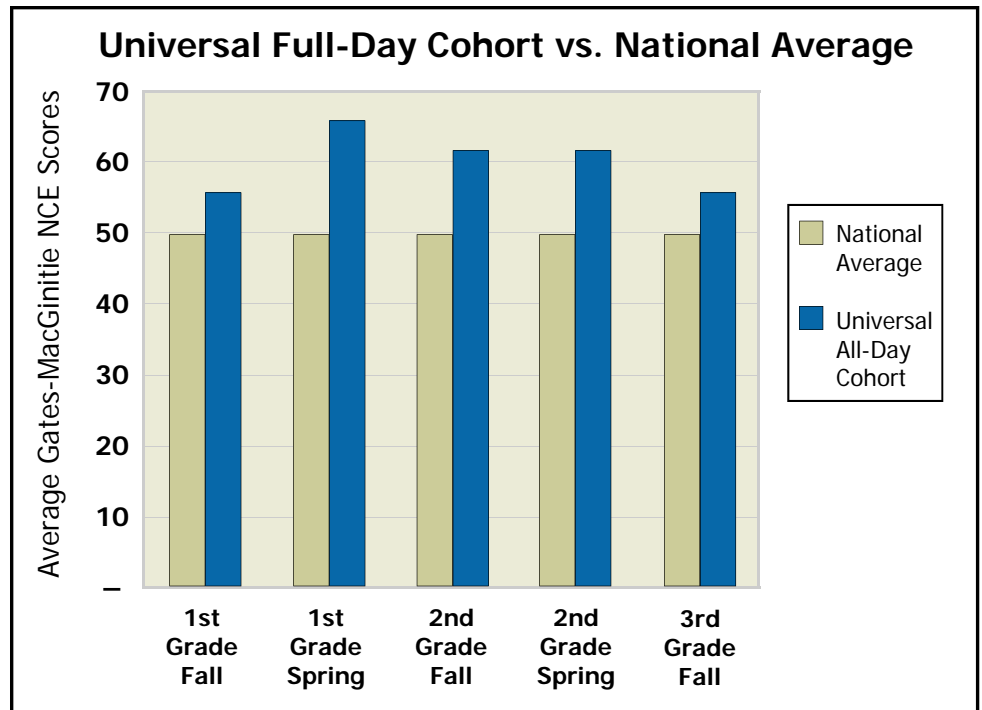
Study shows benefits of all-day kindergarten are quantifiable

(Continued from Page 2)

Dilution of full-day kindergarten cohorts impacts achievement.

The impact of mobility is noted in the latest iteration of the Burnsville study, but is difficult to quantify. Over 42 percent of the students who joined the universal all-day kindergarten cohort in first or second grade are eligible for free and reduced lunch, creating a significant increase in the at-risk student population within the cohort.

If relatively few students in a first- or second-grade classroom participated in an all-day kindergarten program, the benefits observed in the study are likely to diminish. First- and second-grade teachers in the study's comparison district expressed much less confidence in the changes that an all-day kindergarten program had inspired in their students – and most also observed that they had only one or two students who had been enrolled in full-day kindergarten. The results appear to indicate that if a “critical mass” of students with all-day kindergarten experience is enrolled together in a first- or second-grade classroom, the benefits of such a program are more sustainable.



All-day kindergarten is the subject of much discussion at the Legislature this session, and the Burnsville study represents two key messages for policy makers. First, the benefits of all-day kindergarten are real and quantifiable, and they can be maintained by encouraging the broadest participation in all-day kindergarten possible. Second, the results highlight the difficulty of addressing the achievement gap in the classroom alone, and call for a broad policy approach to giving every student a strong start.

Budget forecast offers little hope for fully funding MN education

(Continued from Page 1)

for our schools have been introduced even though federal and state policymakers have not shown the political will to fund existing programs.

More importantly, though, are the long-term effects of these cuts. If we are to compete in a global economy, Minnesota cannot afford to short-change our students when it comes to education. We cannot expect districts to provide the same level of education, much less a ramped up effort, without the funding to do so.

As the legislative session kicks into high gear, concerned citizens must once again take a stand and demand adequate funding for our schools. Our future depends on it.

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