

AMSD Calendar

MAY 3, 2007

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

MAY 10, 2007

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

MAY 17, 2007

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

MAY 24, 2007

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

JUNE 14, 2007

Executive 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

Spring Lake Park to help with Systemic High School Redesign

Spring Lake Park High School is one of only four Minnesota schools selected to help redesign the state's high schools. The school was awarded a grant by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) to help create a model group of high schools committed to significant redesign resulting in increased student engagement and academic achievement.

Redesigning high schools is of national and statewide interest, and has the backing of government and business leaders.

Spring Lake Park had to prove that it was "poised for change" and "willing to implement substantive school improvements" with support from MDE over a three-year period.

Grant-winners Spring Lake Park, along with Fridley, Delano, and Long Prairie, will gather, analyze and utilize multiple sources of data; develop strong effective, change-orientated leadership; and implement results-based programs and strategies that address the five core outcomes of the Systematic High School Redesign: Building a Minnesota Model initiative. They are:

- Rigorous and relevant courses for all students, especially at transition points.



From the Chair

With less than a month remaining in the 2007 legislative session, legislators and the governor will soon be making decisions that will determine the level of funding for public education over the next biennium. Rather than take a wait and see stance, I strongly encourage AMSD Board Members and everyone who cares about public education to contact the governor, legislative leaders, members of the conference committee and their local legislators to convey to them our top priorities and the importance of those priorities in Minnesota's future. (A list of the conferees along with their contact information is available on our web site at www.amsd.org.)

At our last meeting, the Board of Directors approved a funding priorities position statement based upon the legislative platform we adopted in December. This position statement also takes into consideration the current political climate and the legislation on the table. I urge you to ask for the following items to be imple-

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Significant funding issues summarized

As the 2007 legislative session winds down, the governor and legislators will soon be making budget decisions that will determine funding levels for our public schools over the next two years. The following is a summary of three of the most significant funding issues for metro school districts.

The value of the basic formula has been eroded over time by inflation.

AMSD has documented the gradual reduction in real dollars on the basic formula. In the 1991-92 school year, the basic formula allowance was \$3,050 per pupil. Since that time, while increasing the formula incrementally, state leaders have also chosen to eliminate separate revenue streams and roll them into the formula. The effect of this process has been to reduce the value of the funds designated for core education programs. The graph shown below illustrates how inflation has pushed the gap between the 1991-92 funding levels and current funding levels more than \$700 per pupil. The 2 percent basic formula increase proposed

by the governor and Senate would flatten but not reduce the formula gap, while the House proposal to raise the allowance by 3 percent per year would reduce the gap to \$613 per pupil in the 2008-09 school year.

This analysis and others undertaken at AMSD use the implicit price deflator (IPD) as a measure of inflation. The IPD is recommended by the State's Council of Economic Advisors as the most accurate indicator of inflation for goods and services purchased by state and local governments.

Chronic underfunding of special education services has left school districts to scramble for local resources to meet the state's commitment.

The Minnesota Department of Education has projected that school districts will this year use over \$120 million to fund special education services that, under Minnesota statute, are the state's responsibility. Furthermore, the department anticipates that the statewide special education cross subsidy will reach \$518 million in the current year due to the

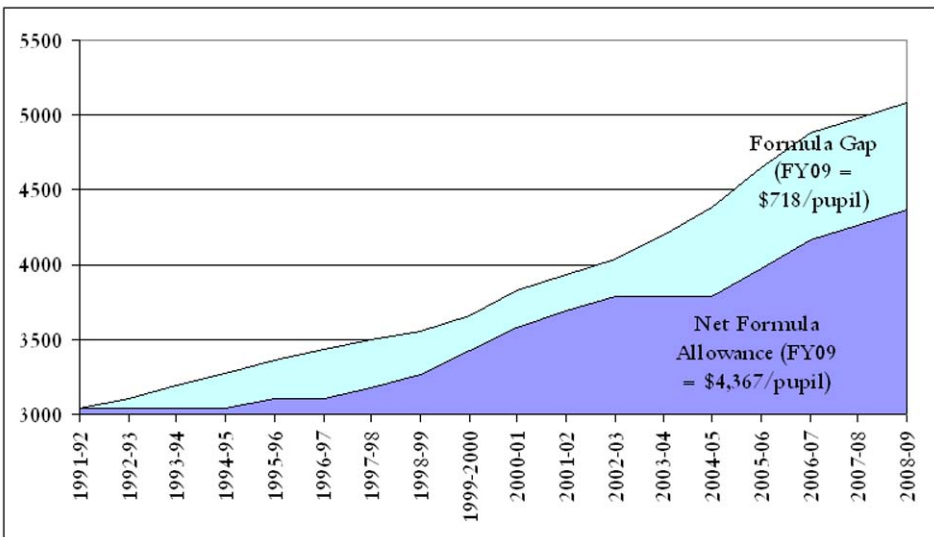
failure of the federal and state governments to adequately fund special education.

The Senate K-12 omnibus bill includes a provision to fully fund the state's special education commitment. Retaining the provision is a critical and effective way to address an unfulfilled state commitment and it increases the level of transparency for voters, citizens and taxpayers. Under the status quo, 27 percent of the districts with an operating referendum redirect more funding per pupil to special education than they collect per pupil under the referendum. This year, more than 65 percent of these districts will use \$400 or more per pupil in funding for regular education to meet special education requirements. The conference committee will serve the needs of all Minnesota students by adopting the Senate provision to fully fund the state's commitment to special education.

Despite the evidence of easily accessible, public data and independent studies, the higher costs of labor borne by metropolitan districts are not reflected in Minnesota's funding formulas.

Data from the departments of Employment and Economic Development, as well as Education, clearly illustrate what most Minnesotans already know: The cost of doing business is higher in the metropolitan area. In the comprehensive Minnesota adequacy study completed by Augenblick, Palaich and Associates last fall, the housing and wage costs in the lowest-cost county (Big Stone) was measured to be 67 percent of those in the highest-cost county (Hennepin).

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Chair: Contact lawmakers now

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mented when communicating with legislators during this critical time:

- Full funding and reform of the state special education formula.
- A three percent increase per year in the basic funding formula.
- A Location Equity Index component added to the funding formula to recognize the higher operating costs in the metropolitan area and reduce reliance on the operating referendum.
- Funding to phase-in voluntary, full-day kindergarten and investments in quality early childhood learning programs for three- and four-year olds.

- At least \$50 per student in one-time funding to upgrade technology in all Minnesota schools.

Yes, these priorities aim high, but most of us encourage our students and children to aim high on a daily basis. Should our students expect any less from us? In these last weeks of the session, let's make an extra effort to reach out to our legislators and make sure they hear and understand the importance of funding these areas. Our future depends on it!

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

Funding issues...

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The House omnibus bill includes a provision implementing a "location equity index" or LEI, which would recognize the higher labor market costs faced by metropolitan school districts. As it passed on the House floor, the LEI authorizes \$500,000 statewide for FY2008 – a small representation of the actual impact of geographic cost differences. However, adopting the House's LEI provision would be a significant step toward aligning the state funding formulas with market realities and provide hope that metro school districts would not be so heavily reliant on the operating referendum in the future.

Spring Lake Park to assist state in school redesign initiative

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- Personalized learning environment for each student, with support of parents and other adult mentors.
- Multiple pathways to post-secondary training or college to achieve a minimum K-14 education.
- High quality teacher and principal leadership.
- Student assessment and program evaluation data used to continuously improve school climate, organization, management, curricula and instruction.

According to Principal Frank Herman, eight Spring Lake Park High School staff members were trained on data and program analysis in February. Rigorous planning took place in March, and a detailed project was developed for the school.

The Spring Lake Park team elected to target students who had two or more failures in their first trimester. The following are part of the intervention plan developed for each student:

- an adult mentor
- weekly meeting with a counselor
- tutoring services offered

- a student mentor
- parents contacted weekly
- self assessment
- chemical pre-assessment
- pre- and post-survey

Herman said he and his staff are optimistic and excited about attaining "the lofty goal" of having no failures for 90 percent of the identified students for the third trimester this year.

Consultants from the MDE are working alongside Spring Lake Park staff on this three-year project. What is learned along the way will be shared with other Minnesota school districts.

"Hopefully, the work we're doing as a result of the MDE grant will not only significantly help our own students, but eventually all students throughout the state," said Herman. "We're in this together."

This month's member spotlight was submitted by Spring Lake Park Public Schools Communications Coordinator Jim Elert.

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