

Mark Your Calendar!

OCTOBER 5

Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting, 7-9 a.m., TIES Building, St. Paul

OCTOBER 12

Board of Directors Meeting, 7-9 a.m. TIES Building, St. Paul
Guest Speaker: Attorney General Mike Hatch

SAVE THE DATE!

DECEMBER 1

Policy conference on school funding sponsored by AMSD, SEE and MREA, 8-12 at the Sheraton Bloomington. More details will be coming soon.

Brooklyn Center Schools

Expect the Best!



Brooklyn Center Schools Focused on Stable Future

The Brooklyn Center School District is going back to voters this fall and telling them to expect the best. *Strong Schools = Strong Communities: Expect the Best* is the theme of the district's effort to actively involve residents in providing stable funding to keep Brooklyn Center Schools strong with the ultimate goal of student success.

In this year's campaign, parents and staff are highlighting District 286's long-standing tradition of being unique—a small district with the big benefit of personal attention for every student. Brooklyn Center's quality of education, combined with the individual attention of a small school setting, means every student can expect to learn.

The district has adopted a long-term financial plan that will help their schools be strong centers of learning well into the future. A key element in the long-term financial plan is the stable funding that can be provided by a renewed levy. The levy referendum election on Tuesday, November 7 will give voters the opportunity to provide up to \$515 in additional funds per student. The questions will ask voters to:

1) Approve a 10-year, \$315 per student levy. The levy that was originally approved in 1995 for \$253 per student expired last year.

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From the Chair

November 7 is right around the corner and with it an opportunity to put local and state representatives in office who are committed to supporting public education.

On page 2 of this month's *Connections*, results of the recent Phi Kappa/Gallup survey are highlighted that provide a summary of how Americans feel on a number of issues important to public education. For example, the majority of respondents felt the lack of financial support was the single greatest challenge facing our schools today.

Make sure you take the time to find out where candidates really stand on the issues and then get involved in the election process like never before. In addition to the Phi Kappa/Gallup survey, AMSD recently updated its Voter's Guide to be used as a resource for anyone concerned about the future of public education. The Voter's Guide can be found on the home page of AMSD's web site at www.amsd.org. Jane Eckert, school board member from St. Anthony/New Brighton, is chair of the Association of Metropolitan School Districts.

Expect the Best from Brooklyn Center Schools! Brooklyn Center High School Band students and band teacher Chris Porter with the Grammy award they recently won.



AMSD's Mission

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



Association of
Metropolitan School Districts

2) Increase the district's levy authority by \$200 per student for 10 years. This funding would restore academic resources, such as librarians and smaller class sizes, and allow the district to raise the bar on learning by improving instruction and curriculum.

The referendum campaign stresses that quality schools translate to strong property values and stable communities. The district expects the best from its students, and families and residents should expect the best from Brooklyn Center Schools. Many points of pride are being highlighted in this year's campaign such as:

- ▶ Elementary students exceed state goals for math and reading scores.
- ▶ Students in grades pre-K through 12 have great access to technology.
- ▶ All-day, every-day kindergarten is offered to every student.
- ▶ Brooklyn Center High School's band is 200 members strong—the largest band in 30 years and the recent winner of a Grammy award!
- ▶ A diverse student body that reflects a diverse world.

For more information about Brooklyn Center's referendum campaign, contact Superintendent Keith Lester at 763-561-2120 ext. 1000, or visit the district's web site at www.brookcntr.k12.mn.us

National Poll Reveals Positive Attitudes about Public Education

For the 38th consecutive year, Phi Delta Kappa and Gallup joined forces to survey over 1,000 people this summer to gauge their attitudes toward public education. The poll posed a range of questions explored in previous years, and a number of new questions as well. Full copies of the poll and a description of methodology and sampling error are available at the web addresses shown at the bottom of the article. Due to the range of topics and the quantitative nature of the findings, the key findings are summarized below:

TOPIC	POLL RESULTS
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When asked to name the biggest problem local schools must deal with, almost twice as many respondents cited lack of financial support as any other issue. The second-ranked issue was overcrowded schools—a challenge caused by lack of funding.
Local Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asked whether the Federal, State or school board policy makers should most influence school policy, 58% indicated the school board, down from 68% in 1980.
Vouchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since peaking in 2002 at 46%, the percentage of respondents who favor allowing public payment of private school tuition has dropped to 36%.
School Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the last five years, the percentage of respondents who believe policy should focus on reforming the existing school system has risen from 69% to 71%, while those who favor finding an alternative system has dropped slightly from 27% to 24%. • When asked to grade America's public schools, 56% of public school parents award the system an "A" or "B". When the same group is asked to grade the school their oldest child attends, this figure rises to 64%. Parents are more confident about the schools they know.
Achievement Gap	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 88% of respondents believe it is very or somewhat important to close the achievement gap between Black and Hispanic and white students; this represents a decline from 94% in 2002. • 49% of public school parents, versus 60% of respondents without children, believe it is the responsibility of our public schools to close the achievement gap. • When asked if the achievement gap for Black and Hispanic students is primarily attributable to quality of schooling or other factors, 79% indicated other factors and 17% chose the quality of schooling. Four years ago, 22% chose schooling and 75% pointed to other factors as causes of the achievement gap.
Testing and No Child Left Behind (NCLB)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 45% of public school parents who responded believe current policy places too high an emphasis on achievement testing in local public schools, up from 34% in 2000. 36% of participants with no children in school agreed, versus 28% in 2000. • 63% of respondents favor the requirement of an examination for graduation for all high school students. • Of respondents who say that know a "great deal" or "fair amount" about NCLB, 29% believe the law is helping local public schools, while 31% believe the law has a negative impact. 37% aren't sure. • The same pool of respondents are evenly split about whether public schools or the law are to blame in cases where schools do not meet AYP requirements.
Early Childhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do preschool programs help children in poverty perform better in school in their teen years? 49% believe so, up from 39% in 1992. • 66% of respondents indicated willingness to pay more taxes to fund such programs, compared to 49% in 1992.
Instructional Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Americans appear ambivalent about adding contact hours to the school year: 48% of poll participants favored extending school time, and 49% opposed it—but in a separate question, 67% indicated they would favor extending the school day in local public schools by one hour.

Full text of poll and methodology available at www.pdkintl.org/kappan/kpollpdf.htm

Information about sampling error available at www.pdkintl.org/kappan/kpollsample.htm