

August 2008  
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## AMSD Calendar

**SEPTEMBER 5, 2008**  
Executive/Legislative  
Committee Meeting,  
7:30 a.m., TIES  
Building, St. Paul

**SEPTEMBER 12, 2008**  
Board of Directors  
Meeting, 7 a.m., TIES  
Building, St. Paul

**OCTOBER 23-24,  
2008**  
Institute on Race and  
Poverty Conference  
*Region: Law, Policy and  
the Future of the Twin  
Cities*  
U of M Law School,  
Walter Mondale Hall,  
Room 25, Minneapolis  
(Co-sponsored by  
AMSD)

## AMSD's Mission

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



Association of  
Metropolitan School Districts

## District enhances safety

*St. Louis Park Public Schools  
takes part in safety exercise to  
prepare for violence in schools*

When the call came in to the St. Louis Park Police Dispatch just after 7 p.m. on Monday, July 28th that there was a shooting at St. Louis Park High School you could almost hear a pin drop. After a collective deep breath by everyone in the Joint Emergency Management Center to remind themselves that this was a “training exercise” the real work began.

St. Louis Park Public Schools in conjunction with the City of St. Louis Park, Park Nicollet Methodist Hospital, Hennepin County, and public safety personnel (police, fire, and others) from neighboring communities were all active participants in the joint emergency management exercise.

The training focused on ways to respond to active shooter situations or other violent incidents on school campuses and in other public venues. It should be noted here that the training was not the result of any specific threat or incident in the community, but instead the training goal was to test school and city emergency plans and procedures and increase the proficiency level of responders and dispatchers to better prepare them to successfully engage in an emergency situation.

One of the many strategies employed to make the training a success was the early and open communication with St. Louis Park residents as well as open and honest dialogue among the training participants about what was and was not working in the exercise.

This exercise provided an “active” scene at the school with children and adults playing the various roles of student, teacher, principal, and office staff, emergency personnel and even multiple shooters in the scenario.

School staff reacted to the incident as if it were happening during the course of a normal school day.

At City Hall, predetermined as the Joint Emergency Management Center, I conducted business as if the emergency was actually taking place ... making operational

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## From the Chair

In his most recent State of the State speech, Governor Pawlenty aptly described one of the challenges Minnesota public schools face: “the power and efficiency of technology has hardly been tapped in our public K-12 system, but it is transforming almost every other institution and aspect of our lives... You have heard me talk many times of how our schools must become educational ‘I-Pods.’ ”

Governor Pawlenty is right to raise that issue, as he has been a staunch advocate of schools being open to change. So is that failure to harness technology the result of some deep-seated, Luddite-like resistance to technology on the part of the education profession, or is it because Minnesota consistently ranks in the bottom third of all 50 states in a yearly, comprehensive evaluation and ranking of state funding for K-12 educational technology performed by the journal *Education Week*?

When it comes to funding, opponents of public education frequently ask, how much is enough? There are many ways to answer that question. One

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# How does Minnesota rank in education spending? It depends

When it comes to analyzing education funding there is a plethora of information to sift through. There are comparisons to other countries, other states and district comparisons within the state. Comparisons are shown on a per pupil basis, per capita, and by \$1,000 in personal income, just to name a few.

For school administrators and school board members, it is a constant challenge to try to project the level of resources they will receive from federal, state and local sources to support the programming their students need to meet state and federal performance expectations. Is the State providing the resources necessary to meet mandates and student and community expectations?

The US Census bureau (<http://www.census.gov/govs/www/school.html>) recently released statistics on school spending for 2005-06. The numbers show Minnesota has declined in state rankings over the past decade. The chart below shows where Minnesota has ranked in total elementary – secondary expenditures since the 1996-97 school year. (For additional details see [http://www.amsd.org/research\\_stats.html](http://www.amsd.org/research_stats.html).)

Year	Per Pupil	Per \$1,000 in Personal Income
1996-97	15	21
1997-98	17	29
1998-99	18	30
1999-00	18	32
2000-01	20	33
2001-02	20	39
2002-03	21	41
2003-04	21	40
2004-05	23	42
2005-06	22	41

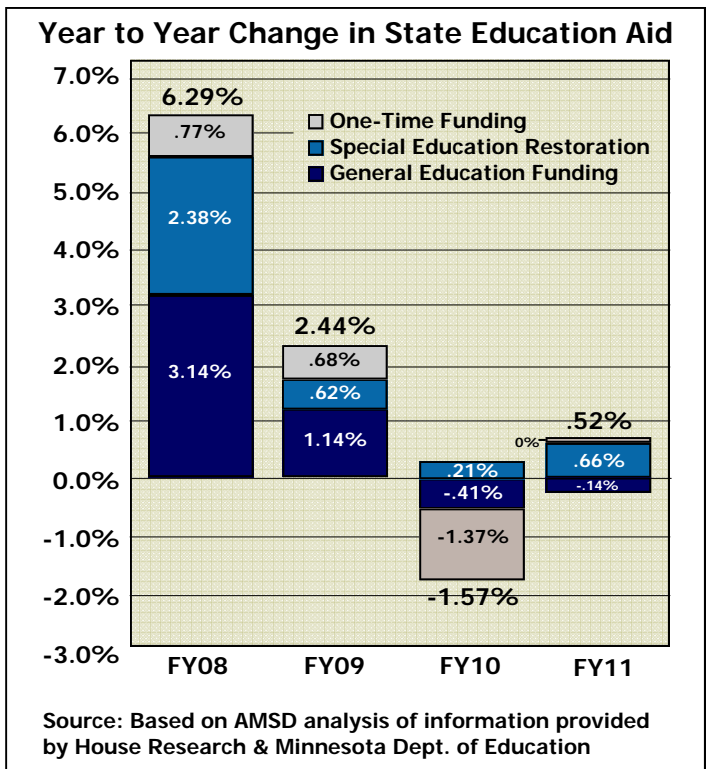
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

In 1996-97 Minnesota ranked 15<sup>th</sup> in total spending per pupil, but by 2005-06 the ranking had dropped to 22<sup>nd</sup>. In 1996-97 Minnesota ranked 21<sup>st</sup> in total spending per \$1,000 in personal income, but by 2005-06 the ranking had dropped to 41<sup>st</sup>.

Groups as diverse as MN2020 ([http://www.mn2020.org/index.asp?Type=B\\_BASIC&SEC=%7B2379290F-06EC-4A44-87FC-BA2DC659E02C%7D&DE=](http://www.mn2020.org/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC=%7B2379290F-06EC-4A44-87FC-BA2DC659E02C%7D&DE=)) and the Minnesota Taxpayers Association <http://mntax.org/cpfr/documents/>

HDMC08.pdf have further analyzed census data figures incorporating tax data and inflation values. Both groups lend support to the claim that Minnesota’s commitment to funding education has declined over the past 10 years.

While the Governor and Legislators develop the state budget on a biennial basis, school district budgets are driven by the change in revenue and expenses on a year-to-year basis. Three of the major components impacting the total revenue a school district receives are state aids for general education, special education, and one-time funding. The projected year-to-year changes on a per pupil basis (under current law) in these funding streams is shown in the graph below.



The above numbers represent the overall changes on a per-pupil basis for the entire state. As the old saying goes “individual results may vary.” Given the rates of inflation, rapidly escalating energy costs, and the above outlook for FY 2010-11, it is no surprise that a number of school districts will again be seeking voter approval for operating levies this fall. It is also not a surprise that there is a growing call from parents, students and educators to overhaul Minnesota’s education funding system.

A proposal for a “New Minnesota Miracle” was developed by a bi-partisan legislative task force last session and is generating a great deal of discussion. AMSD board members and staff are eager to assist the Governor and Legislators in moving this proposal forward.

## *SLP works with local emergency personnel to improve safety*

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decisions by phone with district staff who remained at the site, preparing media briefs with the school district and city communications staff and later in the evening participating in a “mock” press conference to brief the media about the incident.

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The emergency training also gave officials from multiple agencies a chance to look at the current emergency response plans and examine where additional training, planning and procedures may be improved. A plan may look great on paper, but until you actually put it into action, you have no idea where improvements can or should be made. This training enables us to be as prepared as possible.

So what can you do in your district? Work with your local emergency management personnel to conduct a large-scale exercise to test your emergency plans and procedures.

Creating a safe and secure place of learning for our children is our first and primary goal. This training was intended to test our emergency plans and procedures and to ensure that responders are properly educated on how to respond to an incident if it were to occur.

Today we are better prepared to protect our students should an emergency situation arise!

*This month's member feature was submitted by Sara Thompson, Communications Specialist St. Louis Park Public Schools.*

## From the Chair: Funding needed for implementation of technology

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way is to look at what other states are spending. Minnesota is dropping in virtually every survey or ranking that has surfaced in the last few years.

Another, more local, method is to analyze what Twin City private schools are spending. A brief review of websites provides some interesting data. In 2002, The Blake School charged \$17,765 for tuition, fees and transportation for students attending the high school. In 2007, the charge was \$23,120, an increase of 30 percent over those five years.

Benilde-St. Margaret's increased 28 percent in the four-year period from 2004 to 2008; The Academy of the Holy Angels increased 36 percent in the six years from 2002 to 2008; and Breck School increased an average of 5 percent per year from 2002 to 2008. Most people would agree that these are good schools that are not prone to wasting money; they increased tuition and fees because costs were going up, and they want to maintain their excellence.

Public school leaders and parents face the same cost pressures and have the same desire to maintain excellence in their schools. This has become increasingly difficult in recent years. Since 2003, the year the State began what was supposed to be a renewed commitment to properly funding our public schools, average per pupil funding has increased by 21.7 percent - from \$7,244 to 8,815. On an inflation adjusted basis, this actually translates into a 4.4 percent decline in per pupil funding since 2003.

Funding our public schools is not a new issue. Mark Twain, born on Nov. 30, 1835 addressed this very issue in his later years: “When I was a boy on the Mississippi River there was a proposition in a township there to discontinue public schools because they were too expensive. An old farmer spoke up and said if they stopped funding schools that they would not save anything, because every time a school was closed, a jail had to be built.”

I have enjoyed the opportunity to serve as chair of AMSD this past year. I look forward to continuing to work on education issues in general, and the passage of the New Minnesota Miracle in particular.

*John Malone, school board member from Orono, is chair of the Association of Metropolitan School Districts.*

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**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, Northeast Metro Intermediate School District 916 (Associate Member), North St. Paul/Maplewood/Oakdale, Orono, Richfield, Robbinsdale, Roseville, Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan, 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