

## AMSD Calendar

**NOVEMBER 6, 2007**  
ELECTION DAY  
Remember to vote!

**NOVEMBER 9, 2007**  
Executive/Legislative  
Meeting, 7 a.m.  
TIES Building, St. Paul

**NOVEMBER 16, 2007**  
Board of Directors  
Meeting, 7 a.m.  
TIES Building, St. Paul

**DECEMBER 17, 2007**  
Board of Directors  
Meeting, 7 a.m.  
TIES Building, St. Paul

**SAVE THE DATE!**  
**JANUARY 23, 2008**  
AMSD Winter  
Conference,  
8 a.m. to noon  
Roseville Radisson

## AMSD's Mission

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



Association of  
Metropolitan School Districts

## District 112: Creating the future on its own terms

Supt. David Jennings calls the choice “a simple one.”

Faced with compelling reasons to change the approach to high school education, the District 112 School Board had two choices: wait for the political process to address the issue through legislation and mandates, or create the future on the district's own terms.

“The Board concluded that we need to be a place where change is happening, not just being talked about,” Jennings said. “We're not looking to the state or the feds for money for more studies. We need to create our own future on our own terms.”

The need to proceed became more urgent with the upcoming opening of District 112's second high school, Chanhassen High, in 2009. At that point, the district's 9<sup>th</sup> grade center would become a middle school for grades 6-8 and freshmen would return to the high school to make it a four-year program. “We essentially will be opening five new schools in the fall of 2009,” Jennings said. “Pioneer Ridge becomes our third middle school at the same time our second high school opens. This is both an enormous challenge and an opportunity. It seemed like the right time to take a big step.”



**Chaska High's certified pre-engineering program, Project Lead the Way, provides students the opportunity to acquire college credit. It's one of several programs reflecting District 112's commitment to a 21<sup>st</sup> century redesign of its program for grades 6-12.**

## From the Chair

If lawmakers are looking for more proof that the public wants them to financially support schools, they can find it in the recently released Phi Delta Kappa and Gallup poll of America's attitudes toward public schools.

According to this annual poll in its 39<sup>th</sup> year, Americans say the biggest problem facing our schools is a lack of funding. Funding was identified by 22 percent of those polled and was far and away the top response given. Lack of discipline came in as the second biggest problem with 10 percent.

Interestingly, concern about standards and quality garnered only four percent of the responses. Even so, state and national policy discussions continue to center on standards and quality within the framework of NCLB, while seemingly ignoring America's larger concern about funding our schools.

Based upon poll results it seems fair to say that quality and standards may be of increasing concern for the public, but not because of a lack of confidence in local districts.

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# Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll results released

*The more American's know about NCLB, the less they seem to like it*

As America's knowledge of NCLB grows, the less they like the law, according to the annual Phi Delta Kappa and Gallup poll of America's attitudes toward public schools.

This year's poll shows that a record number of people, 54 percent of the total population, report knowing more about the law. At the same time, their view of the law has become increasingly negative. The poll shows that 68 percent of the population feels that NCLB is either hurting or making no difference in the quality of education our children receive.

NCLB relies heavily on testing English and math proficiency to determine student success. A big concern for 93 percent of those polled is that NCLB's emphasis on English and math is reducing the attention to other subjects like science, health, social studies and the arts. This year's poll found that 85 percent of

the respondents thought it very important or somewhat important for American students to learn a language in addition to English and that 70 percent of the respondents thought instruction in a second language should begin in elementary school. The public also believes that schools should play an important role in the behavioral, social and emotional needs of their students with 67 percent of respondents indicating as much.

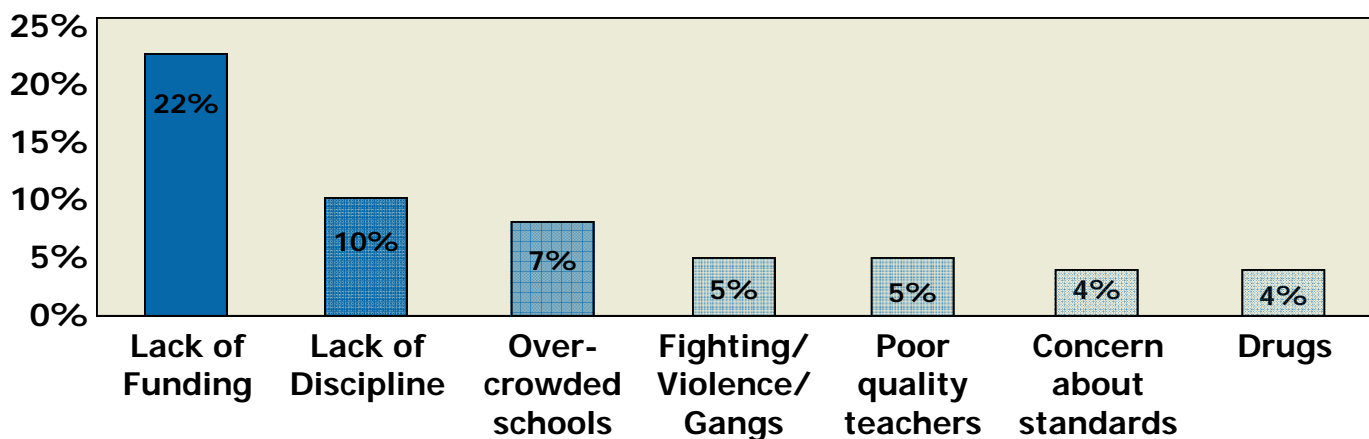
More than two-thirds of respondents believe the increased testing itself has either hurt the schools or has made no difference in the performance of schools as teachers resort to "teaching to the test" at the sacrifice of other academic goals. Sixty nine percent said that the emphasis on testing encourages teachers to "teach to the test" and 79 percent of those who said so also said they thought "teaching to the test" is bad for overall student achievement.

Another concern is the measurement strategies employed by NCLB. The inclusion of students with limited proficiency in English and special education students in the testing was deemed unfair by the majority of people polled (79 and 72 percent respectively) and 82 percent said student improvement is a better indicator of a school's performance than the percentage of students who pass a state test. However, the public is split on whether the testing should be national or state standards. Forty eight percent said they thought tests should be developed by states and 51 percent said they should be national.

A growing number of people say that the goals set up by NCLB are not achievable and that the law is to blame, not the schools. The number of people who said that it is not very likely or very unlikely that schools can guarantee that every student pass the state proficiency test by 2013-14

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**Public's response to the question:  
What is the biggest problem facing schools?**



Data from the 2007 Phi Delta Kappa and Gallup poll of America's attitudes toward public schools.

# Majority say NCLB has had negative effect on education

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nearly doubled since 2002 from 18 percent to the 2007 figure of 32 percent. Additionally, 49 percent indicated that they would blame the law, not the school, up from 41 percent in 2006. Of those who said they knew a great deal about the law, 56 percent said they would blame the law, not the schools if schools failed to meet the requirements established by the NCLB law.

One of the goals of NCLB is closing the achievement gap so respondents were asked what they thought were effective strategies for addressing this goal. Providing students with more instructional time and assistance was identified as the most effective method with 65 percent indicating that it would be “very effective.” Forty-eight percent said providing additional, voluntary pre-

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## 39th annual Phi Delta Kappa and Gallup poll

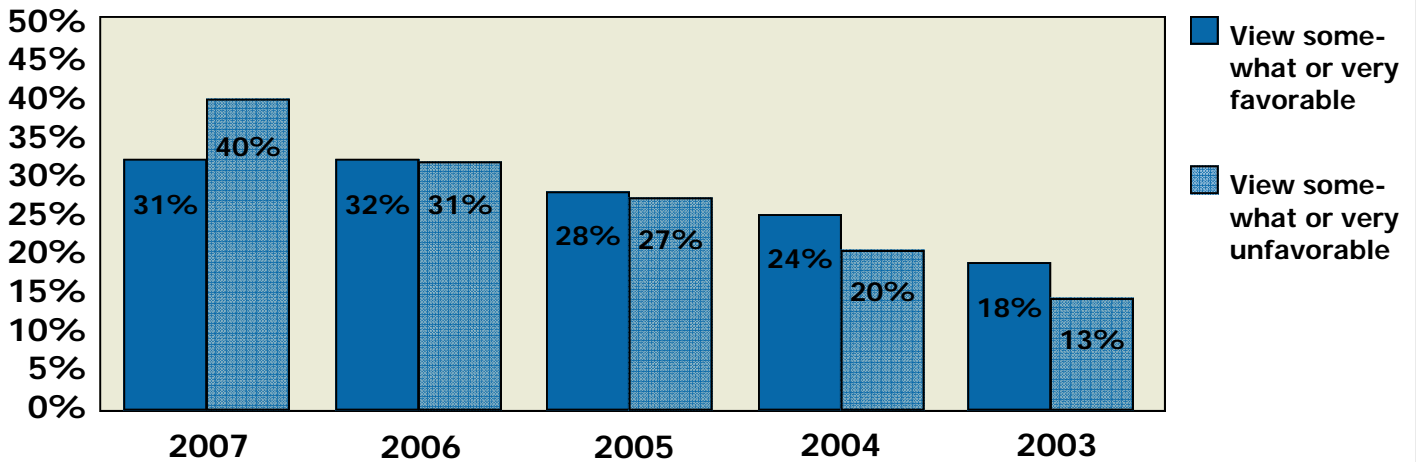
school and kindergarten care for low-performing students would be “very effective” and 30 percent said open enrollment would be “very effective.” Only 20 percent said vouchers for low performing students would be “very effective”

While the general public seems to realize the importance of providing a well-rounded curriculum and closing the achievement gap, it also

had indicated that it is aware of the costs associated with these goals and the fact that schools are currently under funded. Twenty-two percent said that lack of financial support is the biggest problem facing our schools with no other problem coming close.

The full text of the poll can be found at <http://www.pdkintl.org/kappan/kpollpdf.htm>.

**Public's perception of NCLB**



Data from the 2007 Phi Delta Kappa and Gallup poll of America's attitudes toward public schools.

**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

# Chaska addresses 21st century learning world

(Continued from Page 1)

The changes slated for 2009 prompted the school board to extend its vision for change from high school to grades 6-12.

“This was an opportunity to look at the total secondary program as a system instead of individual entities,” Jennings said. “The board decided to move forward with a redesign of grades 6-12 with an eye to creating schools that truly reflect the requirements of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”

District 112’s school board created a 60-member Secondary Program Design Team led by David Brecht, an assistant high school principal on special assignment. The team included teachers from every secondary grade level and content area, parents, community members, students, and administrators. Meeting since January, 2007, this group reviewed national research and found that while many things happening in today’s classrooms provide learners with solid preparation, significant changes needed to be made to truly address the realities of a 21<sup>st</sup>-century world.

Preliminary recommendations have been shared with the entire staff

and the District 112 community; the school board will act November 8. The “big ideas” taking shape include personalizing learning experiences; all graduates competent in a second language; small learning communities; every student prepared for admission to a post-secondary program; increased emphasis on service; and the movement to time as a variable. The complete work of the Secondary Design Team is available at [www.district112.org](http://www.district112.org).

Now that the road map is in place, the details surrounding implementation take the stage.

“We have a lot of work ahead of us,” Jennings said. “This year we will name the principals of the new schools, convene committees to work on graduation requirements, boundaries for all schools, the middle school and high school schedules and develop the process to move staff among the five buildings.

“While that is happening,” he said, “we will name five core teams, one for each of our secondary schools. The core teams will be charged with developing an implementation plan for each school based on the recommendations of the Sec-

ondary Design Team.”

Jennings noted that “over the next two years, we will transform our secondary program into a 21<sup>st</sup> century design. We’re doing this because it’s the right thing to do for our students and our community. The digital revolution, the information age, and the demographic tides sweeping the country make obvious the demand for something far different for learners at the secondary level, something far beyond what we have known in the past.”

“Education today is about helping kids think critically and make good decisions, about helping them understand their world and its cultures, about helping them embrace technology and understand both its strength and its limitations, about helping them understand the difference between information and knowledge, and about giving them the self confidence and skills to be successful. It’s too important to be left to politicians and foundations. We have to create the future we want for ourselves.”

*This month’s member spotlight was submitted by Nancy Kracke, Community Relations Director for District 112.*

## From the Chair: Poll shows public recognizes funding need

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Americans are growing more concerned about NCLB’s strategies in improving the quality of education. Respondents who said they viewed NCLB unfavorably grew by 27 percent since 2003 to a total of 40 percent in 2007.

Curriculum is also a growing concern as a result of NCLB. Ninety three percent of those polled reported that they fear the emphasis placed on testing English and math by NCLB is

detracting from a schools’ ability to provide a well-rounded education for all students. This brings us right back to the funding issue.

NCLB speaks volumes about holding 10 year old children “accountable” for high-stakes testing, but is silent on class size, Pre-K programs and providing schools the resources required to propel students

*Respondents who said they viewed NCLB unfavorably grew by 27% since 2003 to a total of 40% in 2007.*

forward. It is time lawmakers were held “accountable”; there is no point in reauthorizing NCLB unless there is adequate funding to make it work.

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