

# AMSD

December 2008  
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# CONNECTIONS

News and Updates from the Association of Metropolitan School Districts

## AMSD Calendar

December 5, 2008

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

December 19, 2008

Board of Directors Meeting/Legislative Session Preview 8 a.m., Grand Hall, TIES Building, St. Paul

January 6, 2009

2009 Legislative Session Convenes State Capitol

January 9, 2009

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

January 23, 2009

Board of Directors Meeting, 8 a.m., TIES Building, St. Paul

Save the Date!

January 26, 2009

AMSD Winter Conference,

8 a.m., TIES Building, St. Paul. Further details coming soon.

## AMSD's Mission

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



Association of  
Metropolitan School Districts

## Digital Imaging Program to create successful partnership between students and local businesses



**Northeast Metro Intermediate School District 916 adult autistic students develop work skills and help the district by participating in the innovative Digital Imaging Program.**

Last January, Northeast Metro Intermediate School District 916 (NE Metro 916) in conjunction with the NE Metro 916 WELS-North program, launched its Digital Imaging Program and has been amazed at the response and enormous success the district has achieved in a very short amount of time. NE Metro 916 has been recognized in the local media as well as nationally in "Autism Advocate" of the Autism Society of America for its innovation and entrepreneurial vision. NE Metro 916 provides special education and other programs for area school districts. Its WELS-North work program focuses on helping students ages 18 to 21 to develop work skills and provide more opportunities for life. The Digital Imaging program is an innovative way to align the business community's needs with the abilities of some of NE Metro 916 student population.

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## From the Chair

While many people are caught up in the hustle and bustle of holiday preparations, we at the Association of Metropolitan School Districts have been busy preparing for the upcoming legislative session. Our Legislative Committee and Board of Directors have spent the last few months crafting our 2009 Legislative Platform and December 19 is the day that we will present legislators with our priorities for the 2009 Legislative Session.

The annual AMSD Legislative Preview will be at 8 a.m. on Friday, December 19 in the Grand Hall of the TIES Building. AMSD Members, metropolitan legislators and guests are encouraged to attend this informative and interesting event.

We are excited about our program which will include valuable background material as well as influential guest speakers. We are pleased that Commissioner Alice Seagren, Speaker of the House Margaret Anderson Kelliher and Senate Majority Leader Larry Pogemiller will offer an overview the 2009 legislative

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# Report raises questions about charter schools

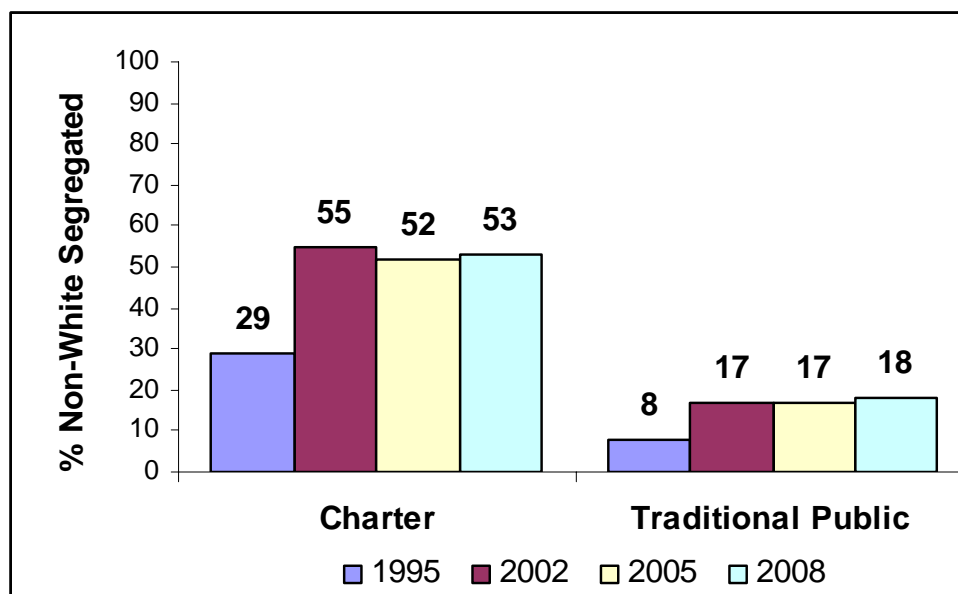
**T**he Institute on Race and Poverty recently released a report, “Failed Promises: Assessing Charter Schools in the Twin Cities,” that raises some serious questions about the performance and impact of charter schools in the Twin Cities. Specifically, the report raises concerns about the extent to which charter schools are segregated or are increasing segregation in traditional public schools and also about student academic achievement in charter schools.

The student achievement findings are consistent with national studies conducted over the past few years. Researchers from the National Center for Education Statistics, Columbia University and the Economic Policy Institute have all found that when comparing test results of students from similar social and demographic backgrounds, traditional public school students perform as well or better than their private and charter school counterparts.

The degree to which charter schools are segregated in the Twin Cities has not drawn much attention previously. The report notes that early proponents of charter schools argued that charter schools would improve student diversity by enabling families to choose schools outside their racially segregated neighborhoods. However, the report shows there is reason to be concerned that charter schools have actually accentuated the racial and economic segregation of students. At a minimum, the report makes it clear that two well established education policies – desegregation and parental choice – often conflict with each other.

Minnesota was the first state to authorize charter schools. The first charter school opened in 1991. Today there are over 28,000 students in more than 140 charter schools. Proponents of charter schools have long contended that charter schools offer parents a superior choice and that the competition created benefits the whole education system.

However, the Institute on Race and Poverty report outlines some significant concerns related to increased



segregation. The chart above shows the extent that charter schools in the Twin Cities are segregated.

The Institute on Race and Poverty report follows a charter school evaluation report released by the State of Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA) last June. This report compared charter school student achievement with demographically similar schools in the traditional public school system. The Institute on Race and Poverty analyzed the data compiled by the OLA and found that only 15 percent of charter schools performed better than their traditional counterparts. More than half performed worse in math and about 40 percent performed worse in reading tests.

The lower test scores occur despite the fact that, on average, Minnesota charter schools receive more funding per pupil than do traditional public schools. An AMSD analysis of Minnesota Department of Education data shows that the average Minnesota charter school receives \$1,995 more operating revenue per pupil than the average traditional public school. *(Based on MDE information from 2007 Revenues per ADM – Fund 01 total revenue)*

The OLA report also made several recommendations related to the need for greater oversight of charter schools. Specific recommendations included:

- The Legislature should clarify the roles of the Minnesota Department of Education and charter

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# Many autistic students possess skills that align well with digital imaging

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NE Metro 916 modeled its Digital Imaging Program after a similar program started by the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities. The skills needed for Digital Imaging aligned perfectly with the autistic student population at NE Metro 916. The students chosen for the Digital Imaging Program are highly functional and capable of doing high-skilled, detailed work that would be too repetitive and boring for most adults to perform.

"The students we chose to pioneer this program thrive on routine and reliability," said Antoinette Johns, Director of Special Education at NE 916. "We also recognize the business community at large has an enormous need for document imaging and by training our students we are giving them another career alternative."

NE 916 partnered with three other school districts, Stillwater, North Branch and Roseville to purchase the scanning equipment, software and computer server needed to launch the Digital Imaging Program for a shared cost of about \$30,000 according to Kristine Carr, Administrative Services Director at NE Metro 916.

Student workers at NE Metro 916 convert thousands of documents into digital images and never seem bored; there's a sense of pride in the work they do and a feeling of being



Student workers get a sense of pride in the work they do and a feeling of being valued and appreciated.

valued and appreciated for their important service.

"A lot of our students with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) might be limited in their socialization skills," said Cindy Sapinski, work coordinator with Wels-North, a division of Northeast 916 providing work and transition services to students. "But a lot of our ASD students are higher-level, and they're more into computers and technology, and that's where the digital imaging has come in."

The students are paid to do imaging for NE Metro 916, but will be

branching out to work for other companies and its affiliated districts in the future. The district is currently designating a per-page fee before contracting with any companies.

"We're working on marketing the digital imaging program and expanding our reach," said Sapinski. "And we're already amazed at the number of businesses contacting us either through word-of-mouth or due to the positive media coverage we have received. We're pretty proud of what we've accomplished in such a short amount of time – it's been great to be a part of such a positive effort."

For more information about the Digital Imaging Program at NE Metro 916, contact Beth Boivin at [elizabethboivin@comcast.net](mailto:elizabethboivin@comcast.net) or call 651-351-9064.

*This month's member feature was submitted by Beth Boivin, Communications Coordinator, NE Metro 916.*

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**"We also recognize the business community at large has an enormous need for document imaging and by training our students we are giving them another career alternative."**

Antoinette Johns  
Director of Special Education

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## Research: Charter schools increase segregation

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school sponsors by requiring MDE to approve sponsors and increase sponsors' authority

- The MDE should implement standards for charter school sponsors and provide additional training to sponsors
- The Legislature should require all new charter school board members to attend financial management training
- The Legislature should expand the charter school board conflict of interest law

The recent studies point to the need for state policymakers to reexamine Minnesota's charter school law. Stronger oversight and reconciling the competing goals of integrated learning environments and broad parental and student choice need further discussion and research. The Legislature has convened a working group to examine these and other important issues and is expected to bring forth recommendations to the full Legislature during the 2009 session.

For more detailed information and the full report "Failed Promises: Assessing Charter Schools in the Twin Cities" please see the Institute on Race and Poverty website at: [www.irpumn.org](http://www.irpumn.org). The Legislative Auditor's report can be found at: <http://www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/>

## From the Chair: Legislative Preview set for Friday, Dec. 19

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session. In addition, several metro superintendents will provide personal stories from their districts.

As always, the Legislative Preview affords an opportunity for legislators and education leaders to share ideas and work together to advance state policies that will enhance achievement for ALL students. Please join us on December 19 as we outline our goals for improving the future of our state.

*Pat Gleason, school board member from Wayzata, is chair of the Association of Metropolitan School Districts.*



**AMSD Members:** Anoka-Hennepin, Bloomington, Brooklyn Center, Burnsville, Columbia Heights, Eastern Carver County, 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, TIES (Associate Member), Wayzata, West Metro Education Program, and West St. Paul