

January 2009
vol 6 • no 4

AMSD Calendar

January 23, 2009

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

January 26, 2009

AMSD Winter Conference, 8 a.m., Grand Hall, TIES Building, St. Paul. Register by Friday, January 16.

February 6, 2009

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

February 13, 2009

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

March 6, 2009

Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting, 7:30 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**

Platform Presentation



Supt. Debra Bowers, St. Louis Park, was one of the presenters at the 2009 AMSD Legislative Platform Presentation on December 19. The event featured a presentation by AMSD Executive Director Scott Croonquist, several AMSD superintendents, Commissioner Alice Seagren, Rep. Margaret Anderson Kelliher and Sen. Larry Pogemiller. More photos of the event are on Page 4.

Our Collective Future Eden Prairie Schools faces change

“Change is inevitable...change is constant.” So wrote a conservative British statesman, Benjamin Disraeli, over a hundred years ago. His words still ring true for many educators today. Whether you’re someone who welcomes change or becomes anxious in its wake, we are all affected by it. Here in Eden Prairie Schools, as in many school districts around this state and country, a plethora of social, cultural, financial, and political changes have become inevitable constants leaving us with two starkly different alternatives: to resolutely face them and persevere in navigating our way or to become overwhelmed, complain, and stubbornly resist their implications.

The choice we make will define both how successful we become and the legacy we will leave to those who follow us. The time has come for those of us in educational institutions to lead the way in proclaiming that “business as usual” is no longer an option.

Like many other districts, we are taking a close look at the students coming through our doors and their changing

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From the Chair

AMSD recently conducted a survey of 36 metropolitan area school districts to gain some insight on their budget outlook for the 2009-10 school year. The survey asked school business officials to project their budget outlook if the Governor and legislators hold education funding flat.

Under this scenario, these 36 school districts would be facing a combined \$138 million funding gap. It would be one thing if these projections were coming on the heels of several years of adequate funding for education. Unfortunately, the harsh reality is that most school districts have already undergone major budget reductions over the past 5 years. The so-called “easy cuts” have been made. The next round of reductions will impact the classroom: staff layoffs, school closings, larger class sizes, programmatic cuts and even higher activity fees will have to be on the table if funding is frozen.

It is critical that AMSD board members communicate with their local legislators to let them know what the impact would be if edu-

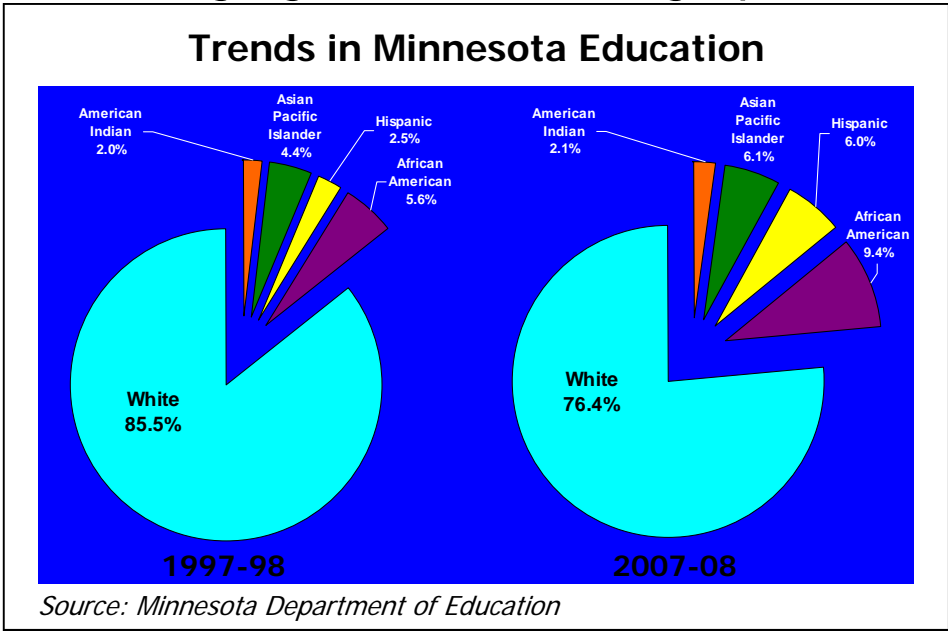
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AMSD Platform Reflects Changing Student Demographics

On December 19, AMSD board members met with about 50 metropolitan area legislators to present the Association's 2009 legislative platform. The platform was developed over the last six months with broad input from AMSD board members. The centerpiece of the platform is enthusiastic support for the New Minnesota Miracle proposal that was introduced at the end of the 2008 legislative session. The proposal has evolved over the interim as legislators continued to gather input taking testimony from citizens throughout the state.

The New Minnesota Miracle proposal builds on work that has taken place over the past five years including the Governor's Education Finance Reform Task Force and the report completed by P.S. Minnesota.

While the projected budget shortfall presents a major challenge, it is critical that the Governor and



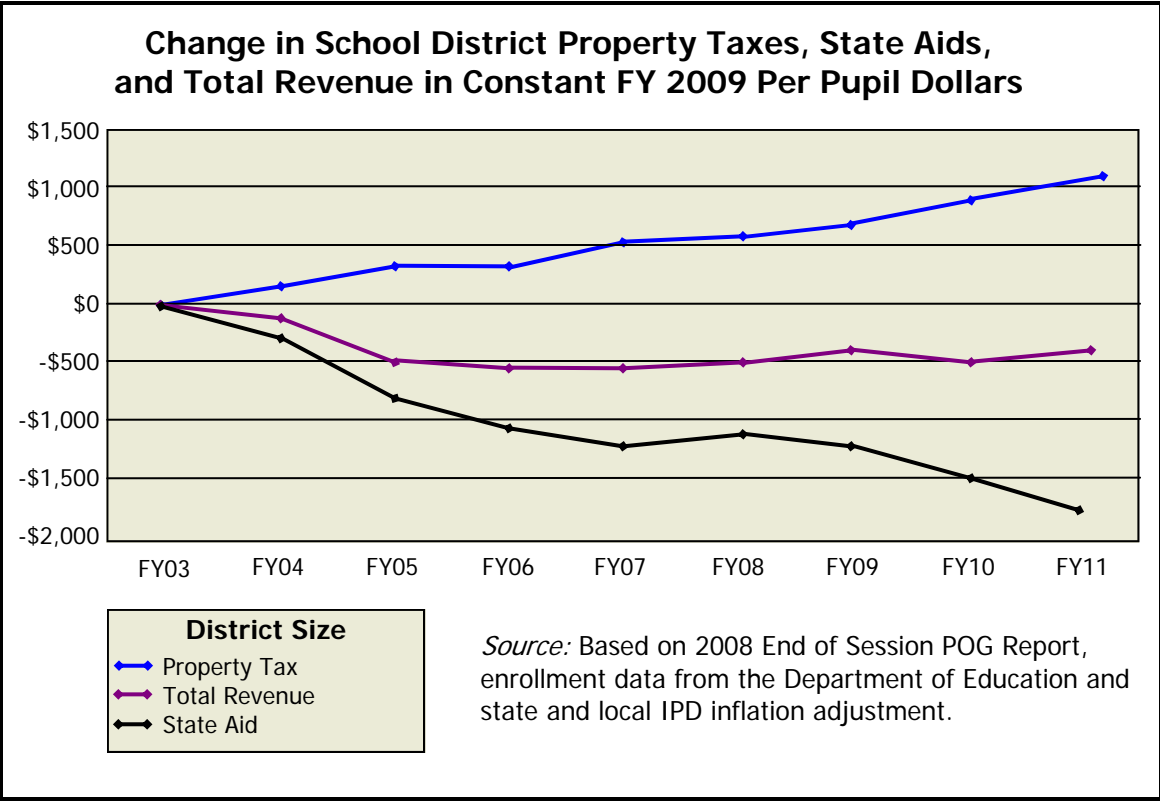
legislators move forward with overhauling our funding system. Rapidly changing student demographics and the looming NCLB deadline that requires school districts to have 100 percent of their students proficient

on the state accountability tests makes funding reform more important than ever.

The landscape in Minnesota has changed fairly dramatically over the past 10 years. Our school populations are becoming increasingly diverse.

A number of AMSD districts have seen their populations of non-white students triple in the past 10 years. In addition the number of students requiring additional services is also increasing at a faster pace. At the same time, state support for education has waned. Since 2003 state aid has declined by \$1,297 per pupil on an inflation adjusted basis. Local levies

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Business as usual is no longer an option for Minnesota school districts

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needs. At our schools, for example, just in the last five years alone, the number of students who come from low-income households has increased more than 40 percent and the number of students of color has increased by more than 70 percent. In addition, we currently serve over 400 students for whom English is not their first language.

On the northern wall of our School Board meeting room hangs a large banner proclaiming our district's mission: "Educating for Success in Our Diverse and Changing World." The message conveys our district's moral imperative to ensure that all of our students—regardless of their race, their home language, or family income level—are provided excellent instructional guidance and learning opportunities. Therefore, we will aggressively embrace the notion that every child deserves to reach his/her full potential.

Eden Prairie Schools could choose to rest on its accomplishments: our numerous National Merit Scholar Semi-Finalists and Commended students, our AP and National AP Scholars, our traditionally high ACT scores, and our successful co-curricular programs. But we know that these achievements reflect only one aspect of our district. We know that a more honest appraisal is needed—one that recognizes and admits that, as with most other school districts in this country, we in Eden Prairie are able to predict varied academic achievement of our students based on zip-code, linguistic, economic, and racial differences

"If we intend to genuinely provide a quality education for all, we will need to continue taking new and bold strategic actions to ensure the success of all of our students—no exceptions, no excuses."

and disparities. Our achievement data clearly reflects this troubling truth.

Committing to the "status quo" in light of these achievement disparities is no longer tenable, nor is it desirable. If we intend to genuinely provide a quality education for all, we will need to continue taking new and bold strategic actions to ensure the success of all of our students—no exceptions, no excuses. These actions will involve many changes.

Some of these will be welcomed, and other changes will be difficult for some to accept particularly those for whom our existing practices and policies have served so well. But the truth is that not all students are benefiting from our systemic models, and this is no longer acceptable.

Eden Prairie Schools can expect many changes over the next few years—from the adoption of new educational models, to the expansion of successful programs and the elimination of ineffective ones, from possible changes in our busing schedules to the potential changes in our school boundaries to promote balance and equity. As educational leaders, we must place a host of re-



**Dr. Melissa Krull, Superintendent
Eden Prairie Schools**

search-based ideas "on the table" in order to raise the achievement of ALL students while eliminating the known and increasing disparities evident in a variety of demographic groups. Similar discussions are happening all around the state.

We, as educators, are not so naive to suppose that no one will be uncomfortable with these actions. In fact, we're well aware of some who are. I believe it falls on us to welcome those voices to the table and invite them to join us in respectful dialogue.

We endeavor to listen to the comments and concerns in our communities in a way that honors our mutual integrity. At the same time, we must hold fast to our convictions, our mandate, and our imperative that schools must be positioned and ready to lead the way in "Educating for Success in Our Diverse and Changing World." We invite ALL families in our community to join us on our mission as we develop an even stronger educational system. Our collective future depends on it.

This month's member feature was submitted by Dr. Melissa Krull, Superintendent, Eden Prairie Schools.

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

Research: 'Miracle' would improve MN education

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have increased by \$752 per pupil over that time period but that increase has not been enough to prevent a decline in total per pupil revenue of \$451.

In 1997-98, 77.7 percent of districts had local levies, by 2007-08 that number is nearly 90 percent. In 2008, 154 of 347 school districts relied on revenue from a local operating referendum for more than 10 percent of their budget.

Even in tough times Minnesota needs to look to our future. We must invest in our human capital to once again be seen across the country and the world as a "brainpower" state. Moving forward with the New Minnesota Miracle would restore Minnesota's reputation as a national leader in education and would build the foundation we need to ensure a strong economy in the future.

From the Chair...

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Education funding is frozen or reduced. The Governor and legislators will be facing many decisions during the session and it is very important that they base their decisions on sound data and accurate information.

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

AMSD Platform presentation brings educators, legislators together



Rep. Margaret Anderson Kelliher talks of the challenges facing legislators in the 2009 Session.



ABOVE: The more than 120 people in the audience had the opportunity to ask questions following the presentations.

BELOW: Supt. Mark Roberston, Fridley makes his presentation.



AMSD Chair Pat Gleason moderated the question and answer session with Commissioner of Education Alice Seagren, Sen. Pogemiller and Rep. Kelliher.

