

September 2009
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AMSD Calendar

September 25, 2009
Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting,
7:30 a.m., TIES Building,
St. Paul

October 2, 2009
Board of Directors Meeting, 7 a.m., TIES Building, St. Paul

October 30, 2009
Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting,
7:30 a.m., TIES Building,
St. Paul

Save the Date!
November 10, 2009
AMSD Advocacy Workshop
5:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
Ties Building, St. Paul
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**

Taking on the Achievement Gap With a Lens of Equity



These elementary students are participating in the Young Scholars summer camp in June. Young Scholars is a program designed to serve students with high potential who are not likely to be identified for gifted and talented programs using traditional methods of identification, and is offered at all 18 Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan elementary schools.

The Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan Public Schools (District 196) has a long and proud history of excellence in student achievement. It is something we value in our district and a reason many parents cite for choosing to raise their families here. Nearly 9 of 10 school-aged children who live in the communities served by District 196 attend District 196 schools (88.6 percent in 2009).

The introduction of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2003 required school districts to begin disaggregating achievement data by race to determine how effective we are educating all students. District 196 data shows that while the majority of our students outperform their peers in Minnesota, we have a significant, racially predictable achievement gap.

While achievement is often correlated to income level, in
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From the Chair

Greetings! It is hard to believe that another summer is in the books and the 2009-10 school year is off and running. Unfortunately, as the accompanying research article shows, students returning to school this fall are being met by fewer teachers and other support staff. In addition, many students have fewer curricular options and higher fees for extra curricular activities as school districts balanced their budgets in the face of reduced support from the state.

The long-term budget forecast does not provide much room for optimism. The current legislative leadership recently convened a Leadership Summit that brought together former governors and former legislative leaders to exchange ideas about how to address Minnesota's structural budget problem. Former Governor Arne Carlson referred to the budget crisis as an "economic tsunami." The combination of an aging population and significantly lower revenue projections does indeed

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New Survey Shows Impact Of Reduced Education Funding

A recent survey of members of the Association of Metropolitan School Districts shows the impact of reduced state support for our schools. Even with an influx of federal stimulus money for FY2010, metro school districts have been forced to lay off staff and make significant reductions in their operating budgets. Heading into the new school year, these thirty-two school districts have reduced their operating budgets by more than \$82 million. This includes staff reductions totaling nearly 900 FTE's. School districts avoided further cuts by spending down budget reserves to the tune of nearly \$50 million. Many school districts have seen their budget reserve dip to dangerously low levels as they have tried to avoid drastic cuts to important programs for students.

Budget Area	Reductions
Reductions in Budget Reserves	(\$45,710,173.00)
Operating Budget Reductions	(\$82,064,823.00)
Projected Interest Costs	(\$3,716,715.00)
Staff Reductions:	
Licensed -384.35	
Non-Licensed -492.65	
TOTAL	- 877 FTEs

**Results based on AMSD survey of 32 member districts.*

The staff layoffs and program reductions are directly related to the results of the 2009 legislative session. The education funding bill approved by the legislature and signed by Governor Pawlenty froze education funding for the next two years at FY 2009 levels. State aid was actually reduced by \$500 million in the budget but that reduction was offset by \$500 million in federal stimulus funds. This is the second time since 2003 that the Legislature and Governor have enacted a biennial budget freezing the basic formula allowance.

In 2003, the State of Minnesota eliminated the general education levy and assumed a greater responsibility for funding Education. The unfortunately reality is that the State has failed to live up to its commitment to fund our schools. By the 2010-11 school year, inflation adjusted, per pupil state aid to school districts will have declined by 14 percent since FY 2003.

In addition to the basic formula allowance being frozen again, school districts are facing interest costs related to the Governor's unallotment action implementing school aid payment and property tax recognition shifts. Many school districts will be forced to short-term borrow to meet their cash flow needs. Other districts will not have to borrow cash but instead will have to use reserves that normally would have earned interest income.

Current revenue and expenditure projections do not promise immediate relief. Current projections show the state facing a budget shortfall of between \$4.5 – 7 billion for the 2012-13 biennium. It is imperative that state policymakers take steps to address the state budget shortfall and work to find a solution that will protect our educational infrastructure and invest in our future workforce.

AMSD Members: Anoka-Hennepin, Bloomington, Brooklyn Center, Burnsville, Columbia Heights, 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. Cloud, St. Louis Park, St. Paul, Stillwater, TIES (Associate Member), Wayzata, West Metro Education Program, West St. Paul, and White Bear Lake.

AMSD Honors Sen. Rummel and Rep. Davnie



AMSD was pleased to present 2009 Friend of Public Education Awards to Sen. Sandy Rummel and Rep. Jim Davnie at its August board meeting. AMSD Chair Jon Tynjala thanked the recipients for their contributions in support of public education. Rummel was recognized for her efforts to establish a state center for educational research and leadership, and her work on establishing a growth model. Davnie has been instrumental in crafting legislation to increase charter school accountability and co-authored the New Minnesota Miracle funding reform legislation. Congratulations to Sen. Rummel and Rep. Davnie.



From the Chair: Forecast not Optimistic

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present significant challenges to maintaining necessary investments in critical state services.

However, there was near unanimous agreement among the Summit participants that the key to solving the budget challenge is increasing productivity and that productivity growth is directly tied to an educated workforce. In other words, it is imperative that state policymakers find a way to make the critical investments necessary to ensure our schools are able to offer the educational opportunities our future workforce needs. AMSD board members stand ready to work with our Legislators and the Governor toward that end.

Jon Tynjala, school board member from Mounds View, is chair of AMSD.

Data Shows Achievement Gap

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District 196 we found that our Black, Latino and Native American students are performing at lower levels than their White and Asian peers, regardless of income. In fact, in some areas, Black and Latino students who do not qualify for free-or-reduced price school meals (a federally designated indicator of low-income) are outperformed by their White peers who do qualify for free-or-reduced price school meals.

Our long-standing mission in District 196 is *educating our students to reach their full potential*. Though we have embraced that mission and intended it to include *all* our students, our methods have not produced the level of excellence and success that we pride ourselves in among our Black, Latino and Native American students. That is the sobering reality we face, as it likely is for many other school districts throughout our state and nation.

What needs to change for us to raise the achievement of all students while eliminating the racial predictability of student achievement? That is the question we've begun to wrestle with in the Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan Public Schools. Since there was no deliberate intent to create this gap, examining our policies and practices to determine what changes are needed requires us to look at things differently, to use a different lens, an *equity lens*.

During the 2007-08 school year, a district task force of staff and parents extensively examined student achievement data from our district. In spring 2008, the task force recommended that the School Board adopt a "vision for educational equity" and begin to foster the culture and conditions to support this vision at the district and school level.

Educational equity is defined as the raising of achievement for all students while narrowing the gaps between the highest- and lowest-performing students, and eliminating the racial predictability of students that occupy the highest and lowest achievement categories.

Throughout the 2008-09 school year, district administrators reviewed data and began to lay the groundwork for understanding the historic intersection of race and education in our country, and the importance of examining our policies and practices with a lens of educational equity. In recognizing we have work to do to change the racial predictability of achievement in our

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Mission: Educating Our Students to Reach Their Full Potential

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district, we knew we needed to begin to have open and honest conversations about race.

With district and school administrators committed to continuing our equity work, this year equity teams of six to 10 staff members have been established at each school and are receiving similar training. As these teams meet they are examining equity challenges within their buildings and using an equity lens to examine district, school and classroom practices.

Pacific Educational Group (PEG) has provided the careful, focused and sustained training necessary to honestly examine our policies and practices to lay the foundation for change. PEG's expertise, coupled with the district's own committed staff and a District Equity Leadership Team, has been guiding this critical work forward.

The District Equity Leadership Team has defined three broad areas for our equity work in District 196:

Equity leadership and systemic equity transformation

Increasing district and school site understanding of, and capacity to, eliminate racial achievement disparities.

Culturally relevant student-centered instruction

Ensuring that an aligned, sequenced, essential curriculum and high-quality, relevant instruction is consistently delivered to *all* students.

Family empowerment and community engagement

Empowering families and communities of color as essential partners in achieving our equity vision.

Changes are starting to happen as we wrestle with our racial achievement disparities. Programs like A.V.I.D. (Advancement Via Individual Determination), which has been added at the middle school and high school level, and Young Scholars at our elementary schools are making a difference. They are changing the demographics in our gifted and talented programming by providing access, affirmation and advocacy for students who are traditionally under-represented in these programs. Schools are increasing efforts to connect with families of color, are conducting "equity walks" to evaluate their school environment and considering other school-led

efforts to increase cultural awareness and competence in their buildings. In addition, more than 800 staff members have participated in "Beyond Diversity" workshops conducted by PEG.



AVID students from Rosemount-Apple Valley Eagan tour Augsburg College. AVID is available at some secondary schools in the district, and prepares students for college-level work.

Though the training will continue over several years, increasingly staff members do the important work they do with a new lens of equity to challenge them to be more conscious of the decisions they make and how those decisions might be impacted by race. We know we have outstanding staff members dedicated to making sure our equity effort doesn't come up short.

Educating our students to reach their full potential must be the promise we make to all of our students and families. Only then can we continue to fully celebrate the success and accomplishments of our students and staff and the proud history of excellence in student achievement in District 196.

This month's member spotlight was submitted by Julie Olson, Director of Elementary Education, who is heading up Rosemount-Apple Valley Eagan Public School's equity efforts, in conjunction with Scott Thomas, Integration Coordinator.