

AMSD Calendar

January 8, 2010

Legislative Preview
8:00 AM—10:00 AM
Grand Hall, TIES Building,
St. Paul

January 26, 2010

8:00 AM—2:30 PM
**2010 AMSD Winter
Conference**
**Online Learning-
Fad or Future?**
Grand Hall, TIES Building,
St. Paul

January 29, 2010

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

February 5, 2010

Board of Directors
7:00 AM—9:00 AM
3rd Floor Cafeteria,
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**

Learning in the Digital Age

Teachers using interactive whiteboards to keep students engaged

Teachers in the North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale School District are using technology to create more “WOW” moments for students. Through the use of interactive whiteboards, teachers are finding more and more ways to connect with students – and students are becoming more engaged learners in the process.

A few years ago Cowern Elementary School in North St. Paul purchased and started using its first interactive whiteboards, also known as “SMART Boards.” Interactive whiteboards combine the simplicity of a whiteboard with the capabilities of a computer, all using touch-screen technology. In essence, they are digital chalkboards with the ability to manipulate information on the screen using the touch of a finger, instead of the click of a mouse.

Jim Miklausich was one of the first teachers at Cowern to get one of the interactive whiteboards, and this year every classroom in the building has its own SMART Board, including the special education and specialist rooms.

The ability to purchase and install so many of these innovative new teaching tools comes from a unique partnership between the North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale’s technology department and parent-teacher groups at district schools.

Two years ago, the district received about \$500,000 in dedicated technology funds from the State of Minnesota, which was used to replace the computers in elementary and middle

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From the Chair:

The world of education is changing so rapidly it almost makes your head spin. Technology is changing the way students and educators learn and what they need to learn. Can we use these new technologies to customize student learning and close achievement gaps? How can professional development opportunities for teachers be expanded and enhanced? What is the appropriate role of online learning in our classrooms? State and national experts will explore these questions and more at AMSD’s annual winter conference later this month.

I encourage AMSD board members, district staff and state policymakers to attend this exciting and informative conference on January 26 at the TIES Conference Center. Details about the conference and registration information is available at <http://www.amsd.org>

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

**"It's the most powerful instructional tool I've ever been able to use."
-North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale teacher Jim Miklausich**

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school labs. Last year the district received \$700,000 in dedicated technology funds from state. Before spending those dollars, input was received from the district's Tech Committee, the teaching and learning department, the principals, and technology staff to determine how to best put those dollars to use and make an impact on student learning. All of the different groups felt strongly about improving technology integration in the classroom and decided to use the bulk of the money to wire and install LCD projectors in the classrooms so the schools could then easily add the interactive whiteboards. With the most expensive part paid for by the district, schools could then purchase and install the SMART Boards for about \$1,500 a piece.

Through the generosity of their parent groups which offered to fund the purchase of the SMART Boards, many district schools have taken advantage of the deal, with about 200 SMART Boards added this year, nearly tripling what the district had previously. In fact, there are about 300 interactive whiteboards now in use throughout the district.

Besides Cowern, elementary schools including Weaver, Webster, Richardson, Skyview and Eagle Point, all have SMART Boards in nearly every classroom. Most other district schools have added a large number of these innovative teaching tools. At the high school level, every math class has a 3M digital media system (interactive whiteboard) courtesy of a 3M grant.

When Cowern began purchasing and installing the SMART Boards several years ago, they started with just four and put them in their fourth and fifth grade classrooms.

"We wanted every child to have the experience of learning with the SMART Boards before they went on to middle school," said Cowern Principal Sonya Czerepak.

The following year, the school's parent-teacher group was able to purchase another five by using the money they raised at the school's carnival. In addition, a parent at the school got a matching grant from Wells Fargo and bought an additional SMART Board for the school – bringing their total up to 10.

"The teachers were thrilled to get them and the SMART Boards have changed the way they teach," Czerepak said.



To find evidence of that, just visit Emily Wollin's third grade classroom.

"It's completely changed the way I teach," Wollin said of her SMART Board. Whether it's having students come up to the board and use their finger to highlight the key parts of a paragraph or use the pen tools to summarize the main idea, Wollin is not only keeping her students interested, but she's getting them involved. In fact, when Wollin asks for student participation in a lesson, nearly every hand in the room goes up.

Teachers can now design interactive lessons on their computers and then bring them up on their SMART Boards. Wollin uses the teaching tool for all of the subject areas she teaches.

Besides using the touch-screen to draw, highlight or write, the SMART Board also provides digital math tools such as rulers, compasses and dice. It can be used to display multi-media, such as Web sites and videos, or it can be used to organize simple tasks, such as tracking who is getting a hot lunch by having the students drag their names into a designated box.

Before getting their individual SMART Boards the teachers all receive training on how to use the tool. They can also access a nation-wide community of educators who are using these tools, making it that much easier to collaborate with other teachers. Online Web sites allow educators to share lesson plans and ideas for utilizing the SMART Boards.

"It's the most powerful instructional tool I've ever been able to use," Miklausich said. "It allows you to present information the way kids learn."

This month's member spotlight was submitted Jennifer McNeil, Communications Specialist, North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale School District.

Property Tax Report Released

The Minnesota Department of Revenue recently released a report entitled: “*Residential Homestead Property Tax Burden Report, Taxes Payable 2007.*” The report is based on data collected by the Department of Revenue and compiled in a property tax/income tax database known as the “Voss database.” The “Voss database” is named after former Rep. Gordon Voss who sponsored legislation enabling the collection of this linked data in 1987. The report examines property tax (payable in 2007) and income (earned in 2006) data in 20 regions in Minnesota. The regions approximate the state’s economic development regions. The full report is available at:

http://www.taxes.state.mn.us/property_tax_administrators/other_supporting_content/Voss_Report.pdf

The report includes extensive information about housing costs, income levels, and property tax burdens broken down by region. The report reveals substantial differences across regions with taxpayers in the metropolitan area having a significantly higher property tax burden than their rural counterparts. The higher property tax burden for metro taxpayers is consistent across incomes. A summary of the significant findings in the report is below.

Housing

As of January of 2006, the median estimated market value for a homestead located in the metro region was \$236,000 compared to \$140,000 in rural Minnesota – a differential of almost 70 percent.

Homestead Income

The median income in the metropolitan region in 2006 was 35 percent higher than in the rural regions of the state - \$72,779 compared to \$54,027. Clearly, the cost of labor is significantly higher in the metro area.

Net Property Tax

For property taxes payable in 2007, the median net residential homestead property tax for the metro region was \$2,279 compared to \$1,210 in rural regions – a 90 percent differential

Property Tax Burden after Property Tax Refund

The property tax burden is the share of the homestead property taxpayer’s income that goes to pay property taxes. As the chart below shows, metro taxpayers pay nearly 50 percent more of their household income toward property taxes than do rural residents. Furthermore, almost four times as many metro taxpayers pay more than 5% of their household income in property taxes than do rural residents.

Property Tax Burden After Property Tax Refunds			
Area	Income Range	Median Burden as % of Income	% of Taxpayers with >5% Burden
Metro	\$45,000 - \$65,000	3.4%	11.9%
	\$65,000 - \$90,000	3.1%	6.6%
Greater Minnesota	\$45,000 - \$65,000	2.3%	2.8%
	\$65,000 - \$90,000	2.1%	1.3%
Statewide	\$45,000 - \$65,000	3.0%	7.5%
	\$65,000 - \$90,000	2.7%	4.3%

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Research shows higher property tax burden for metro taxpayers

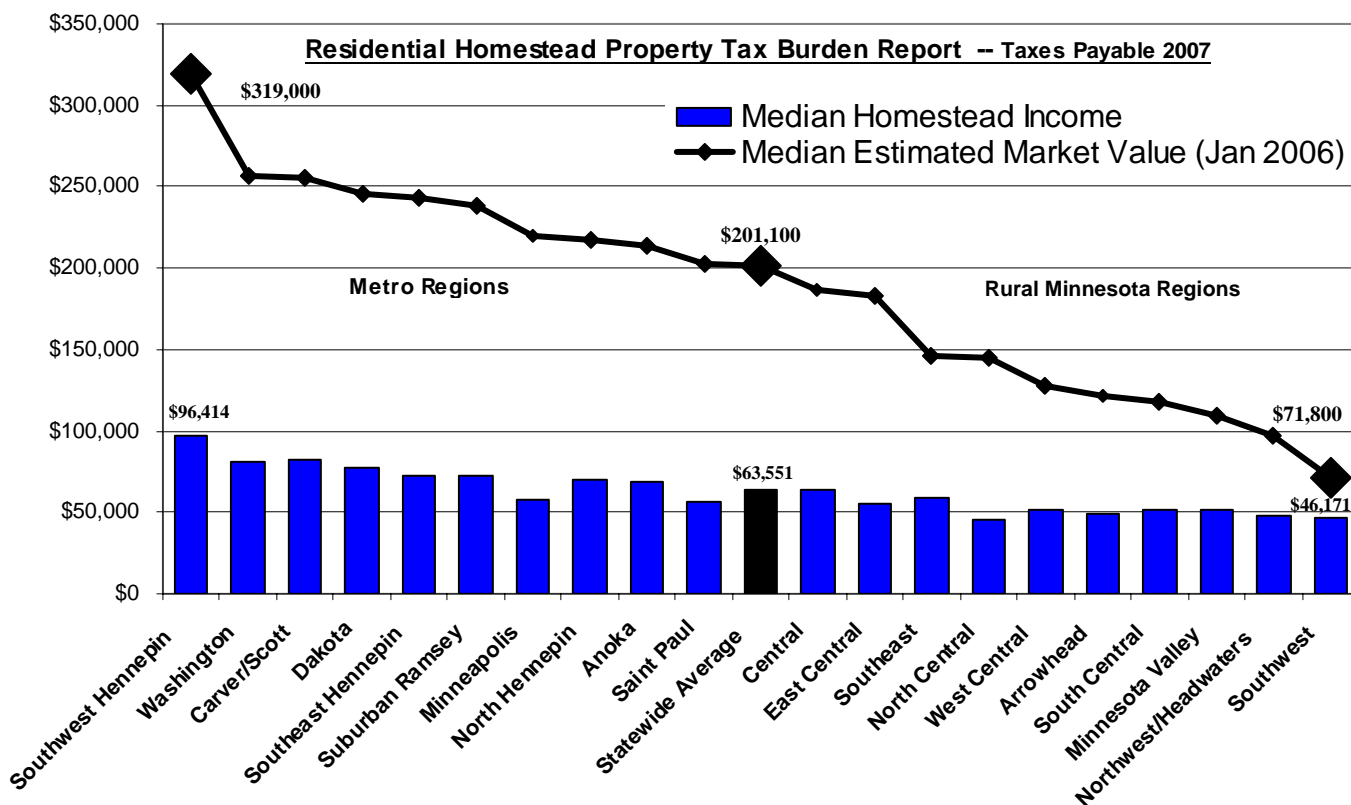
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The data in the report confirm previous research conducted by the Association of Metropolitan School Districts:

- Median housing values in the metro region are 68 percent higher than in greater Minnesota.
- The median income level in the metro region is 34.7% higher than the median income in the rural regions.
- The net property tax in the metro region is nearly double that in the rural regions.
- Metro property taxpayers pay a substantially higher share of their income toward property taxes. The higher property tax burden for metro residents is consistent across income levels.

These statistics highlight a couple of issues confronting metro area school districts. It is more expensive to staff schools in the metropolitan region due to the higher cost of labor. The failure of the education funding formula to recognize these higher labor costs causes metropolitan school districts to rely on passing operating referendums to meet the basic educational needs of their students. The heavier reliance on the operating referendum contributes to the heavier property tax burden experienced by metro residents.

An important component of the New Minnesota Miracle funding reform proposal, the Location Equity Index, is designed to address this disparity. The recently released property tax report offers compelling evidence for the need to move forward with this important reform legislation.



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, Osseo Area Schools, 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.