

March 2010
vol 7 • no 6

AMSD Calendar

March 26, 2010

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

April 9, 2010

Board of Directors
7:00 AM—9:00 AM
3rd Floor Cafeteria,
TIES Building, St. Paul

April 16, 2010

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

April 30, 2010

Executive 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**

Coaching Teachers to Improve Student Learning in Osseo

Research shows the work that really matters begins and ends in the classroom with effective teachers who engage learners. The eternal question for education leaders, then, is how to continually improve classroom instruction in order to increase student achievement.

Through a coaching model, Osseo Area Schools is deploying a powerful tool for influencing effective instruction. Osseo's model includes instructional and literacy coaches, all of whom are relentlessly focused on helping teachers grow in their professional practice in order to improve student learning.

Instructional coaches

We just had no idea how much people wanted feedback from their teaching peers.

--Margo Kleven, instructional coach specialist, Osseo Area Schools

Osseo's instructional coaching program grew out of the district's successful teacher appraisal system and grant money from the state's Q-Comp program. Together, administrators and leaders of Education Minnesota-Osseo designed a model that provides personal coaching support for every one of the district's approximately 1500 continuing contract teachers.

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From the Chair:

One of the myths perpetuated by some policymakers, advocacy groups and members of the media is that public education has been protected and shielded from cuts as the state has grappled with budget challenges in recent years. Some legislators seem intent on making sure that our school children share in the pain as budget cuts are made this spring.

Those who share this feeling can rest assured that, in fact, Minnesota's public schools and their students have indeed shared in the pain. A survey conducted last fall showed that AMSD member districts laid off nearly 900 staff prior to the current school year.

While the Governor and many legislators are to be commended for their efforts to protect education from devastating cuts, our schools are facing major budget challenges heading into the 2010-11 school year. A second consecutive year of the basic formula being frozen and aid payments being delayed continue to take a toll on school budgets. AMSD member districts are projecting nearly \$150 million in cumulative budget gaps for the next school year. Those projections are based on current law and do NOT assume any further cuts to education during the 2010 legislative session.

It is important that AMSD board members continue to communicate with their local legislators during these next critical weeks of the legislative session. We need to make sure that our state policymakers base their decisions on the facts and not on myths or perceptions.

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

Osseo encouraged by results of coaching teachers

Each instructional coach works with 60-70 teachers, meeting regularly with them one-on-one to support the teacher's progress on their professional growth plan and student learning goals. Individual conferences before and after each of three observations per year provide time for the coach and teacher to engage in professional dialogue relating to the observation and growth plans.

"Our focus is on growth in the teacher's skills and in student achievement," said Margo Kleven, instructional coach specialist. "The collaborative observation process, combined with the relationships we develop, help teachers fine tune their craft in order to improve student achievement," said Kleven. "There's no stipend, document, or formula that captures the power of the relationship a coach builds with his or her clients. We just had no idea how much people wanted feedback from their teaching peers."



Drawing a parallel to sports, Kleven added, "As an athletic coach, you don't tell athletes, 'Get to the Olympics' and then leave them to figure it out on their own. You coach them year after year, and you recognize that both of you are on a journey toward mastery."

The Osseo instructional coaching model is robust, focused on student achievement, and centered on key instructional strategies and the efficacious learner framework. Kleven says, "We start with great teachers and move them forward."

Literacy coaches

We chose to use short-lived stimulus funds to build [long-term] capacity in teachers.

--Kris Rouleau, curriculum coordinator

Osseo's successful instructional coach model provided the framework for a plan that uses federal stimulus dollars to create a corps of literacy coaches whose work will provide long-term value.

"When special funds become available for a very short time, like the two-year federal stimulus dollars, it's tempting to seek out the 'next best thing' in materials or other tangible items we can quickly purchase and add to classrooms," said Kris Rouleau, Osseo curriculum coordinator. "We chose to use short-lived stimulus funds to build capacity in teachers, which will provide benefits that will last long after the stimulus funds go away."

While instructional coaches focus on improving the practice of individual teachers, literacy coaches seek to enhance the work of teams of teachers. The literacy coach model has three goals: to improve instruction in reading; to help teachers use data more effectively; and to help participating schools develop site-specific intervention models.

The district's five literacy coaches (one of whom is an English Language Learner specialist) are assigned among seven elementary schools this year; coaches will be added to secondary schools next year.

According to Rouleau, after just a few months of implementing the literacy coach model, she's already seeing results. She meets with the coaches every week and reports that teachers are making huge gains, particularly in the effective use of data.

"With literacy coach support, teachers are doing a much better job of using formative data to identify students who are not making expected growth. More frequent use of data allows teachers to be more nimble in adjusting instruction to meet the needs of individual students." Rouleau expects it will be years before she'll be able to determine that fewer students require reading and writing interventions, but she is encouraged by the results so far.

Challenges

Use of a coaching model brings certain challenges, but the Osseo leaders are seeing them lessen over time.

- Developing a climate in which teachers feel comfortable opening their classroom doors to a coaching peer has taken time, but it gets easier every year because the Osseo coaches have built credibility and trust with teachers.
- Operational logistics are challenging because coaches serve teachers and sites without assistance from support staff. Coaches value the collaboration and support they find in regular meetings with coaching colleagues.

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February Forecast

The much anticipated February Budget Forecast recently released by the Office of Management and Budget (MMB) projects a \$994 million shortfall for the current biennium. The Governor and Legislators will work to balance the state budget based on the projections in this forecast.

This latest forecast represents a modest improvement from the November 2009 forecast which projected a \$1.2 billion budget gap. Major factors for the change include a \$184 million reduction in expenditures and a \$25 million increase in forecast revenues. Legislators and the Governor will now work to find a solution to bring the budget into balance.

While these numbers represent a modest positive change, the future economic outlook is only slightly more optimistic. The GDP growth over the current biennium is now expected to be up 1.8% instead of the 1.4% forecasted in November. The long term budget forecast for the next biennium remains very bleak. MMB is now projecting a budget shortfall of about \$5.8 billion for the 2012-13 biennium. This is an increase of \$363 million since the November forecast.

The next biennium presents a significant challenge. The size of the projected deficit depends on a variety of factors including:

Inflation

Projected spending for the 2012-13 biennium does not include general inflation. Inflation is estimated to be 2.1% in FY 2012 and 1.9% in FY 2013. This would increase the projected deficit by \$1.181 billion.

Shifts

The planning estimates include the complete repayment of K-12 school aid payments that Governor Pawlenty deferred in the unallotment process last spring. If the legislature agrees to codify the aid payment shift this legislative session, the projected deficit for the 2012-13 biennium would be reduced by \$1.15 billion.

Other Factors

The planning estimates make no assumptions about any actions that might occur during the 2010 legislative session. This includes resolving the current biennial deficit as well as any steps to address the structural shortfall projected for the next biennium.

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Trust is essential to ensuring integrity

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- The three-year rotation mandated by the Minnesota Department of Education means one-third turnover every year among instructional coaches, so Osseo leaders must remain diligent about maintaining the high level of training and caliber of services provided.
- As with other educators, coaches find that their job plate continually grows--and success brings additional demands for their time. Osseo is managing that demand by tapping into the support available through Professional Learning Community teams.

Critical elements required for success

Kleven and Rouleau cited several elements that are critical to the success of Osseo's coaching programs.

- Trust is essential to ensuring the integrity of the program. Teachers have to trust that coaches will maintain confidentiality and not share information about specific teachers with others. Kleven cited compelling evidence that Osseo's instructional coaching program has established high levels of trust among teachers. In Year One, the program had 67% teacher support. In Year Two, support grew to 96%; and in the current year, to 97%.
- Coaching is inextricably connected to individual, site-level, and system-level goals. Osseo's data show significant progress in meeting those goals.
- Coaches are committed to "ultimate customer service." Whether working with an individual teacher (instructional coaches) or a team (literacy coaches), each coach is committed to delivering exceptional client service.
- Student achievement remains front and center, driving every decision and every action.

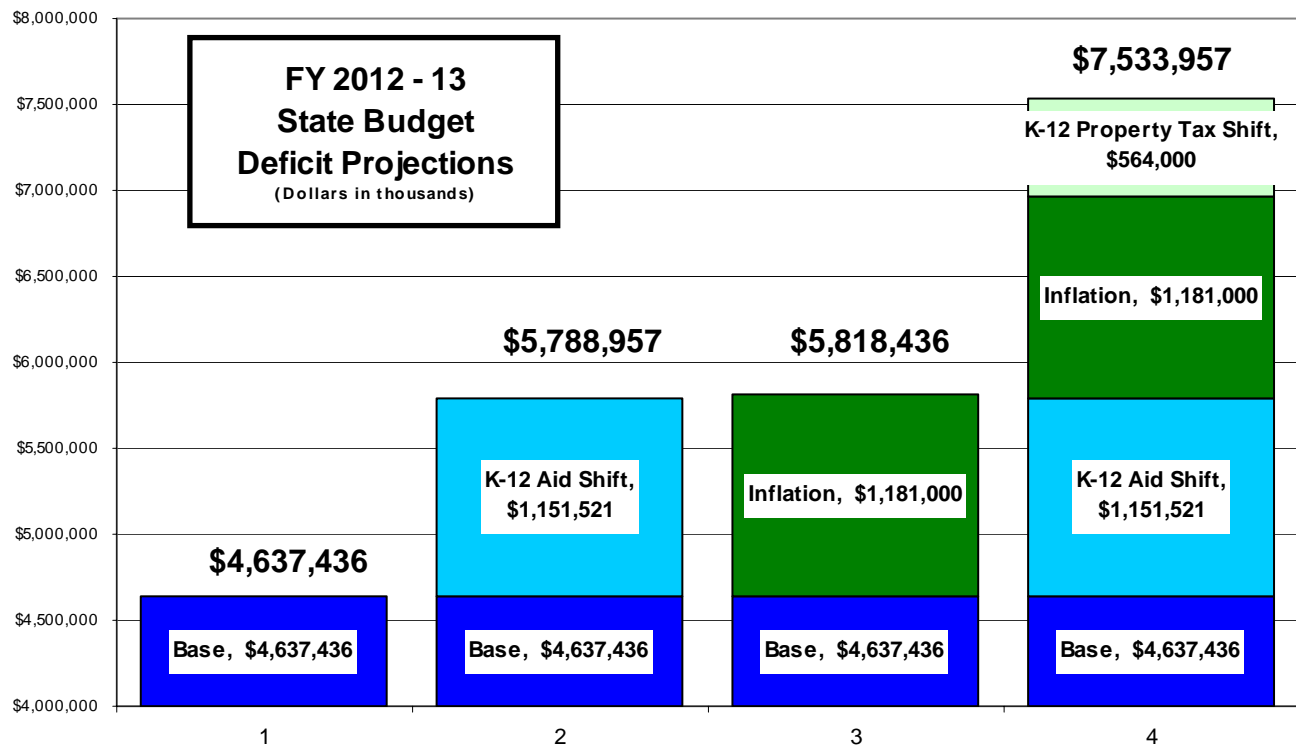
This month's member spotlight was submitted by Barbara Olson, School/Community Relations Director, Osseo Area Schools.

State facing major budget challenge in next biennium

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It is not unusual to hear conflicting accounts related to the size of the projected deficit. Following the release of the February forecast, the projected deficit was pegged anywhere between \$4.6 and \$7.5 billion depending on what factors were included. Many legislators and advocacy groups argue that inflationary projections should be included for both expenditures and revenue. Currently, inflation is only assumed on the revenue side of the equation.

The graph below outlines 4 scenarios that help explain why we often hear varying accounts of the projected budget shortfall.



A case can be made for any of the above scenarios. The first scenario represents what is often referred to as the structural deficit – the amount projected expenditures exceed projected revenues under current law. The second scenario is the one that was released by MMB and reflects current law assumptions. This scenario assumes that the school aid payments that were deferred would be repaid in full and does not account for inflation. The third scenario shows the impact of codifying the school aid payment shift and accounting for inflation in expenditures. The fourth scenario accounts for inflation and also assumes that both the school aid payment deferral and the property tax recognition shift are repaid in full in the next biennium.

The bottom line is regardless of which scenario is used, the State faces a major challenge heading into the next biennium.

For more detailed information on the forecast: <http://www.doer.state.mn.us/fu-2009-nov>

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.