

AMSD Calendar

September 17, 2010
Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting,
7:30 a.m., TIES Building,
St. Paul

October 1, 2010
Board of Directors Meeting, 7 a.m., TIES Building, St. Paul

October 29, 2010
Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting,
7:30 a.m., TIES Building,
St. Paul

November 5, 2010
Board of Directors Meeting, 7 a.m., TIES Building, St. Paul

November 19, 2010
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

Friend of Public Education Award Winner

AMSD was pleased to present the 2010 Friend of Public Education Award to Representative Jerry Newton at its August board meeting. AMSD Chair Patsy Green presented the award and thanked Representative Newton for his contributions in support of public education. Rep. Newton championed local control issues during the session, including carrying legislation to allow locally elected school boards to renew an existing operating referendum and repealing burdensome unfunded mandates. Congratulations to Representative Newton!



From the Chair:

It is hard to believe we are already underway with another school year! This is always an exciting time of year as students come back to school full of anticipation; eager to see their friends and meet their new teachers.

This is also the time of year when political campaigns kick into high gear. The 2010 election is especially important as Minnesotans will be electing a new governor. In addition, every state house and senate seat and each of the 8 congressional seats are up for grabs. State policymakers will need to figure out how to protect school funding and enact reform initiatives aimed at closing the achievement gap in the face of a \$5.8 billion budget deficit. Congress faces the critical job of reauthorizing the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, more recently known as the No Child Left Behind Act.

It has never been more critical for AMSD board members, staff, parents and concerned citizens to get engaged in the electoral process. I encourage all AMSD member districts to establish a legislative action committee to help your citizens engage in this important election. There are many successful examples among our member districts so don't be afraid to contact them for tips and advice. In addition, AMSD has produced a voter's guide that is available on the web site at: <http://www.amsd.org/>. Take advantage of these great resources and get involved – this election is too important to stand on the sidelines!

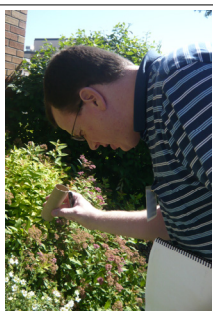
Patsy Green, school board member from Robbinsdale, is chair of AMSD.

No Limits to Learning

Changing the Course of Science Education in Richfield Public Schools

In a culture of test preparation and accountability for math and reading, Richfield Public Schools upholds a commitment to a rigorous and comprehensive education. Strong, integrated science education has taken center stage. Science isn't enough anymore. Minnesota was one of the first states to infuse science standards with engineering and the engineering design process. The addition of engineering along with Richfield's powerful commitment to educational equity drove the creation of K-5 units of study, which focus on integration of science, technology, engineering and math and inspire higher levels of engagement for Black, Brown and American Indian students. Richfield expects that enduring partnerships, investments in comprehensive, long term professional development and an infusion of science materials and equipment will bear fruit at the elementary level this year.

The district identified science education as a top priority for curriculum and staff development at each of Richfield's four elementary schools. In addition, the largest elementary school opened its doors as a S.T.E.M. themed school this fall. To effect the necessary change, Richfield public schools built strategic alliances and long term partnerships in support of powerful, customized professional development and challenging, relevant curriculum.



Mitch Jacobson, science specialist at Centennial Elementary School, uses his "systems boundary opticon" to observe foliage from a new perspective.

It became clear early in the process that no existing program could meet expectations based on effective practice research, academic standards and NSTA recommendations. That is when Kate Foate Trewick, Chief of Staff for Richfield Public Schools asked that teachers create hybrid units of study, which capitalize on the strongest components of multiple vendors and integrate best practice for ELL teaching as well as National Urban Alliance strategies to engage racially diverse students.

Janet Thomson, curriculum and instruction coach, worked with teacher teams to design units using Jay McTighe's Understanding by Design Process. Units are multidisciplinary and reinforce literacy. Teacher capacity received an infusion through three formal partnerships, which support structured, sequenced development opportunities.

Science Museum of Minnesota (SMM) Partnership – preparing for fall 2010 unit implementation:

1) Laurie TeBrake, Bethann Larson and Janet Thomson, key instructional leaders who work with teams of teachers and provide individual coaching, influence curriculum design and support development of common assessments are participating in high quality professional learning opportunities, a powerful network of support, resources second to none and opportunities for leadership development at SMM Science House. The leadership development opportunity informed and influenced the design of comprehensive, integrated units of study, which will be implemented district wide in grades K-6 in 2010-11.

2) SMM professional developers provided a 4 day Scientific Inquiry and Equity Institute this summer to help teachers prepare for implementation of STEM units beginning in fall of 2010. Most K-5 teachers and all teacher leaders attended (including ESL, gifted and talented education, math, science, technology integration and literacy coaches).

3) SMM also provided 5 additional days of science education leadership for 20 teacher leaders to ensure ongoing support and sustainability.



Marta Shahsavand, Literacy Coach and Gifted and Talented teacher at Richfield Dual Language School and Rick Sowada, second grade teacher at Sheridan Hills, observe sedimentation patterns and infer implications for plant and animal life.

(Richfield science continued on page 3)

Survey Shows 1,700 Layoffs

A recent survey shows that metro school districts have laid off almost 1,700 employees and made more than \$285 million in combined budget reductions over the past two years. Unfortunately, there does not appear to be a light at the end of the tunnel. School districts will be forced to make even more program and staff cuts for the next school year even if state funding remains flat. AMSD member school districts are projecting a \$187 million funding gap for the 2011-12 school year based on the current funding levels. However, the state faces a projected budget shortfall of \$5.8 billion for the 2012-13 biennium and some state policymakers are warning that they may not be able to hold education harmless in the next budget setting session.

The chart on the following page shows summary data from the survey of AMSD member districts.

(Layoffs continued on page 4)

Integrated science education taking center stage in Richfield

(Richfield science continued from page 2)

St. Catherine University Partnership – developing teacher understandings and expertise related to integrated sciences and engineering:



S.T.E.M. teachers, Carrie Allen and Judy Cowdery, get serious about designing a movable toy prototype for their Elementary Engineering course.

By spring of 2012, 2/3 of K-5 teachers (including ESL and Special Education) will be K-5 engineering certified through on site course work provided by university faculty. S.T.E.M. school staff is our 2010 priority with other schools participating in 2011. In addition, St. Catherine University faculty has consulted on our unit development and assisted with selection of appropriate materials, assessments, and activities.

The WORKS, Minnesota’s elementary engineering museum, is a unique force for engineering at the elementary level:

With nearly 20 years of experience, staff at the WORKS is providing professional development related to specific, sequenced engineering challenges and assisting with the design and construction of specialized spaces for engineering explorations at the S.T.E.M. school.



Strength of a pasta bridge is tested using a bucket of sand during an engineering challenge at training provided by The WORKS.

Wood Lake Nature Reserve will host each K-5 student 3 times annually. Students at the S.T.E.M. themed school will be trained to participate in year-long service learning (monitoring water quality and invasive species in neighboring parks) to deepen and extend their understandings.

“We are confident that our students and their teachers will have powerful and authentic science experiences this year and into the future,” commented Kate Trewick. “Our secondary teachers are excited about the possibilities moving forward,” she added.

This month’s member spotlight was submitted by Kate Foate Trewick, Chief of Staff for Richfield Public Schools.

More program and staff cuts possible next year

(Layoffs continued from page 3)

	FY2010	FY2011	FY2012
Budget Reserve Reduction	\$59,857,228	\$50,993,365	
Budget Reductions	\$83,476,823	\$91,134,772	
Total:	\$143,334,051	\$142,128,137	\$187,319,863

Staff Reductions (FTE's)	865.5	829.6	?
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School district budgeting is always a difficult task. School administrators must prepare budgets prior to the conclusion of the legislative session which makes it necessary to guess the final outcome of the legislative process. The level of uncertainty has been very high in recent years with final decisions sometimes not coming until after the conclusion of the regular session.

As the survey clearly shows, school boards and administrators have utilized many options to balance their budgets. Tapping budget reserves, closing school buildings, staff layoffs, salary freezes, increasing fees and creating efficiencies by collaborating with other local units of government have all been utilized. In short, school leaders have put all options on the table during these challenging economic times.

It will be important that state policymakers take a similar approach to keeping all options on the table as they work to balance the state budget next session. Economic experts agree that a well educated workforce is essential to creating the vibrant and diversified economy Minnesota needs to compete in the global marketplace. State policymakers and education officials must work together and think creatively and act boldly to move Minnesota forward.

“School board members, administrators, teachers, and parents all understand that the state budget needs to be fixed,” said Patsy Green, chairperson for the AMSD board of directors and a member of the Robbinsdale Area Schools board of directors. “School boards and administrators are looking at everything from closing school buildings to adopting a four-day school week to collaborating with other units of government to create more efficient programs. But when fixing the budget, state policymakers must remember that a well-educated workforce is critical for Minnesota’s future economic success, and that education starts at an early age.”

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, Intermediate School North St. Paul/Maplewood/Oakdale, Northeast Metro District 916 (Associate Member), Northwest Suburban Integration District (Associate Member), 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