

AMSD Position on Mandate Reduction and Local Control

The Association of Metropolitan School Districts supports eliminating unnecessarily restrictive mandates that increase administrative expenses and limit the ability of local school districts to make decisions based on student needs. AMSD further believes that the Governor and Legislature should reverse the trend of centralizing control of public education by broadening the levy and decision-making authority of locally elected school boards.

AMSD BELIEVES

- Federal and state mandates must have a clearly articulated purpose, which is revisited regularly to check for relevance and alignment with other policy goals.
- Policy makers in Congress and in the Legislature must provide the funding necessary to comply with mandates.

BACKGROUND

Minnesota school districts operate with mandates related to financial management, curriculum, and reporting.

Local control and citizen input are key components of our nation's democratic system. Decentralized governance improves responsiveness to local concerns, stimulates innovation and participation, and increases the accountability of locally elected officials.

Mandates have been continually imposed on school districts without the corresponding allocation of resources to carry them out. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) have had the biggest impact on school districts but the list of mandates is seemingly endless. Other examples include:

Financial management mandates which create unnecessary complexity and uncertainty include:

- Approval process for health and safety projects, which has grown increasingly detailed for both school boards and the Department of Education audiences.
- The January 15 deadline and financial penalty for not reaching a teacher contract settlement creates an uneven playing field in the bargaining process and penalizes students.
- Staff development set aside and allocation requirements
- Maintenance of effort requirements for safe schools revenue

Curriculum mandates have created problems when under- or unfunded or arbitrarily restrictive.

- Federal and state mandates to provide comprehensive special education services, without the funding necessary to do so. Statewide, districts will be forced to shift \$567 million from general education programs to meet special education mandates this year
- The prohibition of starting the school year before Labor Day is arbitrary and does not allow local school

boards to respond to community needs and expectations.

- Replace the requirement for a minimum number of student contact days to a comparable number of student contact hours
- Allow students who have failed the GRAD reading test the option to retake the test in a paper/pencil format
- Allow school districts to post board minutes and budget information on their web sites and publish newspaper notices listing the site
- Repeal the requirement that school districts negotiate the number and identity of 403(b) vendors

Reporting mandates that have proven redundant and time-consuming, and no longer have any evident use include:

- Report on allocation of revenue to each school building in district
- Redundant reporting among the UFARS, EDRS, EMAP, MARSS and STARS systems

The Governor and Legislature should work to reduce these burdensome mandates to allow educators more time to focus increasing student achievement.

Every school district faces unique needs which depend on a variety of factors, including, demographics, geography, and district size. Locally elected school boards are best positioned to identify and respond to the varying needs of their districts. The Governor and Legislature should empower school boards to respond to the concerns and desires of their communities by granting them levy authority in the areas of: transportation, technology, and additional authority to address deferred maintenance issues.



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