

Association of Metropolitan School Districts 2010 Legislative Platform

Minnesota faces a historic budget challenge that is threatening the state's ability to develop the productive and educated workforce needed to compete in today's global economy. Our ability to compete nationally and internationally is dependent on building a highly-educated workforce. State policymakers need to act strategically in both the short-term and the long-term if Minnesota is to successfully emerge from the worldwide recession. It is critical that state policymakers balance the state budget while simultaneously laying the ground work to invest in human capital and reform our education funding system.

Stabilize Funding

Many school districts are facing daunting budget challenges in the face of a state funding freeze enacted during the 2009 legislative session and aid payment deferrals implemented by the Governor. AMSD member districts made over \$82 million in budget cuts for the 2009-10 school year including laying off almost 900 staff. It is critical that the Governor and Legislature take steps to stabilize education funding in the short-term and into the future.

- Adopt a schedule to phase in comprehensive education funding reform based on the New Minnesota Miracle framework
- Grant locally elected school boards temporary, discretionary levy authority until the state budget is stabilized and education funding reform is enacted
- Allow renewal of existing operating and capital projects referenda by a majority vote of the school board

Enhance Local Control

In these extremely challenging times, the Governor and Legislature should enhance local control and reduce cost pressures by implementing a moratorium on any new mandates and repealing or temporarily waiving existing mandates that are not funded or outdated. Examples of actions the Governor and Legislature can take to enhance local control and provide relief to local school districts include but are not limited to:

- Eliminate the maintenance of effort requirement for safe schools revenue
- Remove the penalty for not reaching contract settlements by January 15
- Replace the requirement for a minimum number of student contact days to a comparable number of student contact hours
- Repeal the requirement that school districts negotiate the number and identity of 403(b) vendors

- Allow school districts to publish board minutes and budget information on their web site with a notice in the newspaper stating the web address where the information can be found
- Allow school districts that transport charter school and nonpublic school students to charge for the full cost of transporting students to their sites
- Allow students who have failed the computerized version of the GRAD Reading test the option of retaking the test in a paper/pencil format
- Repeal the prohibition of starting the school year prior to Labor Day

Establish an Education Research Center

The Governor and Legislature should establish a non-partisan, independent Education Research Center. The Center should be charged with analyzing, conducting and disseminating research on emerging education issues and serving as a clearing house to share best practices information. The Educational Research Center could:

- Conduct research and make recommendations for enhancing the state's accountability system
- Analyze existing research studies and develop recommendations on critical emerging issues such as on-line learning.
- Analyze data collected through the developing state longitudinal data system and identify best practices to increase student achievement
- Identify and disseminate best practices in the area of shared services and local collaboration