

Increase Student Achievement through Innovation

There is widespread agreement that Minnesota needs to reform its education funding and delivery system to meet the needs of today's students. The current system was designed for a different time and a different mission. We must embrace new systems and take advantage of emerging technologies to personalize instruction and provide expanded learning opportunities so every student graduates from high school ready to enter a post-secondary training program. The new system must engage our youngest learners so they enter kindergarten prepared to learn.



The Governor and Legislature should create incentives for school districts to form local partnerships to spur innovation and creativity that will enhance learning opportunities for all students.

- Provide incentives and remove barriers to innovation and collaboration between and among school districts, charter schools, businesses, nonprofit organizations and other units of local government.
- Establish a digital learning division within the Minnesota Department of Education that is responsible for supporting and overseeing school technology, online learning and blended learning programs. Provide incentives for school districts to form online learning consortia to avoid duplication and to expand digital learning opportunities for students and professional development for staff.
- Establish a new, equalized early learning levy to allow school districts to develop and expand school-based early childhood education programs and full-day kindergarten.

Create Stability and Efficiency

State policymakers have made concerted efforts to protect education funding during the recent economic crisis. This commitment, along with assistance provided by the federal government, has helped reduce the number of layoffs and program cuts that would have otherwise been necessary. Despite these efforts, AMSD member districts made over \$100 million in budget adjustments in the 2011-12 school year including over 600 staff layoffs.

State policymakers and educators must work together to provide a predictable and stable funding system that will encourage greater creativity, innovation, flexibility and partnerships across school districts and local units of government.

- Eliminate the special education cross-subsidy by providing sufficient state funding or establishing an equalized local levy to cover unreimbursed special education costs.
- Reform the special education tuition billing system to increase stability and create greater efficiencies.
- Reduce special education paperwork and better align state and federal special education mandates to maximize staff time with students.
- Ensure integrated and equitable learning opportunities for our students by reforming the desegregation rule and the integration revenue program in a manner consistent with the framework developed by the 2010 Statewide Task Force on School Integration.
- Amend the continuing contract law to ensure school districts are able to retain their most effective teachers.
- Allow school districts to levy for the mandated increase in employer contributions to state pension funds.



Provide More Local Control

Every school district faces unique needs and challenges depending on a variety of factors including demographics, geography, district size and community expectations. We can no longer allow gridlock and logjams to dominate our social and political environment. By unleashing and supporting local control, we can incent locally elected school boards to implement innovative and creative solutions to accelerate student achievement.

- Permit locally elected school boards to structure their school calendar to reduce summer learning loss, expand instructional time and provide opportunities for school districts to collaborate in delivering professional development for their staff. Expansion of the Extended Time Program would allow school districts to extend the school day, week and/or year to increase learning time for students.
- Allow school boards and administrators to allocate staff development revenue to effectively implement the new teacher and principal evaluation system and the new literacy programs.
- Level the playing field between local units of government by allowing school boards to renew an expiring operating referendum by a majority vote of the school board.
- Increase the safe schools levy to ensure school districts are able to hire the necessary support staff and provide proper staff training to ensure a safe learning environment for students and staff.
- Allow appropriately trained staff to use approved restraint procedures in limited cases to ensure student and staff safety.



Association of Metropolitan School Districts

2012 LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM



Innovative and Creative Solutions for Students

“Today, however, more than ever before, our national security depends upon the quality of our educational system. Because of the merger of globalization and the IT revolution, raising math, science, reading, and creativity levels in American schools is the key determinant of economic growth, and economic growth is the key to national power and influence as well as individual well-being.”

— *That Used To Be Us: How America Fell Behind In The World It Invented And How We Can Come Back*, by Thomas Friedman and Michael Mandelbaum



For further information contact:

Scott Croonquist, Executive Director
Association of Metropolitan School Districts
1667 Snelling Avenue North • St. Paul, MN 55108
651-999-7325 fax 651-999-7328