

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 long. Other examples include:

Financial management mandates which create unnecessary complexity and uncertainty include:

- Staff development set aside and allocation requirements (waived in 2011).

Curriculum mandates are unnecessarily restrictive and should be loosened to provide greater local control.

- Federal and state mandates to provide comprehensive special education services, without the funding necessary to do so. In FY 2011, AMSD districts will spend \$687 per pupil of funding meant for general instruction on mandated special education programming.
- 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.
- An exception should be allowed for students who have failed the GRAD reading test 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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