

## AMSD Winter Conference

## Focuses on Transforming Public Education



James Rickabaugh, Director of the Institute @ CESA 1, moderates a panel discussion at AMSD's Annual Winter Conference on January 17, 2012. On the panel from left to right are Rick Ellingworth, Superintendent, Redwood Area Schools, Donna Deeds, Executive Director, Center for Advanced Professional Studies, Catherine Gallagher, Director of Teaching and Learning, Eastern Carver County Schools and Sandra Lewandowski, Superintendent, Intermediate District 287.

### AMSD Calendar

**February 24, 2012**  
**Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting,**  
7:30 a.m., TIES Building,  
St. Paul

**March 2, 2012**  
**Board of Directors Meeting,** 7:00 a.m., TIES Building, St. Paul

**March 8, 2012**  
**AMSD LAC Day at the Capitol**  
State Capitol  
www.amsd.org for details

**March 23, 2012**  
**Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting,**  
7:30 a.m., TIES Building,  
St. Paul

**April 13, 2012**  
**Board of Directors Meeting,** 7:00 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

### From the Chair

January was a very busy month for AMSD. Following the Legislative Session Preview in early January, we held the Annual Winter Conference on January 17. This year's conference topic was, *Education 2.0: Transforming Public Education*, and over 150 people attended. Attendees heard presentations on personalized learning, transforming the school calendar, business partnerships, the Hennepin County graduation initiative and the Eastern Carver County School Districts' Inspire Initiative. We were fortunate to have outstanding presentations from national and state education leaders. One of the highlights of the conference was a Skype conversation attendees had with students, faculty and business partners from the Center for Advanced Professional Studies at the Blue Valley School District in Kansas. All of the conference materials are available on the AMSD website at <http://www.amsd.org/events/amsd-winter-conference>. Thanks to the AMSD staff: Scott, Alice and Sara, for coordinating an informative and helpful month of activities for AMSD members.

The Minnesota Legislature convened the 2012 session on January 24 and the education committees in both the House and Senate were quick to start hearing bills. AMSD has compiled a list of education bills to watch this session and that information is available at <http://www.amsd.org/advocacy/2012-bill-tracker>

It is important to continue to communicate with your local legislators via in person meetings, personal phone calls, or email. You can refer to the AMSD legislative platform, position papers and talking points documents on our website.

*Pam Langseth, school board member from Minnetonka Public Schools, is chair of AMSD.*

## ISD 728: One Mission, One Vision, ALL Students

Every successful organization, regardless of its size, and every company has something that resembles a strategic plan. Each may call it something different, but the purpose is always the same. School districts are no different. Each district has at the minimum a 13+ year plan to educate preschoolers through 12th grade.

ISD 728, a school district based in Elk River, is no different.

Or is it?

Created more than a century ago, and for much of that what some referred to as a “small town district,” ISD 728 is now Minnesota’s eighth largest and fastest growing school district. Since 2000, the school district has grown by more than 3,500 students, an increase more than the enrollment of 80 percent of all school districts in the state and equivalent to five large elementary schools. During this span, four new schools were built, eight renovated and land purchased in two communities. Growth has slowed, but preparing for the future continues at an accelerated pace.



With this growth has come challenges and opportunities, but to meet each the district needed a comprehensive strategic plan. In 2007, newly appointed Superintendent Dr. Mark Bezek, his administrative team and the School Board developed an eight-year strategic plan. In 2011, Bezek announced the majority of that plan had been met and that it was time for a new “roadmap to the future.”

“The world is not the same place it was in 2007,” Bezek says in a newly released video about the district’s Strategic Planning process. With nearly 13,000 students and 2,000 employees, but not enough funding to implement critical programs such as International Baccalaureate, Bezek and the district’s Legislative Action Team sought financial help from St. Paul. Because of “funding inequities and antiquated state rules,” Bezek told state legislators last year, his district needed help. With no success coming from the state, families demanding a quality E-12 curriculum and taxpayers speaking clearly that they are overtaxed, something creative, out-of-the-box, was needed.



Nandu Ganesh, Rogers High School Class of 2011, participated as a student representative in a Community Café.

In the spring of 2011, the first steps toward a new strategic plan, entitled One Mission, One Vision, ALL Students, for the school district started with three “Community Cafés.” More than 140 citizens shared their hopes and dreams for what the school district should focus on for the next five to 10 years. From these conversations, three diverse Core, Action and Measurement teams were formed. Last fall, the Core Team drafted district Core Values, Strategic Objectives, Strategies and Delimiters. This winter the Action and Measurement Teams met to create the action steps and the tools to monitor and assess the district’s annual progress. With a comprehensive communications plan developed, every effort is being made to get input from every corner of the 175-square mile, 16 community school district. The timeline calls for an approval request to the School Board by May 2012.

With limited funding, sustained growth and a need to provide a quality E-12 curriculum, out-of-the-box thinking is happening in ISD 728. The northwest metro suburban district continues to improve on data-driven decisions, with testing results at or above the state average, while creatively discovering new ways to create or implement programs such as an IMPACT student leadership program, two STEM programs, MRC, AVID, PLC and RTI. The new Strategic Plan, Bezek says, will help guide the way for innovative elementary and vocational and technology magnet schools and technology-based learning where “new schools may never have to be built again.”

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# State Budget Surplus Is Illusory

**M**innesota Management & Budget prepares formal forecasts of state revenues and expenditures in November and February each year as required by state law. Forecast information is used by the Governor and Legislature to ensure that enacted budgets remain on track and in balance, and to plan for future budgets. Forecast information is also used by bond rating agencies and other financial analysts to review the state's financial health.

On December 1, 2011, the November budget forecast was released. Most people were caught off guard when the forecast projected a \$879 million surplus at the end of the 2012-13 biennium. While the November forecast was welcome news after years of budget shortfalls, it is the February forecast that will provide the numbers state policymakers will use to make decisions in the 2012 session.

Even if the budget surplus holds or increases in the February forecast, any notion of a budget “surplus” is illusory. Any projected surplus will already be spoken for as a result of actions taken to balance the budget during the 2011 special session.

Current law requires that any projected surplus first go to restoring the state’s reserves. Consequently, if the November forecast holds steady, the first \$255 million will go to the cash flow account to restore it to \$350 million and \$621 million will go to the budget reserve which would bring the reserve to \$648 million--just \$5 million short of the statutorily designated level of \$653 million.

After the reserve is restored to \$653 million, current law requires any additional surplus to go toward repaying the school aid payment shift and then the property tax recognition shift. The budget adopted last July to end the state government shutdown increased the school aid payment shift to a 60/40 payment schedule. This means that school districts are now receiving 60% of their funding in the current year and the remaining 40% in the following year. The amount necessary to totally repay the school aid payment shift is \$2.195 billion.

After the school aid payment shift is restored, the law requires the Governor and Legislatures to repay the \$595 million property tax recognition shift - another accounting shift state policymakers have used in recent years to balance the state budget.

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## ISD 728 implements new strategic plan



Measurement team members Darren Wolf, Rogers High School Assistant Principal, Barbara Schwab (center), Parker Elementary School teacher, and Early Childhood Special Education Speech Clinician Nikki Nordmeier.

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ISD 728 is distinguishing itself by educating, inspiring and empowering its diverse learners, shaping their futures, helping students accomplish their dreams and contributing positively to its local and global communities. With a new roadmap to the future set to be implemented, ISD 728 will continue to be in the top 10 in size, but plans to be in the top tier in terms of programming, curriculum and accomplishments. The new strategic plan is what Bezek expects will set the district apart as a “leader among leaders.” For every ISD 728 Early Education child to high school graduate, having a plan that will develop them into leaders is the expectation. They deserve nothing less.

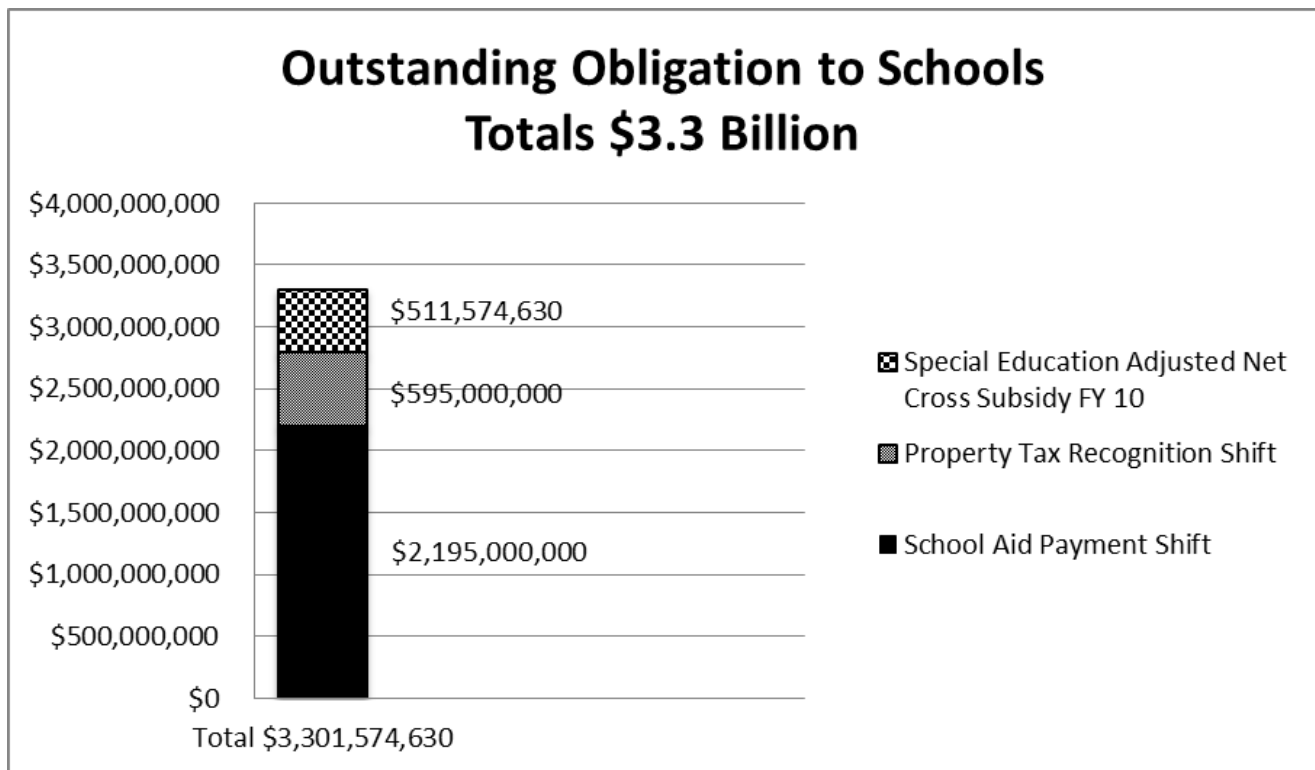
*This month’s member spotlight was submitted by Casey Mahon, Manager of Communications, Elk River Area School District.*

## State Budget Surplus? School Funding Falls Far Short

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On top of the education payment shifts, the state has continued to severely under-fund special education. The Minnesota Department of Education reported in the 2011 Special Education Cross-Subsidies Report that the special education adjusted net cross subsidy for FY 2010 was \$511 million. This means that Minnesota school districts redirected over \$500 million in funds meant for general classroom instruction toward state mandated special education programming last school year.

As the chart below shows, any talk of a state budget surplus is very premature. State policymakers have \$3.3 billion in obligations to our public schools before discussion of a state budget surplus can be taken seriously.



**Source: Special Education Adjusted Net Cross Subsidy for FY 2010 from the 2011 Minnesota Department of Education Special Education Cross-Subsidies Fiscal Year 2010 Report.**

**AMSD Members:** Anoka-Hennepin, Bloomington, Brooklyn Center, Burnsville-Eagan-Savage, Columbia Heights, East Metro Integration District 6067, Eastern Carver County Schools, Eden Prairie, Edina, Elk River, Farmington Area, Fridley, Hopkins, Intermediate District 287, Intermediate District 917 (Associate Member), Inver Grove Heights, Lakeville Area, Mahtomedi, Minneapolis, MSU Mankato Center for Engaged Leadership (Associate Member), Minnetonka, Mounds View, North St. Paul/Maplewood/Oakdale, Northeast Metro District 916 (Associate Member), Northwest Suburban Integration District (Associate Member), Orono, Osseo Area Schools, Richfield, Robbinsdale, Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan, Roseville, Shakopee, South St. Paul, South Washington County, Spring Lake Park, St. Anthony/New Brighton, St. Cloud Area, St. Louis Park, St. Paul, Stillwater, TIES (Associate Member), Wayzata, West Metro Education Program, West St. Paul, and White Bear Lake.