

# CONNECTIONS



*News from the Association of Metropolitan School Districts*

**January 2023**  
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Number 4

## White Bear Lake Area Schools: Building Our Future

**January 27, 2023**  
**Executive/Legislative**  
**Committee Meeting**

7:30 a.m. - 9 a.m.  
Anderson Center  
Bethel University  
Arden Hills

**February 3, 2023**  
**Board of Directors**  
**Meeting**

7 a.m. - 9 a.m.  
Quora Education Center  
NE Metro 916  
Little Canada

**February 24, 2023**  
**Executive/Legislative**  
**Committee Meeting**

7:30 a.m. - 9 a.m.  
Anderson Center  
Bethel University  
Arden Hills

**March 3, 2023**  
**Board of Directors**  
**Meeting**

7 a.m. - 9 a.m.  
Quora Education Center  
NE Metro 916  
Little Canada



The story of White Bear Lake Area Schools' successful Building Our Future fall 2019 bond referendum started long before it appeared on the ballot. It was an out-growth of important projects: a 2017-18 strategic plan process and 2018-19 facilities planning process.

Committees of students, families, staff and community members came together and engaged in important discussions, surveys and studies. A key discussion point, specific to the district, focused on a two-campus high school set-up with one campus housing grades 9-10 and the other housing grades 11-12. It is rumored that this current high school design was a "temporary fix" when implemented in the 1980s, honoring the community's wishes for one high school while overcoming the challenge that no district building could accommodate all students in grades 9-12.

The result was a complex facilities plan to address projected enrollment growth throughout the district; provide safe, secure and healthy learning environments for all students through investments in our aging facilities and infrastructure; create a single unified grades 9-12 high school; and create flexibly-designed learning spaces to support student-centered instruction.

All construction phases will be completed in the summer of 2025, and much

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Thank you to the 200 plus AMSD members and legislators who attended the 2023 AMSD Session Preview! We were also thrilled to welcome Gov. Walz, Lt. Gov. Flanagan, and Commissioner Jett to the event. Gov. Walz's announcement that he and the Lt. Governor will propose linking the formula to inflation drew a long ovation from the standing room only crowd. The 2023 session presents a historic opportunity to stabilize the education funding system and help our students recover from the pandemic. I encourage AMSD members to stay engaged throughout the session. We need your voice and advocacy for our students and our schools!

***From the AMSD Chair, Crystal Brakke, Richfield Public Schools Board Member***



has already been done, including a brand new Transportation facility and a renovation of our Area Learning Center. Additions have been completed at seven of our nine elementary schools, and the eighth is currently under construction. The ninth elementary, a brand new building, opened for students this fall.

Perhaps the most dramatic changes to the district's landscape are those at our current White Bear Lake Area High School - North Campus building, which will be home to the unified grades 9-12 high school in the fall of 2024. The stadium, track and west practice fields were completed last fall, allowing our physical education teachers, coaches, and athletes early access to this new facility. Construction will soon wrap up on the field house, which will house multiple courts, an indoor running track and an elevated walking track. The facility will meet a strong community need for indoor activity space for years to come.

Another noticeable change is the new 3-story classroom addition housing nine learning studios that will transform the way our students are able to learn and collaborate, with a flexible environment and a lot of natural light. Also included in the addition are spaces for our Career Pathways programs.

The unified high school project is complex, with many phases and moving parts. Current North Campus students, our ninth and tenth graders, will soon transition into the new part of the building so renovation work can take place in the original building. The building's existing circle design will be opened up and a fine arts addition will be constructed. Additional parking will accommodate the expanding population of the unified high school.

Our two middle schools are seeing changes as well. Completed additions at White Bear Lake Area High School - South Campus are part of the plan to transition the building into a middle school when the high school is unified. Central Middle School projects are currently in the design phase. The school will gain the current District Center square footage when district offices move to the current Sunrise Park Middle School building along with the Early Childhood program, the Transition Education Center and the Senior Program.

We invite you to follow along and track our progress on the Building Our Future page of the district's website - [www.isd624.org/BuildingOurFuture](http://www.isd624.org/BuildingOurFuture). These exciting district-wide building projects are setting us up well for Our Future.

*This month's member feature was submitted by Dr. Wayne A. Kazmierczak, Superintendent, White Bear Lake Area Schools.*





# 2023 AMSD Session Preview Brings Legislators and Education Leaders Together

More than 200 education leaders — superintendents, school board members and district staff — joined Gov. Tim Walz, Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan, MDE Commissioner Willie Jett, and more than two dozen state legislators on Jan. 6 for the AMSD Legislative Session Preview — the annual event that highlights AMSD’s legislative platform and key education issues for the upcoming legislative session.

The 2023 event, held at Northeast Metro Intermediate School District 916’s Quora Education Center, featured remarks from Gov. Tim Walz and Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan about their education priorities for the session.



*Gov. Tim Walz and Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan spoke at the 2023 AMSD Session Preview — pledging to link the education funding formula to inflation.*

Two AMSD superintendents — Dr. Stacie Stanley of Edina Public Schools and Dr. Joe Gothard of Saint Paul Public Schools — joined AMSD Chair Crystal Brakke in presenting AMSD’s 2023 Legislative Platform, which the AMSD Board of Directors approved in December. The platform focuses on four themes:

- Strengthen and Stabilize Funding
- Enhance School Safety and Increase Mental Health Support
- Close Opportunity Gaps and Spur Innovation
- Diversify the Educator Workforce and Address Shortage Areas



*Edina Public Schools Supt. Stacie Stanley urged legislators to address the English learner and special education cross-subsidies.*



*Saint Paul Public Schools Supt. Joe Gothard talked about the importance of stability and flexibility in the education funding system.*

Gov. Walz told a standing ovation crowd that he and Lt. Gov. Flanagan will propose linking the education funding formula to inflation — a long time AMSD priority that had just moments before been emphasized by Supt. Gothard.

The annual preview provides an opportunity for legislators to hear the priorities of AMSD member school districts and discuss important education issues. AMSD member school districts collectively serve more than half of the public school students in Minnesota. Chair Brakke, Supt. Stanley, and Supt. Gothard each emphasized the importance of stabilizing the education funding system and providing

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school districts with the flexibility to address their unique needs and challenges. Under the current funding system, school leaders don't know what level of funding the state will provide from one year to the next, making it extremely difficult to adopt long range plans.

The preview concluded with a legislative panel discussion (at right) moderated by AMSD Board Chair Crystal Brakke and featuring Sen. Michael Kreun (R-Blaine), Sen. Mary Kunesh (DFL-New Brighton), Rep. Ben Bakeberg (R-Jordan), and Rep. Cheryl Youakim (DFL- Hopkins) who each outlined some of their education priorities for the 2023 session.



Youakim is the chair of the House Education Finance Committee, and Bakeberg is a first-term member of the House Education Policy Committee and Finance Committee. Kunesh is the chair of the Senate Committee on Education Finance, and Kruen is a first-term member of that committee.

- [LINK: View the AMSD 2023 Legislative Preview Presentation](#)
- [LINK: View a PDF of the 2023 AMSD Legislative Platform](#)
- [LINK: View a video of the presentations at the 2023 Legislative Preview](#)

## Governor Releases Education Budget Proposals

On Jan. 17 Gov. Tim Walz and Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan unveiled their One Minnesota Budget proposal relating to children, youth, and families. Flanked by Saint Paul Public Schools Supt. Joe Gothard and Education Commissioner Willie Jett — as well as several other state commissioners — the governor and lieutenant governor made the announcement at SPPS' Adams Spanish Immersion Elementary School.

The plan includes a 4 percent funding formula increase for next fiscal year, as well as renewing the pledge he made at the 2023 AMSD Legislative Preview — to tie the funding formula to inflation beginning in FY2026. The plan would also cover 50 percent of the special education cross-subsidy and 25 percent of the English learner cross-subsidy.

Highlights of the announcement include:

- Formula increased by 4 percent in FY24 and 2 percent in FY25 and formula tied to inflation effective in FY26.
- Special ed cross-subsidy reduction aid increased to 50 percent.
- EL cross-subsidy reduced by 25 percent.
- Universal meals.
- Funding for school support personnel and mental health supports.
- Expanded funding for PreK, the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), and early learning scholarships.
- Establishment of a new Department of Children, Youth, and Families. This department would oversee many programs that support children and families but are currently located in different agencies.

- [LINK: Summary of Governor's Budget Plan](#)
- <https://kstp.com/kstp-news/top-news/walz-announces-12b-education-budget-proposal/>