

March 2021
vol 18 ♦ no 6

March 5, 2021
Board of Directors Meeting
7:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.

March 26, 2021
Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting
7:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.

April 9, 2021
Board of Directors Meeting
7:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.

April 30, 2021
Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting
7:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.

Meetings will be conducted remotely until further notice and instructions will be sent prior to each meeting.

Farmington Tiger Bands—You Can’t Stop Their Beat!

Farmington Area Public Schools, ISD 192, offers a robust band program beginning as early as fifth grade and extending through high school. In addition to being incredibly popular with learners, it is also well loved by the extended Farmington Area community and usually draws a crowd for performances. Unfortunately, playing live music in a large group to a big crowd isn’t something that’s doable during a global pandemic — at least not in a traditional way. Over the last year Farmington Band Directors Erin Holmes, Bradley Mariska, and Elliot Douma have used all their creative and innovative skills to not only maintain the learning experience but to deepen it.

The Farmington High School Band Program is a comprehensive instrumental music education program serving over 300 students. Comprising five concert bands, four jazz ensembles, competitive marching band, pep band, solo/ensemble contest, winter percussion, and many other small ensembles. Farmington High School band students regularly collaborate with professional conductors, composers, and college ensembles. At a time when being together and collaborating with other groups has been difficult, the Farmington Tiger Bands have made it happen.



Farmington High School Band students perform for an empty auditorium while hundreds watch on camera.

With a mix of distance learning and hybrid classes (in which students meet in person two days a week), students were sometimes able to play together in small groups with proper health and safety precautions, such as masks, bell covers, and of course social distancing. Sometimes they were able to play outside. Often they played alone in a room, connected to others via video. This inspired the bands to begin learning recording and production skills on top of their musical studies. The Jazz Band, Symphonic Band, and Wind Ensemble have now recorded and produced multiple

online concerts which can be found on their YouTube page (search Farmington Band).

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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

The recently released state budget forecast shows an improved economic outlook that allows state policymakers to address the financial challenges facing school districts. We have reached a pivotal point in the legislative session when House and Senate leaders will determine the budget allocations for the various finance committees. We need AMSD members to advocate for our students and our schools now. Please urge legislators to pass an early education package to address the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic including funding to mitigate the unanticipated enrollment decline as well for summer programming opportunities. Legislators need to understand that school districts are already developing budgets and designing programs for the summer and for the 2021-22 school year. Thank you in advance for your advocacy!

Curtis Johnson, school board member, Roseville Area Schools, is chair of AMSD.

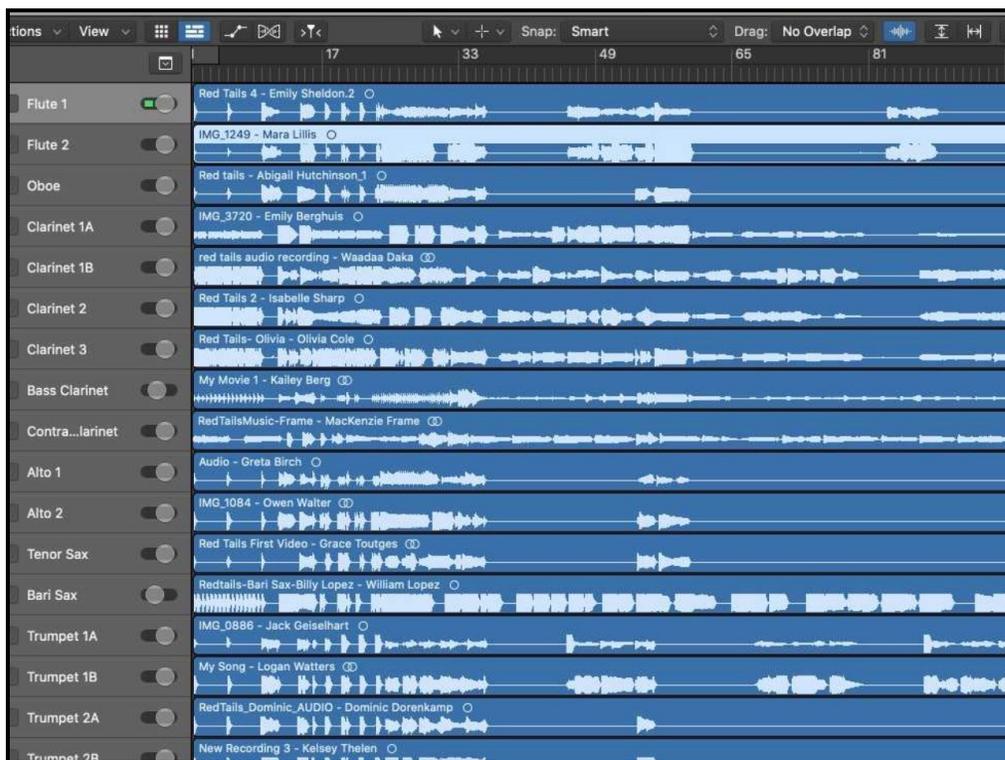
Tiger Bands Exemplify the Spirit of Innovation and Personalized Learning

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In a typical year the band would have performed at the annual Farmington Memorial Day event. This year they played TAPS for their neighborhood. In a typical year, Drum Majors work to build leadership for the next year in the marching band. Last spring, they did this by helping the candidates to prepare for an audition via Google Meet. Despite the fact that this was not a typical year, the Farmington Tiger Bands have found ways to keep students learning together.

Beyond video calls and recorded music, one major thing the Farmington High School Band program has done to build and nurture relationships and connections through this pandemic is to foster a mentorship program between high school and middle school students. Even in distance learning, the high school mentors were able to meet virtually with their middle school mentees to work one-on-one. This allowed the high school students to not only pass on technical skills but to share their passion for music. It allowed the students to build meaningful relationships at a time when many were isolated and lacking daily in-person interactions outside their homes.

There has also been a lot more small group work and opportunities for individual feedback to musicians from their instructors. While things look different, learning and growth are still happening. “We definitely have seen growth,” said Tiger Bands Director Erin Holmes, “simply because we are using a different lens.... being able to hone in on specific instrument skills was fantastic...each student was able to receive individual feedback.”



Learning how to edit together multiple sound tracks so that they sound like an ensemble playing together.

Farmington High School Music Department is invested in presenting opportunities for all students to find personal and artistic expression without any musical prerequisite and educators are looking forward to adding even more options in the future.

Music has long been a key part of education in Farmington Area Public Schools and that has only become more true over time. The Tiger Bands exemplify the spirit of innovation and personalized learning that is alive and well in the Farmington area. As was recently shared on the Farmington High School Band Facebook page: “This year, in the face of great adversity, instead of saying, ‘We can’t,’ we simply said, ‘How?’”

This month’s member spotlight was submitted by Sally McConnaughey, Communications Generalist, Farmington Area Public Schools.



Kristy Rhoades shared on Twitter that her son, a student at Boeckman Middle School, practiced with his Farmington High School Band mentor during distance learning.

In addition to normal band instruction, Farmington High School has recently launched two new instrumental music courses. In the fall of 2020, Farmington High School introduced its first project-based instrumental music courses, two sections of *Rock Band*, an exploratory music course for students interested in guitar, bass, drums, keyboards, and vocals. *Rock Band* is a course in which students learn to arrange, write, and perform music of their favorite popular genres, including - but not limited to - rock, R&B, country, pop, and more. It incorporates a variety of both acoustic and electric musical elements and styles, and is designed for students without formal music or musical notation experience. In the fall of 2021, the bands offered another semester elective in cooperation with the social studies department, *Hamilton: History & Music*. The

Minnesota School Districts Face Budget Shortfalls Due to COVID-19 Pandemic, Cross-Subsidies

Minnesota's public school districts are bracing for budget cuts, staff layoffs and reductions in student programming due to the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the growing shortfalls in the special education and English learner programs – also known as cross subsidies. A new statewide survey initiated by several public education associations shows how significant the budget challenges have become.

The survey, which was sent to 333 school districts statewide, was conducted by the Minnesota Association of School Business Officials (MASBO) in collaboration with AMSD, the Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA), the Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA), the Minnesota Rural Education Association (MREA) and Schools for Equity in Education (SEE).

Of the 144 school districts that responded to the survey, 92 percent project that with no formula increase, their general fund expenditures would exceed projected revenues for the 2021-22 school year — with several individual district shortfalls ranging into the millions of dollars.

Anoka-Hennepin Schools, for example, is projecting a deficit of more than \$14 million, with many other districts projecting critical shortfalls if the Legislature provides no increase to the education funding formula, including Shakopee (\$7 million), White Bear Lake (\$6.8 million), Rochester (\$4.595 million), Robbinsdale (\$4.4 million), Eastern Carver County (\$4.2 million) and St. Cloud (\$3 million).

The majority of districts responding to the MASBO survey indicated they would plan staff reductions and increases in class sizes to adjust for the shortfalls. Notably, the majority of the districts would face budget cuts even if Gov. Tim Walz's proposed formula increase of 1 percent in FY22 is adopted.

While stable education funding is an annual challenge for Minnesota school districts, this year's projected shortfalls have been greatly exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. In February, the [Minnesota Department of Education announced that student enrollment had declined by more than 17,000 students](#), largely due to challenges related to distance and hybrid learning.

As the MDE report noted, “the per-pupil nature of the education funding formula means that a loss of student enrollment will impact the amount of funding schools receive to operate their schools and support student learning.” MDE estimated that each student in Minnesota public schools generates approximately \$10,000 in general education revenue per district — which would translate to a combined loss of more than \$170 million statewide.

In addition to the 1 percent increase for FY22, Gov. Walz has proposed a one-time fund increase for declining enrollment revenue of \$25 million for FY22 to mitigate the impact of enrollment loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Governor has also proposed a hold-harmless appropriation of \$72.7 million for special education, to prevent the statewide special education cross-subsidy from increasing over the biennium. Special education costs continue to challenge districts as the need for specialized services has increased since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The Governor also has proposed an increase in EL funding of \$13.6 million to reduce the EL cross-subsidy.

The cross-subsidies (shortfalls) in special education and English learner programs create significant pressure on school district budgets. School districts are mandated by state and federal law to provide these important services, but the state and federal governments have historically not provided the necessary funding. This underfunding causes school districts to redirect funds meant for general instruction to cover the shortfalls.

According to the [FY 2019 Special Education Cross-Subsidies Report to the Legislature](#), recently released by the Minnesota Department of Education, the average special education cross subsidy per adjusted pupil in FY 2019 was \$802 while the average for AMSD member school districts was \$916. Similarly, the English learner cross-subsidy has grown substantially over the years, which is not surprising given that the formula has not been increased in 16 years.

Over the past decade, English learner expenditures have nearly doubled statewide from \$87.5 million in FY 09 to \$166.4 million FY 19 — a \$79 million increase — while state aid has only increased by \$18.5 million in that same timeframe. This has resulted in a more than doubling of the cross-subsidy in the English learner program, from \$58 per pupil in FY 09 to \$124 per pupil in FY 19.

Special Education Funding Shortfalls Impact AMSD Districts

2019 Special Education Cross-Subsidies

District Number	FY 2019 District	DISTRICT CROSS SUBSIDY*	Cross-Subsidy per WADM
1	Minneapolis	\$52,612,239	\$1,423
6	South Saint Paul	\$2,916,179	\$783
11	Anoka-Hennepin	\$36,860,985	\$881
13	Columbia Heights	\$5,346,299	\$1,411
14	Fridley	\$1,722,584	\$543
16	Spring Lake Park	\$4,878,266	\$751
112	Eastern Carver County	\$8,697,375	\$821
191	Burnsville	\$11,435,574	\$1,208
192	Farmington	\$7,393,868	\$928
194	Lakeville	\$11,811,661	\$969
196	Rosemount-AV-Eagan	\$23,462,726	\$751
197	West St. Paul	\$5,596,762	\$996
199	Inver Grove Heights	\$3,869,458	\$986
200	Hastings	\$4,226,127	\$884
270	Hopkins	\$6,882,257	\$916
271	Bloomington	\$13,427,211	\$1,169
272	Eden Prairie	\$7,648,887	\$781
273	Edina	\$7,111,567	\$771
276	Minnetonka	\$5,551,069	\$465
277	Westonka	\$2,739,224	\$1,023
278	Orono	\$1,775,410	\$562
279	Osseo	\$24,570,480	\$1,067
280	Richfield	\$5,509,557	\$1,198
281	Robbinsdale	\$17,119,270	\$1,280
282	Saint Anthony-New Brighton	\$1,491,284	\$744
283	St. Louis Park	\$4,501,872	\$893
284	Wayzata	\$10,730,160	\$826
286	Brooklyn Center	\$3,096,029	\$1,124
535	Rochester	\$15,440,128	\$805
621	Mounds View	\$7,482,771	\$588
622	N St Paul-Mplewd-Oakdale	\$12,063,959	\$1,033
623	Roseville	\$7,797,621	\$942
624	White Bear Lake	\$11,362,421	\$1,202
625	St. Paul	\$41,029,584	\$1,051
719	Prior Lake-Savage	\$6,514,855	\$675
720	Shakopee	\$8,127,302	\$897
728	Elk River	\$10,870,259	\$746
742	St. Cloud	\$11,374,117	\$1,044
832	Mahtomedi	\$3,472,689	\$952
833	S. Washington County	\$16,605,982	\$820
834	Stillwater	\$8,704,034	\$938
883	Rockford	\$1,102,352	\$616
Group Total/Average		\$454,932,454	\$916
State Total/Average		\$759,692,597	\$802

*Adjusted Net Cross Subsidy

Source: Minnesota Department of Education
 FY 2019 MDE Special Education Cross Subsidy
 Report and FY 19 School Profiles