

CONNECTI NS

News from the Association of Metropolitan School Districts

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Bloomington Public Schools Tackling Substance Misuse Challenges

June 9, 2023
Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting
7:30 a.m. - 9 a.m.
Anderson Center
Bethel University
Arden Hills

July 28, 2023
Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting
7:30 a.m. - 9 a.m.
Anderson Center
Bethel University
Arden Hills

August 4, 2023
Board of Directors Meeting
7 a.m. - 9 a.m.
Quora Education Center
NE Metro 916
Little Canada

August 25, 2023
Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting
7:30 a.m. - 9 a.m.
Anderson Center
Bethel University
Arden Hills

Drugs and alcohol are among the most detrimental, yet most common disruptions in teenage brain development. They manipulate the brain's wiring and affect the way the brain processes and retains information, including the way a teen thinks, focuses, learns, remembers, and concentrates inside and outside of school.

Despite the risky nature of early substance use, drug and alcohol misuse in schools and among adolescents is an all-too-common occurrence. Research shows chemical use of any kind has negative impacts on student's personal, social, and academic success. By senior year in high school, nearly 50 percent of teens have tried an illicit drug. And this is just the beginning. Over 65 percent of teens have consumed alcohol by the end of high school.

When drug use is prevalent and substances are increasingly easy to get, there is an above average chance middle and high school students have already been exposed to drugs and alcohol.

"Youth substance use continues to be a critical public health concern across the state," said Superintendent Dr. Eric Melbye. "Addressing substance use early in life is critical to reducing the risks to youth and families and can help reverse the current opioid overdose epidemic."

Dr. Melbye said the district is committed to collaborating with students, families and the community to promote chemical health awareness through prevention, intervention, and support. The district's new Chemical Health Plan outlines a series of goals to meet student needs through ongoing staff development, school-based counseling and support, and consultation with licensed professionals.

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A huge thanks to past and present AMSD board members, staff, parents and concerned citizens who advocated for our students and our schools during the 2023 legislative session, and of course our own team of AMSD staff. Long-time AMSD priorities — linking the formula to inflation and allowing locally elected school boards to renew an operating referendum — were included in the Omnibus Education bill after years of advocacy. In addition, AMSD's persistent advocacy for addressing the special education and English learner cross-subsidies paid dividends with significant progress to reduce the shortfalls in these programs. While two decades of underfunding can't be undone in one legislative session, these changes will both strengthen and stabilize our funding system. Your voice made a difference. Thank you again for your commitment to public education and have a great summer!

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

Promoting Chemical Health Awareness

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Licensed addiction specialists with PhaseZero Recovery Services meet with high school students in a group session discussion on young adult substance use. PhaseZero Recovery Services contracts with BPS to provide chemical health assessments, and individual and group sessions to identify their needs and develop plans to address their concerns.

Chemical Health Plan Goals

- Provide chemical health awareness and programming for students, parents and families
- Address individual student's alcohol and chemical use
- Provide students with chemical evaluations, individual and group sessions, treatment and other interventions
- Collaborate with community resources for chemical health and related issues
- Consult with school staff regarding student concerns
- Partner with community agencies to prevent and reduce adolescent substance use and abuse, and provide support for students in crisis

As part of an information, engagement and awareness campaign, the district partnered with Bloomington Educational Community Television (BEC-TV) to co-host a live virtual community engagement event: *Let's Be Honest: Tackling Youth Substance Use*. The event featured district and school mental and chemical health leaders, licensed addiction specialists, and a parent who lost her 17-year-old son to an accidental overdose last fall. Bloomington Public Schools also produced a powerfully moving [Let's Be Honest](#) video.

Promoting and supporting chemical health is an important component to achieving success personally and academically. Working together, we can address health and social problems related to substance misuse, and support youth intervention, prevention and treatment.

[LINK: Learn more at Bloomington Public Schools website](#)

This month's member feature was submitted by Rick Kaufman, Executive Director of Community Relations & Emergency Management, Bloomington Public Schools.

2023 Session Adjourns With Historic Education Funding — and Historic New Mandates and Programs

The words “historic” and “transformational” have been used to describe the education bill approved in the 2023 legislative session. Indeed, the \$2.265 billion funding increase for the 2024-25 biennium is a historic funding increase and includes several of AMSD’s legislative priorities including linking future increases in the formula to inflation, allowing school boards to renew an expiring operating referendum, and significantly reducing the cross-subsidies in the special education and English learner programs.

“Historic” and “transformational” might also be used to describe the number of new mandates and programs that were adopted that will impact how public schools will operate. Many of the new programs and mandates include funding, while others will need to be funded with the formula increase provided in the education bill. It will take months to fully ascertain how the numerous policy changes will impact students, staff, and families. Implementation of the new programs and requirements come as schools continue to help students recover from the pandemic amidst historic inflationary cost pressures.

As school districts begin unpacking this historic session and implementing the programs and policy changes, here’s an overview of the 2023 Omnibus Education Bill — along with some other notable legislation that will directly affect public education across Minnesota.



A view of the House of Representatives from the gallery during the 2023 legislative session.

Key funding provisions in the Omnibus Education Bill include:

- A formula increase of 4 percent for FY2024 and 2 percent for FY2025 and the formula will be linked to inflation beginning in FY2026 with a 2 percent floor and a 3 percent cap.
- Special education cross-subsidy reduction aid is increased and will reduce the cross-subsidy by 44 percent for FY2024, 2025, and 2026 and 50 percent for FY2027.
- English learner funding is significantly increased, and cross-subsidy reduction aid is established.
- Funding for 4,000 VPK seats was made permanent for the FY2024-25 biennium and additional funding was provided to expand the number of VPK seats by 5,200 for the FY2026-27 biennium. There is an additional \$50 million available in 2025 for VPK to potentially add an additional 3,000 seats.
- Transportation Sparsity aid is increased by \$9.895 million in the 2024-25 biennium and \$11.655 million in the 2026-27 biennium.
- Community Education aid is increased by \$4.835 million in FY2025, \$5.411 million in FY2026, and \$5.455 million in FY2027.
- A new funding formula for school library aid is established and \$45 million is appropriated for the 2024-2025 biennium and \$47.5 million for the 2026-2027 biennium.
- School boards are authorized to renew an operating referendum question one time by a vote of the school board.

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Board Renewal of an Operating Referendum Approved

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Key provisions of the referendum renewal legislation:

- The per pupil amount of the referendum must be the same amount as the expiring referendum. If the current referendum is adjusted annually for inflation, the inflation adjustment can continue.
- The term of the referendum is no longer than the initial referendum approved by the voters.
- The school board must adopt a written resolution by a recorded vote authorizing the renewal after holding a meeting and allowing for public testimony.
- The resolution must be adopted by June 15.
- A school board may renew a referendum not more than two years before the referendum expires.
- The district must submit a copy of the adopted resolution to the commissioner and the county auditor no later than Sept. 1 of the calendar year in which the resolution is adopted.

Funding was also included for another AMSD priority — diversifying the educator workforce and addressing staff shortage areas:

- Black Men Teach is funded at \$500,000 per year.
- Grow Your Own Program funding increased by \$18.5 million per year in the 2024-25 biennium and \$25.461 million per year in the 2026-27 biennium.
- Licensure shortage areas/special education teacher pipeline initiatives are funded at \$30 million in the 2024-2025 biennium and \$10 million in the 2026-2027 biennium.
- The Teacher Residency Program is funded at \$3 million per year through the 2026-27 biennium.
- Funding for the Collaborative Urban and Greater MN Educators of Color program is increased by \$4.44 million per year.
- A student support personnel workforce pipeline is established and funded at \$5 million annually.
- Early childhood Grow Your Own grants are funded at \$2.5 million annually.
- The current Tier 2 to Tier 3 pathway is maintained. However, the bill closes several pathways to Tier 2. Tier 1 teachers not holding master's degrees, or those not currently enrolled in teacher prep will be relegated to Tier 1 licensure and thus ineligible for the Tier 2 to Tier 3 experience pathway.

New programs or policy changes include:

- The READ Act — an AMSD priority — was also included in the bill and provides funding for professional development and curriculum aligned with structured literacy.
- School hourly workers became eligible for unemployment benefits during the summer months effective May 28, 2023. \$135 million in one-time funding is provided in FY2024 and is available through FY2027. Appropriates \$64 million per year beginning in FY 2026 for special ed unemployment insurance costs.
- Student Support Personnel Aid is established to help school districts hire school support personnel and is funded at \$11.94 per adjusted pupil for FY2024, \$17.08 in FY2025, and \$48.73 per pupil in FY2026 and later.
- Funding is provided for mandatory paid orientation of at least 8 hours annually for paraprofessionals.

Several new curriculum and graduation requirements were adopted including:

- Students who begin grade 9 in the 2024-25 school year and later must successfully complete a course for credit in personal finance in grade 10, 11, or 12.

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Major PELRA Changes Adopted

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- Students beginning grade 9 in the 2024-25 school year and later also must complete a course for credit in government and citizenship in grade 11 or 12.
- High schools are required to offer an ethnic studies course aligned with state social studies standards by the 2026-27 school year. Requires school districts to provide ethnic studies instruction to elementary and middle school students by the 2027-28 school year.
- School districts are required to offer as part of its social studies curriculum education on the Holocaust and genocide education in middle school and high school curriculum by the 2026-27 school year.



Stillwater Supt. Mike Funk talks to Rep. Mark Wiens (R-Lake Elmo) during AMSD's Day at the Capitol.

Links to the Education Bill, the summary, spreadsheets, and district runs are below:

- [LINK: View an MDE overview of the Education Omnibus Bill](#)
- [LINK: FY 2024 District Run](#)
- [LINK: FY 2025 District Run](#)
- [LINK: District Run Lookup Table](#)
- [LINK: Bill Summary](#)
- [LINK: View the final Conference Committee report](#)
- [LINK: AMSD Priorities in the 2023 Education Omnibus Bill](#)

Omnibus Labor, Economic Development, Labor and Industry Bill

The Education Bill wasn't the only legislation to affect school districts, however. The Omnibus Labor Bill, [SF3035](#), included significant changes to the Public Employee Labor Relations Act (PELRA) as well as earned safe and sick time benefits. Key provisions include:

- Terms and conditions of employment now includes adult-to-student ratios in classrooms, student testing, and student-to-personnel ratios that must be collectively bargained.
- Removes the number of personnel as a matter of inherent managerial policy.
- The number of days of required classroom instruction for a probationary period is reduced from 120 to 90.
- Within 20 days of hire, and every 120 calendar days, a public employer must provide the bargaining information for all bargaining unit employees including job title, worksite location, home address, home phone number, and work and home email address.
- School boards are required to meet and negotiate with the exclusive representative of teachers before adopting an e-learning day plan.
- Requires school districts to pay all employees their full wages and benefits for scheduled work hours during an e-learning period and to all employees to work from home to the extent practicable, be assigned to work in an alternative location, or be retained on an on-call basis for any potential need.
- Makes the teacher probationary period the same for districts in cities of the first class and those not in cities of the first class.
- Allows adult basic education and early childhood family education teachers to obtain tenure or continuing contract.
- Modifies the definition of "teacher" for purposes of PELRA, which determines which individuals can be in the teacher bargaining unit. Defines a teacher as a person creating and

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Managerial Rights Diminished Under Labor Policy Bill

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- delivering instruction to children in a prekindergarten or early learning program but allows these teachers to stay in a different bargaining unit certified before Jan. 1, 2023, with some exceptions.
 - Allows Tier 1 teachers to be in the same bargaining unit as other teachers for purposes of collective bargaining.
 - A public employer must allow an exclusive representative to meet in person with newly hired employees for 30 minutes within 30 calendar days from the date of hire.
 - A public employer must allow an exclusive representative to communicate with bargaining unit members using their employer-issued email address and must allow the exclusive representative to meet with bargaining unit members in facilities owned or leased by the public employer.
 - Modifies the definition of “public employee” for purposes of PELRA to include a temporary or seasonal school district or charter school employee to be counted as a “public employee,” for purposes of collective bargaining.
 - Requires employers to allow employees to accrue one hour of earned sick and safe time for every 30 hours worked up to a maximum of 48 hours in a year.
- [LINK: View the Conference Committee Report](#)

Family and Medical Benefit Insurance Bill

The conference committee report for [HF2](#), the Paid Family Medical Bill, also provides Minnesota workers up to 12 weeks of paid family leave and up to an additional 12 weeks of paid medical leave per year with a maximum of 20 weeks of leave in a year. The new programs — funded with a .7 percent payroll tax — require that employers must pay a minimum of 50 percent of the annual premium. Benefits are available starting Jan. 1, 2026.

- [LINK: View the final Conference Committee report](#)



AMSD Chair Crystal Brakke (center), with Rep. Mary Frances Clardy (DFL-Inver Grove Heights), left, and Rep. Mike Howard (DFL-Richfield) in the hallways of the Capitol.

AMSD Executive Director Scott Croonquist and Sen. Mary Kunesh (DFL-New Brighton) took questions from AMSD members during AMSD’s Day at the Capitol on March 8, 2023.

