

December 2018
vol 16 ♦ no 3

December 7, 2018 Board of Directors Meeting

7 a.m.
NEW LOCATION
Quora Education Center
NE Metro 916
Little Canada
<https://goo.gl/maps/EG2bcsS9zuK2>

December 14, 2018 Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting

7:30 a.m.
Lexington Room,
Sourcewell (TIES)
Conference Center
Saint Paul

January 4, 2019 Legislative Preview

7:30 a.m.—10 a.m.
Quora Education Center
NE Metro 916
Little Canada
<https://goo.gl/maps/EG2bcsS9zuK2>

**NEW AMSD OFFICE
LOCATION**
Effective December 17
2 Pine Tree Dr., Suite 380
Arden Hills, MN 55112
612-430-7806

AMSD's Mission

To advocate for state education policy that enables metropolitan school districts to improve student learning.



Association of
Metropolitan School Districts

Eden Prairie Schools

Elevating Student Voice and District Partnerships To Create Equitable Outcomes

The racial and ethnic diversity of Minnesota continues to increase. According to the Minnesota State Demographic Center (2016), by 2035 the percentage of Minnesotans who identify as a person of color will increase to 25 percent; up nearly 200 percent since 2005. This growth has led to an increased number of racially, ethnically and linguistically diverse students in Minnesota Public Schools. For instance, between 2010 and 2015 the English Learner population in Minnesota grew at a rate of 17.5 percent, faster than most midwestern states including Illinois and Ohio.



Schools in the West Metro have experienced an increase in student of color enrollment, including Eden Prairie Schools, which serves a student population where 41 percent indicate a race/ethnicity other than white; Hopkins Schools where 46 percent of students indicate a race/ethnicity other than white, and St. Louis Park Schools, which also serves a population where 46 percent of the students indicate a race/ethnicity other than white.

The change in demographics has compelled district leaders to study best practices that ensure strong achievement for all students. This coupled with the Reimagine Minnesota efforts sponsored by the Association of Metropolitan School Districts (AMSD), led the superintendents of Eden Prairie, Hopkins and St. Louis Park school districts to convene middle and high school students from the three respective districts in August 2018. The purpose of the gathering was to elevate student voice and garner ideas for increasing the service of students of color. The student group included both white and students of color, a balance in gender, students who will graduate in 2019, along with those who will continue in schools for several more years.

Continued on page 2

From the Chair

Thank you to everyone who attended, presented and planned AMSD's annual conference on November 28. The theme of the conference, "Pursuing a Funding System that Ensures Equity, Access and Opportunity for All Students" built upon the Statewide Funding Strategy from the Reimagine Minnesota Roadmap. As this month's research article highlights, we were honored to have a slate of outstanding presenters who shared their expertise and outlined some of the challenges and shortcomings of the current education funding system. Conference attendees went away armed with data and knowledge that will help them be effective advocates at the Capitol during the 2019 session!

Stephanie Levine, school board member from West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan, is chair of AMSD.

Collaborating to Ensure Achievement for All Students

Continued from page 1

During a day long process, students used important 21st century skills such as collaboration, critical thinking, communication, and creativity to examine the complexities of diverse learning environments. The Human Centered Design framework was used to guide the process. There are five main components to the process including: Empathy, Define, Ideate, Prototype and Test. The framework in its simplest form appears to be linear, but the process does not always result in a linear application.

Step 1: Gather Empathy

A total of 35 students from all three districts were asked to provide feedback on their experiences as a student while a “Design Team” of 12 students listened to their responses. Dr. Patrick Duffy, Director of Curriculum and Instruction from St. Louis Park Schools, engaged the 35 students in rich conversation about how they feel while they are at school. The Design Team then split into two groups and began asking groups of five to six students deeper questions, and gathering their responses.



Step 2: Define the Problem to Solve

Students on the Design Team were then asked to put together the information they gathered during the Empathy stage to define a core problem to solve. The student designers started to sort, eliminate, combine and rewrite questions. In the end, two clear questions emerged from the previous dozens: *How might we empower and encourage students to share their voices with staff* and *How might we break the student/teacher barrier?*

Step 3: Ideate

Using the “how might we” questions, designers were tasked with creating as many possible ideas as they could to answer the question. In 20 minutes time, a bounty of ideas in the form of a Post-It Note rainbow appeared.

Step 4: Prototype

Now our design teams had around 100 ideas sitting in front of them. We wanted to see two prototypes from each team. Design teams had five minutes to determine the ideas to build. Like the “how might we” questions, there was sorting, eliminating and combining. After five minutes, two ideas per design team emerged. It was time to build. The designers used a combination of text and crafts to illustrate the ideas that they want to see in their schools. Posters were created to illustrate the finer details, but there were pipe cleaner figures, iPads made from felt and clay objects to represent various ideas.

In the end, students presented four unique prototypes to the district leadership teams of Eden Prairie, Hopkins and St. Louis Park Schools:

1. Privilege Walks: Students and staff participate in privilege walks that show the inequities in our systems and create a starting point for conversations within the school amongst all stakeholders.
2. Student-Led Discussion Panels: Students lead professional development for a staff to share how they feel about their school experience and how they believe barriers can be removed between students and staff.
3. Equity Specific Coaches: Coaches come in and model Culturally Responsive and Equitable Teaching Practices. This would be a mandatory coaching model that all staff members would engage in over the course of a school year.
4. Student Inventory: Students would complete a confidential survey that compiles information about each student and is shared with each of their teachers so that the teacher has a deeper understanding of the student. This would also be a way for a student to access more specific supports, such as a counselor or social worker.

Step 5: Test the Prototype

Superintendents shared their appreciation for students’ involvement in the process and committed to ensuring the student prototypes come to life. In the months ahead, students will provide professional development in their respective districts.

“It never ceases to amaze me the way that students can connect, innovate and solve complex problems,” said Dr. Josh Swanson, Superintendent from Eden Prairie Schools. “From the moment students started walking into the design space, they were using real world skills our colleges and employers are looking for - creativity, collaboration, critical thinking and communication. This process will be a launching point for student voice and leadership in Eden Prairie Schools.”

This month’s member spotlight was submitted by Dr. Stacie Stanley, assistant superintendent, Alex Townsend, instructional excellence coordinator for digital learning and Jaclyn Swords, director of communications and community relations, Eden Prairie Schools.

Annual Conference: Ensuring Equity, Access and Opportunity for All Students

More than 150 education leaders turned out to the Association of Metropolitan School Districts' annual conference on Nov. 28, which focused on ensuring equity for students against the backdrop of last year's Reimagine Minnesota event.

This year's conference, "[Ensuring Equity, Access and Opportunity for All Students](#)," featured nearly a dozen presenters who spoke on the Reimagine Minnesota strategy centered on the importance of a state funding system that ensures equity, access and opportunity for all students.

Dr. Tom Melcher, the director of school finance for the Minnesota Department of Education, opened the conference with what could best easily be described as "School Funding 101" — a breakdown of the complicated mechanics behind school revenue, and the multiple variations that can affect each district's annual revenue.



Dr. Tom Melcher

Said Melcher: "We'll be working closely with the governor and the commissioner and we'll all be involved in trying to develop a good set of education funding improvements. And I can't say enough about the critical role you all play in working with your local legislators and state officials in making sure that they are all aware of what your critical needs and priorities are."

Dr. Melcher's full presentation can be viewed here:

[PDF: Tom Melcher: An Overview of Minnesota's Education Funding System](#)

[Audio: Tom Melcher Presentation](#)

[Video: Tom Melcher Presentation](#)

Dr. Nicola Alexander, an associate professor in the Education Policy and Leadership program at the University of Minnesota, followed Melcher with a broader perspective on the values behind school budgeting.

With a background in public administration and policy, Dr. Alexander is a former board member of the American Education Finance Association and the incoming president of the National Education Finance Academy. Her research covers topics of adequacy, equity, and productivity as they relate to PK-12 education — which made her presentation all the more timely.



Dr. Nicola Alexander

"Budgets are human values with price tags," she told the conference audience. "As you think about a budget, what you are really thinking about are the values you want to invest in. Same with school finance systems: What are the values that we are willing to invest in, in order to get particular outcomes?"

Alexander talked to the group about the financial realities of equitable education in Minnesota by transposing current data from Minnesota's urban and rural divide to show they're more connected than many Minnesotans realize.

"While Minnesota has provisions to address high need, such as poverty, these efforts are somewhat muted in metropolitan areas because we don't take into account differential costs," such as higher costs of living or higher salaries, Alexander said.

Dr. Alexander's full presentation can be viewed here:

[PDF: Nicola Alexander: Creating an Equitable Education Funding System](#)

[Audio: Nicola Alexander Presentation](#)

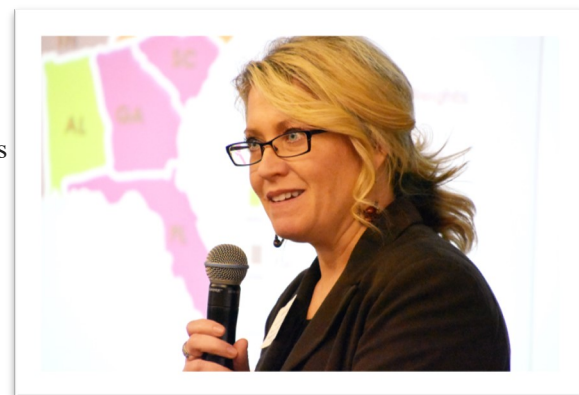
[Video: Nicola Alexander Presentation](#)

Marcy Doud, the Assistant Superintendent of West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan Area School District, and Renae Ouillette, the Executive Director of Student Services in Lakeville, followed Alexander and outlined the challenges of ensuring equity in special education — which is already a significant cost to AMSD districts.

The Special Education Cross-Subsidy — the amount by which special education expenditures exceed revenue provided by the state and federal governments — was nearly \$428 million in 2017 for AMSD districts, and more than \$672 million statewide. The state's projected cross-subsidy is expected to top \$816 million by 2021.

"These are big numbers for our districts," Doud said. "It really means the amount that the general education fund is picking up for special education services."

The reimbursement formula benefits some districts more than others, Doud said. "But at the end of the day it's not benefiting our kids. And this is what needs to get fixed."



Marcy Doud

Continued on page 4

Dr. Nicola Alexander: ‘Budgets Are Human Values With Price Tags’

Continued from page 3

Doud and Ouillet’s full presentation can be viewed here:

[PDF: Marcy Doud and Renae Ouillet: Advocating for an Equitable Special Education Funding Formula](#)

[Audio: Marcy Doud and Renae Ouillet Presentation](#)

[Video: Marcy Doud and Renae Ouillet Presentation](#)

Following lunch and table discussions, officials from Rochester Public Schools offered a first-hand perspective about the benefits of offering a year-round calendar to students. Executive Director of Finance John Carlson shared how Rochester is using existing funding streams to deliver the program, and elementary principal Kris Davidson talked about the positive impact having year-round school has on students and how popular the year-round calendar is with staff and parents.

The session closed with Astein Osei, who has been the superintendent at St. Louis Park Public Schools since 2017. Superintendent Osei brought his leadership team to the front of the room to share how they are using Q Comp funding to deepen teacher racial consciousness through instructional coaching — and this equity work has broadened perspectives for staff and students alike.

“The purpose of our instructional coaching model is to build educators’ will, skill and capacity to disrupt systemic racism in order to impact student achievement and experiences in St. Louis Park Public Schools. So our purpose is very clear,” Osei said.

“Dr. Alexander said budgets are human values with price tags,” he said. “So what we’re saying in St. Louis Park is that budget we get for Q Comp? We’re saying our value is the interruption of systemic racism in our district.”



St. Louis Park leadership team

Rochester Public Schools’ full presentation can be viewed here:

[PDF: Rochester Public Schools: Year-round Calendar: Benefits to the Development of the Whole Child](#)

[Audio: Rochester Public Schools Presentation](#)

[Video: Rochester Public Schools Presentation](#)

St. Louis Park Public Schools full presentation can be viewed here:

[PDF: St. Louis Park Public Schools: Using Q Comp to Deepen Teacher Racial Consciousness](#)

[Audio: St. Louis Park Public Schools Presentation](#)

[Video: St. Louis Park Public Schools Presentation](#)

Three Legislators Awarded Friend of Public Education Award

Each year, AMSD presents its Friend of Public Education Award to one or more state policymakers who demonstrate exceptional leadership, advocacy and support of public education and issues important to AMSD member school districts. This year, AMSD is recognizing State Sen. Sandy Pappas, DFL-District 65; State Sen. Julie Rosen, R-District 23; and Rep. Tim O’Driscoll, R-13B.

AMSD presented the awards to Sen. Pappas and Sen. Rosen at its board of directors meeting on Friday, Nov. 2. Rep. O’Driscoll will be presented his award at an upcoming meeting.

During the 2018 legislative session, Sen. Pappas, Sen. Rosen, and Rep. O’Driscoll worked tirelessly to secure passage of the 2018 Omnibus Pension Bill. In addition to increased employee and employer contributions, the bill contains substantial reforms including adjusting the assumed investment rate of return and several modifications to benefits including a reduction in the cost of living adjustment. Following passage of the bill, TRA’s liabilities were immediately reduced by \$2 billion and the funded ratio was increased from 70 to 75 percent. And, TRA is now on a trajectory to be 92 percent funded in 30 years. Very importantly, this was accomplished in a way that protects the financial health of Minnesota’s school districts as the legislation provides state funding to cover the employer increase through the pension adjustment mechanism in the education funding formula.

“AMSD greatly appreciates Sen. Pappas’, Sen. Rosen’s and Rep. O’Driscoll’s strong leadership and unwavering support for the pension bill,” said AMSD Chair Stephanie Levine. “The bill significantly improves the health of our public pension systems and protects the financial health of our school districts.”



Senator Sandy Pappas and Senator Julie Rosen