

Creating a Culture with M.A.G.I.C. Programming

Monticello Public School District Builds Leaders and Relationships

February 23, 2018 Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting

7:30 a.m.
Lexington Room,
TIES Conference Center
St. Paul

March 2, 2018 Board of Directors Meeting

7:00 a.m.
Grand Hall,
TIES Conference Center
St. Paul

March 23, 2018 Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting

7:30 a.m.
Lexington Room,
TIES Conference Center
St. Paul

April 13, 2018 Board of Directors Meeting

7:00 a.m.
Grand Hall,
TIES Conference Center
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

It started with a simple concept in the Monticello School District - easing the transition for eighth-graders to ninth grade. It turned into a partnership with Youth Frontiers. Then an idea for growth. Then another partnership, this time with Bame Foundation. Now it's M.A.G.I.C. programming.

What is M.A.G.I.C. programming? Simple. "A Meaningful And Genuine Investment in Character."

The programming is led by the trio of John Reeves, assistant principal at Monticello High School (MHS), Lori Hanson, dean of students at Monticello Middle School and Ben Lundquist, special instructor.

"We really felt that there was a need for us to educate the whole child," said Reeves, who started the mentorship program at the high school in the fall of 2015. "We have to look at what we do academically, but also what we do relationally with our kids. If there's a way that we can invest in both at the same time and make a concerted effort to let our students know that we care about them as people ... then that's what we need to do."

The success of the mentorship program at the high school, with connections made, transitions eased and leaders developed, showed administration that this could be a much wider reaching program. Then a partnership with Bame Foundation opened the doors to make that happen.

Matched up by Youth Frontiers, Bame and Monticello were a match meant to be. Bame Foundation has Monticello connections, and was looking for an education project to back. Monticello School District had a project, but knew finances would be a tight squeeze. Bame's donation changed that and opened the doors for programming at all levels.

The next step of implementation took place this past fall, with a Youth Frontiers retreat being held for seventh-graders at the middle school in September, and kicking off a mentorship program. The retreat focused on the topic of courage.

Continued on page 2



A Monticello junior works through activities with freshmen students during the freshmen only first day of school at MHS. The program started in 2015 and has spawned into M.A.G.I.C. programming.

From the Chair

Thank you to everyone who attended AMSD's 2018 Legislative Session Preview on February 2. It was energizing to have well over 100 AMSD board members and school district leaders in attendance to discuss important education issues with our metro area legislators. I was pleased to hear our legislative panelists speak supportively of creating a working group or task force charged with reviewing the special education funding system and developing a plan to reduce, and eventually eliminate, the special education cross-subsidy. In addition, broad support was expressed for reducing mandates and enhancing local control. I encourage AMSD Board members to stay engaged throughout the legislative session. While the 2018 session is not a budget-setting year, important education issues will be debated. We need your voice and advocacy for our students and our schools!

Steve Adams, school board member from Hopkins Public Schools, is chair of AMSD.

M.A.G.I.C. Programming Developing Leaders in Monticello Public School District

Continued from page 1

“That was just a really great day filled with a lot of positive energy,” said Hanson, who had pushed for the implementation at the middle school level. “The feedback that we heard from the students was just outstanding.”

High school students came in as peer mentors and students played several games to help them open up before ending with an activity called “Ripple in a Pond.”

Middle school students Griffen Fieldseth and Lexi Rosenbaum said it was a very positive experience.

“I saw a different side of people,” said Fieldseth, noting that a lot of people spoke that he didn’t expect.

Rosenbaum said the retreat has already had positive impacts on the student body.

“There’s more kindness in the school,” she said, adding that she believes Youth Frontiers should definitely come back.

Continued programming is a major part of the M.A.G.I.C. plan.

High school upperclassmen are trained as mentors, starting with a retreat of their own in the summer. Following their training, they help with the retreats for the younger students. As the school year goes on, mentors meet with their group of students on a consistent basis, maintaining relationships and lines of communication that were established at the start of the year.



Students interact during the seventh grade retreat at the Monticello Middle School earlier this fall. Courage was the theme of the retreat.



Monticello Middle School held a retreat for seventh-grade students at the start of the school year to encourage a culture of courage.

Reeves said those relationships are one of the biggest impacts he has noticed in the first two and half years of mentorship programming.

“The impact is in a sense of community, a sense of driving the culture of our building,” said Reeves. “Relationships are being fostered, I see connections between our older kids and younger kids that didn’t exist before. There’s a cohesiveness that maybe was missing [prior to this programming].”

The other key element to M.A.G.I.C. programming is the idea of developing leaders. By creating mentors for younger students, the district isn’t aiming just to help the mentees, but the mentors as well.

The overall mission statement for the program is this: “Utilizing our people and resources to invest in character and leadership while building meaningful connections within our school communities.”

The idea is to create servant leadership within the district - the opportunity to lead simply by putting others first. That is where Lundquist comes in. The MHS graduate has been coming to both the high school and middle school to teach lessons in leadership and in understanding fellow students.

“Ben is a person that gets it. He understands leadership, he knows what it is and he has a heart for kids,” said Reeves. “He’s taken it head on.”

Reeves said that too often adults assume that certain kids are born to be leaders, or will find their own way there. Instead, the district believes, shaping leaders must be intentional, just like everything else in the educational process.

“Often times we assume that if a kid is a captain of their sport, or really good at academics, they’re a leader,” he said, noting that’s not always the case. “If you want leaders, you have got to train leaders.”

Next year, programming is expected to be implemented at both elementary schools in the Monticello School District.

Elementary students will take part in a retreat, developing mentor relationships that will last the school year and potentially even their school career. The following year, the district hopes to implement the programming at the staff level. *Continued on page 4*

Monticello continued from page 2

AMSD Members Share Legislative Platform with Legislators

A packed house of legislators, legislative staff, Minnesota Department of Education officials and AMSD education leaders gathered on February 2, for AMSD’s 2018 Legislative Session Preview. The always popular annual event provides an opportunity for AMSD members to share the association’s legislative platform with legislators and discuss important education issues likely to surface during the legislative session. The program included a presentation on some key issues on AMSD’s legislative platform, as well as an overview of Reimagine Minnesota – an effort led by AMSD superintendents to create a collective action plan to ensure equity and excellence in education for all students.



Special Education Cross-Subsidy

Osseo Superintendent Kate Maguire kicked off the program by discussing the AMSD platform position to increase special education funding to reduce the state share of the special education cross-subsidy by 10 percent and create a working group charged with developing a plan to eventually eliminate the cross-subsidy. Superintendent Maguire shared that her district, Osseo Area Schools, has a special education cross-subsidy of almost \$22 million -- 8.5% of the total general fund budget and the equivalent of 217 teachers. Superintendent Maguire noted that reducing the special education cross-subsidy could free up resources to implement initiatives such as lower class sizes, an increase in the number of counselors and social workers, or an increase in course offerings and activities. Special education costs exceeded state and federal special education aid by almost \$425 million for AMSD member districts fiscal year 2016. You can find additional research and information about the special education cross-subsidy on the [special education subpage of the AMSD website](#).



Kate Maguire

School Board Renewal of Existing Operating Referendum

Mounds View Superintendent Chris Lennox discussed the AMSD platform position to allow locally-elected school boards to renew an existing operating referendum. Superintendent Lennox noted that other locally-elected governing bodies such as city councils, county boards and town boards have levy authority that does not require voter approval. School districts, on the other hand, must conduct a referendum election even when seeking to renew a previously approved levy that would not result in a tax increase. AMSD is proposing that legislators pass a bill this session that would allow school boards to renew an expiring referendum for the same amount and for the same duration as the expiring levy. AMSD has a [web page](#) with further information on this issue.



Chris Lennox

Reimagine Minnesota

Edina Superintendent John Schultz provided legislators an overview of the history of the Reimagine Minnesota initiative and shared the [Reimagine Minnesota video](#) with the audience.

North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale Superintendent Christine Osorio outlined the nine strategies that are included in the [Roadmap for Action](#) plan that was released in December at AMSD’s annual conference.

Robbinsdale Superintendent Carlton Jenkins talked about the next steps for the Reimagine Minnesota initiative and shared that the group plans to re-engage stakeholders, share best practices and plans for implementing the strategies, and creating a subcommittee to develop policy and funding recommendations for state and local policymakers. Further information about the [Reimagine Minnesota project is on the AMSD website](#).



Christine Osorio



John Schultz



Carlton Jenkins

Continued on page 4

2018 AMSD Legislative Preview

Continued from page 3

The Legislative Preview agenda also included an update from Minnesota Department of Education Commissioner Brenda Cassellius and a legislative panel consisting of Representative Sondra Erickson, Representative Carlos Mariani, Senator Eric Pratt and Senator Susan Kent. The Commissioner and legislators shared an overview of their goals and expectations for the 2018 legislative session and answered questions from AMSD members.

AMSD’s 2018 Legislative Platform is available on the [AMSD Legislative Session page](#).

Materials from AMSD’s 2018 Legislative Preview are available [here](#) and photos from the event are available on the [AMSD Facebook page](#).



Commissioner Brenda Cassellius



Legislative panel from left: Senator Eric Pratt, Senator Susan Kent, Representative Sondra Erickson, Representative Carlos Mariani



At a school board meeting this fall, now-board chair Jill Bartlett spoke on the power of this programming.

“We have a lot of different things that come to our school... and everything is important that we do,” said Bartlett. “But every once in a while something comes across that is a life changer. And this one has the potential to change many, many lives.”

Reeves said that what it all comes down to is making that impact with students, and letting them know that the district cares about them and not just about what they’re reading on their chrome books.

“By the time students graduate, [we want them] to really understand that Monticello Schools really care about them as an individual and care about them enough to make a concerted investment in who they are.”

This month’s member spotlight was submitted by Clay Sawatzke, communications, marketing and enrichment coordinator, Monticello Public School District.

AMSD Members: Anoka-Hennepin School District, Bloomington Public Schools, Board of School Administrators (Associate Member), Brooklyn Center Community Schools, Burnsville-Eagan-Savage, Columbia Heights Public Schools, Eastern Carver County Schools, Eden Prairie Schools, Edina Public Schools, Elk River Area School District, Equity Alliance MN (Associate Member), Farmington Area Public Schools, Fridley Public Schools, Hopkins Public Schools, Intermediate School District 287, Intermediate School District 917 (Associate Member), Inver Grove Heights Schools, Lakeville Area Public Schools, Mahtomedi Public Schools, Metro ECSU (Associate Member), Minneapolis Public Schools, Minnetonka Public Schools, Monticello Public School District; Mounds View Public Schools, North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale School District, Northeast Metro Intermediate School District 916, Northwest Suburban Integration District (Associate Member), Orono Schools, Osseo Area Schools, Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools, Richfield Public Schools, Robbinsdale Area Schools, Rochester Public Schools; Rockford Area Schools, Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan Public Schools, Roseville Area Schools, Shakopee Public Schools, South St. Paul Public Schools, South Washington County Schools, SouthWest Metro Intermediate District (Associate Member), Spring Lake Park Schools, St. Anthony-New Brighton Independent School District, St. Cloud Area Schools, St. Louis Park Public Schools, St. Paul Public Schools, Stillwater Area Public Schools, TIES (Associate Member), Wayzata Public Schools, West Metro Education Program, West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan Area Schools and White Bear Lake Area Schools.