

November 2018
vol 16 ♦ no 2

November 2, 2018 Board of Directors Meeting

7 a.m.
Grand Hall,
Sourcewell (TIES)
Conference Center
Saint Paul

November 16, 2018 Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting

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

November 28, 2018 AMSD Annual Conference

Sourcewell (TIES)
Conference Center
Saint Paul

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>

AMSD's Mission

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



Association of
Metropolitan School Districts

'Dare 2B Real' About Race in St. Anthony-New Brighton

It's 7:30 a.m. in the classroom at St. Anthony Village High School, an hour before school begins for students in grades 10-12. Music plays while 35 students gather at tables around the room. Nimo Hashi, a senior who serves as one of the captains of Dare 2B Real (D2BR), starts the meeting and introduces the morning's speaker. Blessing Roberts, a student, asked her peer group, "Can anyone name the four agreements?" Roberts shares the Courageous Conversation agreements and the Compass in preparation for her presentation on slavery.

"We are trying to create a safe haven at school, to feel comfortable talking about difficult issues," explained Hashi. Co-founded by Anthony Galloway and Dr. Patrick Duffy, D2BR promotes, addresses, and discusses racial equity and leadership. Initially developed through the West Metro Education Program, students engage in trainings and structured discussions that are intended to prepare a new generation for global readiness. Further into her presentation, Roberts encouraged her peers and advisors in the room to discuss slave versus enslaved at their tables before describing the transformation of (African American) slavery from physical slavery to sharecropping and imprisonment to mass incarceration.

Hashi joined D2BR as a freshman after Eddie Estrada, the advisor, approached her. "I didn't have many friends who looked like me. I joined D2BR to learn what it was like." Hashi immediately found D2BR taught her to be proud of who she is and not be ashamed of her culture. "D2BR mentors you. It taught me to use my voice, speak up, and find other ways to learn. D2BR taught me to open up to other opportunities, there's more to learn than what's in a textbook. This is the group that taught me to embrace my roots. This teaches you to embrace your culture, other people's



Mack Ibekwe, 2018 Co-Captain of Dare 2B Real; Kelli Ibekwe, 2016 Co-Captain of Dare 2B Real, and Anthony Galloway, co-founder of Dare 2B Real attend a Conversation on Race.

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From the Chair

It is so exciting and informative to hear from candidates directly, and that's exactly what happened at last month's AMSD board meeting when we welcomed the two major party gubernatorial candidates, Hennepin County Commissioner Jeff Johnson and Congressman Tim Walz. This month's research article summarizes the candidates' responses on a range of issues impacting education and also includes a link to the full audio transcript. As Election Day nears, we know that our students are observing and learning from those around them. A vibrant democracy works when we participate through respectful discourse and, most importantly, our vote. Use and share the [AMSD Education Issues Guide for the 2018 Election](#) to help you evaluate where candidates stand. Information about early voting can be found [here](#) and for any questions you have (including sample ballots and polling locations), go to www.mnvotes.org. Most importantly, be sure to VOTE!

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

St. Anthony-New Brighton Talks About Race—and Brings a Community Together

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culture, and other perspectives. This group teaches you to welcome everyone and teach others what you've been through to appreciate life and my culture and my mom and occasionally my sisters."

Initiated in 2012 as a student leadership group, D2BR meets each Wednesday morning at St. Anthony Village High School and focuses on two primary goals:

1. Students explore their own racial and cultural identity through their study of critical race theory, United States history, and the development of racial identity.
2. Coordination of school programs and events to engage communities in a larger conversation about equity and inclusion.

"We're not just the minority club. We're trying so hard to be inclusive. We are striving to help our white students develop an understanding," explained Hashi. Through cross-cultural coalitions, D2BR is designed for students to use their knowledge, skills, and voices to become actively involved in the community. Fortunately for St. Anthony, D2BR was prepared and ready to respond when the community was thrust into the national spotlight following a police shooting.

In July of 2016, after Philando Castile was shot and killed by a St. Anthony police officer, the community of St. Anthony Village was divided. "Black Lives Matter" and "We Support the Police" signs were posted in yards throughout the community.

D2BR student leaders stepped into the uncomfortable silence of division and proposed a solution. Following several conversations in late summer and during the school year with Estrada, their advisor, students proposed bringing the community together and hosting conversations on race. Equipped with training on facilitating conversations, students created a plan to host the inaugural event. As Hashi shared, "D2BR teaches you the difference between hearing and listening. You can't just jump in. You have to listen. We talk with them, not at them, and ask them to listen." The lessons from D2BR were necessary for a potentially tense conversation to happen among the adults in a divided community.

D2BR was intentional about creating an inclusive conversation and extended an invitation to the St. Anthony Police and Fire Department personnel to attend and participate in the conversation. In addition, D2BR encouraged high school teachers, parents, and students to attend as well. "Being put on the spot challenges you and challenges make you stronger," Hashi said.

The first conversation was held in January 2017 and, as a sophomore, Hashi was asked by Kelli Ibekwe, a senior captain, to help host the community event. D2BR selected discussion questions, trained student facilitators, and encouraged police or fire personnel to sit at each table. When attendees arrived, D2BR students had assembled a potluck so participants could get to know one another while enjoying a meal. As the event convened, Ibekwe shared the Courageous Conversation agreements before student facilitators at each table began the conversations.

D2BR leaders modeled how to create a safe environment in which adults and students could talk about race. Even more, the first conversation inspired additional community conversations, developed relationships, and sparked new partnerships. In Spring 2017, the City of St. Anthony established Youth in Government where D2BR leaders shadowed a city staff member and council member to learn about one another and the role of local government. In addition, Students in Leadership was created in 2018 to offer opportunities for high school students to serve on local boards and commissions to add a youth perspective. Hashi participated in Youth in Government in 2017 and 2018. Hashi, who also serves as a student representative on the City's Planning Commission, said, "D2BR has opened up lots of opportunities for students and those opportunities open doors for us."

D2BR is hosting the third year of Community Conversations on Race on November 14, 2018.

This month's member spotlight was submitted by Wendy Webster, director of community services and communications, and Dare 2B Real student leaders at St. Anthony Village High School in St. Anthony-New Brighton School District.



Q&A: Minnesota Governor Candidates Jeff Johnson, Tim Walz Talk Education with AMSD Board

Education matters.

That was the message to AMSD from the two major party candidates for Minnesota governor on Oct. 5.

The details matter as well.

And it was those details that the two candidates shared — in detail — at AMSD’s monthly board meeting Oct. 5, when AMSD hosted Congressman Tim Walz, DFL, and Hennepin County Commissioner Jeff Johnson, Republican, in Saint Paul to discuss their education platforms.

The meeting was an opportunity for each candidate to share their positions on important education issues — and on the upcoming 2019 legislative session — with the key education leaders of the greater metropolitan region.

The candidates appeared before the board separately. Following brief introductions by each candidate, AMSD Chair Stephanie Levine asked each the same set of prepared questions. The questions were based on the [AMSD Education Issues Guide for the 2018 Election](#).

Both candidates then followed the Q&A with closing remarks.

The written answers below have been edited for length and clarity, from recorded transcripts of the event. The full audio is available at: <http://bit.ly/2018AMSDcandidates>

Funding Formula

Question: Since 2003, the basic education funding formula has lost considerable ground to inflation. In fact, the formula would be \$618 per-pupil higher today if it had simply kept pace with inflation. Do you support indexing the formula allowance to inflation?

Tim Walz:

Yes. And my job again is to go out and talk to the public about it. This issue of not having an honest conversation about having funding indexed to inflation? It is absolutely intellectually disingenuous and dishonest not to say that things go up every year.

That's the place and that's the space where the job of the governor and the job of elected officials is to go to the taxpayers — and rightfully so — to make the case of where we're spending their money.

I will demand and hold firm on that: that any budgeting we do holds inflationary costs as part of that, and that those are continuous, to give you that certainty. It's the best way to do it. We can have a conversation where that money is being spent, that's fine, but to cut that in the front end is disingenuous.

Jeff Johnson:

I don't believe we should index funding for anything. I just don't think you should put anything on auto pilot in government. I think it shirks our responsibility as legislators or the governor. I think circumstances change, where there are times this might be the most important part of the budget, but there might be another time when something else is, so that is not something I'm comfortable with in K-12 education — or any other part of government. I think our responsibility is to discuss this every two years and make a determination as a government whether an inflationary increase should happen or something larger or smaller than inflationary increases can happen.

I will tell you, however, with K-12 education funding I get asked this question all the time: What will be your priorities when it comes to spending money? My answer is twofold. Number one: K-12 Education is one of the few things in our constitution where we are instructed to fund, so that is a priority. The other is to make sure we have the strongest safety net in America for our most vulnerable citizens.

Property Taxes

Local property taxes provide about 21 percent of the revenue for Minnesota school districts. While school boards have limited authority to levy property taxes, the majority of local property tax revenue comes from voter-approved referendums. Under Minnesota’s education funding and property tax system, districts with more commercial/industrial property are able to spread out property taxes and reduce the burden on their homeowners. Do you support increasing operating referendum equalization to address these inequities?



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Tim Walz:

This gets to equity among school districts and the idea of where your ZIP code is impacts the decisions you are going to make.

It all comes down to funding. It's all predicated on having that conversation about what are the outcomes they expect. If we get this right, every single thing we do is about improving student achievement, in improving their capacity to be able to contribute into the economy, so [levies are] a disingenuous front-end cost.

Simply raising those levies or equalizing those levies doesn't take everything else into consideration in terms of the economic impact going into it: lowered correction costs, lower social services costs.

We've not done a good enough job of making the case, and I understand about children not coming in pieces. You'll do everything you can, but let's be very, very clear: If that child comes to school after sleeping in a car, if that child comes to school after witnessing trauma, that is a cost that is being absorbed by the school district that is society's cost that all of us share in. And doing a better job of articulating that lets the taxpayers know.

Jeff Johnson:

Yes I would be open to that, and this kind of comes from first-hand experience. As a legislator I represented Western suburbs, and the finance needs of my district were quite diverse.

Those very different needs in those different districts — frankly, equalization was extremely important. It's something that we're a little bit unique with in Minnesota. I think we do it better than a lot of states, but there is a need to better equalize, and if we need to pump some money into that, I'd be willing to do that.

Special Education and the Cross-Subsidy

In the current year, school districts will be forced to spend almost \$700 million of funds meant for regular classroom instruction on mandated special education programs. Will you support significantly increasing special education funding to reduce the cross-subsidy?

Tim Walz:

Yes and this is the most challenging one. Being very clear: special education is a civil right and we need to deliver it. But we also understand that the federal government — and all of us agree we should do it — laid down a pretty intense series of mandates that were never funded to what needed to be met.

I have feared this for years: Pitting the classroom, if you will, against the special education needs. There are things we can do to make sure we are living up to that civil right for every child. But there also has to be some regulatory humility to release some of the burden of the paperwork and some of those things that are happening.

My commitment is to getting this right and trying to not pit us against our special-needs students that all of us know we want to deliver to.

But it is also increasingly evident to me that we cannot go on in this direction, still take care of our needs with those students, and make the budget work for the classrooms. It is a crisis situation.

Jeff Johnson:

With respect to special education, I hear this wherever I go, whether it's from teachers, or superintendents, or school board members: This is just a huge burden on our schools and therefore on our teachers and our kids.

I am very open to increasing this and trying to fill that gap as best we can. My preference is almost always going to put as much money on the formula and give you as much flexibility in spending that as possible.

But if it makes more sense to put that money into special education, then I'm very open to that. I will say, though, that when we do that we also have to have a difficult conversation about why our special education costs are increasing at such a crazy rate in this state.

And I know how difficult that conversation is. The fact that there are some areas where we are exceeding the federal mandate, do we really need to do that? We need to look at what every other state in the country is doing and see if anybody is doing it better than we are or in a different way.



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Referendums

Under current law, an operating referendum is limited to a maximum of 10 years. Renewal of an existing operating referendum must be approved by the voters, even if it is at the same level as previously approved by the voters. Do you support allowing locally-elected school boards to renew an existing operating referendum by a majority vote of the school board?

Tim Walz:

Yes, and I want to thank the school board members here, so much for the work you do ... but I'm going to take this a step further: I'm frustrated by the way we treat school boards. Did you know of all the taxing authorities in Minnesota ... the mosquito control board can do taxation? But you can't. That makes no sense to me.

I think the commitment for local voters is to trust you to be able to do that. And certainly we have a mechanism in place. If the citizens don't like it, they'll vote you out the next time. That's the way it works.

But forcing these situations is unfair to elected leaders who are in a responsibility, who know the budget, who are there, and elected to make those hard decisions, and then to force it back ... It divides communities. It's incredibly hard. Asking and taking that power from you makes it very difficult to provide consistency in budgeting and an honesty of what needs to be done in your district.

Jeff Johnson:

You're not going to like my answer on this: No I don't support that and I recall because I was in the Legislature at the time, when the state took over a much larger portion of education funding, and we eliminated the state general education levy. And a lot of that discussion was: OK the state is going to move in and cover more of this, but we want to make sure that the taxpayers have ultimate authority at least for the larger levy decisions. And I still feel that's important.

And I know that is going to be contrary to saying that I want to give you local control, but to me that's a really important piece of what we do. I actually think we should have the same thing with other local units of government and we should be consistent about that. I don't think it's fair that you have to do that and that city councils or county boards don't, but that's a different fight to have.

Vouchers for non-public schools

Do you support vouchers, expanded tax credits or other taxpayer subsidies for non-public schools? If yes, should non-public schools that receive taxpayer funding be required to comply with state mandates, be held accountable for how taxpayer dollars are spent, and be open to all students?

Tim Walz:

No, I don't support vouchers. I've made it clear I don't support it; I support public schools. I will not weaken the budgets that are there; if parents choose to go [to another school], then they can go, but it's not going to be with vouchers that many of us know that a cross-subsidy is coming back to you from those schools.

Jeff Johnson:

I do support school choice of some sort, whether it is tax credits or something else. I think tax credits are actually the better way to go. I think the realistic path forward on that is not some massive voucher system in Minnesota.

At least targeted tax credits for parents and schools where they feel that their kid is not being well served, because it's an option that I have as a parent because we can afford it, but it is an option that many parents don't have.

And I do believe that if you are going to get a tax credit, for example, to send your kid to a private school then they should have to comply with at least some of the mandates.

But my focus would be rather than saying that the private schools have to now comply with the 100 mandates we have in the state, let's start actually eliminating mandates on everybody, including the public schools, so that we can give you the power to do what you need to do across the board in Minnesota.

Safety Grants

The MN Department of Education recently announced that 123 schools were awarded a school safety grant as a result of the \$25 million that was included in the bonding bill approved last session. The Department noted that 1,187 applications totaling \$255.5 million were received – more than 10 times the funding available. What proposals will you offer to ensure safe and secure learning environments for all of our students and staff?

Tim Walz:

We need to do things that keep us safer. We need to do some common sense things like background checks, red flag laws, we can do that. I reject this notion that we need to harden and bunkerize our schools. We need to pick smart procedures — and we've done that over the years: That we have one entry point; we have someone sitting there.

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But this is a learning environment, and this is once again society's ills being passed into the school. And I want to be on record, absolutely clearly: Arming teachers is a horrible idea. It is not one that needs to be foisted upon folks.

We have aging facilities that are just not safe, outside of gun violence. We need to make sure they are functional buildings and they add to that learning environment.

We have a massive backlog of needs here. We should look to each in those communities to see how they are going to implement this safety ... but once again not expect an issue as big as gun violence or societal violence is totally your responsibility — both monetarily or for fixes once they walk through that door. Because the problem started long before they walked through that door.

Jeff Johnson:

So part of this is a money issue. I recognize that and, again, I will always go back to my preference: What we're going to spend on education at the state level, I would prefer to send to you in the most flexible way, rather than saying you have to spend it on this.

But I also recognize we have to address this one separately because it is such an important issue to Minnesotans. So I'm very open to spending more on this specific piece if we need to. Again I'd prefer to just put it on the formula, but I know that there will probably be a push to do this in the Legislature so I will support that.

I actually think putting some of the school safety grant into the bonding bill ... I think that's a good idea because you are by-and-large talking about long-term capital projects that affect the entire State, and the school kids in the entire state, so I would be very open to doing that. There are things that we can do to make the school safety levy more flexible for all of you — what you spend it on, how you spend it — and I'm willing to support that.

Pre-K Programming

Minnesota offers an array of early childhood and pre-K programs. What is your vision for early childhood and pre-K programming for Minnesota's youngest learners?

Tim Walz:

The research is clear: we know that pipeline to Stillwater starts way before they even get to kindergarten. I certainly applaud Governor Dayton on all-day kindergarten. I think universal pre-K — Peggy and I certainly are supporters of that — we support community efforts to make it happen. It's going to take things like increasing the child care tax credit and raise that cap a little bit. When I talk to folks, in their businesses and their homes, about issues ... always right near the top is child care. Access to child care. Distance to child care. Quality of child care. How do we get it.

We need to make sure we're helping assist those families — that we make sure we are helping those businesses assist these families.

If there are ways the state can help incentivize businesses to do that, we again have to have this conversation. It's an economic issue for us if we can't get it right. Parents are not going to be able to work or contribute [if they don't have child care].

Jeff Johnson:

My preference is a scholarship program. There's a lot of research on this and it's very important what happens to kids before they go into kindergarten. I support the scholarship program strongly for a couple of reasons: Number one, it actually focuses on the families that need the help the most. I don't believe that the taxpayers should be subsidizing pre-K for my kids because we didn't need that help. It was expensive, and we had to set aside money for it — but we could afford it.

Let's focus on the families that can't afford quality pre-K. And then it gives power and control to parents. It gives them more choices. My preference is you can take that money and figure out which one works best for you. And that kind of fits my philosophy in general about people who are receiving some sort of benefit or subsidy from the government.

Teacher shortage and diversity

Minnesota is facing a growing shortage of teachers, especially teachers of color and teachers in certain subject areas. What actions do you propose to address the teacher shortage and specifically, to increase the pool of teachers of color?

Tim Walz:

First of all the one thing that you can do from this office — and it doesn't cost anything — is to lift up this profession every day. Tell people and send a message: This is a place where you want to teach. This is a place that will lift you up, this is a place where there will be joy in teaching, and this is a place we'll have an honest conversation.

None of us who went into education expected to get wealthy.

But we did not take an oath of poverty, and we fully expected to be able to pay our bills and live a middle class lifestyle. So having a conversation to recruit and retain the best quality teachers is a conversation on compensation, it's a conversation about how they are viewed. And we know that's an important piece of it.

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We also know we need to do incentives. It's important to students that they have culturally competent teachers in front of them, it's important that we use incentives to make sure that in high-needs schools and with teachers of color that we are doing things on student loan forgiveness, and making sure that we are incentivizing your capacity to be able to get those teachers into that classroom.

[It's an] issue of affordable housing for teachers, of making sure that we're recruiting and retaining and we're not burdening them with student loan debt, and that we are very deliberate and going out and searching and incentivizing for those teachers that are culturally competent and culturally reflective of those schools that they are teaching in.

Jeff Johnson:

I've heard from at least some people involved that they don't believe that the Department of Education, or whatever state agency is in charge of this, is actually implementing [current legislation] as it was intended.

The more flexibility we can give to you as administrators and school board members to find more teachers, to find more quality teachers, whether they are teachers of color or otherwise, is what I'm going to be looking at.

It's licensure issues, it's also different methods to pay teachers. I know we had the Q-Comp bill way back when, when I was in the Legislature. To me the more flexibility we can give to you to entice, to recruit different people who you believe will teach your kids well, the better.

MCA Exams Opting Out: Support Reforming state system?

Thousands of Minnesota students and families are choosing to opt out of one or more of the high school MCA exams because they do not feel the tests are meaningful. Yet, school districts are held accountable for these test results. Do you support reforming the state assessment system to provide more flexibility for students to take assessments that will more accurately measure college or career readiness?

Tim Walz:

Yes and as a career educator I understand that we need to use assessments to inform instruction. And if we're doing it right, it should be ongoing and spontaneous and almost simultaneously going on in that classroom of constant feedback. I want to be very clear: we're not afraid of assessing where we're at, and we're not afraid of seeing where we have room for improvement. We need to make sure we're using [assessments] if they can help inform instruction, if they can help show us where our deficiencies are, but this piece of opting out and still being held accountable for it, has incredible impact.

The purpose of those assessments are to ensure we're getting the best opportunities for those individual students to learn and that it needs to be tailored to the differences that come with those students so yes, certainly.

Jeff Johnson:

Sure. I don't know exactly where that would go, but if there are better ways to measure the readiness of our kids for college than what we have in place, I am very open. That would be another example where I would try to work with you, to figure out how do the boots on the ground believe that we could better measure this.

I like the MCA, because it was created by Minnesota, by Minnesota Educators, to measure where our kids are. But if there are better ways of doing that I am absolutely open to that and willing to work with you all on that.

AMSD Members: Anoka-Hennepin School District, Bloomington Public Schools, Brooklyn Center Community Schools, Burnsville-Eagan-Savage School District 191, 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, 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, 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, Wayzata Public Schools, West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan Area Schools, Westonka, and White Bear Lake Area Schools.