Association of Metropolitan School Districts

Mandate Reduction and Local Control

AMSD Position

Unfunded mandates and mandates that limit the ability of locally elected school boards to establish a coherent system that addresses the unique needs of their students and community should be modified or repealed.

Any new mandate adopted after March 1 during a legislative session should not be effective before July 1 of the following calendar year.

- Federal and state mandates should have a clearly articulated purpose, which is revisited regularly to check for relevance and alignment with other policy goals.
- Policymakers should evaluate the fiscal impact proposed new mandates will have on school districts and provide ongoing funding needed to comply.
- Locally elected school boards should have levy authority comparable with other local government boards and councils.

Background

Local control and citizen input are key components of our democratic system. Decentralized governance improves responsiveness to local concerns, stimulates innovation and participation, and increases accountability. Mandates have been regularly imposed on school districts without sufficient resources to carry them out. Most recently, expansive new mandates and expectations were adopted in the 2023 session including the Read Act, universal school meals, summer unemployment insurance for unlicensed school staff, Earned Sick and Safe Time, and Paid Leave. Some of these new requirements were partially funded, some were temporarily funded, and some did not include funding. In addition, 2023 saw the approval of legislation requiring school boards to negotiate e-learning days, student testing, and student-to-staff ratios. This new mandate eroded inherent managerial rights and contributed to protracted contract negotiations.

The misalignment between the adoption of new legislation and school budget cycles creates budget and operational challenges for school districts. The legislature routinely adopts legislation significantly impacting school districts in late May or even June. This can create daunting budget challenges for school districts which are required to adopt budgets by June 30 and notify teachers of termination for the following year by April 1. To stabilize school budgets and allow for thoughtful planning, the legislature should not adopt any new mandate after March 1 during a legislative session or at a minimum, not make a new mandate effective until July 1 or later of the following calendar year.

Each school district faces unique needs which depend on a variety of factors including demographics, geography, and district size. Locally elected school boards are best positioned to work with their staff, students, parents and communities to address local needs and challenges.

Resources

** See the AMSD 2027 legislative platform for specific priorities related to mandates.*

Approved by the AMSD Board of Directors, November 2026