

# CONNECTIONS



News from the Association of Metropolitan School Districts

January 2025  
Volume 22  
Number 4

## Partnering with Families, Strengthening Language Access

### January 31, 2025 Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting

7:30 a.m. - 9 a.m.  
Anderson Center  
Bethel University  
Arden Hills

### February 7, 2025 Board of Directors Meeting

7 a.m. - 9 a.m.  
Quora Education Center  
NE Metro 916  
Little Canada

### February 28, 2025 Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting

7:30 a.m. - 9 a.m.  
Anderson Center  
Bethel University  
Arden Hills

### March 7, 2025 Board of Directors Meeting

7 a.m. - 9 a.m.  
Quora Education Center  
NE Metro 916  
Little Canada

## WELCOME!

WE CAN HELP YOU IN YOUR LANGUAGE.

Please let us know if you need an interpreter or a document translated - at no cost to you.

**AMHARIC** እንኳን ደህና መጡ! በራስዎ ቋንቋ ድጋፍ ማድረግ የምንችል ሲሆን እገነዘብ እስተርጓሚ የምንሰፈልግዎት ከሆነ ያሳውቁን - ወጪ የለብዎትም።

**ARABIC** مرحبًا! يمكننا مساعدتك بلغتك. يرجى إعلامنا إذا كنت بحاجة إلى مترجم أو ترجمة وثيقة - دون فرض أي تكلفة عليك.

**CHINESE** 欢迎您! 我们可以使用您偏好的语言为您提供帮助, 如果您需要口译服务或翻译版本的文件, 请随时告诉我们, 您无需承担任何费用。

**OROMO** Baga Nagaan Dhufurti Afaan keessaniin sin gargaarra, maaloo turjumaana ykn hiikoo sanadaa yoo barbaadani nutti himaa - qarshee isin hin kalfachiisu.

**RUSSIAN** Добро пожаловать! Мы можем помочь вам на вашем языке. Сообщите, если вам нужен устный переводчик или перевод документа. Это совершенно бесплатно.

**SOMALI** Soo dhawow Waxaan kugu caawin karnaa luuqdaada, fadlan nala socodsii haddii aad ubaahan tahay turjubaan ama laguu farsii dukuminti - oo bilaash kuu ah adiga.

**SPANISH** ¡Bienvenidos! Podemos ayudarle en su idioma, por favor, háganos saber si necesita un intérprete o un documento traducido - sin costo alguno para usted.

**VIETNAMESE** Xin chào mừng! Chúng tôi có thể trợ giúp quý vị bằng ngôn ngữ của quý vị, xin cho biết nếu quý vị cần thông dịch viên hoặc cần dịch tài liệu - hoàn toàn miễn phí cho quý vị.



Access has been a strategic priority in our district for a long time. What is unique now is our ability to empower people and technology to help all families participate in and access information for their children's education, regardless of the language they speak.

Before next school year, all Minnesota school districts need to have a school board-approved Language Access Plan (Minn. Stat. § 123B.32). The plan should outline the tools, processes, and resources available to effectively assist students and adults who communicate in a language other than English. A guiding principle behind this legislation is that all families are welcomed and valued partners in their child's learning; language should not be a barrier.

Like most Minnesota school districts, Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan District 196 has seen a significant increase in cultural and linguistic diversity. More than 100 languages are spoken within the district, and nearly 10% of students identify as English Learners. Language

Continued on page 2

Thank you to the over 200 AMSD members and legislators who attended the 2025 AMSD Session Preview last week. We were honored to welcome Education Commissioner Willie Jett to the event and I'd also like to thank Sen. Mary Kunesch, Sen. Michael Kreun, Rep. Ron Kresha, and Rep. Cheryl Youakim for serving on a panel and sharing an overview of what they anticipate for the 2025 session. The 2025 session will be challenging, and it will be imperative that AMSD members stay engaged. Please plan to attend the AMSD/MASA Region 9 Day at the Capitol on March 24. Your advocacy makes a difference!

From the AMSD Chair, Laura Oksnevad, St. Anthony-New Brighton Board Member

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# Fostering an Inclusive, Equitable and Collaborative Environment

*Continued from page 1*

## Transformative Tools

With growing needs for interpreters in many languages, how does a district scale language access? On-demand remote video interpretation services have been one of the most impactful advancements under our Language Access Plan. Imagine a parent walking into school, pointing to a poster of their preferred language, and the school office staff bringing in a remote interpreter through video on demand.

Remote video interpretation services, available anytime, allow access to over 300 languages. On-demand interpreting has transformed parent-teacher conferences, enabled more meaningful dialogue, deepened relationships, and supported critical educational meetings. As a district, we have also prioritized translating communications. From newsletters to two-way texting and emergency alerts, families receive information in their preferred language, keeping them informed and engaged. A digital-first communication philosophy allows the district to leverage rapidly improving communication technologies.

## Investing in People

Recognizing that people-centric relationships drive connection, we know that technology is only a tool for meeting the needs of a multi-lingual community. People are the heart of our plan, which requires professionally trained interpretation and translation services for our most commonly spoken languages. A multilingual communications specialist, cultural family advocates, English language development specialists, and school office staff are the connectors between families and schools in closing cultural and linguistic gaps. Staff training for Language Access is a priority across the district, ensuring educators, clerical staff, and administrators feel confident and equipped to support multilingual families effectively.



## A Vision for the Future

The Language Access Plan reflects our commitment to fostering an inclusive, equitable, and collaborative educational environment. By actively listening to families, adapting to their needs, and embracing continuous improvement, we envision a school system dedicated to honoring diverse needs and cultures. We see multilingualism as a gift to nurture. By embracing the diversity of language in District 196, we are paving the way for a more inclusive future where every family feels valued and we inspire our students for lifelong success.

At their January Meeting, the Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan District 196 School Board approved our [Language Access Plan](#), codifying work that started years ago. Their action strengthens our district's broader strategic goals of enhancing engagement, improving student achievement, and advancing equity. Visit our [Language Services](#) webpage to learn more.

*This month's member feature was submitted by Allyson Garin, Communications Coordinator, Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan District 196.*

# 2025 AMSD Session Preview Brings Legislators and Education Leaders Together

About 170 education leaders — superintendents, school board members and district staff — were joined by 35 state legislators on Jan. 10 for the AMSD Legislative Session Preview, an annual event that highlights AMSD's legislative priorities for the upcoming legislative session.

The 2025 preview, held at Northeast Intermediate School District 916's Quora Education Center, featured compelling presentations from AMSD Chair Laura Oksnevad, St. Anthony-New Brighton Supt. Renee Corneille, Anoka-Hennepin Supt. Cory McIntyre, and Prior Lake-Savage Supt. Michael Thomas. Minnesota Department of Education Commissioner Willie Jett spoke as well, acknowledging a challenging budget environment for the upcoming session and urging legislators and education leaders to collaborate to prioritize student outcomes.



*Minnesota Department of Education Commissioner Willie Jett spoke at the 2025 AMSD Session Preview.*

The annual preview provides an opportunity for legislators to hear the priorities of AMSD member school districts and discuss important education issues. AMSD member school districts collectively serve more than half of the public school students in Minnesota.

This year's AMSD presentations highlighted key points from the 2025 legislative platform, with specific examples from each of the presenters' home districts. The platform focuses on several themes including:

- Funding to stabilize school district budgets, including increases in the formula allowance and also local optional revenue which has been frozen for a decade;
- Enhancing local control to give locally-elected school boards and their administrators the ability to respond to their respective communities' needs;
- Enhancing student-centered learning by broadening the definition of hours of instruction to allow students to earn credit for learning wherever it occurs; and
- Enhancing school safety.



*St. Anthony-New Brighton Supt. Renee Corneille and AMSD Chair Laura Oksnevad*

Chair Oksnevad and Supt. Corneille detailed how their district — the smallest geographically in the state — faces many of the same challenges that larger districts do, such as the percentage of students requiring special education services, and the percentage of students in poverty. They also noted that state equalization aid has deteriorated greatly over the last decade creating significant property tax inequities.

Supt. McIntyre, representing the state's largest school district, shared how a convergence of several factors including historic inflation, rising labor costs, and new requirements and expectations for schools, have caused

*Continued on page 4*

# AMSD Superintendents Outline Budget Challenges

*Continued from page 3*

expenditures to outpace revenue by a significant margin. He noted that his district has already begun trimming \$26 million from its budget even before the Legislature meets this year.

Supt. Thomas reinforced how inflationary costs have outpaced revenue. He also noted that the sheer number of new requirements placed on school districts, even though they come with the best of intentions, have taken a heavy toll on school district budgets and district staff.

The AMSD presentation was followed by a legislative panel discussion of key leaders in the E-12 legislative arena. Representatives Ron Kresha (R-Little Falls) and Cheryl Youakim (DFL-Hopkins), and Senators Michael Kreun (R-Blaine) and Mary Kunesh (DFL-New Brighton) each offered their perspective on AMSD's priorities as well as highlighting issues they hope to address. The legislators also noted that the projected state budget shortfall in 2028-29 creates a significant challenge to providing new funding for schools.



*Anoka-Hennepin Supt. Cory McIntyre*



*Prior Lake-Savage Supt. Michael Thomas*

- [LINK: View the AMSD 2025 Legislative Preview Presentation](#)
- [LINK: View a PDF of the 2025 AMSD Legislative Platform](#)



*Rep. Ron Kresha (R-Little Falls) and Rep. Cheryl Youakim (DFL-Hopkins)*



*Sen. Michael Kreun (R-Blaine) and Sen. Mary Kunesh (DFL-New Brighton)*