CONNECTIONS AMSD

News from the Association of Metropolitan School Districts

May 2025
Volume 22
Number 8

May 16, 2025
Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting
7:30 a.m. - 9 a.m.
Anderson Center
Bethel University
Arden Hills

May 23, 2025
Board of Directors Meeting
7 a.m. - 9 a.m.
Quora Education Center
NE Metro 916
Little Canada

June 13, 2025
Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting
7:30 a.m. - 9 a.m.
Anderson Center
Bethel University
Arden Hills

July 25, 2025
Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting
7:30 a.m. - 9 a.m.
Anderson Center
Bethel University
Arden Hills

Westonka Schools Leads the Way in Sports Safety with Portable AEDs

Westonka Public Schools has become the first school district in Minnesota to equip every high school sports team with a portable automated external defibrillator (AED) — a pioneering move that could set a new standard for schools statewide. This initiative, designed to ensure quick access to life-saving devices during sudden cardiac arrest events, is part of a larger community-driven effort to prevent cardiac-related deaths.

The idea to provide every Westonka White Hawks sports team with an AED was sparked last year by Westonka Activities Director Jeff Peterson and quickly gained support.

“Every second counts during a cardiac emergency, and we know that having an AED readily available could mean the difference between life and death,” Peterson explained. “When it comes to the safety of our athletes and spectators, we want to make sure we’re doing everything we can.”

When Kevin and Nicole Nash, founders of the BeLikeTommy Project, learned of the idea, they were “all in,” according to Peterson. Their son, Tommy Nash, tragically passed away from sudden cardiac arrest in 2021, and since then, the Nashes have been passionate advocates for heart health and safety.

The collaboration expanded when local cardiac arrest survivor Dale Wagasugi, founder of My AED & CPR Solutions, connected the group with Kim Harkins at the University of Minnesota's Center for Resuscitation Medicine (CRM). Through CRM’s AED Recycle/Reuse Program, Westonka was able to acquire refurbished AED units at a reduced cost.

The MN AED Recycle/Reuse Program is part of a larger effort to improve

Continued on page 2

The 2025 legislative session is quickly winding down with the May 19 adjournment date less than two weeks away. The final budget negotiations will determine the level of funding for our schools for the next two years along with other important issues outlined in the research article in this month’s newsletter. Please make a phone call or send a few more emails today urging your local legislators, legislative leaders, and Gov. Walz to support the priorities adopted by the AMSD Board. You can find contact information for legislative leaders and Gov. Walz here and your local legislators here. Thank you in advance for your continued advocacy!

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

Building a Heart Safe Westonka Community

Continued from page 1

outcomes from sudden cardiac arrest. AEDs have been donated to CRM by first responder agencies across Minnesota, which received new AEDs through a $18.8 million grant from the Helmsley Charitable Trust. These used AEDs are then updated with new batteries and pads, ensuring they are rescue-ready before being redistributed to communities in need through an application process.

Fundraising efforts by the BeLikeTommy Project were crucial in making Westonka's plan a reality. Last summer, the Tommy's Speed Walk event raised over $17,000, enough to equip all of Westonka's high school sports teams with AEDs. The funds will also help install an additional outdoor AED at the new Westonka High School stadium.

The Westonka Activities Department assembled the portable AEDs and medical kits ahead of the fall sports season. They also developed a system to track the location, usage and expiration date of each device. "We believe we're the first school in Minnesota to do this," said Peterson. "It's a cool opportunity for us to lead the way and be at the forefront of something that could save lives."

The project is already being hailed as a game-changer for athlete and spectator safety. Wagasugi put it simply: "An AED is like a fire extinguisher—you hope you never have to use it, but if you do, it can save a life."

Beyond providing AEDs, Westonka Public Schools is committed to training students and staff in emergency response. In February 2024, nearly 1,000 students and staff participated in an all-school CPR and AED training event at the high school, part of the Heart Safe Communities initiative. Over 65 local emergency responders collaborated to provide the training, which included hands-on experience with CPR and AED use.

"We work hard to make sure we deliver academics well, but we also want to create space for well-rounded students and staff, and that includes mental and physical health," said Assistant Principal Marty Fischer, who helped coordinate the event. A highlight of the event was a powerful presentation from six survivors of sudden cardiac arrest, who shared how early CPR and AED intervention saved their lives. The goal was to empower students to take on a leadership role in an emergency and have the confidence to respond immediately to a cardiac emergency.

Sudden cardiac arrest accounts for nearly 20 percent of deaths in Minnesota, making it the second-leading cause of death in the state. Westonka Public Schools' proactive training and AED initiatives are critical steps in improving survival rates and addressing this issue head-on. As Westonka leads the way, the hope is that other schools will follow, creating safer environments for students, athletes, and communities everywhere.

This month's member feature was submitted by Becca Neuger, Communications Coordinator, Westonka Public Schools.

AMSD Board Adopts Conference Committee Priorities

With the 2025 legislative session winding down, the AMSD Board of Directors has approved conference committee priorities based on legislation moving forward at the Capitol. AMSD urges legislators to address these priorities as they deliberate the House and Senate Omnibus Education Bills and move toward a conference committee to reconcile the differences.

AMSD Chair and St. Anthony-New Brighton School Board Member Laura Oksnevad testifying earlier this session to the Senate Education Policy Committee.

The Senate and House have proposed significantly different budget targets for education, with the House providing a $40 million increase in the 26-27 biennium and holding funding flat in the 28-29 biennium, while the Senate would hold education funding flat in 26-27 but make $687 million in cuts in the 28-29 biennium including de-linking the general education formula from inflation for the biennium. AMSD urges the Governor and legislative leaders to adopt at least the House budget target with our member school districts facing significant budget challenges.

AMSD Priorities include:

General Education Formula.
The House bill retains the annual inflation adjustment to the formula. The Senate has proposed removing the annual inflation adjustment to the basic formula allowance for the 28-29 biennium. It would set the formula allowance at $7,481 in FY26 (2.74 percent increase over FY25) and $7,705 in FY27 and later. (3 percent increase over FY26). AMSD advocated for linking the formula to inflation for many years before it was finally adopted in the 2023 session and is strongly opposed to removing the link.

Compensatory Revenue / Hold Harmless.
The Senate bill includes funding for compensatory revenue to hold districts harmless from a change adopted in the 2023 session that determines eligibility for compensatory solely on direct certification. The Senate bill would modify the compensatory formula to include the application for educational benefits form, in addition to direct certification, to determine eligibility for compensatory services. The House bill does not include hold harmless funding for compensatory revenue.

Read Act and Literacy Aid Funding.
The House bill provides $40 million, the greater of $2,000 or $45.70 times the number of students served in the 2024 fall enrollment count, for costs related to implementation of the READ Act. The Senate proposes a change to the Literacy Incentive Aid Formula effective in FY27. The proposal is budget neutral for the state, but it will have distributional impacts on school districts with some districts realizing additional revenue and others seeing a reduction in Literacy Incentive Aid. All school districts need additional literacy aid to ensure a successful implementation of the READ act.

Local Optional Revenue.
Local Optional Revenue (LOR) has not been increased since it went into effect in 2014 and would be $250 per pupil higher if it had simply kept pace with inflation. LOR is increased in the House bill, changed to Basic Supplemental Revenue, and a new tier is created. The first tier is all state aid and the

Continued on page 4

AMSD Urges Policymakers to Fund or Repeal State Mandates

Continued from page 3

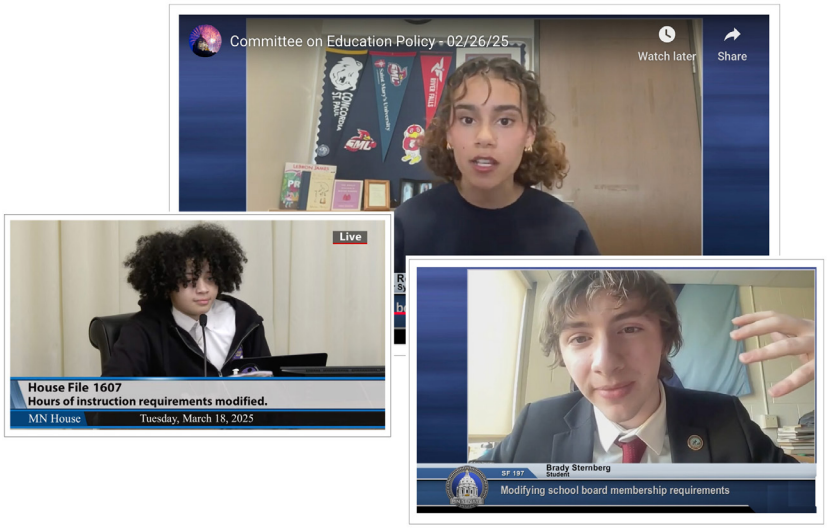
per pupil allowance is $40.34 for FY26, $40.45 for FY27, $43.72 for FY28, and $43.82 for FY29 and later. The second and third tiers are $300 per pupil and $424 per pupil and remain an equalized levy. LOR is not addressed in the Senate Education Finance Omnibus bill.

Supt. David Law, Minnetonka, Supt. Cory McIntyre, Anoka-Hennepin, and Supt. Michael Thomas, Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools, testifying early in the session about the importance of prioritizing funding for classroom instruction and restoring managerial rights and local control.

Unemployment insurance.
The House bill proposes to end summer term unemployment for school hourly workers effective Sept. 9, 2028. It appropriates $30 million to cover the cost of UI through FY26. The Senate retains summer term unemployment insurance and provides $30 million in FY26 and $70 million in FY27 to cover costs through the next biennium.

School Board Renewal of Capital Projects Referendum.
The Senate bill would authorize a school board to renew an expiring capital projects referendum that had initially been authorized by school district voters, and require that the renewed capital projects referendum authority must be the same annual amount as the amount expiring and for a renewed term no longer than the initial term authorized by the voters, after holding a public meeting and allowing public testimony on the proposed renewal. This is not included in the House bill.

School Calendars/pre-Labor Day Start.
HF1124 would allow districts to start school before Labor Day for the 2025-26 and 2026-27 school years only and was approved by the Education Policy Committee and the bill is awaiting action on the House floor. The Senate companion bill has not advanced.

A more detailed summary of where key education issues stand can be found here.

Students from several AMSD districts shared testimony throughout the 2025 legislative session.