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Below is a list of the issues identified by AMSD board members and school district staff in a survey seeking input on legislative priorities for the 2027 legislative session.

A total of 27 responses were received. (AMSD received 27 responses in 2025; 38 responses in 2023 and in 2024; 48 responses in 2022; 24 responses in 2021; 25 responses in 2020; 27 responses in 2019, 36 responses in 2018, and 34 responses in 2017)

FUNDING RESPONSES
Special Education (24)
Repeal the contingent $250 million cut to special education cross-subsidy reduction aid. The cut is already assumed in the forecast base for the 2028-29 biennium and takes effect July 1, 2027 unless the Legislature acts in the 2027 session. HF4114/SF4021 advanced with bipartisan support in 2026 but did not pass, so this is unfinished business, not a new ask. Whatever the Blue Ribbon Commission recommends on Oct. 1, the automatic backstop should come off the books. A cut of this size would erase any inflationary increase to the basic formula and land in general education classrooms, because districts cannot cut federally required special education services.
Do not touch ADSIS funding
Mandates / Unemployment Insurance and Paid Leave (18)
Fund what the state requires. Adopt a simple principle: new mandates come with sustainable funding. That includes READ Act implementation, Paid Leave costs, unemployment insurance and other state requirements.
No more mandates. We are still working to implement the last wave of legislative changes (ESST, Paid Leave)
No new unfunded or underfunded mandates — and a real fiscal-note requirement. Require every bill imposing a new duty on school districts to carry a fiscal note estimating the cost to districts, not just to the state, and to identify an offsetting appropriation. Most policy questions belong with locally elected boards accountable to their own communities. Where the state does act, it should pay for what it requires.

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Formula Allowance / Inflation (14)
Increase formula allowance on top of the inflation adjustment to right past wrongs.
Protect core classroom funding. Protect the inflation-indexed general education formula and strengthen equalization so a student's educational opportunity isn't determined by local property wealth.
Increase formula to a floor of 4%. That is usually minimum annual increase to the salary schedules when factoring steps & lane changes
A meaningful, sustained inflationary increase to the basic formula — and restore the frozen revenue streams around it. Formula increases have averaged well under the rate of inflation, and Local Optional Revenue and the Safe Schools levy have been frozen for roughly a decade. An inflationary increase on the formula alone does not hold districts even if the categorical streams beside it keep eroding. AMSD's 2026 asks — LOR at $979 per pupil and indexed, Safe Schools at $100 per pupil — should carry into the 2027 platform.
Compensatory Funding (14)
Reinstating educational benefits form for calculating compensatory aid.
Stabilize compensatory revenue and act on the Compensatory Revenue Task Force recommendations. The direct-certification-only formula is now live for 2026-27 with only a scaled-down $10 million hold harmless. That is not a transition — it is a cliff for districts whose low-income families are undercounted by direct certification alone. The Task Force's final report is due Oct. 15, 2026. AMSD should ask the Legislature to (a) enact the Task Force recommendations, including restoring the Application for Educational Benefits as a data element, and (b) hold districts harmless in the interim so no district absorbs a permanent loss caused by a data-collection change rather than a change in student need.
Adjust free meals legislation to require top income brackets to pay for lunch, put money on the formula
Local Optional Revenue (8)
Strengthen Local Optional Revenue (LOR): Increase LOR from $724 to $979 per pupil and index it to inflation.
Equalization (5)
Referendum Equalization
Increase or remove the operating referendum cap for all districts.

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Alt-facilities equalization
School Safety (3)
Enhance School Safety/Mental Health
EL Funding (2)
Fully fund English Learner funding and/or EL cross-subsidy
Adequate funding for Student Support Services (Inc ELL Funding)
OTHER
Enhance Long-Term Facilities Maintenance (LTFM) Funding: Increase LTFM revenue from $380 to $516 per pupil and expand allowable uses to include safety/security upgrades, remodeling, and additions to existing spaces.

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POLICY RESPONSES
Accountability / Instructional Time / Testing (7)
Changing the MCA assessment/evaluation process
Replace MCA's with ACT
Modernize Minnesota's learning and accountability system. Move beyond an accountability system dominated by annual standardized tests toward a coherent system that values academic growth, meaningful demonstrations of learning, durable/human skills and readiness for college, career and civic life.
Redesign Minnesota's assessment and seat-time framework. Establish a commission to redesign the state assessment system around balanced, student-centered measures, including replacing high school MCAs with a nationally recognized college entrance exam. Pair it with modernized hours-of-instruction requirements so students can earn credit for demonstrated learning that happens outside a traditional classroom period.
Alternative ways to earn credits
Modernize Instructional time and seat time
Increased flexibility in seat time requirements to allow for personalized learning pathways
School Safety (4)
Support Policies that relate to Student Safety (Related to gun violence protection and mental health supports)
Modernize Minnesota school safety statutes by aligning required drills with action-based emergency response protocols such as the Standard Response Protocol (SRP) or comparable action-based models; investing in statewide behavioural threat assessment and management training and capacity; strengthening anonymous reporting systems with clear triage and immediate school notification; providing sustainable funding for mental health and intervention services; and establishing standards for timely information sharing between law enforcement, schools, and appropriate agencies to support prevention, intervention, preparedness, response, and recovery.
Ban assault style weapons and large capacity magazines
HF 15 the Shield Act

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Equalization (4)
Update equalization formulas to reduce taxpayer disparity and ensure fair State Aid support for: ○ Operating referendums ○ Local Optional Revenue ○ Debt service
Equalization would level the playing field
Data, Privacy and AI (4)
Establish statewide leadership for education in the AI era. Create a coordinated Minnesota strategy for AI literacy, responsible AI use, privacy/data governance, cybersecurity, educator development and AI-enabled teaching and learning—while preserving local authority over implementation.
Establish a Statewide Student Data Privacy Framework Create and support a single statewide Minnesota Data Privacy Agreement and shared approval process for educational technology providers, allowing districts to rely on agreements already reviewed and executed by participating Minnesota districts. The policy goal would be to protect students while eliminating hundreds of districts independently reviewing and negotiating essentially the same vendor contracts.
Enhance policies to reduce certain data requests
Redesign the FOIA to deal with incessant requests from commercial entities.
Local Control (3)
Restore school board authority over subjects moved into mandatory bargaining. Repeal the requirement that boards negotiate e-learning days, student testing, and student-to-staff ratios. These are operational and instructional decisions that boards are elected to make and are accountable for; bargaining them locks in structures that cannot flex with enrollment, budget, or student need.
Special Education Policy (3)
Reform special education tuition billing
Reduce special education paperwork
Special Ed Mandate Relief

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Capital Projects Renewal (2)
Capital projects levy board renewal
Allow school boards to renew a capital project levy at the existing rate
OTHER
We need a plan as a state to address student absenteeism. There is no real consequence for students not attending and it is a major issue for all districts.
Evaluate the performance and accountability of charter schools.
Amending state law that prescribes referendum ballot language
Reform open enrollment into an economic desegregation tool
Allow school districts to publish official proceedings on the district website in lieu of publishing them in a newspaper
Increased flexibility in teacher licensure to allow for industry professionals to provide authentic instruction

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Mandatory Statewide Health Insurance Pool
• **I oppose legislation establishing a mandatory statewide health insurance pool. (15)**
• **I am open to considering the proposal but have questions I would need answered before supporting it. (10)**
• **I support the proposed legislation establishing a mandatory statewide health insurance pool. (1)**
• **Other. (1)**

Comments
Love the idea of a statewide pool, but without a plan to actually lower medical costs, this insurance pool may fall short of its goals.
This would cost us more and give us less. This should be an opt-in option - at best.
Not the ideal coverage, too expensive, and too many unanswered questions.
If the projected state obligation really approaches $1 billion annually, it could compete directly with the general education formula, special education funding, and other classroom investments.
How it was previously written was horrible for us (I believe the poison pill was in the last section). Here's why. Districts have made choices along the way, some have spent more on insurance (less on salary), some have spent less on insurance (more on salary). Saying districts who have spent less in the past get to apply to the commissioner for extra aid makes a permanent underclass of some districts (like ours) who have spent more on insurance.
Creating a healthcare statewide pool that joins the state Gov't pool

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AMSD has had long-standing positions on mandate relief and the importance of local control. A mandatory statewide health insurance pool would directly contradict these two important principles. Secondly, as a Self-Insured School District, the current proposal would be a reduction of benefits to what we currently offer our employees which would therefore reduce their benefits and increase their out of pocket costs.
We are self-funded and doing pretty well. I would not support something that costs more or delivers lower quality but I honestly don't feel like I know enough about this.
I share the underlying goal. Health coverage costs are a serious equity problem. I am not opposed to pooling in principle. My concerns are with how the current draft is written: The state's cost coverage is not structural. The bill lets a district request aid for increased premium costs, with the appropriation unspecified. Preliminary projections put the annual cost above $1 billion against a projected 2028-29 general fund balance of a few hundred million. If the appropriation is not sufficient in any year, the cost lands on districts with no ability to opt out. Enrollment is permanent and there is no exit. A district that finds the pool more expensive or less responsive than its current plan has no remedy. Irreversibility should require a much higher standard of proof than preliminary projections. Self-insured districts would be required to exhaust reserves. Those reserves were built with taxpayer dollars and are held against claims volatility. Requiring them to be spent down to fund premiums converts a locally managed asset into a state program's start-up capital. Uniform statewide premiums cross-subsidize without transparency. Districts that have actively managed plan design and utilization would pay the same rate as those that have not, with no mechanism to recognize or reward that work. The premium collection mechanism reaches state aid. Allowing the commissioner of management and budget to access funds allocated to a district by the Department of Education is an unusually strong remedy against a mandated participant. The 85/95 percent contribution floors remove a central bargaining variable while leaving everything else on the table. The predictable result is that the cost migrates into the general fund and out of classrooms. The 2026 session already directed the Legislative Budget Office to survey school district health plans annually. I would want at least one full cycle of that data — actual district-by-district costs, contribution rates, and enrollment — before the state mandates permanent participation in a program of this size.
This must be opposed. We have a self run insurance program. Our union has made health insurance benefits a major part of their negotiating over the years. Mandating we join this pool would strip many of those hard fought gains from our union. Financially, this is a loser for our district as well. There can be NO TRANSFER of fund balances.

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I think the pool has to join the current state employee pool, and not be a separate pool. We also have to ensure there's no cost losers.
A very expensive unfunded mandate
I fear this proposal would have disastrous impacts for district finances. The size of this program means it will be impossible for the state to fund it all (and if they do, we will get cuts elsewhere). There is less incentive to control costs under this plan, since the cost sharing percentages are locked in.

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MANDATES you would like to see modified or repealed.
Unemployment (10)
Summer unemployment insurance for hourly school workers — fund it at the state level or repeal it. Do not shift it to local levy authority. One-time appropriations have covered this since 2023 and are projected to fall short in FY27. Under current law the cost falls to districts beginning in FY28, with levy authority as the only offset. That creates exactly the two-tier system AMSD has warned about: property-wealthy districts absorb it, others cut staff or go to referendum. The Legislature should make a decision and own it rather than leaving districts to finance a state policy choice locally.
PAID LEAVE (6)
EARNED SICK AND SAFE TIME (4)
Special Education (3)
Reduce Streamline special ed paperwork. Mankato schools brought forward some proposals a couple years ago.
E-LEARNING (3)
Repeal the mandatory bargaining requirements for e-learning days, student testing, and student-to-staff ratios. Added in 2023-24, these moved core board authority into contract negotiations. They should be permissive subjects at most.
Universal Meals / Compensatory (2)
Free lunch for all
Comp ed solely direct certification along with requirement for forms for free lunch.

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Comments
Stop mandating classes or curriculum rather than standards
Define the Minnesota Learner: Competencies for an AI Era Minnesota has an opportunity to clearly define what every learner should know and be able to do in a world being rapidly reshaped by AI. Building on the Vision of a Learner, the state could identify transferable competencies such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity, agency, adaptability, and AI literacy and fluency. Rather than adding another course or graduation requirement, these competencies could become a throughline across standards, instruction, assessment, and graduation—giving Minnesota a shared vision of what it means to be prepared to thrive.
Language accessibility. Completely unfunded and MDE's guidance has turned this into a major project
Modernize Staffing and FTE Structures to Enable Team\-Based Learning Minnesota should review and revise staffing, licensure, scheduling, and FTE policies that limit districts' ability to organize educators and support professionals into flexible teams\. The state could authorize a multi\-year pilot program allowing participating districts to design team\-based models that combine teachers, specialists, interventionists, paraprofessionals, counselors, community experts, and technology around shared groups of learners\. Pilot districts should receive technical assistance, document staffing and scheduling changes, and report outcomes related to student engagement, access to support, educator workload, and academic progress\. The intended outcome is a stronger policy framework that allows schools to deploy expertise more effectively while preserving licensure standards, student protections, and clear accountability.
Build Statewide Infrastructure for Safe Digital and AI Innovation Minnesota should create or designate a statewide entity to maintain model Data Privacy Agreements, coordinate vendor reviews, publish minimum requirements for educational technology and AI tools, and provide districts with practical privacy and governance guidance. Districts should be able to adopt these resources voluntarily while retaining local decision-making authority. The state should also require vendors seeking statewide approval to meet clear standards for data minimization, security, transparency, accessibility, human oversight, and responsible AI use. The intended outcome is a more consistent and efficient approach to technology governance that reduces duplicative legal and administrative work, strengthens student privacy, improves vendor accountability, and enables districts of every size to adopt useful tools responsibly.

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K-3 Suspension Ban
Frankly, repeal anything that was already addressed in collective bargaining agreements.
Allow renewal of an existing capital project levy at the existing rate following a public hearing. Requiring a full special election to continue funding already approved by voters at the same rate imposes real election costs and creates avoidable risk to technology and facilities planning. A public hearing and board action is a proportionate process for a no-increase renewal.

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PAID LEAVE **(Changes, if any, you would like to see made to amend Minnesota's Paid Leave law.)**
Repeal (4)
Limit or remove intermittent leaves (4)
We are also seeing a major increase in complex "intermittent" leave requests, such as shortened work days or weeks, which are difficult to cover compared to traditional block leaves. We have had to add an HR staff member whose primary job is to manage the increase in leaves in our district.
Intermittent and Summer Scheduling Adjustments for those who do not work in the summer
Provide full funding (4)
Provide state aid for the employer premium share for school districts, or exempt districts from the employer premium. Districts cannot raise revenue to cover a new payroll cost. The 0.88 percent premium is a direct, ongoing draw against a state-set formula. The program is projected to run deficits in 2026 and 2027, which means rate increases are foreseeable; districts need either an appropriation that scales with the rate or a cap on what public school employers can be charged.
Provide Funding for Subs (2)
Comments
Employee covers 100% of the cost.
Create a dedicated state reimbursement or categorical aid for school districts' employer-share premiums and documented leave-related substitute costs.
Change leave options to only be for a consecutive time period, repeal intermittent leave. rather than
MPL poses a significant burden. Beyond the 0.44% payroll tax (which doesn't seem like it will hold, given the trajectory of use of the program), it layers leave benefits on top of our existing generous contract language (in terms of accumulated leave, etc). This allows employees to take significantly longer or

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consecutive leaves, worsening absenteeism and coverage issues during an existing staffing shortage.
Exempt school districts from PFML program. Districts already provide generous paid leave and benefits for these types of leaves
Paid leave is too flexible. We have an employee taking every Monday and Friday off. That is too much of a burden for school districts to have to deal with. We need to reel this in a bit.
Difficult and costly. The "sub" who fills in for the person on leave must be paid so additional cost to employer
Interaction with Local Collective Bargaining groups
Add clear, employee-protective scheduling and coordination tools tailored to the academic calendar.Codify collaborative processes that allow districts and employees to align intermittent or continuous leave with natural breaks, grading periods, or semester ends when mutually workable, while explicitly prohibiting denial of leave, reduction of rights, or retaliation based on classroom disruption. Pair this with modest state support for regional or high-quality substitute pools. Women retain full access to bonding, pregnancy-related medical leave, and family caregiving leave on the timelines they need; districts gain practical tools that reduce chaos without any erosion of the benefit.
District's tax portion cannot exceed 50%.
Fund or otherwise address substitute and coverage costs. In a school, the premium is the smaller cost. A 12- to 20-week leave in a licensed position requires a long-term substitute in a market where substitutes are already scarce, and the district pays both the leave-related cost and the replacement. No other employer sector has this structure at this scale.
Exempt, school districts, Cities, Counties, Special Park Districts and Watershed Districts
Make it optional

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Protect and facilitate “top-off” rights while providing administrative capacity support.Guarantee that employees can freely use accrued sick leave, personal leave, or bargained parental leave to supplement Paid Leave up to 100% of wages, without automatic concurrent designation that depletes other banks against the employee’s wishes, and without any loss of seniority or future accrual. Combine this with state-funded technical assistance, shared HR/leave-administration tools, or small grants for districts to manage the new system efficiently. This keeps the financial safety net strong for women (who are more likely to need extended recovery or bonding time) and reduces the administrative and bargaining friction that currently amplifies the burden on school systems.
Additionally, the law allows employees to earn paid leave over the summer when they are not scheduled to work, resulting in higher earnings than peers who actually work. This feels fraudulent, even though it is allowable under law.
Prohibit stacking
Clarify coordination and offset with existing leave. Make explicit that Paid Leave may run concurrently with FMLA, ESST, and district-provided sick leave and short-term disability, with a clean offset, so districts are not funding the same absence twice. Also clarify treatment of nine-month and seasonal employees — how summer non-work periods affect eligibility, benefit calculation, and premium liability.

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EARNED SICK AND SAFE TIME **(List changes you would like to see made to amend Minnesota's Earned Sick and Safe Time law.)**
Fully fund it for districts (3)
Funding to Administer (or Repeal)
Fully fund it for districts
Dedicated state funding or reimbursement for school districts' incremental ESST costsProvide a categorical aid or reimbursement covering the extra costs of ESST for newly eligible short-term, substitute, seasonal, and intermittent staff, plus related substitute coverage.For teachers: Full accrual rates, broad uses (illness, family care, safe time, school closures), carryover, and job protections stay completely intact—no reductions.For districts: Removes a significant unfunded mandate, stabilizes budgets, and reduces pressure to cut programs or staff.
Comments
Substitutes and Staffing Coverage needs to be considered
Employees of options for leaves - ESST should just go away and allow districts to incorporate into their existing leave balances
Decrease allowable uses
Repeal
Permit a school-year accrual year by statute. The rules effective July 6, 2026 default to the calendar year absent clear designation. A statutory school-year option would align ESST with district payroll, staffing, and contract cycles instead of forcing a mid-year reset.
Mental health days are being used as a time off slush fund

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Require doctor's note for 3 days or more of absence (currently the employer can ask but they do not have to provide it)
Contract Harmonization:
Stronger protection and clearer coordination of existing bargained/contractual leave banks with employee choiceExplicitly treat ESST as a floor only. Guarantee that more-generous contractual sick leave cannot be reduced or automatically converted in ways that diminish overall value, and give teachers clear choice in how banks and ESST interact (including sequential or top-off use).For teachers: Protects hard-earned leave banks (especially important for longer-serving women educators) while ensuring newer or part-time staff still get the statutory minimum.For districts: Reduces bargaining friction, compliance risk, and potential disputes over “conversion” of existing banks; provides clearer rules that lower administrative and legal exposure.
This is the lesser concern. The legislation expanded allowable sick time use, added leave accrual for casual employees, and loosened medical note requirements. While there is a cost to increased absences, ESST alone is relatively manageable.
Increase employer ability to validate appropriate use
Codify that a single, more generous PTO bank satisfies ESST without extending ESST protections to non-qualifying uses. The 2026 rules moved in this direction. Putting it in statute would end the practical pressure on districts to run parallel leave systems — one for ESST and one for negotiated leave — purely for compliance tracking.
Acceptable use is too broad
Practical administrative flexibility for intermittent/short-term educational staff paired with shared-service supportAllow simplified tracking, reasonable proration options, or regional shared substitute/leave-administration tools for highly irregular low-hour assignments, while keeping the 80-hour eligibility threshold and all substantive rights unchanged for regular and consistently scheduled employees.For teachers: Eligibility, accrual rights, and usable leave remain fully protected for those who need them most.For districts: Cuts the “substitutes for substitutes” tracking spiral and administrative burden that has driven higher costs and operational headaches.

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No subs (teachers, paras, etc.) or casual employees should earn this leave
School year scheduling considerations
Allow verification consistent with a collective bargaining agreement. Where a district and its exclusive representative have negotiated documentation standards for absences, those standards should satisfy ESST. This matters most in transportation and food service, where unplanned same-day absences have immediate student-facing consequences and coverage is thin.

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ADDITIONAL COMMENTS
MPL, ESST, Statewide Health Insurance Pool place significant constraints and problems for districts who have been well managed are able to meet their local needs. On MPL specifically, beyond the 0.44% payroll tax (which doesn't seem like it will hold, given the trajectory of use of the program), it layers leave benefits on top of our existing generous contract language (in terms of accumulated leave, etc). This allows employees to take significantly longer or consecutive leaves, worsening absenteeism and coverage issues during an existing staffing shortage. We would be happy to discuss all of these matters further. Thank you for asking and for your partnership!
I am hoping that if there is another Democrat Trifecta, the long term funding damage and many mandates are not repeated.
Sequencing: Two reports land right as this platform is finalized: the Blue Ribbon Commission action plan (Oct. 1) and the Compensatory Revenue Task Force final report (Oct. 15). The November forecast follows. I would encourage the Legislative Committee to build an explicit update step into the platform process — either a December addendum or delegated authority for the Board to adjust the specific asks — so AMSD is not advocating from a document written before the two most consequential inputs arrived. Focus: In a budget year with a thin projected balance, a platform with three or four asks and a credible price tag will do more than a comprehensive one. My priority order would be: repeal the contingent special education cut, stabilize compensatory revenue, then formula and levy adequacy. New-member education: After the November election there will be a new governor, new constitutional officers, and a large freshman class in both bodies. I would urge AMSD to front-load member orientation in December and early January — a short, concrete briefing on the cross-subsidy, the compensatory formula, and what a $250 million reduction actually does inside a district budget — before positions harden in committee. Permanent School Fund: If the constitutional amendment passes in November, AMSD should be clear and consistent in messaging that it is a supplement to, not a substitute for, adequate formula funding. That distinction will be tested quickly in the 2027 budget debate.
Mandatory Pre-K is coming if we have a DFL trifecta. This must be opposed. We are in the education business, not the daycare business. We are struggling to pay for k-12, there isn't enough money to add this too. This will also end up being an unfunded/underfunded mandate on schools.