

February 2019  
vol 16 ♦ no 5

## February 21, 2019

### AMSD Day at the Capitol

8:00 a.m.  
Room 400S  
State Office Building  
RSVP to  
[sorourke@amsd.org](mailto:sorourke@amsd.org)

## February 22, 2019

### Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting

7:30 a.m.  
Room 304  
Anderson Center  
Bethel University  
Arden Hills

## March 1, 2019

### Board of Directors Meeting

7 a.m.  
Quora Education Center  
NE Metro 916  
Little Canada  
<https://goo.gl/maps/EG2bcsS9zuK2>

## March 22, 2019

### Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting

7:30 a.m.  
Room 304  
Anderson Center  
Bethel University  
Arden Hills

## AMSD's Mission

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



Association of  
Metropolitan School Districts

## Northeast Metro 916 Intermediate School District Therapy in the Classroom? One School District Says it Works.

*\*Student names and details have been changed to protect privacy*

On a chilly fall morning, students in the River community at [Karner Blue Education Center](#) enter their classrooms with a hot breakfast of french toast and milk in hand. They sit down in their seats and chat with each other about Minecraft strategies, their weekend plans, and their favorite Taco Bell menu items. At first glance, it looks like any other elementary classroom.



Upon closer observation, one might notice a teacher turning the already dim lights a little lower, and setting up a projector to display calm nature scenes and soothing music. An education assistant moves from student to student, helping them progress on their coursework. A therapist floats around as well, making sure students are starting the day out on the right foot. All in all, there are four adults in the classroom tending to five students.

Everything in the Educational Mental Health Classrooms (EMHCs), from the tone of the lights to the type of schoolwork students do in the mornings, has been designed to meet the needs of students whose mental illnesses regularly interfere with their classroom learning. It is the result of a unique partnership between Northeast Metro 916 Intermediate School District and [Canvas Health](#) that is aimed at helping students manage their mental health symptoms so they can regulate their behavior and engage in learning. “Students with untreated mental health needs are not able to learn to their full potential,” said Rachel Goossens, Canvas Health supervisor. “We’re here to change their trajectory.”

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## From the Chair

Two key provisions in AMSD’s 2019 legislative platform call on the governor and legislators to increase the basic formula by three percent per year and to invest in special education to reduce the cross-subsidy. This month’s research article provides concrete examples of why it is so important that our state policy makers deliver on this request. The simple reality is that absent a three percent per year formula increase and progress toward reducing the special education funding shortfall, many, if not most, of our school districts will continue the all too familiar process of making budget reductions. I encourage AMSD board members to share your story with your local legislators and let them know how important it is that they provide the resources our students need.

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

# Educational Mental Health Classrooms Proving Effective in NE Metro 916

*Continued from page 1*

The most common mental illnesses they see in students this young are anxiety and depression. Children identified for the EMHC experience symptoms that are so intense that they may be unable to function in the classroom. One student, Jenessa\*, used to go into crisis for hours at a time, often missing the opportunity to eat lunch with her friends, participate in a classroom play or read her favorite book with her teacher. Now in the EMHC, Jenessa still experiences anxiety, but she is able to calm herself down with the help of her therapists in an hour or less. Not only that, but she has developed healthy habits like proactively asking her teacher to take a break before a crisis occurs. “The most incredible part of it all is that it isn’t just the adults that are noticing her progress,” said Tiffany Kelly, an education assistant in Jenessa’s classroom. “She sees it in herself, and it is really improving her confidence.”

Many of the students in these classrooms have been hospitalized in the past for their mental illnesses, but were told that their symptoms were too severe to be treated in local facilities. Unlike hospitals, schools are required by law to serve every single student, regardless of the severity of their needs.

EMHCs are also different from day treatment programs, where students receive outpatient therapy services and education services in separate timeblocks at a non-school facility. Students may learn coping skills in a therapy environment, but struggle to apply those same strategies in a school environment. In an EMHC, therapists and educators work side-by-side, creating a seamless experience for the student and a collaborative partnership where education and mental health staff learn from each other. Students learn how to cope with mental health symptoms and participate in school at the same time, increasing their ability to sustain learned skills over time and engage with their communities. “Students in these classrooms see it as a positive experience because it feels like their regular school,” said Naomi Lepore, assistant principal at the school. “They are still connected to their friends, their favorite staff members, and a school building where they feel safe.”



With the school year just beginning, the data is very preliminary. Some data is showing the students have behavior challenges more frequently, but experts say that makes sense as students are getting used to a new classroom and new routine. Other data suggests that students are able to work through triggers and challenges that in the past would have posed significant barriers to learning. “Students seem to be growing in the ability to show empathy and engage in the learning process,” school staff wrote on their accountability report.

School isn’t the only place where the therapists offer support and partnership. Brandon, a student in one of the EMHCs, struggles the most in school on Mondays, because his family situation makes weekends difficult. He has started asking his therapists and teachers for help “repairing” the situation at home. Brandon is able to take a break from school to call home and talk to a parent about it, putting his mind at ease so he can continue to focus on academics.

Family therapy follows the student from school to home during the day or evening hours in order to ensure the skills students learn at school can help them in any situation. The mental health and education team also assists families in navigating the sometimes confusing array of school and community-based services, offering referrals as needed. Anecdotally, families report improved relationships and behavior at home, and that their students are able to participate in activities that once seemed impossible - like attending a friend’s birthday party or going to a movie in a theater. “Parents are not only impressed with the classrooms, but also with the support that they are receiving and the changes that they are seeing at home,” said Rebecca Zabinski, one of the classroom therapists.

The EMHCs are one of the innovation grant projects that are being implemented and partially funded through a grant that intermediate school districts received in 2016. There are currently two EMHCs, serving five students each. They hope to expand to seven students soon, and eventually add two additional classrooms at [Pankalo Education Center](#).

*This month’s member spotlight was submitted by Syreeta L. Wilkins, director of communications, Northeast Metro 916 Intermediate School District.*

## Research

# +3 Percent Funding Formula: Anything Less Leaves Most Districts in Deficits

The dollar amounts, when put in context, tell a story no Minnesota parent wants to hear:

Many Minnesota school districts will face budget shortfalls next year unless the Legislature and Governor provide a 3 percent increase to the funding formula — and address the escalating special education cross-subsidy.

This isn't just hyperbole.

This is what school district budget directors across the state are telling their superintendents as the Minnesota Legislature begins work on the biennial budget.

“Years of inadequate state funding have resulted in an ongoing cycle of budget cuts and local levy referendums in our district and in school districts all across Minnesota,” said Mary M. Kreger, superintendent of Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan Public Schools.



While talk of state and school budget cuts may sound like politics as usual, the number-crunching reality is that years of underfunding general and special education have caught up.

If the Minnesota Legislature allocates anything less than a 3 percent increase for the state education formula — and does not address the ballooning special education cross-subsidy, now projected by the [MDE School Finance Division](#) to top **\$793 million by 2021** — many Minnesota school districts will be forced to cut programs and services for all students as early as next year.

The first real wake-up call to this came in early January — at the AMSD 2019 Legislative Preview.

Anoka-Hennepin Schools Superintendent David Law told a group of nearly 200 superintendents, board members and legislators that a 2 percent formula increase, even with a \$40 million statewide buydown of the Special Education Cross-Subsidy (giving the AH district \$2 million), would leave his district with a **\$7.2 million deficit in 2019**.

His report for Anoka-Hennepin was even more grim if the formula increases by only 1 percent: more than \$15 million in cuts.



## BUDGET PROJECTIONS

BUDGET ASSUMPTIONS	2019-2021 Biennium			
	Education formula +1%/1% and \$2 million/ \$2 million cross-subsidy	Education formula +2%/2% and \$2 million/ \$2 million cross-subsidy	Education formula +3%/3% and \$2 million/ \$2 million cross-subsidy	
Revenue:				
• \$2 million additional state buy down of special education cross-subsidy.				
• 5 percent enrollment growth.				
• Additional legislative investment in general education formula.				
Expenditures:				
• 2.6 percent increase in salaries.				
• 5 percent increase in insurance.				
• 3.25 percent increase in transportation.				
• 2.8% overall increase				
	Revenue	\$1,040,897,305	\$1,048,923,878	\$1,057,003,518
	Expenditures	\$1,065,426,665	\$1,065,453,380	\$1,065,480,226
	Surplus (deficit)	(\$15,275,956)	(\$7,276,098)	\$776,696
	Note: • Each one percent increase in the general education formula generates \$2.6 million annually for the district.			

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# Special Education Cross-Subsidy Impacts All Districts, All Students

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These scenarios aren't just a challenge for the state's largest district.

White Bear Lake, with almost 9,000 students, for example, estimates that a 2 percent formula increase — including a \$1.1 million special education cross-subsidy buydown — would still leave it \$2.4 million in the red.

In Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan, the district was already planning \$7 million in cuts for the 2019-20 fiscal year. A formula increase of 2 percent would leave District 196 looking at an additional \$3 million in cuts for 2020-21.

If the state provides only a 1 percent formula increase, District 196 would be forced to cut another \$7 million for 2020-21 and an additional \$14 million in cuts would be needed in the first year of the following biennium, based on a 1 percent funding assumption for the 2021-22 biennium.

A 3 percent increase would stave additional cuts for 2020-21.

"This is an incredibly difficult process because of everything we have already cut previously," Kreger said. "Increases of 3 percent to the basic funding formula would allow our district to avoid additional harmful budget cuts that would otherwise be needed in the second year of the biennium."

As districts know all too well: the state is the main revenue stream for school districts. If state funding is inadequate, school districts are forced to turn to local referendums to make up the difference.

Anoka-Hennepin, for example, will barely break even with a 3 percent increase to the formula. Which means any additional funding—whether for new investments or mandates or simply covering inflationary costs — must come in the form of referendums or significant budget cuts in other areas.

"In addition to our ongoing budget challenges, in our current environment, some of our largest cost drivers are out of our control. Special Education, transportation, and health insurance cost increases are being driven by mandates and market forces that outpace inflation," Law said. "These factors are important to consider for those wanting to invest in and improve education."

To better understand how special education cross-subsidies impact school districts and all students, see our video at [www.amsd.org/specialeducation](http://www.amsd.org/specialeducation).

Graph at right: The most recent special education cross-subsidy calculations from the MDE, January 2019.

## BUDGET PROJECTIONS

with 1% and 2% Funding Formula Increases AND Special Education Cross-Subsidy Investment



### SCHOOL DISTRICT

### FUNDING FORMULA

#### ANOKA-HENNEPIN

-\$15.2 MILLION    -\$7.2 MILLION

#### APPLE VALLEY-ROSEMOUNT-EAGAN

-\$7 MILLION    -\$3 MILLION

#### WHITE BEAR LAKE

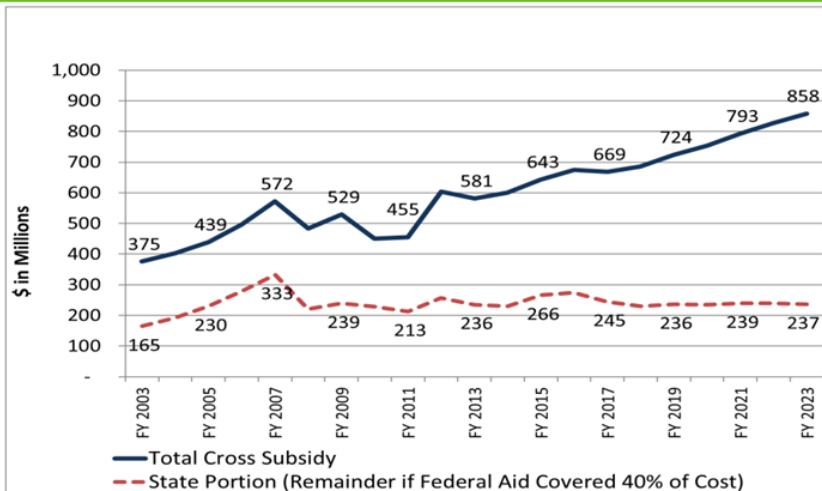
-\$4.5 MILLION    -\$2.4 MILLION

\*Anoka-Hennepin Schools amount is based on a \$2 million special education cross-subsidy investment by the State and a .5 percent enrollment increase.

\*White Bear Lake amount is based on a \$1.1 million special education cross-subsidy investment by the State per year.

\*District 196 calculated amounts are in addition to the \$7 million in cuts for 2019-20, which are being made regardless of legislative session funding. The figures represent cuts that would be needed for the 2020-21 year.

Special Education Cross Subsidy, FY 03–FY 23  
Total and State Portion—(if Federal Funding Covered 40% of Excess Cost)  
Current \$ (Millions)



1/29/2019

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