

May 2019
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May 3, 2019

Board of Directors Meeting

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

May 10, 2019

Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting

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

May 24, 2019

Board of Directors Meeting

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

June 7, 2019

Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting

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

Hopkins Public Schools

Embracing a Culture of Innovation Through Labs

Paul Domer, principal at Eisenhower Elementary and XinXing Academy, has spent quite a bit of time thinking about the future. He has read books, attended seminars, and listened to a variety of perspectives. What he learned validates a gut feeling he has about the traditional model of education — it needs to change.

“Our students will be asked to solve some big problems in the future — the achievement gap, poverty, and climate change, to name a few,” said Domer. “These are really important things, and if we want students to be successful, we need to give them more than facts.”

Domer is currently working with his staff to create an innovation lab designed to increase student-centered learning. The strategy of a lab is to test a bold idea in a controlled setting with a small group before bringing it to scale. The concept is similar to a pilot program, with intentional testing and measuring along the way, including measuring student satisfaction and engagement.

Although he is just beginning to set up what this might look like, Domer knows that the desired outcome is to shift his building’s learning environment toward problem solving, creativity, and collaboration — all skills that will be critical for the future workforce.

“My hope is to get us all thinking differently,” he said. “I want to align learning with the needs of the real world, and ultimately to create learners who can go out and make the world a better place.”

Innovation labs are new in Hopkins, with each of the schools in various stages of the process. The District expects to see more experiments in the near future that test the boundaries of traditional school. Labs are a critical part of Hopkins’ mission to go from Great to World Class through a process known as Vision 2031, a vision co-created by the Hopkins staff, parents, community members, and students.

“If we think empathetically from the student perspective, that will begin to shape the labs we create and what we test,” said Dr. Rhoda Mhiripiri-Reed, superintendent of Hopkins Public Schools. “We



Alice Smith students attempt to break out of their literacy escape room.

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AMSD’s Mission

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



Association of
Metropolitan School Districts

From the Chair

Our voice is needed now! The 2019 Legislative Session is winding down with the May 20 adjournment date fast approaching. There are major differences in the E-12 Education budget proposals from the Governor, House and Senate. The Senate E-12 Education proposal provides just a 0.5 percent increase per year on the funding formula. A recent [Budget Survey](#) shows that AMSD member school districts would face over \$160 million in combined shortfalls over the next two years under a ONE percent per year formula increase. Obviously, the shortfalls would be even more devastating under a 0.5 percent formula increase. Please contact your local legislators and Governor Walz to advocate for [AMSD's Session Priorities](#). The final budget negotiations will determine whether our schools and our students will have adequate resources for the next two years. All of us must advocate for our students. Please reach out to your community. Thank you in advance for your help!

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

Hopkins Public Schools Test Bold Ideas to Bring Student-Centered Learning Into the Classrooms

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have to get in touch with our end users, which for us is our students.”

North Junior High tests a school within a school

North Junior High had their end users in mind when they decided to lab a new school model known as North University (NU), a nontraditional school experience for students who are not reaching their engagement potential. NU students are enrolled in two regular classes — math and another subject of their choice. The rest of their schedule is open and flexible. The curriculum is inquiry-based, meaning the students have a lot of control over what they learn and how they learn it. Although North is only a few weeks into its experiment, students are already giving it positive reviews.

“I love NU and I would recommend it for everyone,” said seventh-grade student Isaiah. “I did not look forward to school before, but now I do.”



Ben Dickens, an NU teacher, works with students on their design concepts.

NU is run by two teachers and a social worker, and is supervised by the dean of students. Its goals are to meaningfully engage students, increase a sense of connectedness, and foster student resilience and self-awareness. Using the lab process was instrumental in allowing radical innovation. With a small sample size of 16 seventh-grade students, a core team of educators was able to swiftly move forward with a bold idea in a short amount of time.

“When I started to imagine how I would want my classroom to look like in 10 years, I could not envision how to get there short of closing down school for two years,” said Debbie Hahn, a social studies teacher who helped create NU. “This is the future of education. For me, it is how I want school to look like for my students and my own children.”

NU is a blend of learning that occurs both inside and outside the school walls. Students have traveled to the University of Minnesota, where they were paired with a group of college athletes. The trip examined the history of athletics through the lens of race and gender. NU students also visited the Minnesota Capitol and met Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan.

NU is headquartered in a North Junior High classroom, which is where students spend the majority of their day. Students are involved in many of the decisions related to their learning. As a first assignment, they designed the learning space that would best meet their needs. They worked with a budget, created blueprints, shopped for furniture, and consulted with an architect firm.

“Having this flexibility allows us to be more responsive to students, and we are involving student voice to help determine the learning paths,” said Hahn.

Once a day, NU students participate in genius hour, a time where kids deeply explore a passion and are given time to learn more about it. Louie, an NU student, is researching world history and the evolution of rap.

“Genius hour is by far the coolest thing I have done in school,” Louie said. “I was never excited to go to school before, but now I am getting to learn more about what I want to learn about. I don’t dread school.”

Everyone can create a lab

Structures are in place to support leaders, teachers, and staff members who have the desire to test a bold idea through a lab format. Creating a culture of innovation is an exciting shift, but it does require staff and administrators to embrace ambiguity and even failure, as not every lab will be successful. And that’s the point.

Stephanie Herrera works with principals to support them in leading innovation for their schools and to encourage them to also be willing to take bold risks alongside their staff. She started working for the District this summer as the director of principal leadership.

“It’s one thing to have an idea, but then to be willing to be vulnerable, not fully knowing what it might look like or what the result will be, that is not easy,” said Herrera.

Alice Smith adds enrichment to literacy learning

At the beginning of the school year, fifth- and sixth-grade teachers at Alice Smith Elementary were willing to take the leap. They were among the first to embrace the lab concept. Instead of teaching literacy the way it had always been done, the teachers reimagined a new model. By creating cohorts of fifth- and sixth-grade students, they were able to provide enrichment for all students, maximize school choice, and increase classroom engagement.

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Biennial Budget Comparisons: The Story Behind the Numbers

It's fair to say when it comes to understanding the complexities of Minnesota's education funding system, "it's complicated" is clearly an understatement.

Whether calculating per pupil funding, understanding compensatory revenue, or determining a district's special education cross-subsidy, even the most seasoned lawmakers, as well as educators, can be challenged to understand the myriad revenue streams — and how much bottom-line revenue a school district receives each year.

We've all heard variations on the phrase "budgets are values"—and each year politicians and organizations alike dissect budgets and present numbers that portray half-full/half-empty narratives respective to their agendas.

In other words, while numbers may be *accurate*, the ways that budget numbers are presented can lead to an inaccurate understanding of the larger budget picture.

In an attempt to explain the education budget in more simple terms, here are some factors to keep in mind:

Biennium to Biennium vs. Year to Year

Comparing spending in one biennium to another biennium is fraught with challenges and can lead to distortions. For example, if a new program is implemented in the second year of a biennium, the State only incurs one year's worth of expenses in that biennium. The cost will double in the next biennium when the cost of that program will have to be paid for each year.

Total Spending vs. Per Pupil Spending

The two most common ways to measure spending in the education arena are measuring spending in total dollars or measuring spending on a per pupil basis. Here again, using total dollars spent can lead to distortions and an inaccurate picture of the funding individual school districts actually receive. The best example relates to growing enrollment. In Minnesota, a general and uniform system of public education is a constitutional right. As such, when the number of students showing up in our public schools increases, the State guarantees that funding for those students will be provided. If total statewide enrollment increases, total State spending on education will increase to cover the new students. However, the amount spent per pupil will be the same. Some districts will see more total revenue, but the same per pupil revenue, while districts that are experiencing declining enrollment will see their total funding fall.

With that context, let's take a look at the February 2019 State Budget Forecast. The forecast projects that E-12 Education spending statewide **will go up by \$711 million (an average of 1.9 percent per year)** in the 2020-21 biennium compared to the 2018-19 biennium. Here's a breakdown of what is driving that cost increase:

- **Special Education costs are going to increase \$443 million.*** There are two primary factors that drive this increase. First, the State's special education formula is one of the only components of the education funding system that includes an automatic inflationary increase. Second, more students with more significant needs are expected to receive special education services. There are multiple reasons for this (new technology, better diagnoses, etc.). While state special education aid is projected to grow significantly, mandated special education expenditures are projected to grow even faster. In fact, the Minnesota Department of Education projects that the special education cross-subsidy—the amount by which school district special education expenditures exceed special education revenue—is projected to continue to grow.
- **Pupil Growth (\$217 million).*** General education spending is largely driven by the number of students served by our public schools. The number of pupils expected to be served in our public schools is projected to increase by more than 27,000 in the coming biennium. As a result, it costs the state more money just to provide the same level of per pupil funding as existed during the previous biennium. The increased number of pupils accounts for almost \$217 million of the projected biennial increase in education spending.
- **The Second Year Effect (\$105 million, for the formula increase in the second year of the current biennium).*** The "Second Year Effect" in a lot of ways is like a pro-rate in a billing cycle. The Legislature budgets on a biennial basis - for two years at a time. Whenever the Legislature enacts a new program, or increases funding for an existing program effective in the second year of the first biennium, the first time it's only funded for one year. The next biennium must carry the cost for both years.
 - For example, in 2017 the Legislature approved an increase in the basic formula of 2 percent per year for the 2018-19 biennium. The 2 percent increase that took effect in the second year of the 2018-19 biennium, in fiscal year 2019, only had to be paid for in one year of that biennium—but will have to be paid for in both years of the 2020- 21 biennium. This accounts for \$105 million of the biennium to biennium increase.

Traditionally when policymakers talk about spending in an upcoming biennium, they are talking about the proposed increase (the "target") over the projected base. (In other words, the target is the increase over the base. Another way to measure spending is to compare spending in the previous biennium to the coming biennium. (See table 1)

*Senate Fiscal Tracking Sheets and 2019 State Budget Forecast

See page 4 for table 1

Biennial Budget Comparisons: The Story Behind the Numbers

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So what does this all mean at the end of the day?

If state policymakers look only at the biennium to biennium spending projections, they may be led to believe that school districts are scheduled to receive significant new funding over the next two years

It is important that legislators understand that the vast majority of

funding included in the base does not represent new, per pupil operating revenue for school districts, and in no way negates the need for investments in the basic formula allowance, special education and other important education programs during the 2019 session. The cost of education—because of increasing enrollment and the increasing various costs noted above—is going up. Paying to cover that increasing cost is not the same as investing new dollars.

TABLE 1

HOUSE, SENATE AND GOVERNOR PROPOSED BIENNIAL EDUCATION SPENDING			
	HOUSE	SENATE	GOVERNOR
TARGET (proposed increase over base)	\$900 million	\$228 million	\$719 million
BASE (projected increase under current law)	\$711 million	\$711 million	\$711 million
BIENNIAL INCREASE	\$1.611 billion	\$939 million	\$1.43 billion

Hopkins Public Schools: Blending Learning Inside and Outside the Classroom

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“The students are getting so much more than they would have if they were just in one classroom,” said Catherine Luckemeyer, a fifth-grade teacher at Alice Smith.

Developing the new model required out-of-the-box thinking and a desire to do things differently, something the teachers were encouraged to do. Instead of using the existing curriculum, they embedded the learning standards into seven enrichment experiences for students. Throughout the school year, students rotate through each of the experiences which range from canoe building and theater to poetry and genius hour.

For her experience, fifth-grade teacher Christina Farrell adapted a natural disasters unit and turned it into an escape room that her students need to break out of by solving puzzles, connecting clues, and working in teams. It connects back to literacy because students need to read and retain in order to solve the puzzle. At the end of her unit, students create their own escape room for their classmates to solve.

“It keeps their interest,” she said. “They are excited for what is going to happen next, and they are writing much more than they were before.”

Maggie Lund, a sixth-grade teacher at Alice Smith, admits it felt counterintuitive to go against the grain of what she had been taught. Taking on 180 kids in rotation, rather than the 30 she would have had, was a mindset shift. And although she was initially worried that she would not hit the standards, it was easier than she thought.

“Having the support has made it much easier for me,” said Lund. “We have been given the go-ahead to try things and we can alter it to fit what we want it to look like. The whole team has been really excited and supportive of one another.”

This month’s member spotlight was submitted by Jolene Goldade, public relations/communications coordinator, Hopkins Public Schools.