

October 2019
vol 17 ♦ no 1

October 4, 2019
Board of Directors
Meeting

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

October 25, 2019
Executive/Legislative
Committee Meeting

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

November 1, 2019
Board of Directors
Meeting

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

November 13, 2019
Annual Conference

12:30 - 4:30 p.m.
University of Minnesota
Continuing Education and
Conference Center
St. Paul
[https://
www.amsd.org/
conference2019/](https://www.amsd.org/conference2019/)

AMSD's Mission

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



Association of
Metropolitan School Districts

West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan Area Schools Celebrate Soaring Latino Student Graduation Rate

When West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan Area Schools (School District 197) saw graduation rates among all student groups increase in 2018, it was cause to be proud. But when the Latino student graduation rate came in at a 13 percent increase — a staggering 27 percent above the four-year state average — it was time to celebrate. “We are fully committed to improving outcomes for our students,” says Superintendent Peter Olson-Skog. “And we are extremely fortunate to have strong Latino families who are actively engaged in their students’ education.”



Students from the Henry Sibley High School's ALMAS student group

School District 197 provides a wide range of opportunities and support that are ideal for Latino students and their families. ALMAS (Anglos Latinos Motivados A Superarse), a Henry Sibley High School student group founded by Spanish teacher Robert Hanson, is a prime example. According to Hanson, ALMAS was founded with the goal of reducing the high school dropout rate among Latino students. “We believe that for students to succeed we must have strong families, strong schools, and strong students,” Hanson explains. “If we want to improve our graduation rate, we have to do something in all three areas.” With that in mind, Hanson started ALMAS, an after-school program that empowers students to become involved in their community while providing their families with access to community resources.

At Garlough Environmental Magnet School, initiatives range from a Native Language Literacy Program and a Spanish Facebook site to a Spanish book backpack program and the addition of hundreds of Spanish books to the school’s library. Xiomara Medina, one of many cultural liaisons and interpreters who work in the district, supports the school’s students and staff.

At Heritage ESTEM Magnet School, 7th and 8th grade students have the opportunity to participate in AVID, a program in the district’s middle schools and high school that is designed to help students develop the skills they need to be successful in college. “AVID has had a significant impact on the school’s culture because it develops our students’ self confidence and self worth,” says Principal

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From the Chair

Registration is open for AMSD’s annual policy conference scheduled for Wednesday, November 13 from 12:30 - 4:30 p.m. at the Continuing Education and Conference Center on the University of Minnesota’s St. Paul campus. The theme of this year’s conference is Building Community Bridges. The keynote speaker will be Dr. Marguerite Roza from Georgetown University, a nationally renowned speaker on effectively communicating complex education finance issues to parents and other stakeholders. The conference agenda also includes a presentation from Minneapolis Public Schools on their innovative parent engagement initiative which was recently featured in *Education Week*. Registration is limited and is available on a first-come, first-served basis: <https://www.amsd.org/conference2019/> I look forward to seeing you at the conference!

Andrea Cuene, school board member, Wayzata Public Schools, is chair of AMSD.

Empowering Parents Through Respect, Cultural Sensitivity, and Education

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Karen Allen. Other Heritage initiatives include a home visit program operated collaboratively between classroom teachers and EL staff.

From a family perspective, district programs such as Building Bridges and Parent Academy, as well as parent-fueled organizations like Padres de Latinos in Action, have helped parents and guardians advocate for their children. Carmen Pineda, a cultural liaison with the Early Special Education Program, has been with the Building Bridges program since its inception in 1998. “Our programs have related to parents on a more personal level as partners,” Pineda explains. “The key has been that we have empowered parents through respect, cultural sensitivity, and education.”

Olivia Carillo is a district parent who has participated in a number of district-hosted programs and activities for Latino parents. “The most important challenges are the language and the culture,” she explains. “Through these programs, parents gain tools to support students and become more involved in the school programs.”

The recent increase in graduation rates shines a spotlight on the support Latino students and their families experience through their time in District 197 schools and programs. “We have advocates at every level — teachers who have incorporated strategies they know will work for multilingual students,” explains Andrea Saenz, English Learner and Equity Program Coordinator. “Our programs would not be the same without the committed and passionate staff who are key to their success.”

“The numbers just don’t lie,” says Henry Sibley High School Principal Ron Monson. “When you combine strong, supportive families with school-based resources and opportunities, you are paving the way for student success.”

In honor of the district’s accomplishments thanks to the hard work of students, staff, and community members, School District 197 was honored at the 17th annual La Familia Latino Heritage Celebration at St. Paul’s Historic Landmark Center on September 17. Organizers of the event, which celebrates the heritage and culture of Hispanic and Latino Americans, presented the La Familia Latino Heritage Award to leaders in the arts, community, education, sports, and civic affairs who promote, support, and contribute to the Latino community in Minnesota and nationally. School District 197 was honored for its Latino graduation rate and in accepting the award, Superintendent Peter Olson-Skog emphasized that the path to a diploma starts in preK.



Students, staff, and community members joined Minnesota Education Commissioner Mary Cathryn Ricker and School District 197 Superintendent Peter Olson-Skog to celebrate School District 197’s La Familia Latino Heritage Award.

This month’s member spotlight was submitted by Carrie Ardito, Director of Communications, West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan Area Schools. The article was originally published in the June 2019 Latino American Today publication. Our thanks to Latino American Today for featuring the work of our students, staff and community members.

2019 Education Bill Provides Important Special Education Funding

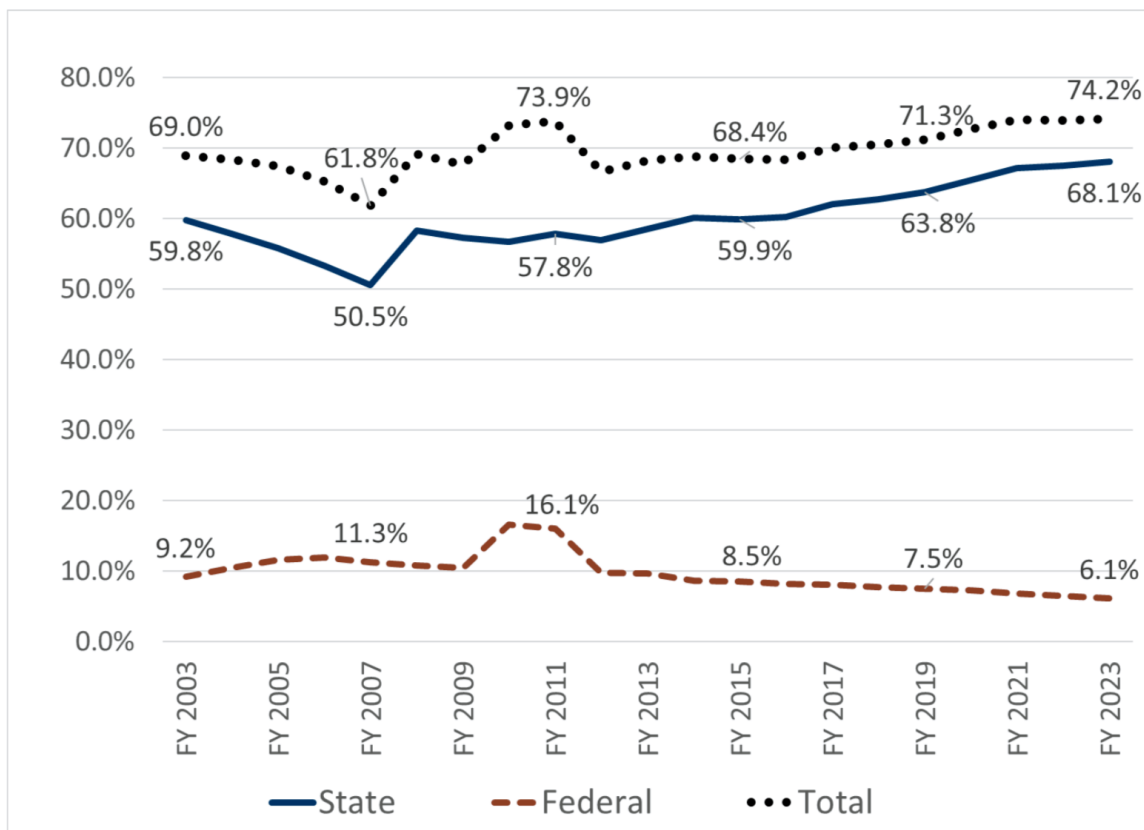
However, MDE projections show cross-subsidy will spike again without action.

The 2019 Omnibus E-12 Education Bill included a significant investment and critical reforms in the state's special education funding system. The bill increased funding for special education by \$91 million including the establishment of a new component — cross-subsidy reduction aid — to the funding formula. In addition, the state aid growth cap is being phased out and eliminated in FY 2021 and later providing additional relief for many school districts.

The special education cross-subsidy — the amount by which special education expenditures exceed revenue provided by the state and federal governments — will hold steady for the next two years as a result of the bill. However, as the recently released FY 2018 Special Education Cross-Subsidy Report shows, the cross-subsidy will begin to rapidly rise again in FY 2022 without further action by state policymakers. The report shows that the final statewide cross-subsidy was just over \$690 million in FY 2018 and was projected to be \$714 million in FY 2019. The bill approved last session will hold the cross-subsidy relatively flat in FY 2020 and 2021 but the cross-subsidy is projected to jump to \$771 million in FY 2022 and \$807 million by FY 2023 if the Governor and Legislature do not take additional steps over the next two years.

The newly added component to the special education formula — cross-subsidy reduction aid — is equal to 2.6 percent of unreimbursed costs for FY 2020 and 6.43 percent of the cross-subsidy for FY 2021 and later. This was a very positive step and will provide some relief to school districts that were being severely impacted by the underfunding of special education. Likewise, the phaseout and elimination of the special education aid growth cap provides critical financial relief to many districts. Another significant change in the 2019 legislation reduces the portion of unreimbursed special education costs that the serving school district or charter school can bill back to the resident district from 90 percent to 85 percent in FY 2020 and 80 percent in FY 2021 and later.

**Special Education Revenue Percentages
by State and Federal funding FY 2003-2023**



Source: Minnesota Department of Education
FY 2018 Special Education Cross-Subsidies Report to the Legislature

At the local level, when a district must use general education funding to cover additional special education costs, the budgetary impact can be severe, and lead to budget reductions that impact all students. There is a common misperception that the special education cross-subsidy is strictly a federal issue. That perception is understandable given that the federal government falls far short of covering its 40 percent share envisioned in the original Individuals With Disabilities Education Act. In fact, according to September data from the Minnesota Department of Education, the federal government has contributed less than 10 percent of special education funding since 2014 — and the federal government is projected to contribute just 7 percent in fiscal years 2019 and 2020.

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Special Education Shortfall: A State and Federal Challenge

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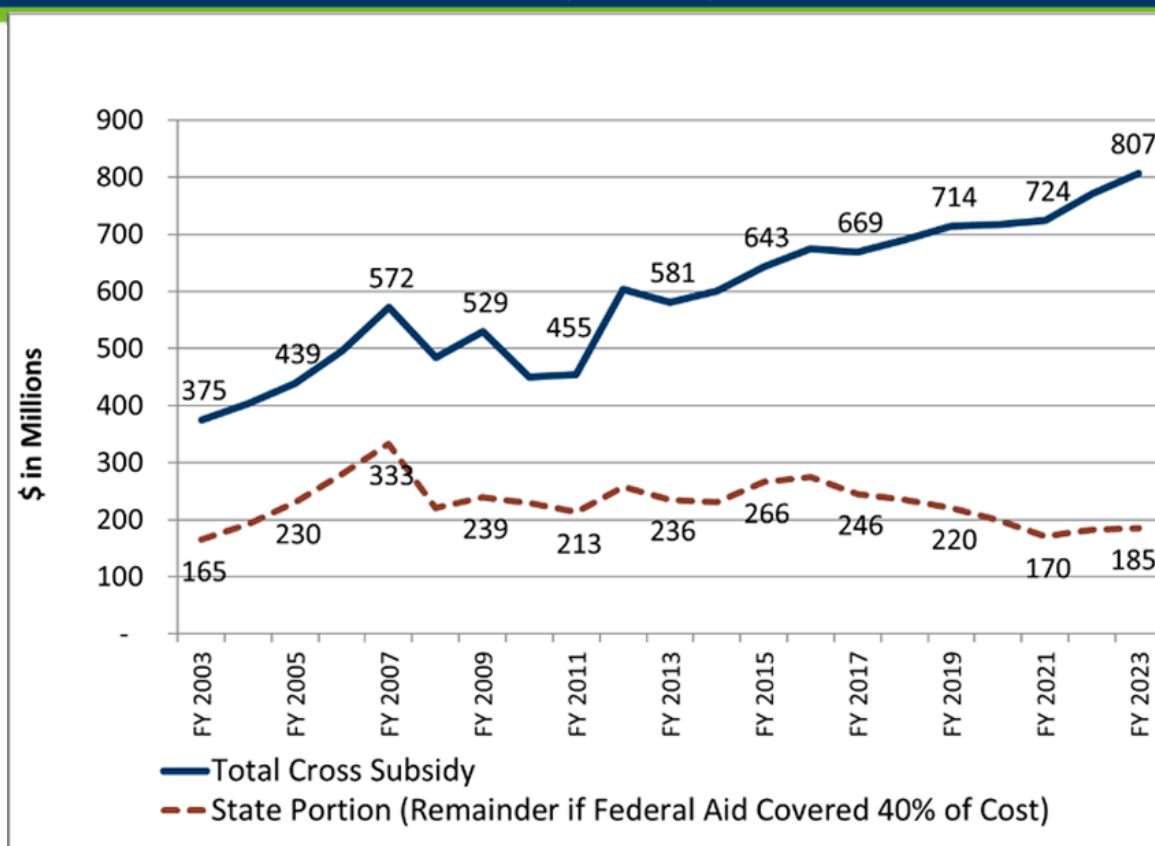
But as the chart below indicates, even if the federal government met its goal of covering 40 percent of special education costs, the special education cross-subsidy for Minnesota would have been more than \$235 million for FY 2018 and is estimated to be more than \$220 million for FY 2019. Clearly, the State is also falling far short of its obligation.

Robbinsdale Area Schools Board Chair John Vento acknowledged the investment the Governor and Legislators made in the 2019 session. Without the action during the last session to remove the special education aid growth cap, Robbinsdale's cross-subsidy would have risen by an additional \$400,000 in the current school year.

"We greatly appreciate the investments and reforms the Governor and Legislators adopted last session. But it is critical that state policymakers continue to address the severe underfunding of special education to ensure that each and every student has the opportunity to receive an equitable and excellent education," urged Vento.

Link: [View AMSD FY 2018 Cross-Subsidies by District](#)

SPECIAL EDUCATION CROSS SUBSIDY, FY 2003 – FY 2023
Total and State Portion-(if Fed Funding Covered 40% of Excess Cost)
Current \$ (Millions)



Source: Minnesota Department of Education
FY 2018 Special Education Cross-Subsidies