

June 2020
vol 17 ♦ no 9

Spring Lake Park Schools: Learning Our Way Through A Pandemic

As Minnesota reported its first case of COVID-19 on March 6, Spring Lake Park Schools, like many others in the state were headed on spring break. The push to completely change how school happens was less than a week away.



Preparing iPads for pick up was an important part of our teacher's planning and prep time before extended flexible learning began.

Three months later, the district has learned its way through the first phases of a pandemic. It has delivered child care for essential workers, established meal delivery services for community children and totally rebuilt the how's of school. More than 99 percent of SLP Schools' 6,200 students have been actively engaged in what we call extended flexible learning and the positives of parent feedback have outweighed the negatives.

"I am immensely proud of the way in which our Spring Lake Park Schools community has risen to the challenges this spring with a sense of urgent optimism," says Superintendent Jeff Ronneberg. "For us, this has not just been about 'getting through' this situation but on building an even stronger future for our schools."

While everyone prefers the idea of being back in school buildings for the 2020-21 school year, as the summer months begin district leaders are planning for a variety of scenarios. They are reflecting on what they learned and applying three takeaways from the spring to scenario planning for 2020-21.

The approach to design and planning supports each level of the organization in feeling ownership and support. As child care and meal delivery launched, design also got underway for the likelihood of continuing learning in a distance format. While many school districts brought all staff in at one time for planning, SLP Schools took a tiered approach.

"As district leaders gathered over spring break, it was imperative to us that teachers be highly supported in developing learning experiences in this new environment to help students continue their learning as effectively as possible," says Ronneberg. "We wanted our process to support teachers and help them manage stress and anxiety, not create more."

Continued on page 2

June 12, 2020
Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting
7:30 a.m.

June 17, 2020
Reimagine Minnesota Virtual Conference
9 a.m.—12 p.m.
To register:
amsd.org/reimagine2020

July 17, 2020
Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting
7:30 a.m.

August 14, 2020
Board of Directors Meeting
7:30 a.m.
Quora Education Center
NE Metro 916
Little Canada

These meetings will likely be conducted electronically and instructions will be sent prior to each meeting.

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

The 2020 legislative session was unlike any other. The COVID-19 pandemic upended our hopes for new investments in children's mental health, school safety and reducing the cross-subsidies in the special education and English learner programs. As the pandemic turned the state budget surplus into a deficit, we focused on advocating for measures to stabilize funding, provide flexibility with existing funding streams and reduce mandates. The pandemic, and the transition to distance learning, shone a bright light on the educational inequities that were previously identified in the Reimagine Minnesota work. On June 17, AMSD will host a virtual conference, *Reimagining Education in the Midst of COVID-19*, to share what we have learned from distance learning and explore how we can use the Reimagine Minnesota collective action plan to ensure access and opportunity for each and every child in a distance learning environment. Further conference details, including registration information, can be found here: amsd.org/reimagine2020

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

Building a Stronger Future for our Schools

Continued from page 1

In that spirit, district leaders were first on site to develop response team protocols. Then the Educational Services team gathered to develop the district's shared framework for extended flexible learning. Principals and academic coaches then provided real-time feedback before teachers engaged in professional learning and individual and collaborative planning.

As one staff member said, "This tiered approach created direction and allowed each tier to deal with their own stress and anxiety before leading the next tier. Each group had time to work through their struggles, come to terms with a new reality, and devise a plan going forward."

Shared frameworks for learning and teaching support staff, student and family experiences. The district developed a shared framework for learning and teaching in this environment using *SLP 3D Design*, a design thinking framework SLP Schools has developed, to put the consumers at the center of the design. Templates, toolkits, technology tutorials, and digital resource libraries were created to support the experience of staff, students, and parents and families.

The framework for extended flexible learning outlined expectations for what this experience should include. While delivery of the different components depended on the teacher, the SLP Schools experience included five common elements:

1. **A daily greeting** that communicates work expectations and maintains and builds relationships. These are often videos so students can see and hear their teachers to maintain connections and relationships.
2. **Synchronous ("live") learning sessions** once a week (at minimum) for each class. These might be focused lessons for reading with teacher modeling, small group meetings to do checks on student learning and progress, a mini-lecture with time for questions, collaborative small group discussions with peers, and more. These are also recorded for later viewing.
3. **Asynchronous ("not live") opportunities for student-to-student interaction.** This might be discussion board posts and replies, the use of Flipgrid for video responses and replies, providing peer-to-peer feedback on work, and collaborative projects.
4. **Consistent and meaningful feedback** on student work that moves their learning forward. This allows teachers to monitor and adjust instruction for individual students, small groups of students, or for the whole class as they go.
5. **Consistent opportunities for students and families to connect with teachers on questions** often described as "office hours." These may be open WebEx sessions where kids can "drop in" for help or connections, or scheduled times to provide direct support and scaffolding for student learning.



March 30 felt like the second first day of school for this school year, so SLP schools treated it as such and enjoyed all the "first day" photos families shared.

Special education services have continued for all students with disabilities during the spring with a focus on regular and positive communication with students and families. Structures were also put in place to continue to provide targeted mental health supports for students.

Going back to doing school the way it's been done isn't possible. Regardless of what the fall holds, it has become clear that how we do school has changed. The district has had iPads for all students since 2012. This spring provided the push for supporting internet access and meaningful use of technology in learning.

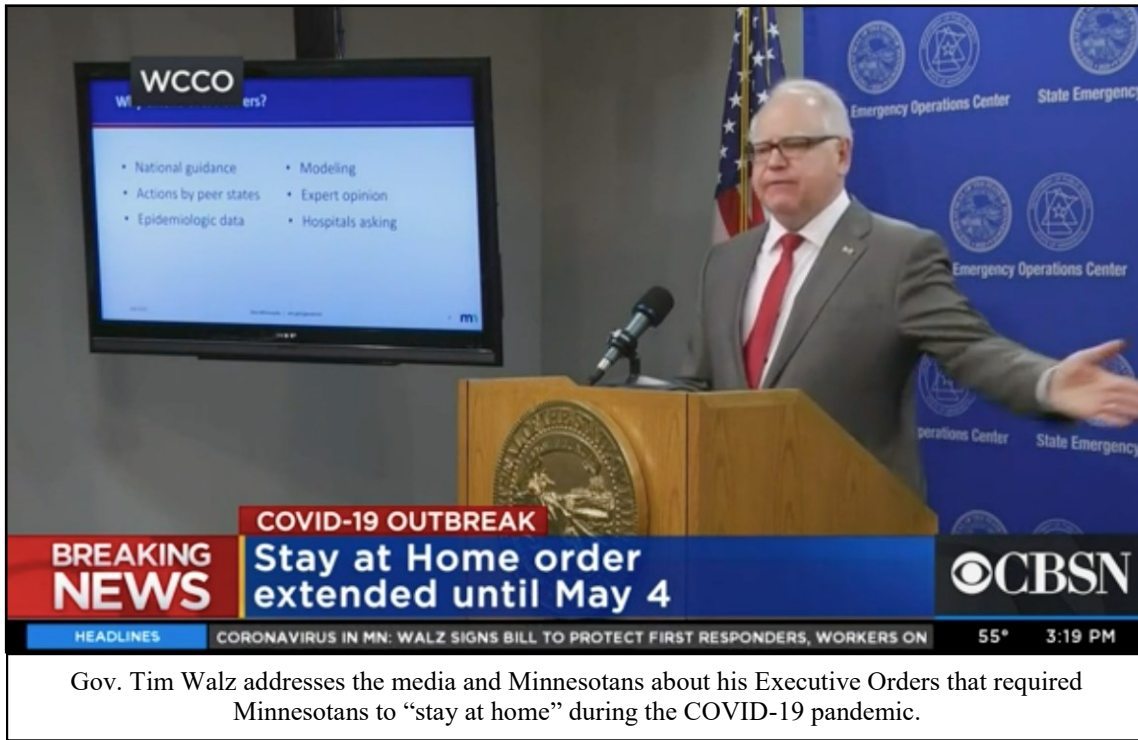
Teachers have fundamentally evolved how they teach. Many are excited about what that means going forward. One teacher shared, "This is showing us new ideas about how learning might look at school and home." Another shared, "I'm learning so much about how to design learning that **all** my students can access." And yet another, "This is paving a new connection between home and school."

Some students who have struggled in a traditional school setting, have thrived in new ways during extended flexible learning. Many high school students have been freed from the grind of a 6-period day and have grown in the ownership of their learning in ways that may be impossible to retract. And, there are still opportunities to enhance what we are doing.

"While the positives from parents and families have far outweighed any concerns, we know not everyone has experienced great levels of success," says Ronneberg. "Now, we can learn from our experiences this spring and bring forward an approach for the fall that is flexible to changing dynamics in public health and builds on the strengths in both in-person and extended flexible learning environments."

This month's member spotlight was submitted by Erika Taibl, Director of Communications and Marketing, Spring Lake Park Schools.

A Look Back at the 2020 Legislative Session



It's no understatement to say the 2020 Legislature was among the most challenging in Minnesota history. With COVID-19 restrictions, a transition to distance learning in our schools, and committee hearings held almost exclusively online for nearly three months, the 2020 session was unlike any other.

In the end, the 2020 session did produce some important — albeit limited — legislation to help provide some stability for our schools. In the waning days of the session, two key bills remained in the works for E-12 education — one went to the Governor for his signature (HF 4415), and one did not (HF 163). Two additional bills that passed — the Omnibus

Higher Education Policy bill, SF 3683, and the Elections Bill, HF 3429 — also included some provisions regarding E-12 education.

With the regular session concluded, Gov. Walz is expected, as of this writing, to call a special session for June 12. (That is when the current peacetime emergency order expires and if the Governor chooses to extend the order, as he is expected to do, he is required to call the Legislature into special session).

While nothing is certain, the special session agenda could include a revival of HF 163 — as well as a bonding bill and a tax bill, since the House and Senate were not able to reach an agreement in those areas.

Below are highlights of the legislation that passed and what did not.

The Supplemental E-12 Education Finance Bill, [HF 4415](#)

Specifically with respect to COVID-19, the legislation addressed several areas including:

- Requires the Commissioner of Education to prioritize CARES Act funding to schools to help districts comply with Governor's Executive Orders related to K-12 schools. (Further details about CARES Act funding is listed below).
- Student absences from March 1-June 30, 2020 do not bring that student under the definition of continuing truant.
- For the 2019-20 school year, the required number of days of teacher service for probationary teachers is adjusted to reflect the number of canceled days due to closures for COVID-19 related reasons.
- School finance formula glitches resulting from the conversion to Distance Learning, including aid for:
 - * Special Education, allowing districts to code special education staff and services in FY 20 that would have been eligible for state aid before COVID-19 as special education costs, even when they did not provide the special education services;
 - * School meals, allowing any savings due to lower meal counts during the school year to be reallocated on a per meal served basis to schools providing summer food service meals;
 - * Adult basic education/community education, CTE, nonpublic pupil transportation, school-aged care, developmental child screening revenue (to calculate using 2018-19 counts), and achievement and integration aid.

Continued on page 4

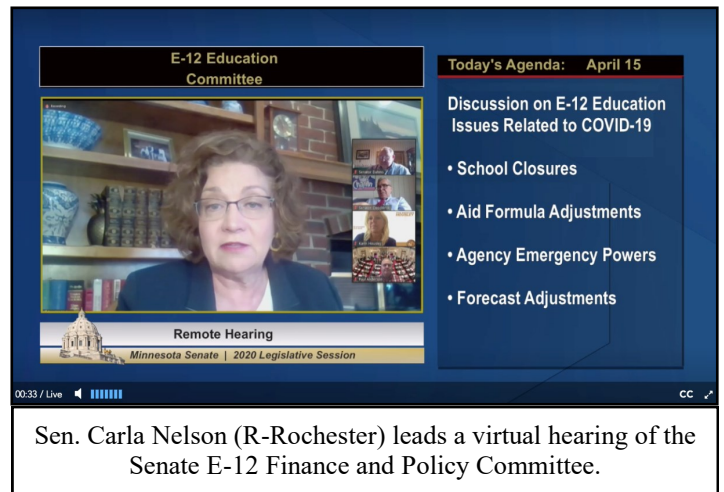
Waivers Approved to Mitigate Impact of COVID-19

Continued from page 3

- * Additionally, Literacy Incentive Revenue growth rate calculations will not include FY 20 data, so aid does not fall below the forecasted amounts in the February 2020 budget forecast.
- For FY 20 and 21, unassigned operating fund balances may be transferred to another operating fund. Such transfers cannot increase state aid or levy amounts and School Board approval is required and records requirements are detailed.
- For FY 21, districts that are impacted by delayed payments of property tax proceeds may apply to the Commissioner for modified cash flow payments in a form and manner determined by the Commissioner.
- Also beginning in FY 21, the law eliminates the requirement to reserve a portion of compensatory revenue for extended time programming. (Some FY 2020 compensatory revenue must still be reserved for extended time.)

Additionally, the legislation:

- Expands eligibility to participate in the early middle college program. The bill makes permanent the ability of an early middle college program to serve a student who is not yet 22, which will allow more late-arriving English Learner students to take advantage of early middle college.
- Expands uses for regional library telecommunications aid to include improving Internet access and access to technology with items that are not e-rated, including digital or online resources.
- Updates statewide testing and Achievement and Integration funding to reflect canceling of MCAs and enrollment changes.



Sen. Carla Nelson (R-Rochester) leads a virtual hearing of the Senate E-12 Finance and Policy Committee.

PELSB and Licensure Legislation

Specifically with respect to the Professional Educator and Licensing Standards Board (PELSB), the legislation:

- Requires the Commissioner to waive testing and accountability requirements linked to statewide testing; requires PELSB to issue one-year conditional Tier 3 licenses to teachers who cannot renew their licenses due to COVID disruptions; and requires PELSB to extend by six months the 2020 calendar for completion requirements for licensure renewals.
- If an educator holds a Tier 3 or Tier 4 teaching license that expires on June 30, 2020, the legislation gives teachers an additional six months to meet renewal requirements and for relicensure committees to submit renewal requirements, and teachers must renew their license by January 1, 2021. (This extension does not impact teachers whose licenses expire after 2020).
- If an educator holds a teaching license that expires on June 30, 2020 the legislation in most cases gives teachers an additional six months to complete cultural competency training and to attempt MTLE content exams. Likewise, administrative licenses that are tied to a teaching license will also be extended to allow for administrators who hold both a teaching license and an administrator license to renew both at the same time.
- Also, if new applicants for Tier 3 teaching licenses are unable to take the MTLEs required for the licensure area due to COVID-19 closures and cancellations, but meet all other requirements for a Tier 3 license, they may receive a 1-year “Conditional” Tier 3 license. Teachers who receive the conditional Tier 3 license must pass the MTLEs required for the licensure area and apply to remove the “Conditional” from the Tier 3 license prior to June 30, 2021. Teachers holding a Conditional Tier 3 license who are not able to pass the MTLEs must apply for a Tier 2 license to teach the following academic year.

The bill also provides the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board \$49K to update data systems.

Continued on page 5

Clock Runs Out on Education Policy Bill

Continued from page 4

Full details about the PELSB license renewal process can be found on the PELSB website at:

LINK: <https://mn.gov/pelsb/>

Higher Education Bill, [SF 3683](#)

The Omnibus Higher Education Policy bill, SF 3683 (Anderson, P.), requires the Office of Higher Education and the Department of Education to collaborate in order to provide annual statewide evaluative information on concurrent enrollment programs to the Legislature and directs OHE and Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) and the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals to set an annual goal for the percentage of Minnesota high school seniors completing the FAFSA.

The 2020 Elections Bill, [HF 3429](#)

The Elections Bill provides measures to allow elections to be safely held in August and November in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The bill stipulates that a school may only be used as a polling place when no other public or private location is reasonably available for use as a polling place. If a municipality or county has designated a school as a polling place, the municipality or county must work with school staff to ensure that contact between students and voters is minimized.

House Education Policy bill failed to make it to Senate before adjournment

The House Education Policy Bill, [HF 163](#) (Youakim), passed the House floor as the clock ran out in the 2020 legislative session leaving no time for the Senate to consider the bill.



It is unclear as of this writing whether the bill will be brought up in the special session. Key provisions of the final HF 163 included:

- **Referendum notices.** The bill would extend the timeline for sending the required referendum notice from 30 to 45 days prior to the election. This was among the AMSD Legislative Priorities, to align the delivery of the referendum notice with the start of early voting.
- **Dyslexia.** The bill would require school districts to screen for students who demonstrate the characteristics of dyslexia and provide a report of those efforts including the number of students screened, and the number of students demonstrating the characteristics.
- **Mental health training.** Extends mental illness training required for Tier 3 and Tier 4 licenses to Tier I and Tier 2 licenses.
- **Vaping awareness and prevention.** The bill would require public schools to provide vaping prevention instruction at least once to students in grades 6 through 8, and strongly encourages schools to provide evidence-based vaping prevention instruction to students in grades 9 through 12. The instruction could be provided as a part of a public school's locally developed health standards.
- **Unclaimed student medications.** The legislation would require notifications and new disposal procedures of medications considered controlled substances, as well as procedures for other unclaimed or abandoned student prescription drugs or medications remaining at schools.

Continued on page 6

Governor Targets Technology and Summer Programming with Federal Funds

Continued from page 5

- **Special Education.** Allows a school district to conduct a functional behavior assessment (FBA) as a standalone evaluation without conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the student, and allows a student who receives special education services to participate in Alternative Delivery of Specialized Instruction Services (ADSIS). Under current law, a student with an individualized education program cannot receive ADSIS services in addition to special education services.
- **PreK discipline and expulsion.** The legislation would require districts to exhaust nonexclusionary discipline resources — including referrals for needed support services, parenting education, home visits and other supportive education interventions — before allowing a disciplinary dismissal for PreK students, and then limit expulsions and exclusions to when there is an ongoing serious threat to the child or others.

[LINK: View the full House Summary](#)

Governor releases priorities, plans for CARES funding

The federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act for children, students, and families during the COVID emergency allocates some \$91 million in federal funding to Minnesota — \$48 million in Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funds and anticipates receiving \$43 million in the Governor’s Emergency Education Relief (GEER) funds.

Gov. Walz has outlined the following priorities for the \$43 million federal GEER dollars:

- \$38 million to the Minnesota Department of Education for:
 - * Access to technology for K-12 students;
 - * Summer school programming for students who need additional support over the summer months;
 - * \$5 million in competitive grants for other non-profit educational entities for technology and summer school programming;
- \$5.3 million for higher education including critical technology needs of students, Minnesota Tribal Colleges, and strengthening equity in education through targeted support of teacher preparation programs and postsecondary faculty.

Gov. Walz identified the following priorities for the \$48 million in CCDBG dollars:

- Provide increased access to supports to reduce child care costs for essential workers;
- Increase funding for peacetime emergency child care grants for child care programs of essential workers, including school-age programs who help meet the needs for care during the summer;
- Provide flexibilities for providers serving lower income working families.

At the May, 2020 AMSD Board of Directors meeting, Andre Prah, the Agency Finance Director at the Minnesota Department of Education, also outlined additional details of CARES funding, including:

- Elementary and Secondary School Education Relief (ESSER) funding, which is to provide local educational agencies (LEAs), including charter schools that are LEAs, with emergency relief funds. Minnesota’s State Allocation is \$140,137,253. The Governor is urging school districts to prioritize technology, summer school programming, and mental health support.
- Child Nutrition State Grants, of which Minnesota has been allocated \$160 million in funding to cover the reimbursable meal costs of National School Lunch/Breakfast, Special Milk, Child and Adult Care Food and Summer Food Service Programs.
- Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Grants to States, of which Minnesota has been allocated \$509,589 to expand digital network access, purchase internet accessible devices, and provide technical support services.
- An undetermined allocation for Head Start and Early Head Start for supplemental summer programs that will prioritize children entering kindergarten in 2020-2021 and currently enrolled children with IEPs, to make up for learning children lost as a result of program closures due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

A full breakdown of the MDE presentations and details of the CARES Act funding and its allowable uses is available on the AMSD website:

<https://www.amsd.org/event/may-22-board-of-directors-meeting/>