



Association of Metropolitan School Districts

LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

2021

Minnesota's future prosperity and ability to compete successfully in the global economy is directly tied to our ability to graduate each and every student from high school ready for college or career.

We are currently falling far short of that imperative. Minnesota has significant racial and socioeconomic disparities in educational outcomes. State policymakers must address the historical inequities that have led to unacceptable opportunity and achievement gaps. All students, and all Minnesotans, will benefit when we ensure that each and every student has access to an equitable and excellent education.



The AMSD Board of Directors have identified five key recommendations on the following pages to stabilize school budgets and ensure equitable academic outcomes – high levels of achievement – for each and every student.



ABOUT AMSD

The Association of Metropolitan School Districts represents 42 K-12 school districts, five intermediate/cooperative districts and two integration districts. AMSD member school districts enroll more than one-half of all public school students in Minnesota. The mission of AMSD is to advocate for metropolitan school districts and advance legislation that supports student achievement. AMSD stands ready to assist state policymakers by providing current research and data to help them make informed decisions.

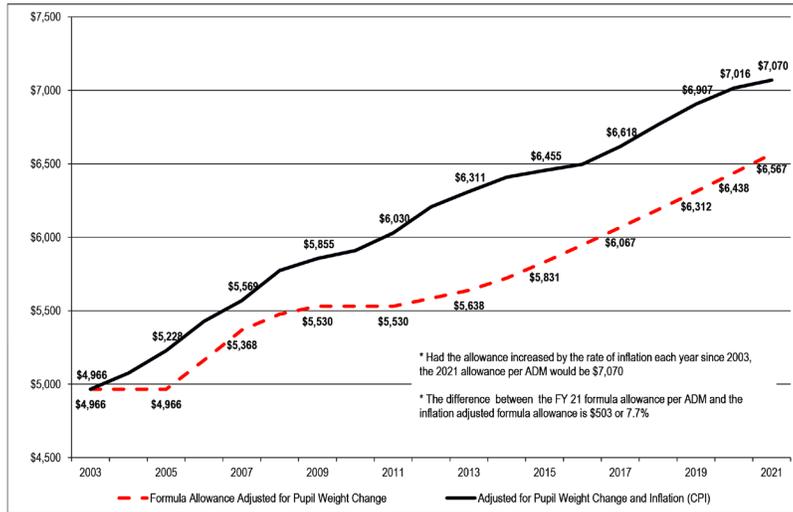


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STABILIZE EDUCATION FUNDING



General Education Formula Allowance, 2003-2021
Adjusted for Pupil Weight Change and Inflation (CPI)



Source: Minnesota Department of Education, June, 2020

The basic funding formula would be \$503 per pupil higher for 2021 if it had kept up with inflation.

ENSURE SAFE SCHOOLS

To protect public assets and ensure safe and secure learning environments for students and staff, state policymakers should:

- Increase the Safe Schools Levy to allow school districts and intermediate school districts to hire additional support staff to address the growing mental health needs of our students which have been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Remove the per pupil limit on the Long-Term Facilities Revenue program so every school district can maintain safe learning environments;
- Expand the allowable uses of Long-Term Facilities Maintenance Revenue to allow school districts and intermediate school districts to enhance safety through security modifications to buildings, including remodeling and additions to existing space.

A School Finance Working Group, convened last year by the Minnesota Department of Education, drafted a comprehensive set of recommendations that would stabilize the education funding system and ensure taxpayer equity. The recommendations would reduce reliance on state aid and on the operating referendum by establishing an equalized local levy and recognizing cost differentials related to geographic location and district size. The Governor and Legislature should phase in the recommendations to stabilize funding for schools.

To provide stability in the short-term, the Governor and Legislature should:

- Increase the basic formula allowance by 2 percent per year and index the formula to inflation;
- Mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic by allowing school districts to use the greater of the 2019 or 2020 pupil counts for general education and compensatory funding;
- Allow locally-elected school boards to renew an existing operating referendum.



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CLOSE OPPORTUNITY GAPS

The AMSD Board of Directors urges the Governor and Legislature to close opportunity gaps and accelerate growth for students of color and other historically underserved students. To ensure each learner can realize their full potential, the Governor and Legislature should:



- Increase special education and English learner funding to eliminate the funding shortfalls in these programs which causes school districts to redirect general education funding;
- Create incentives and alternatives to attract, develop and retain teachers, particularly teachers of color and teachers in shortage areas;
- Maintain multiple pathways to licensure in the tiered licensing system;
- Increase access to school-based pre-kindergarten programs;
- Ensure all students have access to reliable internet service and devices to engage in distance learning.



ENHANCE TAXPAYER EQUITY

Property tax levies play a critical role in funding education programs and facilities. However, these levies have widely varying impacts on local property taxpayers depending on the property wealth of the school district. To eliminate these disparities, the Governor and Legislature should:

- Include increased equalization of the operating referendum, local optional and debt service levies in the Omnibus Tax Bill;
- Oppose taxpayer subsidies of private education through vouchers, tax credits or scholarships.



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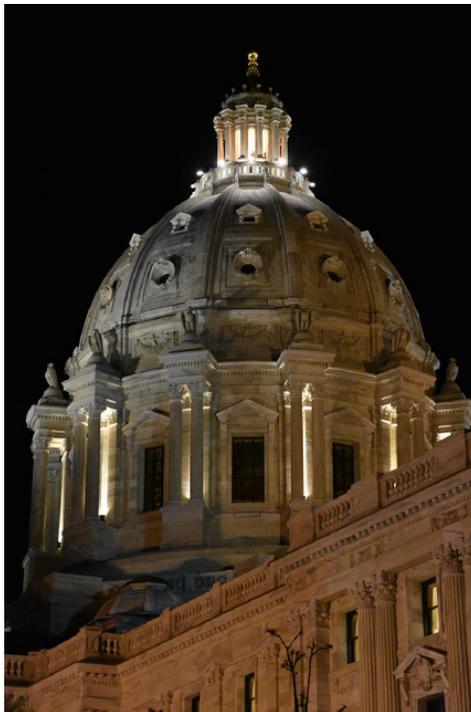
MEMBER DISTRICTS

Anoka-Hennepin School District • Bloomington Public Schools • Brooklyn Center Community Schools • Burnsville-Eagan-Savage School District 191 • Columbia Heights Public Schools • Eastern Carver County Schools • Eden Prairie Schools • Edina Public Schools • Elk River School District ISD #728 • Equity Alliance MN • Farmington Area Public Schools • Fridley Public Schools • Hastings Public Schools • Hopkins Public Schools • Intermediate School District #287 • Intermediate School District #917 • Inver Grove Heights Schools • Lakeville Area Public Schools • Mahtomedi Public Schools • Metro ECSU • Minneapolis Public Schools • Minnetonka Public Schools • Mounds View Public Schools • North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale School District • Northeast Metro Intermediate School District #916 • Northwest Suburban Integration District • Orono Schools • Osseo Area Schools • Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools • Richfield Public Schools • Robbinsdale Area Schools • Rochester Public Schools • Rockford Area Schools • Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan Public Schools • Roseville Area Schools • Shakopee Public Schools • South St. Paul Public Schools • South Washington County Schools • SouthWest Metro Intermediate District • Spring Lake Park Schools • St. Anthony-New Brighton Independent School District • St. Cloud Area School District 742 • St. Louis Park Public Schools • Saint Paul Public Schools • Stillwater Area Public Schools • Wayzata Public Schools • West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan School District • Westonka Public Schools • White Bear Lake Area Schools

REDUCE MANDATES AND ENCOURAGE INNOVATION

One size fits all mandates stifle innovation, creativity and local control. The Governor and Legislature should oppose any new unfunded mandates and encourage innovation:

- Expand the innovation zone law to allow school districts to:
 - Implement a competency-based education model in lieu of seat time requirements;
 - Collaborate with post-secondary institutions, nonprofit organizations and businesses to enhance course offerings and opportunities for students;
 - Replace the high school MCA exams with a nationally-recognized college entrance exam;
 - Offer online or blended learning instruction to students;
 - Establish the calendar that best meets the needs of their students and community.
- To provide budgetary relief, the Governor and Legislature should:
 - Repeal the requirement that school districts publish minutes and budget information in the newspaper and instead allow this information to be posted on the district website;
 - Delay the science, English language arts, and social studies standards revisions by one year.



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