

Minnetonka's Innovative Science Opportunities Inspire Students, Drive Excellence

July 16, 2021

Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting

7:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

Room 301

Anderson Center

Bethel University

Arden Hills

(Hybrid Meeting)

August 13, 2021

Board of Directors Meeting

7 a.m. - 9 a.m.

Quora Education Center

NE Metro 916

Little Canada

August 27, 2021

Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting

7:30 a.m. - 9 a.m.

Room 301

Anderson Center

Bethel University

Arden Hills

September 10, 2021

Board of Directors Meeting

7 a.m. - 9 a.m.

Quora Education Center

NE Metro 916

Little Canada



Two eighth graders collaborate on a project in their accelerated science class.

At Minnetonka Public Schools, innovative science programs inspire curiosity and empower students to excel. “Engaging students in science begins with an early introduction to the power of hands-on learning, and it grows by offering inquiry-based opportunities for students to pursue what interests them,” said Dr. Dennis Peterson, Superintendent of Schools.

Classes and extracurricular options offered throughout the District provide opportunities for students to explore science and the ways it connects to other aspects of their daily lives. The programs provide a strong foundation for students to continue to pursue excellence in the field after graduation.

Engaging in a School of Opportunities

Minnetonka High School (MHS) is often referred to as a ‘school of opportunities,’ able to support and challenge students to discover and pursue their passions while achieving personal excellence. MHS offers a robust slate of AP and IB science courses, including AP courses in biology, chemistry and environmental science; IB Sports, Exercise and Health Science; and several options for both AP and IB Physics. More than 80 percent of MHS students take at least one AP or IB course during their four years at the high school. In addition to these opportunities, MHS’s signature programs provide pathways for students to engage in rigorous scientific endeavors.

In Minnetonka Research, students pursue authentic, collaborative research, driven by their own interests. In the program, students propose, execute and present original projects while engaging with academic professionals and industry leaders. “Students participate in a wide array of projects, from biochemistry and astronomy to computer sciences, exercise science and psychology,” said Kim Hoehne, Minnetonka Research program director. “There are so many ways for students to explore their curiosities here.”

This year, four Minnetonka students qualified for the Society for Science’s 2021 International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF), the premiere international event for high school science. At the

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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

With the special session finally coming to a close, I would like to thank AMSD board members, staff, parents and concerned citizens who took time to advocate for our students and our schools during the 2021 legislative session and the special session. While we didn’t achieve all we hoped for, several AMSD priorities were included in the Omnibus E-12 Education bill. Formula increases of 2.45 percent the first year and an additional 2 percent the second year, grants to increase the number of teachers of color and American Indian teachers and retention of voluntary prekindergarten seats were key AMSD priorities included in the bill. I was also pleased that our call to refrain from enacting new unfunded mandates was largely heeded by legislators. The biggest disappointment was the failure of state policymakers to adopt key measures to stabilize the funding system; namely, linking the formula to inflation and allowing elected school boards to renew an existing referendum. Both proposals were included in the House bill but did not make the final agreement. We will continue our advocacy on these important issues as we prepare for the 2022 session. Thank you again for your commitment to public education and have a great summer!

Curtis Johnson, school board member, Roseville Area Schools, is chair of AMSD.

Programs Provide Students With Hands-on Ways to Explore

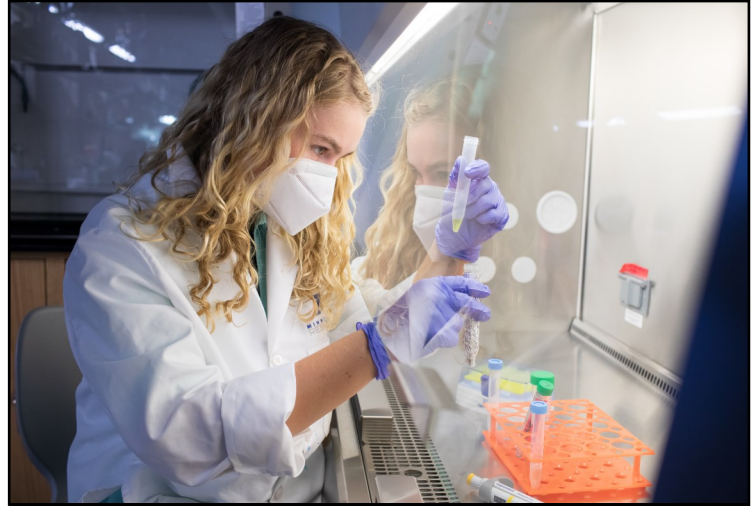
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fair, students share their research with professionals and scientists from around the world and compete for prestigious awards and scholarships. “To be named an ISEF Finalist, students must have a robust research project that follows the scientific process, and they need to clearly articulate the importance and significance of their work,” said Hoehne. Minnetonka’s researchers joined students from 49 states and 64 countries as part of this international fair.

High schoolers looking to connect their interest in science to future careers are able to do so through two other signature programs, as well: VANTAGE, the MHS advanced professional studies program; and MOMENTUM, the school’s program focused on design and skilled trades.

VANTAGE students engage in real-world learning through site visits, ongoing relationships with professional mentors and field projects with local businesses. Two of the program’s eight “tracks” of multidisciplinary study focus on scientific fields. In Global Sustainability, students study the environment and global economics through the scientific lens. In Health Sciences, students explore prospective health care professions. They also have the opportunity to earn certification as a registered nursing assistant or emergency medical responder.

MOMENTUM offers courses such as “The Physics of Home Renovation” that combine science and technology education topics. MOMENTUM is continuing to grow at MHS. A new building expansion that will house flexible maker spaces to support STEM projects and to provide space for an automotive shop will be completed on the MHS campus this year.



A MHS student researcher works in the Minnetonka Research lab as part of her research for the program. In the lab, students have access to cutting-edge equipment, wet lab benches and flexible areas for collaborative work.

“The science programs across the district have established a firm foundation for our students,” reflected Hoehne. “Students receive a robust curriculum with opportunities to learn through inquiry, creative problem-solving, and collaboration. These components allow students to build on previous courses and apply their knowledge in new contexts, seeking answers to their own curiosities.”

Making the Most of the Middle

At Minnetonka’s two middle schools, in addition to studying physical science in sixth grade, life science in seventh grade and earth science in eighth grade, students may choose to propel their academic study through accelerated science courses. In these classes, physical, life and earth sciences are covered in two years rather than three.

“Our classes allow teachers to tailor the curriculum to each student’s needs,” said Fred Stock, science department chair at Minnetonka Middle School West. “Our teachers are truly enthusiastic and knowledgeable educators who design engaging and challenging lessons in all of our science courses.”

Extracurricular science offerings enhance middle schoolers’ experiences in the classroom. Students have competed in Science Bowl challenges at the national level, and in past years, educational summer trips for seventh and eighth graders provided chances to learn about topics such as life sciences in Costa Rica and earth science in the southwest United States.

Beginning with Hands-on Curiosity

Elementary students are engaged in standards-based content with an emphasis on cultivating collaboration, critical thinking and innovation across all subject areas. In science classes, this often takes the form of lab activities. Science units are enriched with hands-on labs supported by the district’s Science Center, which provides materials for the K-5 science lessons at all six elementary schools. From preparing kits for Kindergarteners learning about mealworms to procuring Lego kits for upper elementary students to build simple machines, the Science Center is a hub of resources for projects and activities.

“Minnetonka’s science programs provide students with hands-on opportunities to explore and innovate at every level,” shared Dr. Amy LaDue, the District’s Assistant Superintendent for Instruction. “Students learn deeply, and they build confidence along the way, preparing them to excel in their endeavors both within the science classroom and beyond it.” To learn more about Minnetonka’s science programs, visit the [Minnetonka Schools website](#).

This month’s member spotlight was submitted by Mary Cornelius, Communications Specialist, Minnetonka Public Schools.

E-12 Omnibus Bill Includes Funding to Diversify Teacher Workforce

With just over a week before the state-mandated budget deadline of June 30, an agreement was brokered on a \$554 million E-12 Omnibus Budget Bill. Negotiations had been stalled since Gov. Walz, Majority Leader Gazelka and Speaker Hortman announced a deal on a budget framework and budget targets on May 17, the final day of the regular session. The bill was approved by the House on a vote of 105-20 and the Senate by a vote of 65-0. The bill is now on its way to Gov. Walz for his expected signature.

The most significant component of the bill, by far, is an increase in the basic funding formula: A **2.45 percent increase in the per-pupil formula for FY2022 and a 2 percent increase in FY2023**, accounts for nearly \$463 million of the \$554 million total investment. The bill also extends funding for the 4,000 Voluntary Pre-K (VPK) seats for two more years.

The agreement provides very modest increases to the special education and English learner funding programs. The \$10.425 million in one-time funding in FY2022 for Special Education Cross-Subsidy Reduction Aid falls far short of the \$70 million needed to hold the cross-subsidy flat for the 2022-23 biennium. As a result, the special education cross-subsidy will grow significantly over the next two years. The bill also includes \$2 million per year for the next four years for English Learner Cross-Subsidy Reduction Aid. English learner funding has not been increased since 2003 causing the shortfall to grow significantly.

Another key feature of the agreement is a significant investment in a variety of grant programs to increase the number of teachers of color and Indigenous teachers in our schools including \$5 million per year in ongoing funding for the Grow Your Own Program. The chart below highlights the other investments targeted at increasing educators of color.

Recruiting and Retaining Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers 2021 E-12 Education Omnibus Bill	
Program	Amount
Grow Your Own	\$5 million per year increase (increase is ongoing)
American Indian Teacher Prep Grants	\$140,000 per year increase (increase is ongoing)
Black Men Teach	\$750,000 (FY2022 only)
Come Teach in MN Hiring Bonuses	\$200,000 per year increase (increase is ongoing)
Expanded Concurrent Enrollment (Intro to Teaching)	\$125,000 per year increase (increase is ongoing)
Teachers of Color Mentoring & Retention Incentive Grants	\$2.254 million per year increase (increase is ongoing)
Teacher Recruitment Marketing Campaign	\$250,000 per year increase (increase is ongoing)

Unfortunately, key measures that would have greatly stabilized the education funding system — linking the formula to inflation and allowing school boards to renew an existing referendum — were not included in the final bill. In addition, the agreement does not allow school districts to continue to offer a distance learning option for students outside of the options that are already available under current law.

View the full bill language, the House Research summary, school district runs, an overview of the change items, and the appropriations and levy tracking spreadsheets here: <https://www.amsd.org/2021session/>

Grants to Specific Programs

The final bill also includes grants for a variety of specific programs.

- Sanneh Foundation: \$1.5 million per year for FY2022 and FY2023.
- Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) grants: \$3 million in FY2022.
- Non-exclusionary Discipline Training: \$1.750 million in FY2022.
- Children's Museums: \$150,000 per year in FY2022 and FY2023.
- Digital Well-Being Grant: \$1 million in FY2022 only.
- Girls in Action: \$1.5 million in FY2022.
- Math Corps: \$500,000 per year in FY2022 and FY2023.
- MN Civics Education Coalition: \$75,000 per year in FY2022 and FY2023.
- MN Youth Council: \$187,000 for FY2022 and \$188,000 for FY2023.
- Suicide Prevention Teacher Training grants: \$265,000 in FY2022.

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School-linked Mental Health Grants Included in HHS Bill

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Policy Provisions

The House and Senate bills had major differences in their respective policy provisions and for the most part, they were not able to resolve their differences. Policy provisions in the final bill include:

- **Environmental Hazards:** Schools must notify school staff, students and parents if there is a threat of an environmental hazard. The notice must also include information about what to do to reduce harm.
- **School Lunch:** Prohibits lunch shaming and authorizes the commissioner to recalculate school lunch payments to schools to reflect school's participation in alternative school meal programs during the 2020-21 school year.
- **Religious Observance:** Requires school boards to provide an annual notice to parents of the district's policy on absence for religious observance.
- **COVID Recovery:** Requires school districts to collaborate with the families of students with disabilities to address the impact of learning disruptions due to COVID-19.
- **Screen Time limits:** Establishes limits on pre-school student screen time.
- **Standards Suspension:** Suspends the implementation of revised academic standards not already implemented as of January 1, 2023, until June 1, 2023. This does not impact MDE's rulemaking process and work on the Social Studies standards revision will continue.

In addition to the E-12 Education Omnibus Bill, several additional omnibus bills include provisions impacting E-12 education including:

Omnibus Transportation Bill

The Omnibus Transportation bill, [HF10](#), includes \$15 million to equip Minnesota school buses with outward-facing cameras to catch stop-arm violators. The bill also provides \$7 million dollars for the Safe Routes to Schools program.

- [View the Omnibus Transportation Bill](#)

Omnibus State Government Finance Bill

[SF2](#) establishes a school finance accountability team in the Office of the State Auditor to allow for the audits of school districts that have volunteered with and been selected by the state auditor to have their annual audit performed by the state auditor at no cost to the school district.

- [View the Omnibus State Government Finance Bill](#)

Omnibus Tax Bill

[HF9](#) adds a supplemental statement to the required notice of proposed property taxes. For school districts, the summary budget data statement must include the information provided under the World's Best Workforce statute for the current year and prior year. This is effective for taxes payable in 2023. The bill also exempts the collection of sales taxes from sales made by school associations.

- [View the Omnibus Tax Bill](#)

Omnibus Health and Human Services Bill

The Omnibus Health and Human Services Bill [HF33](#) includes \$2.5 million each year for school-linked mental health grants and \$1.75 million each year for school-linked substance abuse grants. In addition, the bill includes some updates and fees to the requirements for the Department of Human Services background studies for all first-time applicants for educator licenses to PELSB and BOSA, as well as redirects federal funding to several childcare provisions.

- [View the Omnibus Health and Human Services Bill](#)