

November 2021

Volume 19

Number 2

Edina Strategic Plan Drives Focus on Mental Wellness Support

November 17, 2021

Annual Conference

8 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Minneapolis Marriott Northwest

Register here:

<https://www.amsd.org/conference2021/>

Registration deadline is November 10!

November 19, 2021

Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting

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

Anderson Center
Bethel University
Arden Hills

December 3, 2021

Board of Directors Meeting

7 a.m. - 9 a.m.

Quora Education Center
NE Metro 916
Little Canada

December 17, 2021

Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting

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

Anderson Center
Bethel University

At one time, students with underdeveloped social emotional skills might have been referred for a special services assessment. "Now we say, 'Oh, you don't know how to play. I will teach you how to play and how to ask someone to play with you,'" said Leah Byrd, coordinator of Edina Early Learning Center (ELC).



Edina Early Learning teacher Joanna Taylor fosters students' social emotional skills by teaching them how to play and work together.

Training in the Pyramid Model, a framework of practices to promote young children's social and emotional development, has led to a change in staff perspective and in children's early classroom experiences.

In 2018, the Edina ELC received a grant of \$58,000 from the Minnesota Department of Education, in collaboration with the Minnesota Centers of Excellence, to fund training and implementation of the Pyramid Model. The district's new strategic plan, adopted in 2020, further emphasizes mental wellness with a specific priority aimed at "fostering positive learning

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It is hard to believe but AMSD's annual Session Preview Program is right around the corner. The 2022 Preview will be held on Friday, January 7 from 8-10 a.m. and will be conducted in a hybrid format with the option to attend in person or participate remotely. The Session Preview always provides a great opportunity for AMSD board members to discuss important education issues with their local legislators and review AMSD's legislative platform. Further details will be coming soon but for now, please mark your calendar for January 7!

From the AMSD Chair, Kelsey Dawson Walton, Osseo Area Schools Board Member

Staff More Confident In Their Ability To Help Kids Be Successful

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environments and whole student support.”

Every classroom teacher participates in training, and those interested in becoming a Pyramid coach for their colleagues receive advanced training. As new teachers join the staff, they engage in foundational training and are connected with a coach. Now, in the fourth year of a five-year implementation, every ELC staff member has had Pyramid training and results are being noticed.

“Parents have said that their child was dismissed from other preschool programs and it wasn’t until they came to Edina ELC that their child learned how to play with others,” Byrd said. “Kindergarten teachers tell us they recognize when they have one of our ELC students in their classroom by the words and phrases they use to solve problems.”

As the effects of COVID-19 continue, Byrd points out that most early learning students do not remember life without the trauma of a pandemic. “That is heart-stopping, if you think about it,” she said. “Pyramid training has contributed to staff well-being too, by making them feel more confident in their ability to help kids be successful at school in spite of the pandemic.”

Of course, many Edina students do remember life before the pandemic. They are old enough to miss the way things “used to be,” which for many has added anxiety to the rollercoaster of emotions that are common with childhood and adolescent development.

Last spring, in alignment with the district’s new strategic plan, Edina Public Schools administered the Panorama Student Survey to students in grades 3-12. Although the survey was voluntary, the majority of students in each grade band (elementary, middle and high school) completed the survey. Its purpose was to measure student perceptions of their relationships, feelings, emotions, and engagement at school.

“What we see on the outside -- a student’s behaviors and attitudes -- are what we tend to work on. But the vast majority of mental health happens between the ears,” said Jeff Jorgensen, district director of student support services. “Through the survey, they could tell us how they feel. The survey reveals to us where we need to do work.”

Data from the survey has helped target resources to the needs of students at each school, and staff reach out to connect with individuals who indicated they may be struggling.

The district’s efforts to support the mental health of students receives wide support from the community, most notably from the Edina Education Fund. Last year the organization launched an initiative called Heal Together: From Awareness to Wellness. A fall concert and a recent grant to the Education Fund from the City of Edina, through the American Rescue Plan Act, have helped the district increase the number of full-time therapists at secondary schools, provide trauma-sensitive training and intervention skills for staff, and summer support staff for students and families. Jorgensen said the support the district receives from the Edina Education Fund is “tremendously important.”

“We want all of our students to have a sense of belonging and personal wellness. A feeling of valued worth allows kids to participate in school in ways that are meaningful. Through that involvement, they experience success,” Jorgensen said, “and academic success is good for mental health.”

This month’s member feature was submitted by Mary Woitte, Executive Director of Communications, Edina Public Schools.

State Education Spending Ranks Barely Above National Average

Minnesota state spending on education ranks only slightly above the national average of state and local revenue dedicated per pupil according to a [new national study](#), and the state received an overall grade of C when it came to spending on education.

A new analysis by the public education advocacy group Education Law Center (ELC), of U.S. Census Bureau data, reported that Minnesota spends \$15,193 per pupil statewide — just \$79 above the national average of \$15,114 per student.

The analysis, released in October, calculates 2019 per pupil funding levels from state and local sources against the most recent U.S. Census data. The figures do not include federal funds, which make up just 8 percent of the nation’s K-12 education funding. Figures were also cost-adjusted for regional variations related to labor market costs. A state’s funding level grade is determined by ranking its position relative to other states and does not measure whether a state meets any particular threshold of funding level based on the actual cost of resources necessary to achieve state or national academic standards.

Two of Minnesota’s four contiguous states, Wisconsin and North Dakota, rank above Minnesota and the national average — spending \$15,856 and \$16,493 per pupil, respectively — while Iowa and South Dakota spend less than the national average at \$14,720 and \$13,847 respectively per student.

While Minnesota’s spending levels for education ranks only slightly above average, Minnesota receives a grade of “A” from the ELC on how it allocates its funding to school districts, relative to concentration of student poverty. States are classified as progressive, regressive, or flat, and Minnesota’s funding distribution was ranked as “progressive” as its high poverty districts receive 28 percent or \$4,167 more per pupil than low poverty districts.

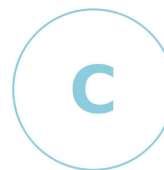
The study classifies poverty districts using the Census definition of poverty, because National School Lunch Program poverty classifications can often be misleading because of self-underreporting.



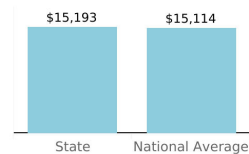
Funding Level

State and local revenue per pupil, adjusted for regional cost differences.

Minnesota ranked 21 out of 51 on funding level with \$15,193 in cost-adjusted per pupil revenue. That is \$79 above the national average of \$15,114.



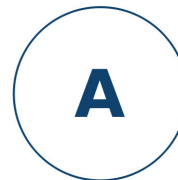
PER PUPIL FUNDING



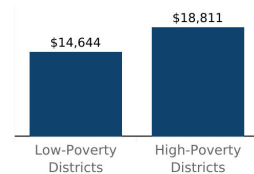
Funding Distribution

The allocation of funds to school districts relative to the concentration of student poverty. States are classified as progressive, regressive, or flat.

Minnesota’s funding distribution was progressive: on average, high poverty districts receive 28% or \$4,167 more per pupil than low poverty districts.



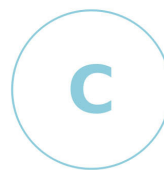
PER PUPIL FUNDING BY DISTRICT POVERTY



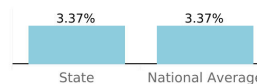
Funding Effort

Funding allocated to support PK-12 education as a percentage of the state’s economic activity (GDP).

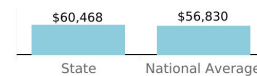
Minnesota makes an average effort to fund schools. The state’s fiscal capacity (GDP per capita) is higher than average.



EFFORT INDEX



PER CAPITA GDP



Minnesota Has Fiscal Capacity to Provide Stronger Education Funding

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ELC considers the Census definition of poverty a more accurate measure than either free lunch eligibility (130 percent of Census poverty) or reduced lunch eligibility (185 percent). The study defined high-poverty districts as having a 30 percent Census poverty rate among school-aged children, and low-poverty districts having a 5 percent poverty rate. AMSD advocates for using criteria beyond eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch to determine the level of poverty and compensatory funding to stabilize that funding stream and more accurately reflect the needs of students in each school district. [Research has consistently indicated](#) that investment in high poverty schools positively impacts educational outcomes.

The report stresses that funding progressivity must be looked at within the context of overall funding levels. Specifically, the report notes, “The potential for progressive funding to adequately resource a state’s high-poverty schools is difficult if the overall level of funding is extremely low.”

On a third ranking, the report examined the fiscal effort each state makes to fund education. Effort is measured as total state and local revenue (including capital outlay and debt service, excluding all federal funds) divided by the state’s gross domestic product (GDP). GDP is the value of all goods and services produced by each state’s economy and is used to represent the state’s economic capacity to raise funds for schools. In this analysis, Minnesota rated just average because the state’s fiscal capacity (GDP per capita), at \$60,468 in 2019, was notably above the national average of \$56,830 but Minnesota’s education spending level is only average. In other words, Minnesota has the fiscal capacity to provide much stronger funding for its public schools.

A Minnesota Department of Education School Finance Working Group, convened in September of 2019, issued a comprehensive report, and set of recommendations, that would strengthen Minnesota’s education funding system and restore Minnesota’s place as a national education leader. The full report can be found using the link below:

- LINK: [View the Education Week overview of the 2021 report](#)
- LINK: [View the 2021 “Making the Grade” report](#)
- LINK: [School Finance Working Group Report](#)



2021 AMSD Friend of Public Education: Paula Forbes

At the November Board of Directors meeting, AMSD recognized Paula Forbes with the 2021 Friend of Public Education Award for her tireless work to ensure an equitable and excellent education for every Minnesota student. Congratulations to Paula!