

May 2022
Volume 19
Number 8

Duluth Adult Education Hosts Grand Opening of New Location

May 6, 2022
Board of Directors Meeting
7 a.m. - 9 a.m.
Quora Education Center
NE Metro 916
Little Canada

May 13, 2022
Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting
7:30 a.m. - 9 a.m.
Anderson Center
Bethel University
Arden Hills

May 27, 2022
Board of Directors Meeting
7 a.m. - 9 a.m.
Quora Education Center
NE Metro 916
Little Canada

June 10, 2022
Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting
7:30 a.m. - 9 a.m.
Anderson Center
Bethel University
Arden Hills

When people think of adult education, the first image that comes to mind is often adults who didn't finish high school and are working toward their GED. But adult education in Duluth is much more.

Duluth Adult Education (DAE) recently moved from Historic Old Central High School after the building was sold, to a new location just four blocks away. We held the grand opening at their new location earlier this month, after having to delay it a few days due to a March "Snow Day." Many people think access to a free public education ends when they walk out of their high school, but this is not the case: Adults 18 and older can access free public education at Duluth Adult Education.



DAE offers online and in-person free classes for adults through five different programs:

- Basic skills and refresher
- English Language Learners
- GED or Diploma
- College Prep
- Career Path

The basic skills and refresher program is meant to serve people who are not yet ready to complete their GED or adult diploma, and to build up their basic skills to be able to achieve high school equivalency. DAE coordinator Angie

Continued on page 2

We need your voice now! The legislative session is winding down with the May 23 adjournment date fast approaching. End of session negotiations between the Governor and legislative leaders will determine whether supplemental funding will be provided to address the budget shortfalls facing many of our school districts. AMSD and several other leading education organizations will host a joint press conference and Day of Advocacy on Monday, May 9 to call on the Governor and Legislators to fully fund special education. The press conference will be held at 1 p.m. in the Minnesota Capitol Press Room. AMSD members are encouraged to reach out to their local legislators and legislative leaders to urge them to stabilize education funding by eliminating the special education cross-subsidy. There will be opportunities to participate in person or virtually. Further information is available here: [May 9 Advocacy Event](#) Thank you in advance for your advocacy for our students!

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

DAE Helps Students With GED, English Skills, Career Paths

Continued from page 1

Frank said the program can also help students who have earned a high school diploma or a GED, but still find certain tasks difficult.

“They might want to be better at reading to their kids or able to help their kids with their math homework. Sometimes adults with developmental disabilities just want to have a community place to come to and work on an academic skill,” Frank said. “So, it’s really about meeting the needs of students that have some sort of educational goal and we can do that for them in that program.”

The English Language Learners program helps student develop their English skills. The first languages of current students in the program include Dari, Chinese, Vietnamese, Thai, Russian, Portuguese, Spanish, and French.



Lei Wang is an English language learner at DAE. He said he learned about DAE through a friend as a way to help with his English. Wang is currently enrolled at the University of Minnesota-Duluth, and is working on his postdoctoral in chemical engineering. Wang said the best part of the classes at DAE is being able to practice his English with other language learners. Frank said DAE recently had four Afghan refugees join their classes to learn English.

“Being part of that international and national problem for people and being able to support women through our programs feels really good,” Frank said.

DAE also helps students beyond high school or their GED. The program’s college prep offers reading, writing and math classes at Lake Superior College to ensure students are college ready and ready to enroll at Lake Superior College. “Essentially it’s just an opportunity for people who think, ‘I want to go to college, but I don’t know if I’m ready or I’m not that good at writing,’” Frank said. “They can take one of our classes for free on a college campus, be in that environment, learn their computer system platform and kind of be immersed in how to be successful at college before they have to enroll in Lake Superior College and pay tuition.”

DAE can also help students with a career path. Currently DAE partners with the city of Duluth CareerForce, SOAR Career Solutions, Lake Superior College, and Community Action Duluth to help students obtain employment in fields including:

- Certified Nursing Assistant
- Auto Technician
- Paraprofessional
- Health Services
- Information Technology
- Construction Trades
- Highway Heavy Machinery Construction

Frank said these fields change based by need and partnerships.

For more information, visit isd709.org/DAE.

This month’s member feature was submitted by Adelle Wellens, Communications Officer, Duluth Public Schools.

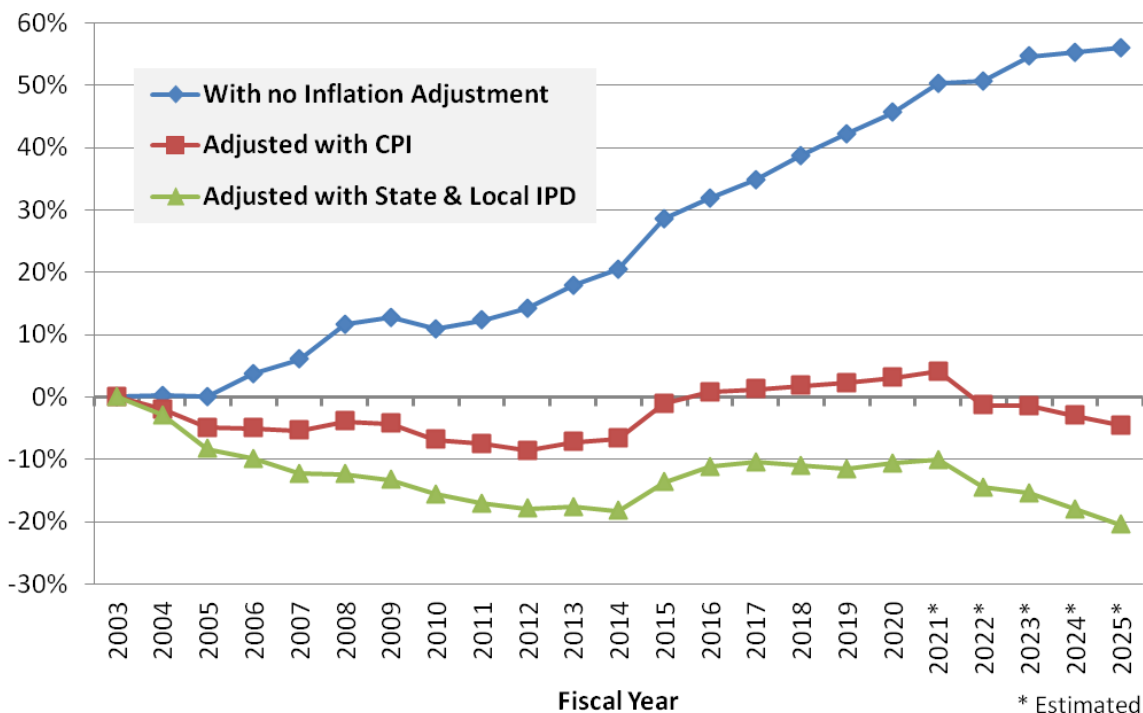
Inflation, Growing Funding Shortfalls Challenge School District Budgets

The recent spike in inflation – the U.S. inflation rate was nearly 8 percent in February 2022 – has compounded the financial challenges for school districts. The Omnibus E-12 Education Budget Bill approved in the 2021 session provides a 2 percent increase in the general education formula for the 2022-23 school year – far below the current inflation rate. However, even before the recent rise in inflation and onset of supply chain issues, Minnesota’s education funding system was very unstable.

The complex nature of Minnesota’s education funding system makes it difficult to analyze and evaluate funding trends and sufficiency. Different pictures can be painted depending on the funding stream being measured and the starting and ending point of the analysis. Two major state policy changes adopted in 2001 and 2002 — repealing the statewide general education levy and removing projected inflation from the state budget forecast — make a compelling case for using 2003 as the baseline year for measuring Minnesota’s commitment to funding public education. The 2001 Legislature repealed the fully equalized general education levy as a primary source of funding for schools and committed to funding education with state income and sales tax revenue. How has the state done since then?

The chart below shows the per pupil increase in total state aid to **school districts** — excluding aid to charter schools — since 2003. This is inclusive of all state aid for general operations, special education, transportation, deferred maintenance, etc. as well as aid for new programs approved since 2003 such as full-day Kindergarten and voluntary pre-Kindergarten. The chart shows the increase unadjusted for inflation and adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and the Implicit Price Deflator (IPD) for State and Local Governments. The IPD is the index that more accurately measures the inflationary costs impacting school districts. As the chart shows, while total state aid per pupil has increased by more than 50 percent since 2003, **it has decreased by almost 15 percent when adjusted for inflation as measured by the IPD.**

Percent Change in State Aid per AADM Since FY 2003
Minnesota School Districts



Source: MDE General Fund State Aid and Levy Revenues, 2006 to 2025: 2022 February Forecast

Surplus Offers Opportunity to Stabilize Education Funding

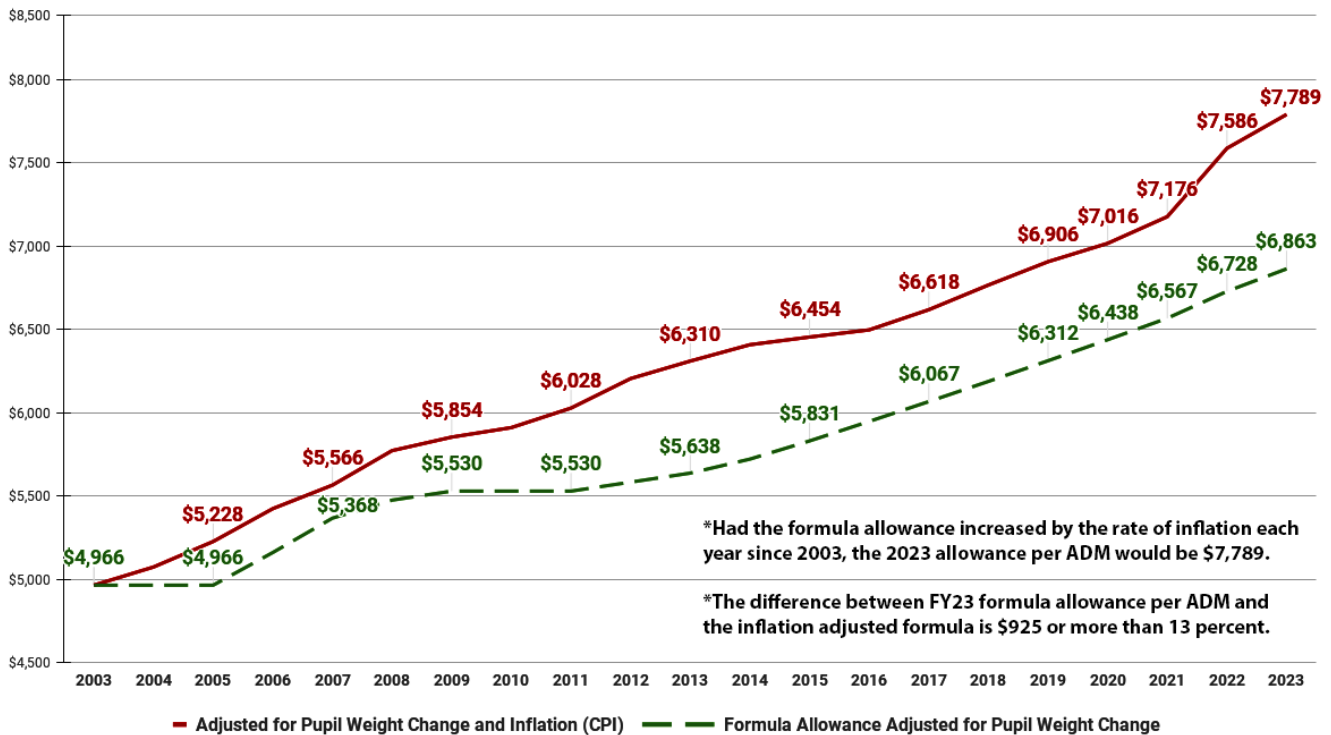
Continued from page 3

The decline in state support for the general education formula, the most important funding stream for school districts, is even more pronounced. The formula accounts for 55-60 percent of a school district's revenue. As the chart below shows, the formula would be \$925 per pupil higher today if it had kept pace with inflation since 2003 – and that is using the Consumer Price Index which understates the inflationary pressures school districts face.

Not only has the general education formula failed to keep up with inflation, but school districts are also having to redirect an increasing share of their general education revenue to cover growing shortfalls in the special education and English learner programs. Statewide, the special education funding shortfall has grown to more than \$800 million and the shortfall in the English learner program has risen to \$170 million according to the most recent information from the MN Department of Education.

So, why do Minnesota school districts continue to face budget challenges? The answer is clear. The general education formula has lost \$925 per pupil in purchasing power since 2003, the state has consistently failed to sufficiently fund the special education and English learner programs. The good news is that the \$9 plus billion projected surplus offers state policymakers the opportunity to mitigate the budget shortfalls facing our school districts and stabilize Minnesota's education funding system.

General Education Formula Allowance, 2003-2023
Adjusted for pupil weight change and inflation (CPI)



Source: MDE General Fund State Aid and Levy Revenues, 2006 to 2025: 2022 February Forecast