



Association of Metropolitan School Districts

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2024 Legislative Session | Platform Survey Summary

Below is a list of the most frequently identified issues by AMSD board members and school district staff in a survey seeking input on legislative priorities for the 2024 legislative session. The number in parentheses indicates how many times respondents identified that issue.

A total of 38 responses were received. (*Context:* AMSD received 48 responses in 2022; 24 responses in 2021; 25 responses in 2020; 27 responses in 2019, 36 responses in 2018, and 34 responses in 2017).

Policy Issues

- **TEACHER LICENSURE / RETENTION (8)**

- Move the pilot program for substitute teacher license from a 2 to a 4-year pilot, giving more districts time to see the long-term impact
- Teacher Licensing - specifically more flexibility in areas like science (K-12, K-5, 6-8, 6-12, 9-12 licenses instead of specific science areas)
- Teacher Licensure (take away barriers for out of state candidates)
- Staff Recruitment and Retention
- Address severe teacher shortage
- Diversify Educator Workforce
- Growing our Workforce
- Support Apprenticeship Programs

MANDATES AND GUIDANCE (7)

- Watch the mandates
- Stop the mandates and creating more central office workloads
- Understanding what they actually passed and having MDE prepped to support
- Higher Education focus on Science of Reading in Teacher Prep Programs
- State colleges should train new elementary teachers in the Science of Reading
- Modify Civics requirement to allow students to complete credit requirements in multiple grades
- Additional READ Act guidance



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- **ASSESSMENTS (5)**
 - State-wide Assessments
 - Assessments
 - Allow school districts to replace the high school MCA exams with a nationally recognized college entrance exam (ACT)
 - Assessments aligned with the proper use (i.e. MCAs are for district/state data, not individual information)
 - Establish a pilot project to allow approved school districts to replace the high school MCA exams with a nationally recognized college

- **STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING (4)**
 - Alternative Pathways to Graduation
 - Student-Centered Learning
 - Student Centered Learning
 - Allow school districts to implement a competency-based education model in lieu of seat time requirements to allow for personalized learning opportunities

- **STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH (3)**
 - Mental Health in the Classroom
 - Comprehensive support and partnerships addressing mental health needs of students, staff and families (2)

- **LOCAL CONTROL (3)**
 - Local control has been lost
 - Flexibility in school calendar, instructional time & school structure (grade levels based on age, etc)
 - Flexibility in Educational programming needed

- **STANDARDS GUIDANCE (3)**
 - Art 2 Educational Excellence points
 - Art 10 Preschool support and access
 - Art 9 Focus on School Media Center program access for all



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- **CHARTER SCHOOLS (3)**
 - Requiring charter school to outperform public as a requirement to exist
 - Charter School Proliferation and Accountability
 - Limiting Charter school to under 10 percent of district population

- **UNEMPLOYMENT POLICY (2)**
 - Unemployment clarity prior to summer hiring
 - Unemployment between terms changes needed

Additional topics identified:

- Protecting inclusive and equitable library and curricular resources
- S.E.L. guidelines to become standards. (with financial support)
- Persistent disparities in education while the framework remains much the same
- 522 Title IX--once new updates are completed
- Modify state special education requirements to achieve maximum efficiencies and reduce costs.
- Help reduce the carbon footprint of school buildings, buses, and maintenance equipment
- Development of a Social Media Policy--Bloomington has a nice one which also includes the School Board
- School Media learning commons revenue increase program access, close gaps, support equity



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Funding Issues

- **CROSS-SUBSIDIES (26)**
 - Eliminate cross subsidies (SpEd, EL, etc)
 - English learner formula that is stable, equitable, and consistent.
 - Special Education Funding
 - Rather than continue to try to write hold harmless, "lower of" calculations, or cross-subsidy reduction formulas that lead to complicated calculations, we strive for something very simple like "all approved special education costs will be funded at x%" with x equal to what the State can afford right now and that automatically keeps increasing.

- **FORMULA INCREASE / ADJUSTMENT (17)**
 - Basic Formula Increase
 - Increase FY 2025 to 5%
 - Increase funding formula in 2024-25 from 2% to 4%
 - Inflation Percentage For All Districts - Added 2% Basic Formula
 - Additional \$\$ on 2nd year of formula
 - 2% year two has created a hole in our ongoing budget - needs an increase
 - Remove the inflation cap on the general education formula so it is the same as operating levies with inflation factors
 - Allow Districts to gain additional levy authority for the cost incurred when attempting to lower ratios
 - Ensuring that funding is actually there for the new mandates
 - Roll in some of the new categoricals into the general education formula. It's not helpful to have \$2 in operating capital for menstrual products or mandated streams for library media and student support personnel aid. It takes away flexibility for our needs.
 - Eliminate 3% cap to inflation. Tax proceeds will increase along with inflation, so should our funding.
 - Formula possible impact on hiring



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- **LOR / REFERENDUM ADJUSTMENTS/EQUALIZATION (17)**
 - Increase Local Optional Revenue by \$200/pupil and index to inflation
 - Link the local optional formula to the general education formula so it stays at the same percentage, i.e., local optional = 12% of the general education formula.
 - Increase local optional revenue and tie to inflation
 - Local Optional Revenue Inflation Catchup And Factor
 - Alignment of all funding formulas to inflation - local optional revenue, operating capital, safe schools levy, etc.
 - Equalization of Operating Referendum
 - Increase the operating referendum cap
 - Operating Referendum Cap Increase And Increased Equalization For Low Property Value Districts
 - Adding lease levy revenue authority to operating capital and removing the lease levy category
 - Increase amount that can be levied locally by the board, while not increasing cap. Allow districts with greater challenges passing levies to keep up
 - Renewal authority on tech levies too.
 - Local school board authority to renew capital levies
 - Raise the Cap on Local Operating Referendums
 - Increase the board authority on Local Optional Revenue
 - Tie the current \$424 LOR to inflation

- **UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE COSTS/PAID FAMILY LEAVE (15)**
 - Permanent funding for unemployment insurance
 - Clean up UI so that it doesn't negatively impact our ability to staff summer programs. If we have posted positions that they choose not to apply for, they shouldn't qualify at least not for all of it.
 - Full funding in perpetuity of paid family leave
 - Statewide Support for Negotiations & Salary Cost Containment
 - Re-analyze unemployment legislation based on learned impact.

- **PENSIONS / PELRA / TEACHER RECRUITMENT FUNDING (12)**
 - Funding to Properly Support Workforce Recruitment & Retention
 - Educator Pensions (needed for teacher wellness & retention)
 - Pension reform
 - Recruitment and retention/teacher shortage funds
 - Statewide attendance incentives for public school employees



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- No further creep with PELRA language
- Minimize/streamline labor-intensive requirements/policies connected to district HR departments
- Repeal of changes to PELRA made by the 2023 legislative session
- Repeal PELRA changes (Class size negotiation, etc)

- **SCHOOL SAFETY / REVENUE AND TECHNOLOGY (11)**
 - Dollars for needed safety updates
 - Cyber-Security Funding
 - Increase of Safe School Levy-\$36/pupil is not enough
 - Continued support for the safe schools funding to help schools better address student trauma, safety, mental health, and social emotional needs.
 - Increase funding for safety and security so districts have the dollars to install the smart systems that help adults be smart during disruptive or crisis events
 - Tie safe schools funding to inflation
 - Provide dedicated resources for safety and security
 - Safety entrances for schools--how to do this with older buildings--districts need access to funding
 - Provide dedicated resources for technology
 - Dedicated funding stream for technology that is not dependent on local taxpayer approval

- **COMPENSATORY / SCHOOL LUNCH (11)**
 - Revision of compensatory revenue calculation
 - Address the Free/Reduced funding calculation beyond the "hold harmless" period for Compensatory Aid
 - Ensuring compensatory being fully funded
 - Compensatory dollars need to be figured out
 - Eliminate the newly implemented free meals for all and instead lower the threshold for families to qualify for free & reduced meals. Put the savings from this program on the funding formula.
 - Come up with a new way to identify low-income families that does not rely on families filling out a form
 - Fixing language to ensure F/R lunch students identified to receive compensatory funding
 - Determine poverty indicator adjustments that hold districts harmless re: Comp Ed
 - Meals only for those that truly need them paid for



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- **LTFM (7)**
 - LTFM Access for smaller districts
 - LTFM allowable expense to broaden for entries for safety
 - Increase LTFM allowance per pupil unit
 - LTFM access/equalization
 - LTFM is getting so convoluted with some roll-ins for new things like VPK classrooms and gender neutral bathrooms yet we can't replace low voltage wiring to updated standards for today's computer networking or upgrade lighting to energy efficient lighting that I think we just need to relax and say "LTFM is for doing anything you feel you need to do within the existing footprint of your facility; you can't add square footage but you can feel free to move a wall and repurpose space, upgrade to standard wiring, and upgrade lighting/heating/cooling even if the purpose is just to save on utilities."
 - Expand the allowable uses of LTFM revenue to allow school districts and intermediate school districts to enhance safety, complete security modifications including renovations and additions to existing space
 - Increase facilities maintenance revenue allocation. No change since enacted, and has not kept up with inflationary increases

- **READ ACT / PROVIDE FUNDING FOR UNFUNDED MANDATES (6)**
 - READ Act, unemployment, and paid family medical leave
 - Additional dollars for READ ACT
 - Ongoing funding streams for the READ Act, unemployment, and paid family medical leave
 - Unfunded Mandates
 - Eliminate unfunded mandates
 - Fully fund the partial or unfunded mandates (Unemployment Insurance, READ Act, etc.

- **TRANSPORTATION AID (3)**
 - Transportation specific funding
 - Cross subsidy for transportation
 - Require private and charter schools to fully pay for transportation costs

Additional topics identified:

- Public money for public schools only (no vouchers)



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- Increase funding for school readiness and ECFE to ensure CE departments have the financial resources to pay early childhood teachers comparable wages.
- Identify a method of mitigating harm to districts for enrollment loss that is within nationwide/statewide averages for public school districts
- More Money for CTE
- Alternative Facilities Funding - Expansion of School Districts
- Data requests have to have a fee. Always. If you want us to spend time finding stuff you need to prepay an estimated amount for our time to go searching. This should help narrow down timeframes based on their budget. We are adding a position out of the general fund to just be available to search for things.
- Community Education Program revenue increase PreK to adult benefits

Additional Comments

- Provide a funding mechanism for compensatory dollars when the hold harmless ends.
- School media center/learning commons support and funding section should be included with other educational equity, excellence, and literacy sections,
- We are excited for KnowledgeWorks and look forward to learning from them for our transformational work.
- Thanks for all the work!
- Thank you for your work on our behalf!
- Difficult to know what policies are the most hindering yet. These priorities will likely change
- Deeply concerned about the rapidly rising costs and subsequent layoffs - which further exasperate burnout and turnover challenges. This dangerous cycle has the potential to eventually bring down our public education system in Minnesota.
- I promise to have more ideas next August when this same question comes around. New to my role, I don't know what I don't know yet -- which limits my ideas for fixing all the things!
- Philosophy - quit trying to put govt control over everything and giving into every request a specialized group asks for. Children's learning first
- This isn't a specific issue, more of a process request. Our request is to delay the implementation of new policies by at least six months. "Upon final enactment" creates a LOT of strain on the system, along with mistakes.