

March 2020
vol 17 ♦ no 6

New Partnership Offers Special Education, Mental Health Support for South St. Paul Students at Reduced Cost

Through an innovative partnership between South St. Paul Public Schools (SSPPS) and the University of Minnesota, more consistent special education and mental health services are able to be offered to students at a reduced cost to the district. The partnership provides much needed support to students while also ensuring school psychologist graduate students gain the in-school experience they need to attain their degree.

“These emerging school psychologists provide fresh, new ideas and solutions to our school system and are supported by the structure of the highly accredited and professional faculty team at the University of Minnesota,” said Kelly Tetrick, director of special services. “We’re really excited to be a partner with the University of Minnesota and have these highly talented student school psychologists represent our district.”

Providing more special education and mental health services within schools has been top-of-mind for students, families, community members, school board members, administrators and legislators, but cost and access to high-quality job applicants are often barriers to providing sustained services. Through partnerships like this one, costs for school districts are reduced and access to high-quality candidates is increased.

“By hiring student school psychologists with faculty supervisors, we are able to receive about 1.5 times the support for students than if we hired one full-time school psychologist,” Tetrick said. “And the in-school services allow for more ongoing communication between the family, special education teams and mental health providers during student assessments and interventions.”



School Psychologist Intern Jenna Kluft meets with a South St. Paul student as part of a unique partnership between the district and the University of Minnesota.

For the past two school years, a team of five masters students and one doctoral psychologist student from the University of Minnesota’s College of Education and Human Development have been providing direct support and interventions to SSPPS students within the school setting while completing their required internships. This in-school support structure allows for SSPPS students to receive behavioral, academic and mental health services.

Through these interventions and the individual support with student school psychologists, SSPPS students increase their academic achievement, grow their social-emotional skills, and build behavioral and work skills. Additional goals of the interventions are to reduce

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March 6, 2020 Board of Directors Meeting

7 a.m.
Quora Education Center
NE Metro 916
Little Canada

March 17, 2020 AMSD Day at the Capitol

8 a.m.
Room 316
State Capitol
RSVP to
kjansa@amsd.org

March 27, 2020 Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting

7:30 a.m.
Room 304
Anderson Center
Bethel University
Arden Hills

April 3, 2020 Board of Directors Meeting

7 a.m.
Quora Education Center
NE Metro 916
Little Canada

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

The legislative session is moving swiftly with many important issues impacting our schools under consideration. I encourage AMSD members to attend our 2020 Day at the Capitol on Tuesday, March 17. We will meet at 8 a.m. in Room 316 in the Capitol for an update from AMSD staff and several legislators. The most important part of the day is scheduling meetings with your local legislators to urge them to address the issues on [AMSD's Legislative Platform](#). Meeting with your local legislators at the Capitol is one of the most effective ways to advocate for our schools and our students. Please join us on March 17 and make your voice heard!

Andrea Cuene, school board member, Wayzata Public Schools, is chair of AMSD.

SSPPS Partners with University of Minnesota

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behavioral referrals, reduce absenteeism, and support academic and social-emotional growth. The partnership supplements and complements the efforts made by district teachers and support staff to support all SSPPS students.

By enhancing the number of special education and mental health professionals in a school, students have more access to the individual services they need. The student school psychologists are able to enrich the student assessment process, as well as design, implement and monitor progress of interventions with a larger team of people. They work in conjunction with other school professionals including counselors, teachers, administrators and support staff to determine how to best support each student's individual needs. Through the embedded psychologist program, SSPPS is able to support children identified with tier two and tier three special education service needs.

“Having the school psychologist team allows us to give more focused, individual attention to students and provides more interventions than we previously would have been able to,” said Angie Ryter, assistant principal at South St. Paul Secondary. “We are able to expediate and get kids help faster. This extra layer of support has really been helpful.”

In order to become a school psychologist, one must earn between 60-90 graduate semester hours and complete a 1,200-hour supervised internship. Through this educational background and practical experiences, student school psychologists are equipped with the knowledge they need to collect and analyze data, conduct student assessments, apply behavioral interventions, and more.

In SSPPS, the student school psychologists also collaborate with community providers to coordinate services students may need. Through this work, school psychologists help to: improve academic achievement; promote positive behavior and mental health; support diverse learners through culturally competent treatment plans; create safe, positive school climates; promote social emotional learning behaviors; strengthen family-school partnerships; monitor individual student progress in academics and behavioral patterns; and improve school-wide assessment and accountability.

“My most favorite part about being a school psychologist is seeing the growth in students,” said Jenna Klaft, who is in her second year in SSPPS, last year as a school psychologist master's student and currently serves as a school psychologist intern. “I love showing students how they are progressing in their academic, behavioral or social emotional goals. The support I receive from my faculty and the constant evaluation and supervision of my performance have really allowed me to grow and apply my skills in working with students.”

This unique partnership has turned out to be a win-win for both the University of Minnesota and SSPPS. For the University, it is able to guarantee internship hours for students and provide emerging school psychologists with networking experience within a school district. The University provides high-quality instruction and oversight of the embedded school psychologists team, allowing the district staff to focus more on direct service to students and families and less on paperwork. Since the partnership was implemented, the district has seen improvements in key state system requirements, including being celebrated for high performance by the Minnesota Department of Education for due process review evaluations. Additionally, the student psychologists receive mentorship and supervision support from SSPPS as a result of their being an integral part of the school's student support team.

“Our master's- and doctoral-level students provide academic and social emotional interventions and evidence-based practices to support children alongside other talented school employees,” said Annie Hansen-Burke, senior lecturer at the University of Minnesota and embedded school psychologist supervisor. “We take the latest in educational research and the energy and drive of our student school psychologists who are here to best serve South St. Paul children and families.”

School districts often find it difficult to fill school psychologist vacancies, leaving a hole in the professional special educational and mental health services districts are able to provide. By welcoming the school psychologist students into the building to earn their practicum hours, districts like SSPPS are able to develop a pool of potential candidates for future openings.

“In the end, we need to remember that we are an institution of learning,” said Supt. Dave Webb. “It makes sense that we invest not only in the learning and development of our students, but also our staff. This partnership is an example of investing in key staff members who are continuing their learning. We are proud to partner with the University of Minnesota to help launch the careers of these and future student school psychologists and hope that they choose to come back to South St. Paul when they graduate.”

This month's member spotlight was submitted by the South St. Paul Public Schools Communications Department.

Majority of AMSD Districts Face Budget Shortfalls for 2020-2021

AMSD member school districts project a combined \$93 million in budget shortfalls for the 2020-21 school year assuming no additional funding is approved by Legislature during the 2020 legislative session.

According to the AMSD Budget Survey conducted in February 2020, 28 of the 41 AMSD districts surveyed are projecting shortfalls for FY 2021.

[Link: View the full table of the projected shortfalls](#)

Of the 13 districts that did not project a shortfall for FY 2021, six passed voter-approved operating referendums in November 2019.

While many factors contribute to each district's shortfall, a significant contributing factor is that the general education formula, the most important funding stream for school districts, has not kept pace with inflation. In fact, the formula would be \$639 per pupil higher today if it had simply kept pace with inflation since 2003. Vast shortfalls in the special education and English learner programs also significantly contribute to school district budget challenges.



South St. Paul teacher and 2019 Minnesota Teacher of the Year Jessica Davis (pictured, far left) testified in February to the House Education Policy Committee on the importance of funding the Increase Teachers of Color Act.

[Link: Special Education Cross-Subsidies by District](#)
[Link: English Learner Cross-Subsidy](#)



Dr. Yeu Vang, Director of Multilingual Learning for Saint Paul Public Schools, testified in February to the House Education Finance Division about the importance of English learner funding with bill author Rep. Kaohly Her.

The budget shortfalls are often conundrums for local residents. By law, school districts may not operate with deficits, yet the majority of school district funding is provided by the Minnesota Legislature, supplemented with federal aid and local operating referendums.

While local operating referendums provide critical support, those referendums also come with costs. In 2019, for example, the Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan District estimated its 2019 referendum renewal campaign cost more than \$50,000 to provide required and important information to its residents, not including thousands of hours and hundreds of presentations to citizens and community groups.

And, without property tax equalization, taxpayers with less property wealth in their community can pay up to three times more to raise the same amount of funding for their schools as a taxpayer from a community that has more property wealth.

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AMSD Members Advocate for Stable Funding

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South St. Paul Supt. Dave Webb, and Finance Director Aaron Bushburger, presented in February to the Minnesota Department of Education’s School Finance Working Group about the importance of property tax equalization.

The projected shortfalls for 2020-21 are no surprise.

In a similar survey in 2019, most school districts reported they would face shortfalls in 2020 and beyond if the Legislature did not pass a three percent formula increase and make progress toward reducing the special education cross-subsidy.

Several superintendents testified last session about the importance of increasing the basic formula by at least three percent per year for the next two years and improving special education funding if they were to avoid shortfalls.

AMSD continues to call on state policy-makers to stabilize the education funding system during the 2020 legislative session by linking the funding formula to inflation, addressing the shortfalls in the special education and English learner programs and providing school safety and mental health funding.



Richfield Supt. Steve Unowsky testified in February to the House Education Finance Division about the significant shortfall in English learner funding.



Robbinsdale Supt. Carlton Jenkins joined Rep. Rena Moran and testified in support of legislation that would provide funding for trauma-informed professional development for staff who work with students with adverse childhood experiences.