

# CONNECTIONS



News from the Association of Metropolitan School Districts

April 2023  
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Number 7

## Makerspace at Northeast Metro 916

April 14, 2023

### Board of Directors Meeting

7 a.m. - 9 a.m.  
Quora Education Center  
NE Metro 916  
Little Canada

April 28, 2023

### Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting

7:30 a.m. - 9 a.m.  
Anderson Center  
Bethel University  
Arden Hills

May 5, 2023

### Board of Directors Meeting

7 a.m. - 9 a.m.  
Quora Education Center  
NE Metro 916  
Little Canada

May 19, 2023

### Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting

7:30 a.m. - 9 a.m.  
Anderson Center  
Bethel University  
Arden Hills



A staff member assisting a student with coded art.

At Northeast Metro 916 Intermediate School District, it's essential to incorporate art, creativity, and fun into the classroom. Art and creativity play a valuable role in mental health, and they can help to boost confidence and make people feel more engaged and resilient. Besides these benefits, art engagement also alleviates anxiety, depression, and stress.

Northeast Metro 916 is one of four intermediate school districts in Minnesota, serving nearly 5,000 students through shared programming that includes [career and technical education](#), [special education services](#), [area learning centers](#), and [care & treatment](#). Through sharing resources, talent, and ideas, Northeast Metro 916 provides cost-effective, expert, and reliable services to [13 member school districts](#) and the students and families we collectively support.

Northeast Metro 916 has recently developed a collaborative workspace for students, [the Makerspace](#), to create, learn, explore, and share using low-tech to high-tech tools. These workspaces are open to all abilities and have various maker equipment, including robots, Legos, Duplos, cardboard, 3D printers, 3D doodle pens, laser cutters, and art supplies.

"Makerspace was designed to be a hands-on, fun learning experience for our students. The students that have participated in the activities tell us about the fun they are having and love that, at times, they get to create things

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It is hard to believe but the 2023 Legislative Session is already winding down with just under six weeks before the mandatory adjournment date of May 22. This month's research article outlines the E-12 Education budget proposals from the Governor, House, and Senate. It also provides an overview of proposed legislation that would significantly infringe on the inherent managerial rights of school boards and their administrators. I urge AMSD members to contact their local legislators, Gov. Walz, and Lt. Gov. Flanagan to express your opposition to this legislation. In addition, please continue to advocate for [AMSD's legislative priorities](#). We need the voice of AMSD members over the final weeks of the session. Thank you in advance for your help!

*From the AMSD Chair, Crystal Brakke, Richfield Public Schools Board Member*



# Learning Can Be Fun, Too!

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independently. It's exciting to see kids engaged and smiling!" – Emily Thomas, co-creator of the Makerspace team at Northeast Metro 916.

Northeast Metro 916 believes that every student should have the opportunity to be creative with emerging technologies. Each Makerspace workspace has six differentiation levels, giving each student a chance to learn. The six differentiations are step-by-step picture slides, text and picture instructions, single-page written instructions, a video model, an end product picture-only, and a design challenge card. Makerspace also has connections to core vocabulary and science standards.

This year, a fun new Makerspace uses Coded Art through robots to create artwork. Northeast Metro 916 has two different types of robots for the students to use, and iPads control both. One robot zooms around a cardboard box and rolls through paint that creates art on paper. The other robot uses markers and coding to create art on paper. Makerspace has allowed special education students to use computational thinking and algorithms to create works of art. Students' expectations are differentiated to meet their individual needs. Some use coding to make their images, and others create Jackson Pollock-inspired artwork.



Robot used by students to create coded artwork.

Arts education promotes creative expression, which helps students to relax and think differently. It is essential to students with special needs because it supports learning and practicing life skills, resilience, literacy, coordination, communication, and many other essential skills.



Teacher assisting a student with a cotton-ball launcher.

To make Makerspace art meaningful, Northeast Metro 916 looked at the available technology and researched similar programs in other districts. The goal was for every student in the district to have an opportunity to create using coding or algorithmic skills. 916 has authored four lessons that use those skills and are accessible to students with different abilities and needs. Northeast Metro 916 plans to display its students' works of art at its annual art show.

Watch video: <https://vimeo.com/756890547>

This month's member feature was submitted by Shannon Hunter, Communications Coordinator, Northeast Metro 916.

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*"The arts can level the playing field because children with difficulties in academic subjects might excel at drawing, painting, acting or dancing and singing. Art programs may even lead to some employment in the art industry, and the arts can help build self-esteem, bring joy, and provide motivation for struggling students to stay in school."*

Nancy Bailey, author.

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# House, Senate Release Omnibus Education Finance Bills

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The House and Senate Education Finance Committees have approved their respective Omnibus Education Bills, and while they have many similarities, there are also some key differences. One significant difference is that the House has combined its finance and policy provisions into one bill, while the Senate has separate finance and policy bills. The Senate will likely merge their bills into one at some point to match up with the House.

The bills still have a few committees to clear before being sent to the House and Senate floor where they will be taken up following the Legislature's spring recess. Conference committees will likely not get underway until the end of April.

Key provisions of the two bills as they relate to AMSD Priorities include:

**General Education Formula.** The House bill would increase the allowance by 4 percent for FY24, 2 percent for FY25, and then index the formula to inflation beginning in FY26 with a cap of 3 percent. The Senate, meanwhile, would increase the General Education Formula Allowance 4 percent in FY24 and 5 percent in FY25 — but not link the formula to inflation. AMSD advocates for a formula increase of 5 percent per year and linking the formula to inflation. A 5 percent per-year formula increase is needed to allow school districts to meet budget challenges that have been exacerbated by the pandemic and historic inflation. Linking the formula to inflation is critical to stabilizing the funding system.

**Special Education Cross-Subsidy.** The House bill proposes to fund 48.7 percent of the special education cross-subsidy. The Senate increases special education cross-subsidy reduction aid to 40 percent for FY24, 47.3 percent for FY25 and 60 percent for FY26 and later.

**English Learner Revenue.** The House proposes increasing funding for the base EL formula from \$704 to \$1,000 per pupil in FY24 and would eliminate the cross-subsidy by FY27 and later. The Senate also proposes to increase the base EL formula from \$704 to \$1,000 per pupil in FY24 and then reduce the cross-subsidy by 75 percent by FY26 and later.

**PreK Seats.** Both bills propose to make permanent the funding for the 4,000 PreKindergarten seats, but the House bill also proposes to add and permanently fund an additional 5,200 seats.

**Renewal of a Referendum by School Boards.** Both bills allow a school board to renew an expiring referendum if the per-pupil amount of the referendum is the same as the amount expiring, and the term is no longer than the initial term approved by the voters. The districts must also hold a meeting allowing public testimony on the proposed renewal. The bills limit boards to just one renewal.

**Local Optional Revenue.** Local Optional Revenue (LOR) has not been increased since it was adopted in 2013 and AMSD had urged the Governor and Legislators to increase it by \$116 per pupil and to increase equalization of the levy. Both bills include a modest increase in equalization of Local Optional Revenue but neither bill includes an increase in LOR revenue.

**Teacher Shortage and Diversifying the Workforce.** Both bills include increased grant funding to attract and retain teachers, particularly teachers of color and teachers in shortage areas.

**Student Support Personnel Aid.** The House and Senate bills include student support personnel aid to help school districts hire new counselors, social workers, and other support personnel to help address the mental health needs of students.

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# Omnibus Labor Policy Bill Proposals Would Infringe on Inherent Managerial Rights

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**Unemployment Compensation.** The House and Senate Omnibus bills also propose to make hourly school workers eligible for unemployment compensation in the summer months. The bill does **NOT** provide funding or allow school districts to use the unemployment levy to cover the cost. The failure to provide funding for this new mandate would have the effect of creating another cross-subsidy as school districts would be forced to use general fund dollars to cover the cost.

Additional legislation that also continues to advance include:

- **Paid Family Medical Leave:** [HF2 / SF2](#) (Richardson / Mann), this bill establishes paid family leave, pregnancy, bonding, and serious medical condition benefits. The bill is funded through a .7 percent payroll tax with up to 50 percent paid for by the employee. Funding is not provided to cover the employer cost. The funds would need to come out of the general fund.
- **Labor:** [HF1522](#) (Nelson) / [SF1384](#) (McEwen), the Omnibus Labor Policy Bills, include several provisions including making class size and student-to-personnel ratios subject to collective bargaining; reducing the number of days of teaching service a probationary teacher must annually complete during the probationary period; requiring the adoption of e-learning days to be negotiated with teachers, and granting unions additional access to employee data. AMSD is strongly opposed to expanding the terms of conditions of employment and believes this would be a significant infringement of inherent managerial rights and negatively impact the ability of locally elected school boards and their administrators to effectively govern and manage their districts. Many of these provisions are also included in the House Omnibus Education Finance Bill.
- [LINK: View a full 2023 Education Omnibus Bill Comparison chart](#)
- [LINK: AMSD Legislative Platform](#)
- [LINK: View a House Research List of the Children and Families Incorporated Bills](#)

*NOTE: This research was modified on April 18, 2023 to reflect updates in the Senate Omnibus Education Bill language regarding Student Support Personnel Aid and information regarding school board referendum renewals in the House bill.*



AMSD members gathered at the Capitol on March 8 to advocate for AMSD priorities — many of which are addressed in the 2023 Omnibus bills. Above, Sen. Mary Kunesh (DFL-New Brighton), chair of the Senate Education Finance Committee, and Rep. Cheryl Youakim (DFL-Hopkins), chair of the House Education Finance Committee, took questions from AMSD members at the Capitol.