

CONNECTIONS

News from the Association of Metropolitan School Districts

September 2021

Volume 18

Number 11

SouthWest Metro Intermediate District Grows New Opportunities in a New Space

September 24, 2021 Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting

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

October 1, 2021 Board of Directors Meeting

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

October 29, 2021 Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting

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

November 5, 2021 Board of Directors Meeting

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

Students exited their buses with wide eyes as their teachers greeted them from the sidewalk. Looking up, they saw a fresh-faced, two story brick building with "SouthWest Metro Intermediate District 288" proudly stamped on the exterior. Slowly, the halls became full of laughter and excitement that the previously uninhabited building had not seen in years, if ever, as a former corporate headquarters.



The Dean Lakes Education Center (DLEC) is now the proud home to the SouthWest Metro (SWMetro) District Office and a collection of student programming. Among eager students are essential community partnerships in the form of leased space to the Scott County Community Development Agency (CDA) and ProAct - a pending tenant that offers day programming for adults with disabilities.

THE PLACE DLEC occupies just over 100,000 square feet of space on the south side of Highway 169 in Shakopee. Sandwiched between sprawling companies like Shutterfly and Bayer, the 2007 structure was built to house a budding technology company that has since expanded and moved to Colorado. Originally a large swatch of open spaces peppered with cubicles and offices, SWMetro seized the opportunity to customize the building with specialized student services in mind. Much of the open footprint has been converted into 6 large-size classrooms, each accommodating up to 30 students comfortably. Where temperature-sensitive servers were housed, a work-based learning lab and large motor exercise room have been installed. A former utility space on the northwest side of the building hosts Outdoor Power Equipment, a new

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AMSD was pleased to join several of our sister education organizations in a joint statement about the importance of increasing [education equity](#). AMSD superintendents, through the [Reimagine Minnesota](#) plan, have been at the forefront of advocating for education equity. The Reimagine Minnesota plan was based on the input of over 3,000 students, parents, community members, business leaders and educators. Minnesota's ability to compete in the global economy is directly tied to our success in ensuring and excellent and equitable education for every student. Let's continue this work together!

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

Partnerships Create Pathways for Lifelong Learners

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Career and Technical Education (CTE) Agriculture program focused on small gas engine operation.



Crossover learning begins! At the end of the first week of school, Transition students learn how to spin honey from locally produced hives with Outdoor Engines Instructor Bruce Mathiowetz.

THE PROGRAMS Existing SWMetro programming, including Transition (Level IV Special Education for ages 18-21), Oasis (Level IV Special Education for grades 6-12), Reflections Day Treatment (in partnership with Scott County Mental Health Services), and Adult Education (GED preparation and English classes) have all moved to DLEC with their own secure entrances to ensure privacy and convenience.

A selection of CTE courses have also been transplanted to DLEC from Chaska. Instructors have set up their computer lab for the Computer Networking classes, a Medical Assistant exam room (equipment donated courtesy of the Shakopee Veterans Affairs Clinic), the aforementioned Outdoor Power Equipment Lab, and a growing Multimedia Studio. Other more traditionally structured classes include Criminal Justice and Education Pathways for aspiring teachers.

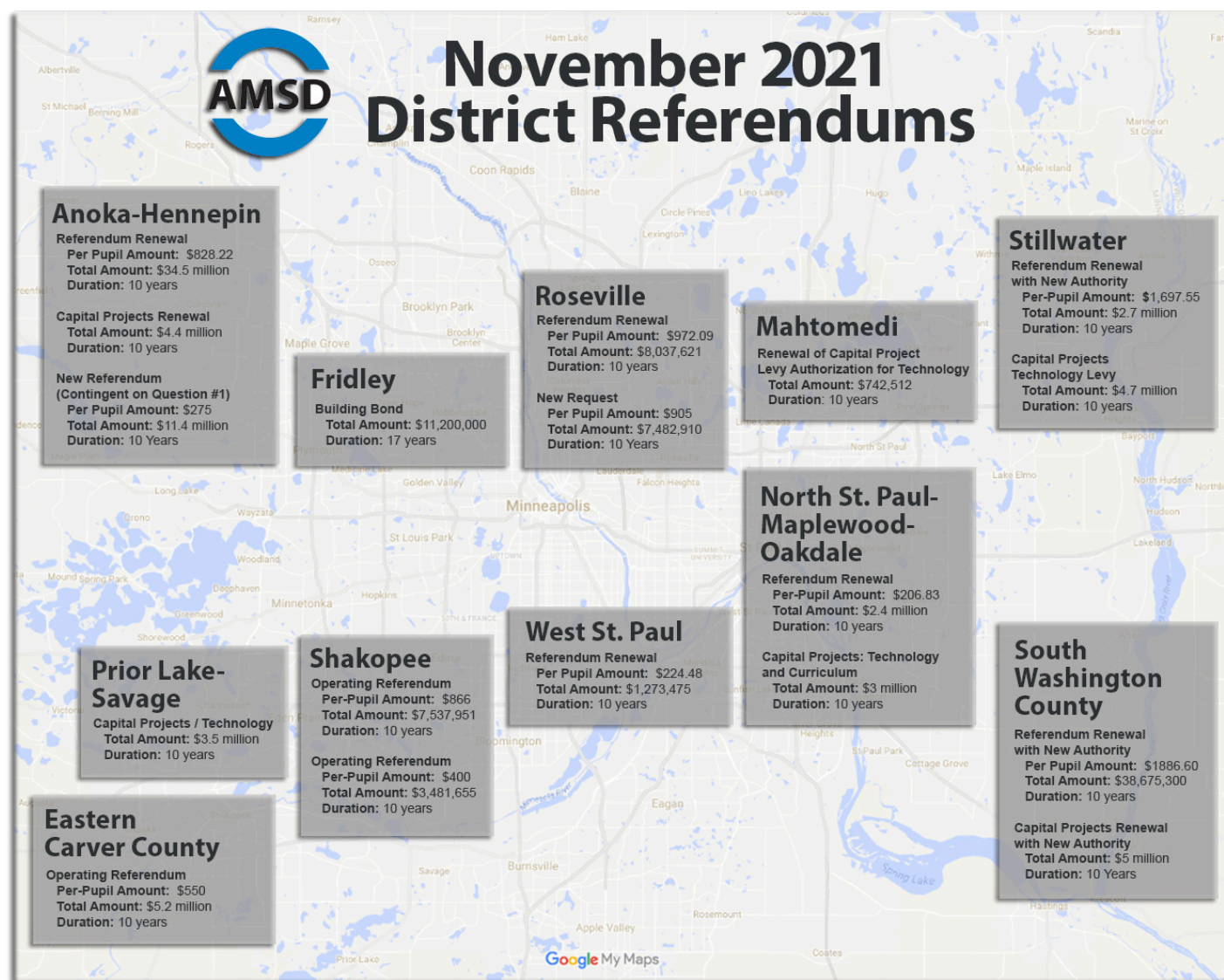
THE PARTNERSHIPS While supporting the trades and encouraging students to embrace careers after high school (since paying for postsecondary education is often not an option for non-traditional students), SWMetro noted that college and university presence is lacking in the southwest suburban/rural corner of the Twin Cities. Unless a student has the means to live on campus or commute daily 45 minutes one way, the only way to achieve postsecondary success is online, which has been confirmed in the last 18 months to not be the best learning option for everyone. Enter the Live-Learn-Earn Post Secondary Education Committee. This collaborative enterprise through Scott County has a mission to create pathways for lifelong learners in the surrounding population. Jo Faust, co-chair of the committee, says that SWMetro's DLEC is "helping achieve the Committee's vision...so that businesses may gain and retain highly trained staff, prospective students can seek degrees and certifications, and the community may continue to develop and thrive".

Superintendent Darren Kermes has curated a finely-tuned machine at DLEC. Working with his team, he has ensured infrastructure within the existing programming to accommodate for future partnerships with institutions like Dakota County Technical College and University of Minnesota so that satellite classes can be hosted at the campus. By providing accessibility to these classes in the community, local professionals and students can stay in the area without sacrificing their desired quality of life.

This partnership also provides symbiosis with CTE students and budding local businesses. The Scott County CDA provides a program where aspiring entrepreneurs compete for space to incubate their business idea. With CTE programs like Multimedia Design and Computer Networking, these budget-conscious startups have the potential to provide internships and real-life experiences to enthusiastic students already on campus.

THE PRODUCT Although only one week of school has passed, DLEC has already come alive with the bustling chatter of students moving from class to class, visitors touring rentable areas for their annual conferences, and staff working diligently to put the finishing touches on their spaces to provide for customized experience for all who enter.

For more information, contact Jennifer Bock, Director of Communications, SouthWest Metro Intermediate District 288 at (952) 567-8116 or jbock@swmetro.k12.mn.us.



Eleven AMSD school districts have 18 referendum questions on the ballot on Nov. 2. The ballot questions include operating referendum and/or capital project levy renewals or increases and a bond question. Detailed information about each district's referendum question(s) can be found here: <https://www.amsd.org/2021referendums>. Voters are encouraged to contact their local school officials if they have questions about their school district's referendum.

Why referendums are necessary

While the state provides the largest share of operating revenue for school districts, referendum revenue is critical to allow school districts to deliver basic programming to students. As the chart on page 4 shows, education funding is primarily a state and local partnership in Minnesota with the federal government generally providing a very modest level of aid. The federal government provided significant, one-time emergency funding over the past two years to help school districts address the enormous challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. The federal aid was critical in helping school districts address technology and internet connectivity needs related to distance learning, increased transportation costs, personal protective equipment and cleaning and sanitation supplies, as well as the loss of revenue related to enrollment decline and the inability to offer fee for service child care or a la carte lunch offerings due to the pandemic. However, the federal aid is one-time funding and does not replace the critical funding that referendum revenue provides.

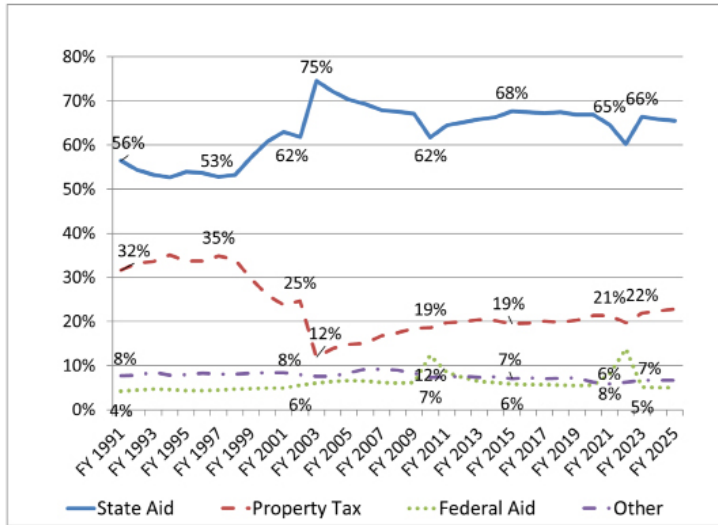
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Referendums: An Integral Part of Minnesota's School Finance System

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EDUCATION FUNDING TRENDS

PK-12 Education Revenue by Source (All Funds)
February 2021 Forecast



Source: Minnesota Department of Education | 9/14/2021

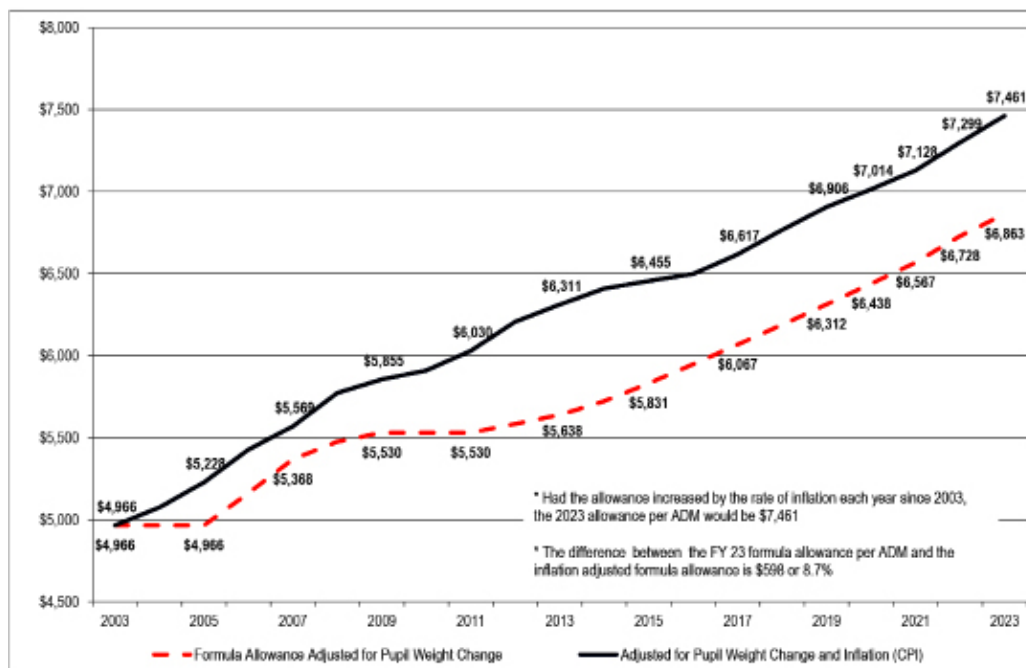
Metropolitan school districts are particularly reliant on voter-approved referenda because Minnesota, unlike many other states, does not account for regional variations in operating costs. As a result, metro area school districts depend on the operating referendum to cover significantly higher labor costs. In addition, school districts continue to face significant shortfalls in the special education and English learner programs and the general education formula continues to lag inflation. The Omnibus E-12 Education Bill approved in the 2021 special legislative session included a formula increase of 2.45 percent for FY 2022 and 2 percent for FY 2023 - the largest biennial formula increase in 15 years - but as the chart below shows, the formula will continue to fall short of projected inflation. School districts also rely on capital projects referendums to provide the technology their students need to succeed in our digital economy. The State does not provide a dedicated funding stream for technology making this revenue stream especially important.



Association of Metropolitan School Districts

General Education Formula Allowance, 2003-2023

Adjusted for Pupil Weight Change and Inflation (CPI)



* Had the allowance increased by the rate of inflation each year since 2003, the 2023 allowance per ADM would be \$7,461

* The difference between the FY 23 formula allowance per ADM and the inflation adjusted formula allowance is \$598 or 8.7%

Source: MDE Inflation Estimates, July 2021



Association of Metropolitan School Districts

