

January 2018
vol 15 ♦ no 4

**January 5, 2018
Board of Directors
Meeting**

7:00 a.m.
Grand Hall,
TIES Conference Center
St. Paul

**January 26, 2018
Executive/Legislative
Committee Meeting**

7:30 a.m.
Lexington Room,
TIES Conference Center
St. Paul

**February 2, 2018
Legislative Preview**

7:30 a.m.
Grand Hall,
TIES Conference Center
St. Paul

**February 23, 2018
Executive/Legislative
Committee Meeting**

7:30 a.m.
Lexington Room,
TIES Conference Center
St. Paul

AMSD's Mission

To advocate for state education policy that enables metropolitan school districts to improve student learning.



Association of
Metropolitan School Districts

Best Communities for Music

Instrument donations support Mounds View's award-winning music programs

Every year, in every school, dozens of Mounds View Public Schools students who participate in band and orchestra cannot afford to rent or buy their instrument.

As enrollment continues to grow across the District, the number of students participating in music programs also grows. And access to instruments remains the number one barrier to participating in music programs.

“When we couple financial need with other factors, nearly 40 percent of the District’s band and orchestra students are playing school-loaned instruments this year,” says Mounds View’s music curriculum coordinator Andy Schmidt. “As interest in the program and overall enrollment continues to grow, the need for more instruments grows as well. Thankfully, we are part of a caring and generous community that sees the value in music education and has helped to fill that need.”

In spring 2017, Schmidt called on the community to donate used instruments to the District’s music program. Since April, more than 80 instruments have been collected. A partnership with a local music retailer has allowed the District to trade unusable or worn instrument donations for credit toward new instruments. This partnership offers schools the opportunity to give deserving band and orchestra students brand new instruments to play while they are enrolled in District music programs.

“I will never forget the reaction that one student had when I gave her a new flute,” says Schmidt. “When I told her it was hers to take home, she looked at me in disbelief. She said she had never been given anything new. It made me realize the true success of the donation program. It is really changing lives.”

Not only have these donations helped outfit the program with necessary brass, woodwinds and string instruments, they have also helped the District to free up resources for larger music program initiatives.



Nearly 87 percent of District high school students participate in at least one club, sport or musical opportunity. Irondale High School's award-winning Marching Band is made up of 90 students.

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From the Chair

The 2018 legislative session is right around the corner and I want to encourage AMSD board members and legislators representing our member school districts to mark your calendar for AMSD’s annual Legislative Session Preview program. The 2018 Session Preview will be held on Friday, February 2 from 7:30 – 10:00 a.m. in the Grand Hall in the TIES Event Center. The session preview is always a great chance for legislators and AMSD members to discuss important education issues.

The program will include an overview of AMSD’s legislative priorities, as well as a legislative panel discussion and remarks from Minnesota Department of Education Commissioner Brenda Cassellius. While the 2018 session is not a budget setting session, there are many important issues to be addressed. I look forward to seeing you for a great kick-off to the 2018 session at AMSD’s Session Preview on February 2!

Steve Adams, school board member from Hopkins Public Schools, is chair of AMSD.

Mounds View Music Program Draws the Interest of Nearly Half of 4th to 12th Grade Students

Beyond the classroom

While the instrument donation program continues to outfit classrooms with necessary equipment, it is also putting instruments into students' hands for co-curricular activities. Music opportunities like jazz band and orchestra ensembles give students a chance to connect outside of the classroom. They also give staff an opportunity to showcase talented student groups, while offering the community opportunities to see live performances.

In addition to school performances, the District hosts Music at Mounds View, an annual music series for area residents that brings professional musicians to perform locally at Mounds View High School. These concerts often present opportunities for student musicians to perform alongside the professionals who participate in the concert series.

A lasting impact

Mounds View's music program clearly makes a lasting impact on its students. Irondale High School alumnus Nick Gohman says his high school provided him with an opportunity to find his talents and express them. He says, "the music programs were the most inspiring to me," and he is convinced his involvement in orchestra and music helped prepare him for the rigors of college at the University of Minnesota. Mounds View High School alumna Jessica Sorenson credits choir for teaching her that it is okay to be unique. Both students cite music teachers and programs at Mounds View Public Schools when asked how their schools prepared them for post-secondary success.

"At Mounds View, we are proud of a music program that draws the interest of nearly half of fourth-grade to 12th-grade students," says Schmidt. More than 3,500 students in these grades participate in music programs districtwide annually.

Students and staff are not the only ones recognizing the impact of the music programs throughout the District. In 2017, for the fifth consecutive year, Mounds View Public Schools was named among the nation's Best Communities for Music Education. Awarded by the National Association of Music Merchants, the Best Communities for Music designation recognized fewer than 4 percent of schools across the country in 2017. The award honors school districts that show an exceptionally high commitment to music education and ensure access to music for all students.

"Music education is such an important piece of the puzzle that helps us prepare students for life," says Schmidt. "I am grateful for a community that helps us sustain a program where all students have access to music programs. I look forward to growing the donation program so that stories like our alumni's continued to be heard for years to come."

With the ongoing support from the community, Mounds View Public Schools hopes to put more instruments in more students hands. To learn more about the instrument donation program, call 651-621-6787 or email

andy.schmidt@moundsviewschools.org.



In November, District choir students performed with nationally-recognized singer and songwriter Kat Perkins at Mounds View High School for the first 2017 concert in the District's annual Music at Mounds View series. Orchestra students will perform with musicians from a professional instrumental trio, Clocks and Clouds, in January.



Representatives from Schmitt Music congratulated Mounds View Public Schools music teachers for maintaining their commitment to music and earning the Best Communities for Music Education distinction.

This month's member spotlight was submitted by Rachel Gutierrez, assistant director of public relations, Mounds View Public Schools.

2018 AMSD Legislative Platform

The AMSD Board of Directors recently approved its legislative platform for the 2018 session that will convene on February 20, 2018.

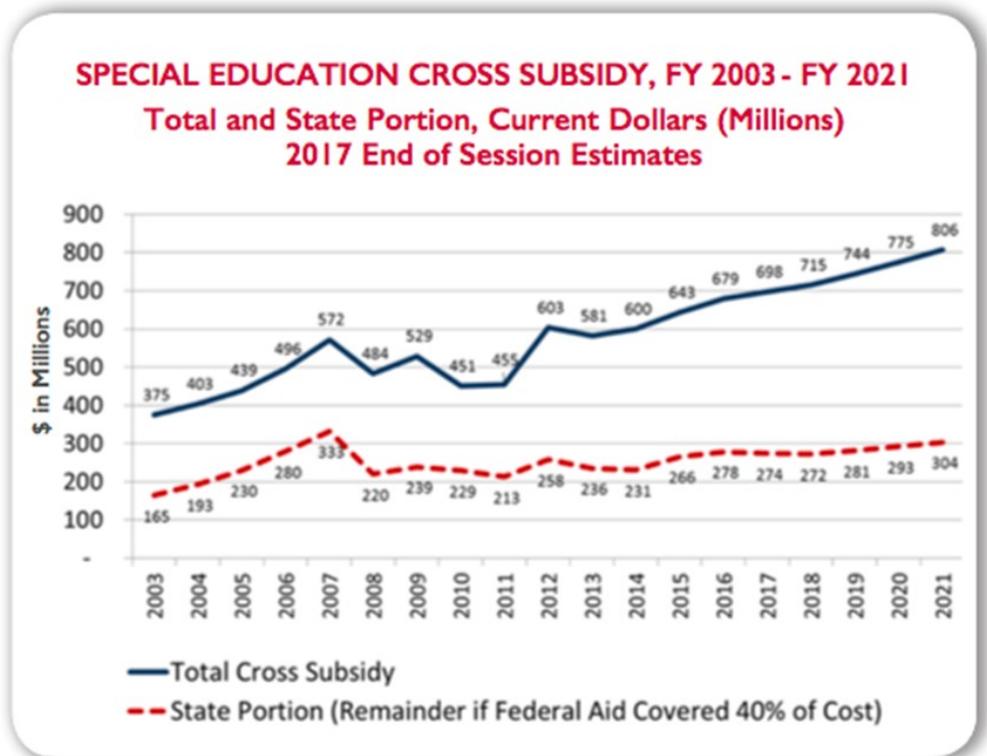
AMSD board members recognize that the 2018 session is not a budget setting session. The November budget forecast presents a challenge with a projected deficit of \$188 million for the current biennium and \$586 million deficit for the 2020-2021 biennium. However, during a press conference following the release of the November budget forecast, Republican legislative leaders expressed hope that the February forecast may show significant improvement.

The new investments in education approved during the 2017 session, including a 2 percent per year increase in the general education formula, provided important resources for our schools. At the same time, the growing special education cross-subsidy continues to exert tremendous pressure on school district budgets and increases the reliance on the operating referendum to provide basic programming for students. Consequently, addressing the special education cross-subsidy and increasing operating referendum equalization remain high priorities for AMSD members. Likewise, AMSD members feel strongly that locally-elected school board members should have the authority to renew an existing operating referendum at the same level by a vote of the school board.

In addition, AMSD remains committed to closing the achievement gap and ensuring equitable academic outcomes—high levels of achievement—for all students. A summary of the AMSD legislative platform is below and the complete platform is available on the AMSD web site: <http://www.amsd.org/2018-legislative-platform>

Stabilize Education Funding

- Increase special education funding to reduce the state share of the special education cross-subsidy by 10 percent and create a working group to develop a plan to eliminate the state share of the cross-subsidy by 2023.
- Allow locally elected school boards to renew an existing operating referendum.
- Direct the Permanent School Fund Commission to study the feasibility of allowing school districts to borrow against the school trust fund to address capital needs and make recommendations regarding any governance changes needed to ensure that the school trust lands director has the authority to work on behalf of the trust beneficiaries - Minnesota public school students.



Data Source: Minnesota Department of Education

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2018 AMSD Legislative Platform

Reform and Stabilize the Teachers Retirement Association Fund

- Reform and stabilize the Teachers Retirement Association Fund and St. Paul Teachers Retirement Fund by increasing employer and employee contributions and adjusting benefits. Use the pension adjustment mechanism in the funding formula to cover the actual increase in the employer contribution to avoid cuts to programs for students.

Increase and Diversify the Teacher Workforce

- Expand programs and incentives to attract, develop and retain teachers, particularly teachers of color and teachers in shortage areas.



Enhance Taxpayer Equity

- Increase equalization of the operating referendum, local optional and debt service levies to reduce taxpayer and education funding disparities.
- Oppose taxpayer subsidies of private education through vouchers, tax credits or scholarships.

Reduce Mandates and Enhance Local Control

- Align the World's Best Workforce law to the State ESSA plan to create one accountability plan.
- Maximize federal funding for Medical Assistance services such as social worker costs and 504 health-related services.
- Provide funding for all 11th grade students to take a nationally-recognized college entrance exam and, if approved by the United States Department of Education, replace the high school MCA exams with a nationally-recognized college entrance exam.
- Allow locally-elected school boards to establish the school calendar that best meets the needs of their students and families.
- Reduce the number of reports required to be submitted to the Minnesota Department of Education.

Ensure Safe and Modern School Facilities

- Implement the recommendation of the School Facilities Financing Work Group to establish a school facilities improvement revenue program to allow school districts to enhance safety.
- Increase the Safe Schools Levy and expand the allowable uses to allow school districts to enhance cyber security.

AMSD Members: Anoka-Hennepin School District, Bloomington Public Schools, Board of School Administrators (Associate Member), Brooklyn Center Community Schools, Burnsville-Eagan-Savage, Columbia Heights Public Schools, Eastern Carver County Schools, Eden Prairie Schools, Edina Public Schools, Elk River Area School District, Equity Alliance MN (Associate Member), Farmington Area Public Schools, Fridley Public Schools, Hopkins Public Schools, Intermediate School District 287, Intermediate School District 917 (Associate Member), Inver Grove Heights Schools, Lakeville Area Public Schools, Mahtomedi Public Schools, Metro ECSU (Associate Member), Minneapolis Public Schools, Minnetonka Public Schools, Mounds View Public Schools, North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale School District, Northeast Metro Intermediate School District 916, Northwest Suburban Integration District (Associate Member), Orono Schools, Osseo Area Schools, Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools, Richfield Public Schools, Robbinsdale Area Schools, Rochester Public Schools; Rockford Area Schools, Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan Public Schools, Roseville Area Schools, Shakopee Public Schools, South St. Paul Public Schools, South Washington County Schools, SouthWest Metro Intermediate District (Associate Member), Spring Lake Park Schools, St. Anthony-New Brighton Independent School District, St. Cloud Area Schools, St. Louis Park Public Schools, St. Paul Public Schools, Stillwater Area Public Schools, TIES (Associate Member), Wayzata Public Schools, West Metro Education Program, West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan Area Schools and White Bear Lake Area Schools.