

April 2017
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Going ‘From Caterpillars to Butterflies’ in Robbinsdale Area Schools

April 7, 2017

Board of Directors Meeting

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

April 28, 2017

Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting

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

May 5, 2017

Board of Directors Meeting

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

May 12, 2017

Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting

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

“Caterpillars to butterflies” is an easily grasped metaphor which describes a complex process. Dr. Carlton D. Jenkins, superintendent of Robbinsdale Area Schools, used it during this year’s State of the District Address to describe “a good district working to get better.”

More than 150 students, families, staff members and stakeholders turned out March 16 at Cooper High School in New Hope, Minnesota, to see student performances and hear Dr. Jenkins share an overview of where the district is and where it hopes to go. As the district embraces its transformation from caterpillar to butterfly, decisions made on the local, state and national levels continue to impact students, family members and staff members. Guided by its Unified District Vision (UDV), which compels the district to ensure an equitable and respectful educational experience for every student, family and staff member, Robbinsdale Area Schools will continue working to remove barriers impacting students in order to create a welcoming environment, regardless of:

- Race
- Ethnicity
- National Origin
- Gender
- Age
- Religion
- Culture
- Ability
- Socioeconomic Status
- Sexual Orientation
- Physical Appearance
- Home of First Language

“Robbinsdale Area Schools’ UDV is a source of strength and the GPS which guides our district as we encounter various issues, challenges and opportunities,” Jenkins said.

Other districts are joining Robbinsdale Area Schools in this transformative work. This year, 40 school districts from the metro area have committed to the Reimagine Minnesota initiative, which entails developing policies, programs and practices to create equity, excellence, and integration for ALL Minnesota students. Last month, stakeholders from Robbinsdale Area Schools engaged in a World



Robbinsdale Area Schools’ State of the District Address featured a variety of student performers, running the gamut from one-act theatre to hip-hop to a J.S. Bach suite played by a solo cellist. One of the event’s performances was from Long Chau (Pearl Dragon), a Vietnamese fan dancing group made up of students from FAIR School Crystal. They are pictured here with Superintendent Dr. Carlton D. Jenkins.

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

Following the release of the February budget forecast, which projected a \$1.65 billion surplus, there was reason to be optimistic that legislators would make significant progress toward addressing AMSD’s top priorities such as providing an inflationary increase in the funding formula, reducing the special education cross-subsidy, investing in school-based early learning, diversifying the teacher workforce and increasing referendum equalization. That optimism faded following the release of the House and Senate budget targets for E-12 Education. As the research article in this newsletter notes, the House and Senate spending levels for E-12 Education are insufficient to provide even an inflationary increase in the funding formula.

Fortunately, there is still time to contact your local legislators and legislative leaders to urge them to match the overall level of investment in E-12 Education proposed by Governor Dayton. The Legislature will be in recess the week of April 10 providing an opportune time to meet with your local legislators to advocate for AMSD’s [Session Priorities](#). Thank you in advance for standing up for our students.

John Vento, school board member from Robbinsdale Area Schools, is chair of AMSD.

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Robbinsdale Area Schools Undergoing Transformational Process

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Cafe community conversation along with stakeholders from the Edina and St. Louis Park school districts. The goal of the Reimagine Minnesota initiative is to disrupt the predictability of which students will not succeed at high levels in our state's educational system.

Robbinsdale Area Schools will continue to build on this constructive dialogue in April during a review of its Unified District Vision, which was adopted in 2014. The four goals of the Unified District Vision are:

- Goal One - Implement policies and practices that open pathways to academic excellence for ALL students
- Goal Two - Utilize culturally responsive teaching and personalized learning for ALL students
- Goal Three - Engage family and community members as partners
- Goal Four - Engage and empower students through amplifying student voice

In his 2016 State of the District Address, Dr. Jenkins quoted noted author Maya Angelou, saying, "We delight in the beauty of the butterfly, but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty." Dr. Jenkins followed up on this line of thinking during the 2017 State of the District Address by saying, "A butterfly's biological transformation process includes metamorphosis, remaking itself inside of a cocoon, unseen by others, and emerging on the other side of the process as a far more capable creature. Butterflies can go where caterpillars, if they dream, could only dream of going. So it is with our district."

In its transformational process, Robbinsdale Area Schools has embraced the challenges of the World's Best Workforce and received guidance from its Unified District Vision, while focusing efforts on the following strategic priorities:

Kindergarten Readiness: Providing high-quality early learning programs will ensure all students are kindergarten ready. More than 555 students attended preschool in Robbinsdale Area Schools last school year. Disaggregated data shows students attending the district's preschool programs were more likely to be able to identify enough letters coming into Kindergarten to be on track to reach third-grade reading proficiency on the MCAs.

Third-Grade Reading Proficiency: Providing differentiated learning experiences will ensure ALL third-grade students achieve grade-level literacy. Robbinsdale Area Schools will continue to build upon the framework of the Daily 5 Cafe with a district-wide strategy of balanced literacy.

"We are excited about our work in Professional Learning Communities around literacy and the standards," Dr. Jenkins said.

High School Graduation: Ensuring every student graduates from high school career and college ready benefits not only our district, but also our state, nation and world. Robbinsdale Area Schools' 4-year graduation rate in 2016 was 76.2%. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there is a \$9,250 per year difference in average earnings between workers with a high school diploma and workers without a high school diploma. Robbinsdale Area Schools graduated 54 more students in 2016 than 2015, which represents an additional \$14 million in income to society over a 30-year working career. A PreK-12 graduation plan has been implemented to increase Robbinsdale's graduation rate, which will further benefit stakeholders.

Teaching the Standards: All Robbinsdale Area Schools staff will teach the Minnesota state standards K-12. The district is in the midst of a three-year professional learning plan to ensure these standards are taught with greater fidelity from pre-K to K-12 to Adult Basic Education.

Building Central Office Capacity: Building central office capacity to deliver services in a timely and efficient manner to principals will ensure the highest quality of learning. Better supporting principals so they can truly be effective instructional leaders in the buildings requires us to continue establishing a more collegial and reflective culture.

Middle School Re-Design: As Robbinsdale Area Schools prepares to reopen Sandburg Middle School this fall, a variety of Advanced Academics nights and middle school transition activities have been held to enhance articulation and connection between schools and families. District residents are excited about the additional option for attending middle school in their community.

"Moving from being caterpillars to butterflies is not lofty thinking," Dr. Jenkins said. "We can become great with serious and intentional efforts to narrow the gap between excellence and non-excellence, while working to reduce equity gaps based on factors such as racial/ethnic group membership, gender, economic status, and special education status. Although our gaps are consistent with the state of Minnesota, which has the largest equity and opportunity gaps in the country, we know we can do better! Our great community deserves better for ALL of our students!"

Please follow Robbinsdale Area Schools' journey from caterpillar to butterfly at www.rdale.org, or on Facebook at facebook.com/robbinsdaleareaschools. As Dr. Jenkins often says in his weekly e-update, "It's a Great Day to be in Robbinsdale!"

This month's member spotlight was submitted by Joseph Palmersheim, marketing and communications specialist, and Dr. Richard McGregory, executive director of strategic communications and achievement accountability, Robbinsdale Area Schools.



At Robbinsdale Area Schools' State of the District Address, Superintendent Dr. Carlton D. Jenkins recognized three of the district's outstanding students (pictured from left): Michael White, Jael Kerandi and Simon Awcock. Michael, a Cooper High School senior, earned the National Speech and Debate Association (NSDA) Academic All-American Award. Jael, who is also a senior at Cooper, has committed to using her voice to advance high expectations and Excellence for ALL as a facilitator of Community Conversations. She is headed to the University of Minnesota's Carlson School of Management on a full scholarship. Finally, Simon, a National Merit Finalist from Armstrong High School, was recently profiled as one of Channel 12's "Standout Students."

House and Senate Education Finance Proposals Fall Short

The House and Senate have assembled their respective Omnibus Education Finance bills with the proposals insufficient to provide the resources schools need just to meet inflationary cost increases. The Senate bill would increase education funding by \$300 million including a 1.5% per year formula increase. The Senate bill also provides a \$10 million down payment to help stabilize the Teachers Retirement Association (TRA) fund and makes investments to address the teacher shortage. The House bill proposes an increase of \$267 million which includes a 1.25% per year formula increase. The House bill also includes some troubling proposals including freezing the compensatory revenue program at the FY 2017 level and eliminating the Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten and Pathway II Early Learning Scholarship programs. The House bill attempts to mitigate these changes by establishing a new Targeted Compensatory Revenue program and increasing School Readiness funding for two years to provide a temporary cushion for districts losing Pre-K funding.

The House and Senate bills fall far short of the Governor’s E-12 Education proposal of \$705 million including a 2% per year increase in the funding formula, \$40 million for special education and \$175 million in the voluntary pre-kindergarten program. In addition, the Governor’s budget includes \$68 million to offset the proposed increase in the employer contribution to TRA in 2018-19. Funding to offset the proposed pension increase is critical as school districts would otherwise be forced to use a portion of any formula increase to meet that cost.

A comparison of the budget highlights from each proposal is available in Figure 1. Links to the House and Senate bills, district runs, comparison summaries and appropriation and levy tracking sheets can be found on the AMSD web page: <http://www.amsd.org/advocacy/2017-legislative-session>

Figure 1: Summary of Minnesota Education Finance Proposals

	House: HF 890: Loon	Senate: SF 718: Nelson	Governor’s Proposal
Proposed Increase Over Base FY 2018-19	\$267 million	\$300 million	\$705 million
Formula Increase	1.25% formula increase per year	1.5% formula increase per year	2% formula increase per year
Special Education	No increase	No increase	\$40 million increase over the biennium
Compensatory Revenue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Freezes compensatory revenue at the FY 2017 level by de-linking it from the basic formula Creates new Targeted Compensatory Revenue: \$9.9 million for FY 2018 and \$12.157 million for FY 2019 	Makes Compensatory Pilot Grants permanent	No changes
Pension Stability Funding	Not included	\$10 million	\$68 million
Early Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repeals voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Increase to School Readiness: \$24.368 million in FY 2018 and \$24.685 million in FY 2019 Increase to Early Learning Scholarships of \$24.6 million De-links ECFE from the formula, provides an increase of \$999,000 Increase to Parent-Child Program \$1 million 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase Early Learning Scholarships: \$2 million Increase Parent-Child Home: \$1.1 million 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases funding for the voluntary pre-kindergarten program by \$175 million over the biennium Help Me Grow: \$3 million
Teacher Shortage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alternative Teacher Preparation: \$1 million Collaborative Urban Educator Program: \$440,000 Grow Your Own: \$1 million Teacher Shortage Loan Forgiveness: FY 2018: \$800,000, FY 2019: \$3.2 million 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborative Urban Educator: \$500,000 Grow Your Own: \$750,000 African American Registry: \$264,000 Concurrent Enrollment Teaching Grants: \$750,000 	Not included

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Biennium to Biennium Spending Comparisons Provide a Distorted Picture

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Education funding is very complex and the debate at the Capitol has increased the level of confusion. The traditional method to evaluate a proposed funding increase is to compare the proposed increase to the base level of funding outlined in the state budget forecast. However, some legislators have been comparing proposed spending in the 2018-19 biennium to expenditures in the 2016-17 biennium. It is important to note that biennium to biennium spending comparisons can provide a greatly distorted picture of the actual funding increases received by school districts. For example, some legislators are stating that their education spending proposal would increase spending by more than \$1 billion. This includes the increase of \$844 million that is already included in the base if you compare the 2016-17 biennium to the 2018-19 biennium. That base increase is largely due to the following three factors:

- An increase in the number of special education students served and the cost of providing those services.
- Higher than projected student enrollment.
- New spending approved during the last biennium that was not effective until the second year of the biennium. For example, Long-Term Facilities funding was approved during the 2015 session but was not effective until FY 2017 – the second year of the biennium. Funding only had to be provided for one year of the 2016-17 biennium but must now be funded for both years of the 2018-19 biennium.



Eden Prairie Superintendent Curt Tryggestad, Hopkins Board Member Betsy Anderson and AMSD Chair and Robbinsdale Board Member John Vento testify in support of Sen. Carla Nelson's bill to increase the education funding formula by 2% per year.



It is also important to keep in mind that school districts continue to be impacted by the \$680 million special education cross-subsidy and the fact that the basic funding formula would be \$550 per pupil higher today if it had simply kept pace with inflation since 2003.

White Bear Lake School Board Member George Kimball testifies in opposition to legislation that would provide taxpayer subsidies for students attending nonpublic schools.

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 Community 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.