

September 2018
vol 15 ♦ no 11

Orono Was Prepared For the Test, But Still Had Lockdown Lessons to Learn

On February 20-21, 2018, when back-to-back threats rocked Orono Schools, the district was well-situated to address the one threat determined to be credible. That threat, exactly one week after the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, required that the district go into lockdown. More than 3,100 students and staff members were sequestered for just over five hours.

For more than 15 years, Orono has prepared for such an event. That preparation included attending training provided by the Department of Homeland Security and Federal Bureau of Investigation, participating in active shooter drills and establishing and training internal response teams.

Perhaps one of its most significant assets, however, is the school district's trusting relationship with the Orono Police Department and West Hennepin County Public Safety, as well as with the Long Lake and Maple Plain fire departments. These relationships have been nurtured through mutual planning and training.

On the morning of February 21, the district's administrative team was debriefing with law enforcement officials about the threat that was dismissed the night before. At 10:57 a.m., Orono Police received notice of a second threat made via Facebook and Twitter that a shooting would occur at noon.

"Because we have trained, because we have an excellent relationship with the police, the decision to lock down was executed immediately, and the administrative team knew what to do next," said

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Classroom Emergency Procedures

UNIVERSAL PROCEDURES

EVACUATION
Unplanned situations may occur when it is necessary to evacuate the area or building due to a threat or hazard inside.

1. Evacuate following posted evacuation routes. Attend to student-specific needs.
2. If possible, take the class roster with you when leaving the building.
3. Move to the designated meeting points outside the building at a safe distance away.
4. For events involving hazardous materials, move upwind.
5. Take attendance at the designated meeting points outside the building. Report missing students to the building administrator immediately.

SEVERE WEATHER SHELTER

1. Take emergency go-kit and class roster.
2. Take the closest and safest route to shelter in designated safe area.
3. Use secondary route if primary route is blocked or dangerous.
4. If outside, return to main building.
5. Assist those needing additional assistance.
6. Do not stop for personal belongings.

LOCKDOWN WITH INTRUDER

RUN

1. If outside, stay outside and run to an area of safety.
2. Have an escape route and a plan in mind.
3. Leave belongings behind.
4. Keep hands visible at all times.

HIDE

1. Hide in an area out of the intruder's view.
2. Lock and barricade door of hiding location.
3. Be quiet. Silence all electronic devices.
4. Only open door for law enforcement.
5. If fire alarm sounds, do not evacuate unless fire or smoke is visible.
6. Shut off lights; stay away from doors and windows.

FIGHT

1. Fight only as a last resort and only when your life is in imminent danger.
2. Attempt to incapacitate the shooter.
3. Act with physical aggression and throw items at an active shooter.

IN ALL SCENARIOS

1. Assist those with special needs.
2. Call 911 when it is safe to do so and pass on critical information.

LOCKDOWN WITH WARNING

1. Lock all exterior doors.
2. Keep students away from windows.
3. Continue classes; move on announcement only.
4. Wait for further instructions.

SEE OTHER SIDE →

These two-sided laminated posters hang in every Orono classroom to help remind teachers of emergency procedures but, more importantly, to remind parents that safety is always at the forefront.

September 7, 2018 Board of Directors Meeting

7 a.m.
Grand Hall,
TIES Conference Center
Saint Paul

September 28, 2018 Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting

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

October 5, 2018 Board of Directors Meeting

7 a.m.
Grand Hall,
TIES Conference Center
Saint Paul

October 26, 2018 Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting

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

November 28, 2018 Save the Date! AMSD Annual Conference

TIES Conference Center
Saint Paul

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

September is a time of beginnings and we welcome our new director of communications and advocacy, Troy Melhus, to the AMSD team. As we start fall activities and settle into new routines, we have six school districts with important ballot questions this fall. You can read more about them in this month's research article, as well as by contacting local school officials. With all state constitutional offices, our entire congressional delegation and 134 state house seats on the November ballot, now is the time to engage with candidates! There will be critical funding and policy decisions made during the 2019 legislative session which includes establishing the level of school funding for the next two years. AMSD just released this comprehensive non-partisan "[Education Issues Guide for the 2018 Election](#)" that will help parents, staff, and citizens get involved in the electoral process. As you engage with candidates, please share this guide as a way to educate them about the pressing issues we face as we strive to meet our constitutional obligation to educate our children. Happy start to the 2018-19 school year everyone!

Stephanie Levine, school board member from West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan, is chair of AMSD.

Communication is Key to School Safety and Security

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Superintendent of Schools Dr. Karen Orcutt. “While the threat lacked clarity – Was it coming from inside? Was it someone outside the district? – our response was precise. Preparedness brings a certain level of calm even during a tense situation,” she added. “Don’t ever assume, ‘It will never happen here.’”

Orono’s crisis plan calls for a command center to be staged with law enforcement and the superintendent. The director of special services and coordinator of facilities and safety, who head the district’s crisis training, also work out of the command center.

The communications team includes the communications director, technology coordinator, an administrative assistant and district receptionist. “We learned in responding to a bomb threat in 2013 that communication needed to be more frequent and as widespread as possible,” said Gary Kubat, the district’s communications director.

The district used its mass notification system (emails, text messages and phone calls), Facebook, Twitter and websites to update parents and community members every 15 minutes with a few gaps. The updates were numbered (“In hindsight, I would also timestamp them as well,” Kubat noted) and always ended with the reassurance that students and staff were safe.

“From the start, establish the district as THE source of information,” Kubat emphasized. “Remind parents to dismiss rumors or opinions they see on social media. And those text messages from their students? Students are most likely experiencing only pieces of the larger picture.”

Staff members in Orono were receiving all of the same communications as parents and community members, but may have been so focused on student welfare that they didn’t see them. “Be sure principals are checking in with their staff members, so they know how everyone is doing,” Orcutt said.

“A parent’s first instinct might be to come to the school, but remind them not to,” Orcutt continued, “as it could interfere with an emergency response.” With all of its schools on one campus, the city was able to assist in that regard by blocking the roads with snowplows and police cars. Concerned parents gathered at a nearby garden center and food co-op where a police officer was stationed to calm them and communicate with them. “It wasn’t part of our plan, but such a place – an offsite location where parents can gather and support each other – is a good idea,” Orcutt added.

The suspect, a student at Orono High School, was arrested by police about 4:15 p.m. and students were finally dismissed. A press conference was held shortly after that at the Orono Police Department with Police Chief Correy Farniok, other law enforcement officials and Dr. Orcutt. “It was an efficient way to convey information to the media and to ensure every media representative heard the same story,” Orcutt said. “Be honest, show compassion for everyone involved and express your gratitude for the support you received.”

The successful conclusion to this threat didn’t mean that the work was over once the crisis has passed. Orono staff and law enforcement immediately debriefed and sent one more message to parents that evening. It thanked them for their cooperation and support, and provided online resources should they or their student(s) need further reassurance. Communication about the threat continued through the end of the week.

Prepare for the return to regular classes with much care. Have crisis teams available in each school. “Use team members to build lists and check in with students who are struggling or may be at risk of struggling,” Orcutt said. “Don’t forget staff members. Even though they are adults, they may still need support in processing what they went through.” Orono was fortunate to have partners in the community and nearby school districts to support these efforts.

“At some point, the spotlight moves on,” Kubat noted. “Keep school safety and security at the forefront, however, by communicating about it frequently. Even if a procedure or training seems routine or mundane, constant reminders that safety is a top priority is encouraging to parents.”

Every situation is unique and, no matter how well prepared you think you may be, there’s always a twist or somewhere to improve,” Orcutt said. “The feedback we received about our response was overwhelmingly positive.

“What we achieved together – the police, staff, parents, communities of Orono Schools and our students – was incredible,” Orcutt said. “We were fortunate.”

This month’s member spotlight was submitted by Gary Kubat, director of communications, Orono Schools.



Dr. Karen Orcutt, superintendent of Orono Schools, spoke at a press conference with Governor Mark Dayton and St. Louis Park High School student Eva Goldfarb on the proposed Safe and Secure Schools Act.



On the day after the threat, the community expressed its gratitude to Orono Schools staff and Orono Police Department, including School Resource Officer Jason Barnes.

Six AMSD Districts on the 2018 Ballot with Referendums

Five districts are going to local voters for operating referendums this November, two are asking for additional technology levies, and one is asking voters to support three specific school improvements.

Six AMSD school districts are going to voters with referendum requests this fall, asking their residents to provide additional – and essential – funding for their students. The ballot questions range from operating referendum increases to capital project levies to support technology to bonding proposals. The six districts will have a total of 10 questions on the November 6 ballot.

The Mahtomedi, Minneapolis, Robbinsdale and Saint Paul School Districts are seeking to increase their current operating referendums. The Rockford School District does not currently have a voter-approved operating referendum in place and is proposing to establish a \$750 per-pupil referendum.

Minneapolis and Rockford are also asking for technology support: Minneapolis is seeking a \$12 million, 7-year levy and Rockford is asking residents to approve a 10-year, \$4 million levy for technology.

And in Columbia Heights, the school board is putting three capital projects to a vote to make several improvements: to an elementary school, to improve its high school performing arts space and to expand its high school band space.

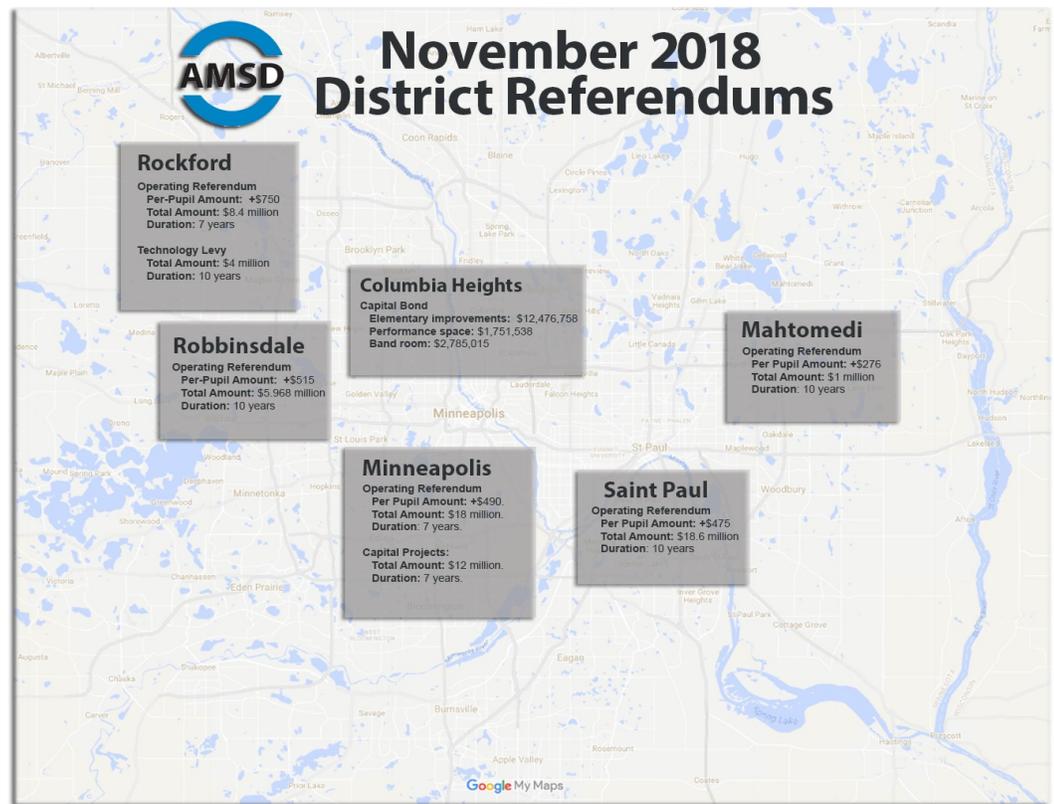
In the case of every of the six AMSD districts going to voters, the boards are making clear: voter support is critical to elevating student success. Staving off staffing and program cuts, investing in literacy, social emotional learning and student support services are among the initiatives the districts will pursue if their referendums are successful.

The need for community support is clearly a resonant message.

Columbia Heights Board Chair John Larkin earlier this year explained to the community the importance of its support:

“School safety and security is vital and cannot be compromised. The Arts are an integral part of the curriculum and must have facilities that support programming and are comparable with other school districts in the area.”

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AMSD Members: Anoka-Hennepin School District, Bloomington Public Schools, Brooklyn Center Community Schools, Burnsville-Eagan-Savage School District 191, 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, 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, Wayzata Public Schools, West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan Area Schools, Westonka, and White Bear Lake Area Schools.

2018 Referendums: An Essential Part of Funding For Local Students

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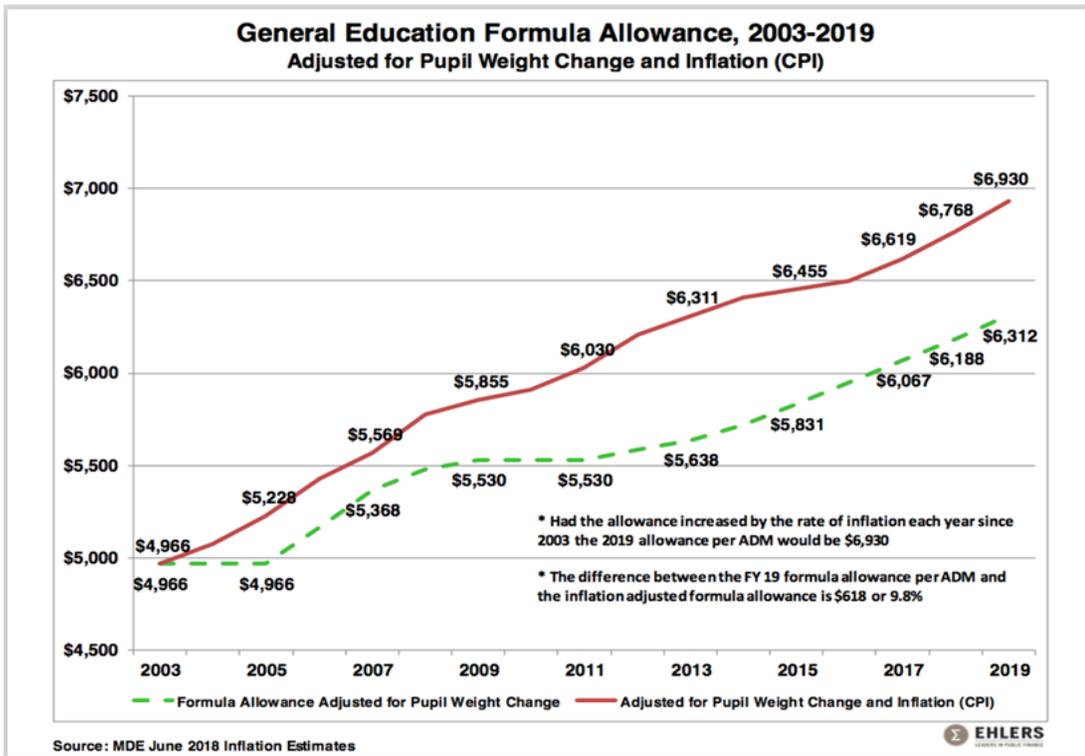
Why referendums are necessary

School district funding historically has been a state and local partnership to provide students the resources and opportunities they need to graduate ready for college or career.

In 2017, local property taxes provided about 27 percent of the revenue for Minnesota school districts; the state provided 67 percent, and federal funding accounted for 6 percent.

The state does provide the lion's share of funding for operating costs but referendums deliver critical resources for basic programming. The additional funds from local referendums support opportunities and programs critical to student success.

While the Governor and legislators have made strides toward stabilizing Minnesota's education funding system in recent years, including approving a 2 percent per year formula increase in the 2017 legislative session, the basic formula continues to lag behind inflation. As the chart shows, the basic formula would be \$618 per-pupil higher in the current school year had it simply kept pace with inflation since 2003.

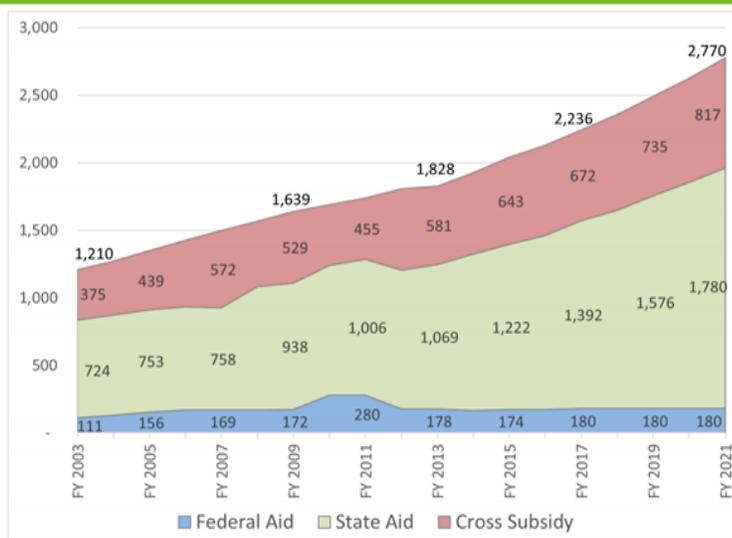


Source: MDE June 2018 Inflation Estimates



SPECIAL EDUCATION FUNDING TRENDS, FY 2003 – FY 2021

Federal Aid, State Aid, and Cross Subsidy –Current \$ in Millions



8/20/2018

3

Source: [Program Finance Division Minnesota Department of Education](#)

Inflation is just one challenge.

Dr. Tom Melcher, director of school finance for the Minnesota Department of Education, explained to the State Senate E-12 Education Committee in August how the under-funding of special education impacts school district budgets. Insufficient state and federal funding for special education means school districts are forced to redirect funds meant for general classroom instruction to make up the difference. That difference is no small amount. In FY 2017, special education was under-funded by more than \$670 million according to the Minnesota Department of Education's Annual Special Education Cross-Subsidy Report. In other words, school districts redirected \$670 million in funds meant for general classroom instruction to cover the special education funding shortfall. According to Melcher's calculations, federal and state funding covers just over 70 percent of special education costs.

The chart on page 5 outlines the AMSD member district referendum questions that will be on the ballot on November 6. Voters are encouraged to contact their local school officials if they have questions about their local referendum.

AMSD Member District November 2018 Referendums

District	More information	Type	Per-Pupil Amount	Details
Columbia Heights	More information: Go to the Columbia Heights Public Schools Website	Capital Bond	<i>N/A: Bond levies are for specific amounts.</i>	<p>"The projected budget for the three requests are \$12,476,758 for North Park Improvements, \$1,751,538 for the CHHS Performing Arts Space Improvements and \$2,785,015 for new Band Room Addition at CHHS. The approximate total is \$17,013,311, or a six percent increase, from the 2017 ask of voters."</p> <p>Question 1: North Park Elementary improvements: \$12,476,758.</p> <p>Question 2: High school performing arts space improvements: \$1,751,538</p> <p>Question 3: High school band room addition: \$2,785,015</p>
Mahtomedi Public Schools	More information: Go to the Mahtomedi Public Schools website	Operating Referendum	\$276	<p>"On November 6, Mahtomedi Public Schools is seeking to revoke and replace its current operating levy with a tiered payment structure. Mahtomedi Public Schools made \$1.6 million in budget adjustments (\$1.1 million in expenditure reductions and staffing and enrollment adjustments) for the 2018-19 school year. If the levy passes, our priorities include: reducing class sizes district-wide; enhancing academic programming; strengthening the safety and security of our buildings; and building financial stability through deficit reduction."</p> <p>Per Pupil Amount: \$276.26 Total Amount: Approximately \$1 million Duration: 10 years</p>
Minneapolis Public Schools	More information: Go to the Minneapolis Public Schools website	Operating Referendum and Capital Projects	\$490	<p>"If passed, the referendum would give Minneapolis Public Schools access to \$30 million in additional revenue. The funds will be used across the district to improve student achievement and well-being through equitable investments in literacy, social emotional learning, and support services. The new revenue sources will also help avoid future budget cuts and reductions in services to students across Minneapolis."</p> <p>Operating Referendum Per Pupil Amount: \$490 Total Amount: \$18 million Duration: 7 years Capital Projects Total Amount: \$12 million Duration: 7 years</p> <p>Project details: Provide funds for the purchase, installation, and maintenance of software applications and technology equipment, and for training and directly related personnel costs.</p>
Robbinsdale Public Schools	More information: Go to the Robbinsdale Public Schools website	Operating Referendum	\$515	<p>"The funding would support district efforts to maintain Robbinsdale Area Schools' high-quality academic and co-curricular programming for students."</p> <p>Per Pupil Amount: \$515 Total Amount: \$5.968 million Duration: 10 years</p>
Rockford Area Schools	Go to the Rockford Area Schools website	Operating Referendum and Technology Levy	\$750	<p>Question 1: A General Levy for \$750 per-pupil for 7 years, generating approximately \$1.2 million annually or \$8.4 million total.</p> <p>Question 2: A Capital Projects Levy at 3.57 percent for 10 years, generating approximately \$400,000 annually for technology or \$4 million total."</p> <p>Operating Referendum Per Pupil Amount: \$750 Total Amount: \$8.4 million Duration: 7 years Technology Levy Total Amount: \$4 million Duration: 10 years</p>
Saint Paul Public Schools	More information: Go to the Saint Paul Public Schools website	Operating Referendum	\$475	<p>"SPPS is asking voters to consider increasing its operating levy to provide additional funding which would enable the district to invest more in schools, keep pace with the educational needs of its students and help implement the district's Strategic Plan to increase achievement for all students."</p> <p>Per Pupil Amount: An increase of \$475 (existing levy is \$704). Total Amount: \$18.6 million. Duration: 10 years.</p>