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How Eastern Carver County is Personalizing Learning for Every Student

January 27, 2017 Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting

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

February 3, 2017 Board of Directors Meeting

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

February 24, 2017 Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting

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

March 10, 2017 Board of Directors Meeting

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

Eastern Carver County Schools' plan to personalize learning in every classroom of the 9,500-student school district challenges leaders, students, teachers and the district's stakeholders. Consider how entrenched the so-called "factory" model is in our educational systems: lesson plans as discrete pieces of information, the organization of students by age, the design of schools and classrooms based on efficiency rather than efficacy. Most importantly, in the traditional model of learning, students have been passive participants, recipients of the teacher's knowledge instead of having the opportunity to co-create their learning. Teachers are re-evaluating the classroom from the student's perspective and it is driving many changes in order to deliver on the promise of exceptional, personalized learning.



Personalized learning in Eastern Carver County Schools has five components. Questions for each component guide the planning process in each school:

- Purposeful Learning: How do learners find relevancy and make connections between themselves and their learning?
- Engagement with Learning Tools: How do learners purposefully select tools to support their learning?
- Collaborative Environment: How do learners leverage their environment to maximize their learning?
- Learner Voice and Choice: How do learners design and take ownership of their learning?
- Purposeful Instruction, Assessment and Feedback: How do learners leverage relevant learning targets and authentic learning opportunities that meet their needs? How do learners use evidence and feedback to further their learning?

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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

Thanks to everyone who attended AMSD's annual legislative session preview program on January 6. It was a great morning with excellent presentations and thoughtful discussion. We were very pleased to have 36 legislators in attendance for the program! It was also great to hear from Commissioner Cassellius and a legislative panel of Rep. Jenifer Loon, Rep. Jim Davnie, Sen. Carla Nelson and Sen. Chuck Wiger. It was heartening to hear our legislators speak about the importance of investing in public education and working together to meet the needs of all of our students. I was also pleased to hear broad support for reducing mandates and enhancing local control. AMSD board members stand ready to assist legislators on these important issues during the 2017 session. *John Vento, school board member from Robbinsdale Area Schools, is chair of AMSD.*



Learners are Ambassadors for Personalized Learning in Eastern Carver County

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Using these five points, questions were posed to building level administrators at district leadership meetings. It was the last question – how do learners leverage relevant learning targets and authentic learning opportunities that meet their needs? – that was the most tantalizing. This seemed to be the lever that propelled buildings toward full-scale implementation of personalized learning.

Curriculum work that focused on content changed to focus on learning. Teachers became facilitators of learning. Classrooms and hallways were transformed to create learning spaces with specific purposes and learners were consulted on what environment they needed for different learning opportunities. Rigid bell schedules are falling out of favor, replaced by student-driven schedules based on their needs. Teacher desks were moved to storage so classrooms could be transformed into learning environments, each with unique purposes to support student learning. Time became more flexible with opportunities for learners to use their time where they need for their learning. Teachers embraced informal learning time for student support and conferencing. Every nook and cranny in buildings became prime learning real estate. Is a student done with her learning in math? *Great! Now, you have flexible time to collaborate with other learners on science, or flex into a lesson with your world language teacher for more guidance.* In one high school, teachers needing to be absent could opt out of a substitute teacher and use that time for tutoring, independent learning or group work. In another high school, flexible time was added to the daily schedule. Bottom line: do what you need to do for your learning.

At the heart of personalized learning in Eastern Carver County Schools is changing instruction -- putting students in charge of their learning targets. Jack Hurst, 5th grade teacher at East Union Elementary School recalled when he asked his students to start math lessons based on what they were ready to learn, instead of following his daily lessons. He said, “It took me a long time to get the kids to accept that ownership, instead of just doing the assignments to please me. I was not sure if they would to take that baton and run. It still surprises me when they do.”

Learners have become the strongest ambassadors for personalized learning. As they became active participants in learning, instead of passive receivers of information, they could tell their parents/guardians in detail what and how they were learning. In many of these cases, the student was taking a personal interest or passion and using it to achieve a learning target. The relentless focus on individual students and their needs gives teachers and students the freedom to adapt learning to include personal interests. Creating a world in Minecraft, diving deep into the history of World War II, or a love of painting or dancing can all be used to demonstrate learning targets. The role of the teacher becomes more complicated as they must critically assess student work to ensure the student meets those targets. Teachers report that personalized learning is more work, given the diversity of their students. But they quickly add that it is worth it because they have developed different relationships with students around learning. Those students who may have previously slipped through the cracks – like those who did enough school work to get by without drawing overt positive or negative attention – now receive more direct, personal attention.

Deep and real change will take years to take hold – and the focus is on gentle pressure applied steadily. At times, district and school leaders have had to take a step back, assess progress and needs before pushing forward again. One of the messages from staff during the 2015-16 school year was they felt good about the work, but it was a lot to manage. So at the end of the school year, teachers were given additional time to develop learning targets and work on their curriculum. It was time outside of the daily pressures of the classroom to get to get a handle on some components of personalized learning that everyone agreed was important, but needed some deliberate focus. The end goal is personalization in every classroom, for every student. The work is well underway throughout the district. Students who have experienced this model of learning in its fullest form do not want to return to the old, one-size-fits-all tradition of “sit and get.”

The district created www.wearepersonalizedlearning.org as a resource for families and staff. We invite you to learn more and, if you are intrigued by what you see, schedule a tour with the link at that site.

This month’s member spotlight was submitted by Clint Christopher, associate superintendent for teaching and learning, Eastern Carver County Schools.



Students in Chanhasen High School’s QUAD have flexibility across four subjects to learn at their pace and the ways that are most effective for them. Collaboration with other students is one way students choose to learn.

Huge Turnout for AMSD Session Preview

Over 200 metropolitan area legislators, legislative staff, Minnesota Department of Education officials and AMSD education leaders gathered on January 6 for AMSD's 2017 Session Preview. The annual event provides an opportunity to share AMSD's Legislative Platform with legislators as well as highlight some of the needs and challenges facing AMSD member school districts. Rochester Superintendent Michael Munoz, Prior Lake-Savage Superintendent Teri Staloch and Superintendent Chris Lennox and Board Chair Amy Jones of Mounds View Public Schools, offered presentations that highlighted some of the key provisions in AMSD's 2017 Legislative Platform.



Senator Carla Nelson and Rochester Superintendent Michael Munoz.

Special Education Cross-Subsidy

Superintendent Munoz reviewed the student demographics in his district and noted that 15.7% of Rochester's students receive special education services and over 80 languages are spoken in their schools. Superintendent Munoz discussed the AMSD platform position to reduce the State share of the special education funding shortfall by 25 percent. Special education costs exceeded state and federal special education aid by over \$385 million for AMSD member districts and in Rochester Public Schools, the special education cross-subsidy has grown from \$9.70 million in 2011-12 to \$15.60 million in 2015-16.

Mandate Relief

Superintendent Munoz also spoke about mandate relief, noting that one size fits all mandates stifle innovation and creativity and urged legislators to refrain from enacting any new unfunded mandates. Superintendent Munoz

noted several unfunded mandates and their impact, especially how Minnesota special education law exceeds federal law in several areas including the timing of transition services, restrictive procedures, caseloads and alternative dispute resolution and due process hearings.

Local Control and Innovation

Superintendent Staloch discussed the AMSD platform position that calls for enhancing local control to encourage innovation, specifically, to expand the innovation zone law to allow school districts to try new instructional models, personalize student learning and increase collaboration with post-secondary institutions and businesses. There are currently five innovation zone pilot projects in Minnesota and Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools has partnered with Lakeville Area Schools for the Minnesota Center for Advanced Professional Studies (MNCAPS). You can watch a video [here](#) that details the program. Superintendent Staloch called on the legislators to expand the program to allow for new research, expand partnerships and explore new research opportunities.



Senator Eric Pratt and Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools Superintendent Teri Staloch.

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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.

AMSD Members Share Legislative Platform with Legislators

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Taxpayer Equity

Superintendent Staloch discussed the district’s significant growth in student enrollment since 2004-5 and how the district is experiencing growth at all grade levels. The district is under space constraints with almost all of their buildings nearing or over capacity. In May of 2016, the district went to the voters with a bond and technology levy request. The tax impact would have been \$31 a month on a \$300,000 home and the question failed with 53% of voters voting against the referendum. The district is now engaged in short-term and long-term facilities planning working with a citizens’ advisory committee. Superintendent Staloch reviewed AMSD’s Legislative Platform position to increase equalization of the operating referendum, debt service and local optional levies to reduce taxpayer and education funding disparities. Property tax levies play a critical role in funding education programs and facilities, however, these levies have widely varying impacts on local property taxpayers depending on the property wealth of the school district.



Representative Randy Jessup and Mounds View Schools Superintendent Chris Lennox.

Formula Increase

Mounds View Superintendent Lennox and Board Chair Jones discussed AMSD’s platform position of increasing the basic formula allowance by at least 2.5 percent per year and indexing it to inflation. Superintendent Lennox noted that the formula has lost significant ground to inflation and would be \$550 per pupil higher today if it had simply kept up with inflation since 2003.

Concurrent Enrollment

Board Chair Jones discussed the district’s enrollment and student demographics and noted that during the 2015-16 school year, 82% of students in grades 10-12 were enrolled in a college-level course. The AMSD Platform calls on legislators to ensure all students have the opportunity to take rigorous, college preparatory classes and dual credit courses to earn college credit.

Superintendent Lennox reviewed the concurrent enrollment program in Minnesota and the Early College program at Mounds View Public Schools. He also discussed the recent faculty credentialing rule change and urged legislators to expand the Northwest Partnerships Program statewide to make sure all school districts are able to help their concurrent enrollment staff gain the credits they need to meet the new credentialing requirement.

The Legislative Session Preview also included an update from Minnesota Department of Education Commissioner Brenda Cassellius and a legislative panel consisting of Representative Jenifer Loon, Representative Jim Davnie, Senator Carla Nelson and Senator Chuck Wiger. The legislators shared an overview of their goals and expectations for the 2017 legislative session and answered questions from AMSD members.

AMSD’s 2017 Legislative Platform is available [here](#).

Materials from AMSD’s 2016 Legislative Preview are available [here](#).

Photos from the event are available on the AMSD Facebook page and are available [here](#).



Commissioner Brenda Cassellius

