

Monthly Committee of the Whole Board Meeting

Duluth Public Schools, ISD 709

Agenda

Tuesday, May 6, 2025

District Services Center

709 Portia Johnson Dr.

Duluth, MN 55811

4:30 PM

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

2. **ROLL CALL**

3. **AGENDA ITEMS**

A. Strategic Plan Alignment

1) Advancing Equity

a. **Denfeld Indigenous Cohort**

2

2) Supporting Every Student

a. **Secondary English-Language Arts Adoption Purchase**

13

b. MnMTSS Grant and PLC Update

19

3) Improving Systems - N/A

B. Budget Update

1) FY 26 Budget - first reading

36

C. Other

4. **ADJOURN**

COW Agenda Cover Sheet

Meeting Date: May 6, 2025

Topic: Denfeld Indigenous Cohort

Presenter(s): Memegwesiikwe-Diana Lawrey, Amanda Horton, Cohort Staff and Teachers

Attachment:

Brief Summary of Presentation or Topic (no more than a few sentences):

Update on the Denfeld Indigenous Cohort: Program goals, staff, progress, challenges, and plans moving forward.

This Requires School Board Approval : No

Denfeld Indigenous Cohort

Cohort Team

OUR MISSION

Every student, every day will be empowered with learning opportunities for growth, creativity and curiosity, in preparation for their future in a global community.

OUR VISION

Duluth Public Schools provides an academically engaging, safe and inclusive environment with high expectations and responsible use of resources.

OUR CORE VALUES

Learning



Developing a love of learning through life-long inquiry.

Excellence



Having high standards for all through accountability, integrity and authenticity.

Equity



Creating conditions of justice, fairness and inclusion so all students have access to the opportunities to learn and develop to their fullest potential.

Collaboration



Working in partnership with staff, families, students and community.

Belonging



Providing a welcoming and accessible environment where everyone feels safe, seen and heard.

How it began.... March 2024

- Teachers and administrators noticed a group of Indigenous students that were not engaging in school in general, and Ojibwe language classes.
- Counselors, teachers, and administrators gathered to discuss options to increase student engagement and achievement of Indigenous students.
- Denfeld administration was in support of a new educational model to increase Indigenous student engagement and graduation rates - School within a School Model with an Indigenous focus.
- Staff and space was allocated by Mr. Tusken and American Indian Education to start the cohort.



Staff and Roles

- **Content Teachers**
 - **Brian Jungman-English**
 - **Ryan Jacobi-Social Studies**
 - **Alison Wood-Science**
 - **Pamela Nelson-Math**
- **Classroom**
 - **Amanda Horton - SEL Teacher/Ojibwemowin Teacher Classroom Support**
 - **Jamie de la Cruz - Classroom support, parent contact, coordinate activities, student needs, provide teacher resources**
- **Administration**
 - **Tom Tusken-Principal**
 - **Geri Saari - Counselor**
 - **Aakawe'aashiik-Coordinator**
- **Ancillary Support**
 - **Sheila White - American Indian Education Coordinator**
 - **Memegwesiikwe-Teacher**
- **Community Support**
 - **Center for American Indian Health**
 - **Dr. Mary Owen**
 - **Mengan Golden**
 - **Check and Connect**
 - **The DEN and PAWS and DASH**
 - **AICHO**
 - **Seek to Learn - FDLTCC**

Daily Model

1st hour

SEL/Career/Foundations Class; Credit bearing and culturally relevant
Students do not have to be in full cohort to attend

2nd hour

9/10 Grade English

3rd hour

Social Studies: 9/10 grade credit

4th hour

Science: 9th grade credit

5th hour

Math: 9/10 grade credit

Students attend as much of the cohort classes as are appropriate for their graduation plan. 10th graders who passed grade 9 science & intermediate algebra went to an SWS class that hour. Students still have access to support and cohort activities if they have transitioned to other classes.

Goals

The goal is graduating on time, the focus is on:

- To create an engaging learning environment for our American Indian academic struggling students.
- To work in partnership with core content teachers to create an integrated curriculum with an Indigenous focus.
- To help credit deficient students to earn credits and graduate.
- To create an alternative pathway to credit.
- To connect students to post-secondary education options and help create pathways for success in college/career choices. (Higher learning plan)



Progress and Trends



- Most Freshman were not ready to be in the cohort; need to transition to high school first - most transitioned out of the program.
- Greatest gains for Sophomores - most are doing better & made significant increases in credits completed for graduation. Attendance is still an issue.
- Students that transition out of the cohort are still offered support and interventions
- Students have a better relationship with school adults and are more open to receiving support from the counselors.
- Need to continue support for 2025 - 2026 Juniors.

Challenges

- Most 9th grade students did not continue in the cohort - three have continued and are currently doing well.
- Program could not adequately support students with learning disabilities - no funding for special education licensed instructors.
- Attendance...chronically absent students have not shown significant improvement in attendance. If students do not come to class, the cohort cannot support them.
- Curriculum support for teachers to create more culturally relevant materials.
- Overall coordination of program is fragmented.

Moving Forward - 2025 & Beyond

- Program will focus on 10th and 11th grade students.
- 9th grade students will be considered second semester for the morning Social-Emotional Learning period.
- The program cannot adequately support students with significant learning disabilities.
- Scheduling is in place to continue to consolidate courses, and steer students toward PSEO courses with support in 11th and 12th grade.
- Program will be explained in detail in meeting prior to enrollment into the Cohort with the focus on adding students that want to participate in the program.
- Entrance and exit guidelines for the program are being revised to provide for the best chances for success for the students and the program.
- Time and resources need to be allocated to support curriculum development with cohort teachers.
- A Coordinator has been assigned.
- A full-time paraprofessional will be present in the classroom throughout the day.



Questions?

- Any questions?
- Comments?
- Concerns?
- Feedback?

COW Agenda Cover Sheet

Meeting Date: May 6, 2025

Topic: Secondary English-Language Arts Adoption Purchase

Presenter(s): Jen Larva, Dale Uselman, and Jackie Otway

Attachment: [Slides](#)

Brief Summary of Presentation or Topic (no more than a few sentences):

The Secondary English-Language Arts Committee has completed the process of researching and reviewing instructional resources for adoption to meet the new MN English-Language Arts Standards. The committee is asking for approval from the school board to make the purchase of materials to help meet compliance of the new state standards starting next year.

This Requires School Board Approval : yes

This will be brought forth to the School Board Meeting on May 20, 2025 for final approval

Secondary English-Language Arts Curriculum Adoption

May Committee of the Whole

Jen Larva, Dale Uselman, and Jackie Otway

Adoption Process

- **2021-2022**
 - Analyzed 2020 MN English-Language Arts Standards
 - Identified curricular and instructional shifts in standards
- **2022-2023**
 - Conducted Needs Assessment
 - Surveyed staff, students, families, and community members
- **2023-2024**
 - Prioritized Curriculum Needs
 - Identified needs in diverse literature, differentiated support, improved writing instruction and updated resources
 - Reviewed Resources Based on Needs
 - Reviewed 6 instructional resources using district evaluation rubric
- **2024-2025**
 - Piloted Possible Resources
 - Middle School piloted myPerspectives and Into Literature
 - High School piloted StudySync and Into Literature

Secondary ELA Selection

- **The Pilot Team:**
 - 6 middle school and 4 high school ELA teachers across grades 6-11
- **Time Invested:**
 - Teachers spent 1st, 2nd, and 3rd quarter engaging in training sessions, preparing lessons, attending check-ins, hosting walk-throughs, and implementing the resource in their practice
- **Analysis and Reflection:**
 - Staff completed a Resource Rubric and an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Rubric to reflect on the resources. Savvas and StudySync ranked high in
 - Culturally Responsive texts in each unit
 - Supporting student dialogue
 - Making real world connections
 - Standards-based lessons and assessments
- **Themed Units and Diverse Texts:**
 - Each unit revolves around an essential question that addresses universal ideas through multi-genre texts written by diverse authors
- **Aligned to MN ELA Standards:**
 - Pacing guides and assessments correlate directly to the 2020 ELA standards, providing alignment across classrooms
- **Differentiation Support:**
 - Access to professionally recorded audio, concept vocabulary with audio support, multimedia activities, teacher-facing notes to support multilingual learners, vocabulary development, and cross-curricular connections

Adoption Cost

- myPerspectives (Middle School): \$318,273.60
- StudySync (High School): \$376,673.85
- Total Cost (8 years*): **\$694,947.45**

*Through negotiations and by signing an 8 year contract, Duluth Public Schools saves over \$500,000 in cost over the next 8 years.



Questions?

- Any questions?
- Comments?
- Concerns?
- Feedback?

COW Agenda Cover Sheet

Meeting Date: May 7, 2025

Topic: MnMTSS Grant and PLC Update

Presenter(s): Jen Larva and Brenda Spartz

Attachment: [Slides](#)

Brief Summary of Presentation or Topic (no more than a few sentences):

The presentation is about Duluth Public Schools' MnMTSS Grant application and plan. It outlines the three goal and the corresponding activities. The presentation also update the board on the current work and emphasizes the continued prioritization of Professional Learning Communities.

This Requires School Board Approval : no

Duluth Public Schools

MnMTSS Grant Overview & PLC Update

Committee of the Whole

May 7, 2025



MnMTSS Grant Overview

Overview of Grant Requirements: Up to \$200,000

Requirements: Fulfilled

- Districts must have attended 6-session MnMTSS training
- Leadership team must annually conduct the SEMI-DLT using results to refine plan
- Ongoing MnMTSS professional development
- District must collaborate with MnMTSS statewide team
- Leadership meets with Regional MnMTSS lead monthly to discuss progress on action plan

Requirements: In Progress:

- Districts must identify the role responsible for MnMTSS efforts
- MnMTSS Action Plans reviewed and updated at monthly meetings
- Action plans must address all five MnMTSS component areas

Requirements: Upcoming

- School teams must use the SEMI for School Leadership Teams (SEMI-SLT)
- District must onboard future district and school leadership team members
- Roles responsible for coordination of MnMTSS participate in monthly grant coordinators community of practice and meet monthly with Regional MnMTSS lead

Purpose of securing the grant...

- Further align systems and structures to the MnMTSS Framework:



- Expansion of MnMTSS to school level
- ***Ultimately* — Better outcomes for students due to highly effective, impactful systems and structures; supporting each student, every day**

Goal 1: Overview

By July 1, 2025, Duluth Public Schools will identify MnMTSS focused staff to coordinate, lead, guide, and support MnMTSS implementation by dedicating at least 40% of their time to fulfilling key responsibilities outlined in the MnMTSS Grant for Engaged Districts.

Activities:

- Identify and assign responsibilities to one Elementary and one Secondary focused staff to coordinate the efforts
- Partner and collaborate with COMPASS and MDE support to develop capacity and expand professional networks
- Summer data retreats for CITs to conduct Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA)
- Continue development of the Duluth Public Schools MnMTSS Handbook

Goal 1: Budget

- \$120,000: 40% dedicated time of two identified coordinators for MnMTSS requirements
- \$3,900: Two half days with 26 stakeholders for handbook development
- \$56,640: CIT Summer Retreats



Goal 2: Overview

By June 30, 2026, 100% of Duluth schools will complete the SEMI-SLT as part of our comprehensive needs assessment process in the development of school improvement plans.

Activities:

- Participation in COMPASS System Leadership Pathway for District Leadership Team
- Two schools will attend School Leadership Pathway with site teams (1 Elem and 1 Secondary) and champion work across sites
- Roles responsible for coordination of MTSS will coach and support school leadership teams on CNA and School Improvement Plans (SIP)
- District representatives will attend COMPASS Summer Institute in June 2025

Goal 2: Budget

- **\$8,260:** Travel expenses and stipends for 10 district and school leaders to attend COMPASS Summer Institute June 2025
- **\$11,200:** School Leadership Pathway training stipends (\$400) for 28 staff members



Goal 3: Overview

By June 30, 2026, 100% of Duluth schools will implement and monitor progress on increasing stakeholder engagement in each site's School Improvement Plan (SIP).

Activities:

- Identified roles responsible for coordination of MnMTSS efforts will:
 - Train and support CITs through CNA process and SIP development
 - Establish expectations and monitor the implementation of the Family and Community Engagement framework
 - Engage in COMPASS Family and Community Pathway training and share learning with site leadership teams

Goal 3: Budget

- No budget line items for this goal



Timeline

- Revised application submitted April 29, 2025
- Funding award letters early May 2025
- FY25 funds available by late May 2025
 - Register for COMPASS Summer Institute
- FY26 funds available July 2025
 - Identify roles that will coordinate MnMTSS efforts
 - Plan and conduct August CIT Summer Retreats (all schools)
 - Complete other goal activities according to action plan



Professional Learning Communities (PLC) Update



PLCs

Learning Leadership Team structures based on the MnMTSS guidance:

[District Learning Leadership Teams and Structures](#)

[Elementary Learning Leadership Teams and Structures](#)

[Secondary Learning Leadership Teams and Structures](#)



Purpose: per the Elem and Secondary teaming guidance

“[PLCs] engage in detailed planning for classroom instruction & use of data to enhance effective instruction.”

PLCs play a crucial role in the MnMTSS structure!

PLCs: Essential Resources

PLC Handbook: [Professional Learning Communities Handbook](#)

Inside the handbook:

- How to get started as a team
- Guidance, rubrics, tools
- PLC Hub information and guidance
- “Critical Issues for Team Consideration” assessment

PLC Hub: [PLC Hub](#)

Inside each hub:

- PLC Dashboard: directions & linked resources
- Guiding questions
- Agenda templates: monthly tabs with weekly agendas

PLCs: 2025/2026

PLCs continue to be a priority as an essential component of the MnMTSS teaming structures for next school year.

- Continued Use of **PLC Handbook** and **PLC Hub**
- Continue **PLC Thursdays**
 - Secondary before school
 - Elementary after school
- **Increased Monitoring of Implementation**
 - By CITs with guidance and support from roles responsible for coordination of MTSS efforts
- **Focus on Priority Work and Dufour Questions**
 - What do we want our student to know and be able to do? (Teacher Clarity)
 - How do we know if they learned it? (Assessment)
 - What do we do if they do not learn it? (Intervention)
 - How do we extend learning for those who are proficient? (Extension)



Acronyms:



CIT(s): Continuous Improvement Teams

COMPASS: Collaborative Minnesota Partnerships to Advance Student Success

CNA: Comprehensive Needs Assessment

MDE: Minnesota Department of Education

MnMTSS: Minnesota Framework for Multi-Tiered System of Supports

SIP: School Improvement Plan

PLCs: Professional Learning Communities

COW Agenda Cover Sheet

Meeting Date: May 6, 2025

Topic: FY 26 Budget - first reading

Presenter(s): Simone Zunich

Attachment: Powerpoint attached

Brief Summary of Presentation or Topic (no more than a few sentences):

Executive Director Zunich will present a first reading of the FY 26 budget

This Requires School Board Approval : no

FY26 Preliminary Budget Review

Committee of the Whole
First Reading
May 6, 2025



Timeline

- April 2025 | Individual board member meetings occurred to review the 5-year forecast and the FY26 preliminary budget
- May 6 | Committee of the Whole – Budget First reading
- May 27 / Committee of the Whole –Budget Second reading (include categorical aid breakdown and basic formula aid)
- June 9 | HR/Business Services
- June 13 | Committee of the Whole – Budget Third reading (include categorical aid breakdown and final basic formula aid)
- June 17 | Regular Board Meeting – Budget Adoption
- Smaller group meetings are possible within this timeline

Summary

Overview/Definitions:

General Fund includes General (01), Transportation (03), and Operating Capital (05). Within the General and Operating Capital funds, certain revenues will have reserve requirements.

Additional funds include Food Service Fund (02), Community Service Fund (04), Construction Fund (06), Debt Service Fund (07), Trust Fund (08), Internal Service Fund (20).

The process for General Fund Revenue budgeting will include projecting and analyzing current Federal, State, and Local revenues along with forecasting legislative or local district changes to revenues.

Summary

- Basic formula allowance for FY 26 is 2.74% which translates to \$1,979,700
- The FY26 budget will be presented as a balanced budget
- We will provide the categorical aid breakdown at the 2nd reading on May 27
- Compensatory aid is reflected with the FY25 allowance. We are waiting for the FY26 Education Budget to be released.

FY26 Revenue Projections

	FY 25 Revenue	FY26 Revenue	Dollar Change
General Education Aid	\$74.5M	\$77.6M	\$3.1M
Special Education Aid	\$23.7M	\$25.9M	\$2.2M
Property Tax Levy	\$45.1M	\$43.2M	(\$1.9M)
Federal Funds	\$13.0M	\$12.8M	(\$200K)
Non-Federal Grants	\$2.3M	\$2.3M	\$0.0
Funded Programs	\$9.1M	\$8.7M	\$400K
Other Revenue	\$5.7M	\$7.5M	\$1.8M
<i>Debt Service</i>	\$28.0M	\$27.8M	\$200K
Food Service	\$6.0M	\$6.1M	\$100K
Community Education	\$8.5M	\$8.2M	\$300K

- FY26 General Fund revenue shows the basic formula increase of \$2.74%.

Additional Factors:

- Special Education Aid is based on prior year expenditures
- Property tax levy has a decrease due to LTFM prior year(s) adjustments.
- Federal Funds will hold steady unless we hear otherwise
- Funded programs are student support services, Gifted and Talented, transportation etc
- Other Revenue includes fees from patrons, student activities, miscellaneous local revenue and grants

FY26 Expense Projections

	FY25 Expense	FY26 Expense	Dollar Change
Salaries and Wages	\$85.6M	\$84.5M	(\$1.1M)
Employee Benefits	\$42.3M	\$43.1M	\$80K
Purchased Services	\$12.3M	\$12.9M	\$118K
Supplies and Materials	\$8.1M	\$8.7M	\$600K
Capital Expenditures	\$3.3M	\$4.2M	\$900K
Other Expenditures	\$427K	\$427K	\$0
Debt Service	\$27.3M	\$27.3M	\$0
Food Service	\$6.0M	\$6.1M	\$100K
Community Education	\$7.8M	\$7.7M	\$100K

- FY26 Salaries reflects a decrease due the district budget realignments. Benefits shows a slight increase over Fy 25 which reflects an increase in pension employer contribution and health insurance premiums.
- Purchased Services expense shows an increase over FY25 due to the anticipation of increased 3rd party contracts such as transportation.
- Supplies and Materials increase reflects the anticipation of increase supply and shipping costs.

Comparing Revenue to Expense

PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR 2025/2026 BUDGET

REVENUES	Proposed FY 2026 Budget	EXPENDITURES	Proposed FY 2026 Budget	Dollar Change
01 General Fund	\$139,022,981.00	01 General Fund	\$138,774,130.00	\$248,851
02 Food Service	\$6,120,000.00	02 Food Service	\$6,095,464.00	\$24,536
04 Community Service	\$8,187,495.00	04 Community Service	\$7,725,252.00	\$462,243
06 Construction		06 Construction		\$0
07 Debt Service	\$27,857,301.00	07 Debt Service	\$27,394,520.00	\$462,781
08 Trust	\$320,000.00	08 Trust	\$270,842.00	\$49,158
20 Internal Service	\$959,836.00	20 Internal Service	\$1,025,548.00	-\$65,712
79 Student Activities	\$313,509.00	79 Student Activities	\$311,758.00	\$1,751
Subtotal - Revenues	\$182,781,122.00	Subtotal - Expenditures	\$181,597,514.00	\$1,183,608

Projected Enrollment

- Analysis completed March 2025
- Due to FY24 final counts of 8,263, we are using the ADM count of 8,099

	Projected Enrollment					
	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Early Childhood/VPK	207	207	200	198	196	194
Grades K-5	3,485	3,451	3,391	3,362	3,345	3,337
Grades 6-8	1,843	1,773	1,751	1,701	1,670	1,604
Grades 9-12	2,728	2,801	2,816	2,895	2,795	2,739
Total Enrollment	8,263	8,232	8,158	8,156	8,006	7,874
Change		(31)	(74)	(2)	(150)	(132)
% Change		-0.38%	-0.89%	-0.02%	-1.84%	-1.65%
ADMWE	8,068	8,099	8,125	8,150		

Questions?