

Ensuring Exceptional Academic Outcomes for All



THE STABILITY OF A REPUBLICAN FORM OF GOVERNMENT DEPENDING MAINLY UPON THE INTELLIGENCE OF THE PEOPLE, IT IS THE DUTY OF THE LEGISLATURE TO ESTABLISH A GENERAL AND UNIFORM SYSTEM OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS. THE LEGISLATURE SHALL MAKE SUCH PROVISIONS BY TAXATION OR OTHERWISE AS WILL SECURE A THOROUGH AND EFFICIENT SYSTEM OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS THROUGHOUT THE STATE.

—ARTICLE XIII, SECTION 1;
CONSTITUTION OF THE
STATE OF MINNESOTA



Association of Metropolitan
School Districts

Minnesota's future prosperity and ability to compete successfully in the global economy is directly tied to our success in graduating every student from high school ready for college or career. Attaining this goal will require bold leadership and resources not currently provided by the State.

CURRENT REALITY

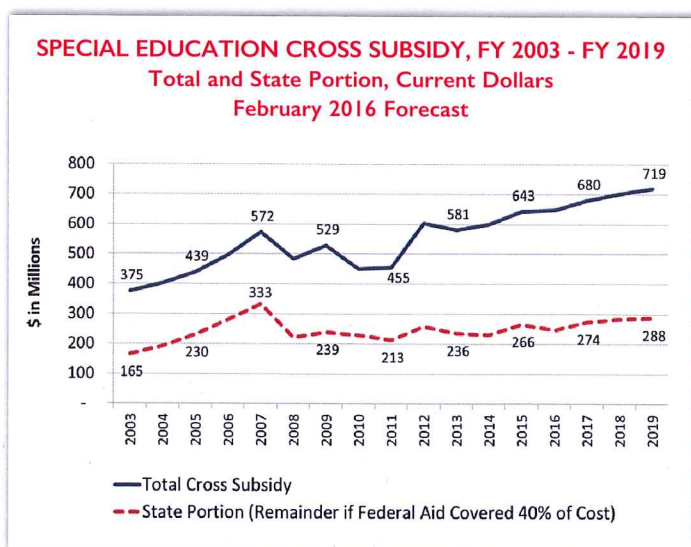
- Minnesota's education funding system does not provide adequate, equitable or reliable resources for our schools. The basic education formula would be \$550 per pupil higher today if it had simply kept pace with inflation since 2003. In fiscal year 2015, special education expenditures in Minnesota schools exceeded special education revenue by nearly \$600 million. The state share of the special education funding shortfall is almost \$275 million.
- Minnesota has significant racial disparities in employment, health care, home ownership and educational outcomes. State policymakers must acknowledge and address the historical inequities that have led to our unacceptable opportunity and achievement gaps.
- Federal and State standards for student performance and accountability are increasingly rigorous. At the same time, Minnesota students have more significant needs and challenges than ever before. The number of students eligible for English learner and special education services has risen significantly in recent years. The number of students living in poverty is at a record high and we have a growing number of homeless students. We must provide every one of these students the opportunities and resources they need to reach their full potential.

The AMSD Board of Directors has identified a series of recommendations to help Minnesota reclaim its place as a national leader in education by addressing its racial disparities, accelerating growth for students of color and other underperforming student groups, closing the achievement gap on all measures and ensuring equitable academic outcomes – high levels of achievement – for all students.

ADEQUATE, EQUITABLE AND STABLE FUNDING

Adequate, equitable and stable funding is essential to ensuring equitable academic outcomes for our students. Toward that end, the Governor and Legislature should:

- Increase the basic formula allowance and local optional revenue by at least 2.5 percent per year and index them to inflation;
- Increase special education funding to reduce the State share of the special education funding shortfall by 25 percent; and
- Allow locally-elected school boards to renew an existing operating referendum.



Data Source: Minnesota Department of Education Special Education Cross-Subsidies Report Fiscal Year 2015

INCREASE TAXPAYER EQUITY

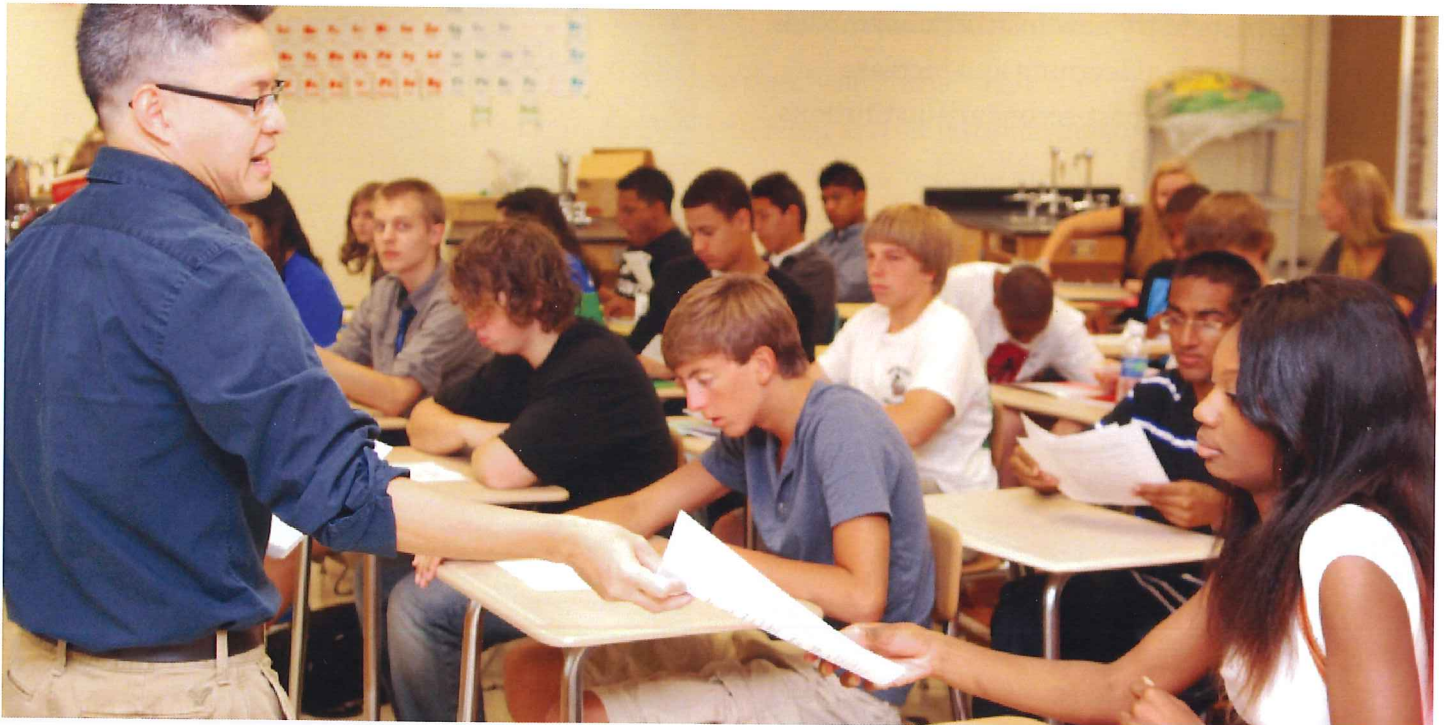
Property tax levies continue to play a critical role in funding education programs and facilities. However, these levies have widely varying impacts on local property taxpayers depending on the property wealth of the school district. These disparities should be addressed in the Omnibus Tax Bill. Specifically, the Governor and Legislature should:

- Increase equalization of the operating referendum, debt service and local optional levies to reduce taxpayer and education funding disparities.

ENHANCE EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

We must strive to have every student graduate from high school ready for college and career. Toward that end, the Governor and Legislature should:

- Increase funding for the English Learner Program to close the achievement gap and eliminate the funding shortfall;
- Expand programs and incentives to attract, develop and retain teachers, particularly teachers of color and teachers in shortage areas;
- Invest in the Extended Time and Compensatory Revenue Programs so school districts can help struggling students succeed;
- Replace the high school MCA exams with a college entrance exam to reduce standardized testing and help all students graduate from high school ready for college or career;
- Ensure all students have the opportunity to take rigorous, college preparatory classes and dual credit courses to earn college credit; and
- Increase access to school-based, pre-kindergarten programs and fully fund all required program components, including adopting the recommendation of the School Facilities Financing Working Group to establish a new school facilities improvement revenue program to allow school districts to remodel existing space and add instructional space.





ENHANCE LOCAL CONTROL TO ENCOURAGE INNOVATION

One size fits all mandates stifle innovation and creativity and consume staff time and resources. Locally-elected school boards are in the best position to work with their students, staff, parents and communities to address local needs and challenges. Specifically, the Governor and Legislature should:

- Refrain from enacting any new unfunded mandates;
- 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; and
- Allow locally-elected school boards to establish the school calendar that best meets the needs of their students and families.



ABOUT AMSD

The Association of Metropolitan School Districts represents 40 K-12 school districts, six intermediate/cooperative districts and three integration school districts. AMSD member school districts enroll over one-half of the public school students in Minnesota.

The mission of AMSD is to advocate for metropolitan school districts and advance legislation that supports student achievement. AMSD stands ready to assist state policymakers by providing current research and data to help them make informed decisions.

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