

March 2015
vol 12 ♦ no 6

March 6, 2015

Board of Directors Meeting, 7:00 a.m., Grand Hall, TIES Conference Center, St. Paul

March 27, 2015

Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting 7:30 a.m., TIES Conference Center, St. Paul

April 10, 2015

Board of Directors Meeting, 7:00 a.m., Grand Hall, TIES Conference Center, St. Paul

April 24, 2015

Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting 7:30 a.m., TIES Conference Center, St. Paul

AMSD's Mission

To advocate for state education policy that enables metropolitan school districts to improve student learning.



Association of
Metropolitan School Districts

Brooklyn Center Community Schools Uniting Communities, Eliminating Barriers and Transforming Lives through the Community Schools Model

In 2009, Brooklyn Center School District became Minnesota's first Full-Service Community Schools district, also receiving honorable recognition from the Minnesota State Legislature for its efforts. In 2010, the School Board executed the Community Schools policy for the purpose of uniting community and eliminating barriers for the overall success of youth.

A Community School is both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. Its integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development and family community engagement leads to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities. Schools become centers of the community and are open to everyone – all day, every day, evenings and weekends. Full-Service Community Schools extends its reach through civic engagement and co-located services, such as onsite community and staff clinics, family resource rooms and social service support.

Community Schools' work in concert with an array of services for students, families, and the larger community. Unlike wrap-around services, Community Schools work to ensure that needs are continually met and barriers to learning are reduced. We work to reduce those barriers through the following components: College, Career and Citizenship; Community Engagement; Early Childhood Development-Early Learning; Engaging Instruction; Expanded Learning Opportunities; Family Engagement; Health and Social Support and Youth Development.

- **College, Career and Citizenship:** The goal of every Community School is to prepare its students to be successful in life after graduation. Community Schools partner with universities and colleges to prepare middle and high school students for college; they provide students with engaging and meaningful instruction; and they create service-learning and other youth development opportunities that train students to be active citizens.
- **Community Engagement:** What separates Community Schools from other wrap-around services is the essential role of community engagement. Community Schools are built on community strengths and focus on improving the well-being of the entire community. To make this happen, Community School leaders seek and act on community input; and they work in



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From the Chair

The state budget forecast released last Friday projects a budget balance of nearly \$1.9 billion for the 2016-17 biennium. These funds provide a great opportunity for state policymakers to build on the momentum from the last two years! Our children's education is the best investment we can make to build the "World's Best Workforce." The AMSD legislative platform notes that while much was accomplished over the last two years, important work remains if we are to achieve the "thorough and efficient" education funding system envisioned in the State Constitution. The basic formula still lags well behind the rate of inflation since 2003. The special education "cross-subsidy" is nearly \$600 million and many of our school facilities are in need of repair. State policymakers have an opportunity to invest in our students' future and continue to build the foundation that will allow Minnesota to prepare the World's Best Work Force. AMSD board members stand ready to work with the Governor and legislators to achieve that common goal.

Bruce Richardson, school board member from St. Louis Park Public Schools, is chair of AMSD.

Brooklyn Center Community Schools

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partnership with grass roots community organizations. In thriving and sustainable Community School initiatives, community stakeholders help develop the vision of the Community School and oversee its implementation. Shared ownership with the community paves the way for joint accountability and success, and serves as an organic vehicle for advocacy on behalf of the Community School.

- **Early Childhood Development-Early Learning:** Children who start kindergarten ready to learn are better prepared for the challenges and opportunities ahead, and all children should have access to high-quality early childhood opportunities. Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) is an Early Childhood and Parent Education program for children from birth to 5 years old and their families. We believe that parents are a child's first and most important teacher, and offer many ways for the child and parent to learn together including classes and drop-in playtimes, new baby welcome visits and informational home visits.
- **Engaging Instruction:** Community Schools offer real-world learning opportunities. Support inside Community Schools are tailored to remove barriers that prevent a student from learning, while instilling the skills they will need for the 21st Century. Community Schools utilize partnerships with environmental organizations, local higher education institutions, businesses and others for educational activities such as urban gardening initiatives, mock banking lessons and much more.
- **Expanded Learning Opportunities:** Expanded Learning Opportunities are "activities that provide more time for academics and enrichment beyond the conventional school day (e.g., extended day, summer and after school) and include efforts to provide learning and development experiences that enhance school curriculum during the conventional school day (e.g., community-based learning, problem solving, linked learning). School staff, contracted providers, and/or community partners are responsible for providing more time and more opportunities." The 21st Century Community Learning Center grant program is one way we create innovative approaches for our youth, families, staff and the community. Examples of extended learning opportunities include: Out-of-School Time programs (academic support, enrichment programs, athletic programs, wellness programs - promoting physical activity, theater and band programs, family education programs, summer learning programs, etc.).
- **Family Engagement:** Parent and family engagement is critical to the success of children and youth. Community Schools consistently and sustainably increase parent participation in the education of their children and in their schools by empowering families providing them with a variety of supports. These include programs such as parent leadership and parenting education, GED and ELL classes, food and clothing pantries, and opportunities to participate in school decision-making. Community Schools are the hub and cultural center of many neighborhoods. They offer families activities such as cultural nights, performances, art exhibits and more.
- **Health and Social Support:** Poverty, family circumstances, limited access to health care and other social supports have a substantial impact on a student's ability to successfully learn and develop. These facts are not "excuses," they are realities that students, families, teachers, and principals address daily. Community Schools are making connections to important health and social supports by bringing community health agencies, dentists and mental health experts into schools. We offer families support on a consistent basis. These services help create the kind of supportive environment that keeps students healthy and safe and living in stable families.
- **Youth Development:** Children need enriching youth development opportunities if they are to grow into well-rounded, successful adults. Too often, the traditional school day has been dominated by math and reading, while enrichment and youth



development has been pushed to the side. In a Community School, partnerships are critical as they help design all types of innovative, fun and educational activities for students – from urban gardening programs to mentoring and internships. Young people have such varied interests and inspiring creative skills that should be acknowledged. Community Schools provide an opportunity, an outlet, for young people to explore their interests and grow into highly skilled, creative, and well-rounded adults.

As a Community Schools District, Brooklyn Center Community Schools is committed to working in partnership with parents, families and the entire community to ensure the academic, social and emotional development success of all students.

This month's member spotlight was submitted by Mark Bonine, Superintendent, Brooklyn Center Public Schools.

BROOKLYN CENTER
community
uniting communities
eliminating barriers
Schools

School Readiness Programs Get Results

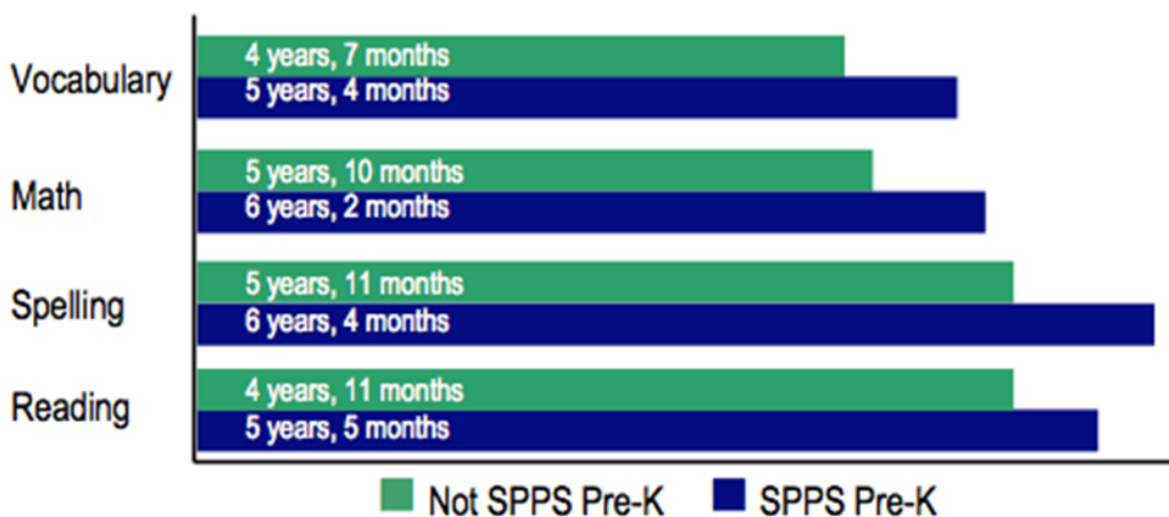
A broad array of research shows that providing students from low-income families the opportunity to attend a high quality pre-school program closes achievement gaps and offers extensive societal benefits. This overwhelming research has led to a growing interest among state policymakers to increase Minnesota's investment in quality pre-K programming. Two options have garnered a great deal of attention in the 2015 session – expanding the existing scholarship program and rapidly moving toward universal 4 year-old pre-K. A third option, significantly increasing the investment in Minnesota's School Readiness Programs, could provide a viable path to universal pre-K that immediately focuses on the students most at risk of not being ready for kindergarten, while providing school districts time to expand infrastructure and secure the teachers necessary for a universal program.

The School Readiness Program seems to be one of the state's best-kept secrets. Minnesota was ahead of the curve in 1992 when it first established the program. In fact, Minnesota's School Readiness Program has been a nation-leading example of how high-quality, school-based early learning programs can close the achievement gap and ensure that all students are prepared for kindergarten. The 1992 legislation required school districts to use the funds to serve at-risk 3 and 4 year-olds and prepare them for success in kindergarten. Children in school readiness programs, usually referred to as Pre-K, are involved in a variety of learning experiences that prepare and allow children to enter kindergarten with the skills, behavior and knowledge needed to progress and flourish. The School Readiness Program serves approximately 29,000 children, who are 3-5 year olds (approx. 19,000 are 4 year olds).

- The state has 150,000 3 and 4 year olds with approximately 40% in poverty
- School districts have been achieving strong student results with measures indicating 75%-90% readiness for kindergarten with at risk populations
- The program is based on strong public policy, but has been chronically underfunded for decades
- School Readiness Programs report that licensed teaching staff is used to deliver instruction (97% of the districts responding to survey)
- Current state funding for School Readiness is \$12 million

The results from school readiness Pre-K programs are impressive. For example, in Figure 1, data from Saint Paul Public Schools shows that students in the Pre-K program advanced in the areas of vocabulary, math, spelling and reading. Figure 2 (page 4) shows the incredible progress made by students in the Anoka-Hennepin School Readiness Preschool between the fall and spring. Figure 3 (page 4) shows that students who participated in the Bloomington/Richfield KinderPrep Program were almost twice as likely to be on track to read well by 3rd grade as were students not in the program.

Figure 1: Comparison of Kindergarten Academic Test Scores from 10 Schools Participating in Saint Paul Public Schools Pre-Kindergarten Program, First Three Cohorts (2013-14)



The graph shows the average scores of each group in terms of age-based norms.

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A Path to Universal Pre-K

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While maintaining school readiness funding for high-need students, many districts also expanded their Pre-K programs over the years so that any family could participate in Pre-K using a sliding fee scale. Last year, nearly 30,000 children statewide were served through Pre-K programs. Unfortunately, while Minnesota was an early leader in early childhood education, our state has fallen behind. School districts did not receive any additional funding for school-based preschool programs for more than 20 years. While the research continued to pile up showing the positive impact of high-quality early learning, especially for children living in poverty, investments stalled. New resources were finally allocated to school readiness programs during the 2014 Legislative Session.

The new investment allowed school districts to expand service to their most needy families. For example, through various funding sources, including grants that are now ending, Robbinsdale Area Schools opened eight new sections of Pre-K targeting at-risk children. All eight sections quickly filled up and a waiting list was soon needed because families were choosing high-quality programs from a district they trusted. Many school districts throughout the state shared a similar experience.

State policymakers have established a bold vision of universal Pre-K to prepare all students for kindergarten. Expanding Minnesota's School Readiness Program, arguably the most effective and efficient early learning program available, could provide a smooth transition to that ultimate goal.

Figure 2:
Anoka-Hennepin Student Progress in School Readiness Preschool (2013-14)

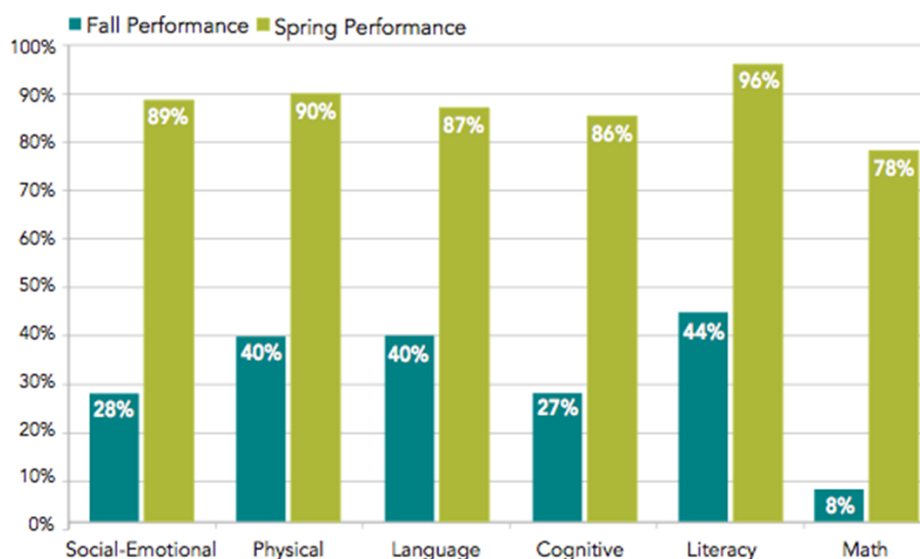
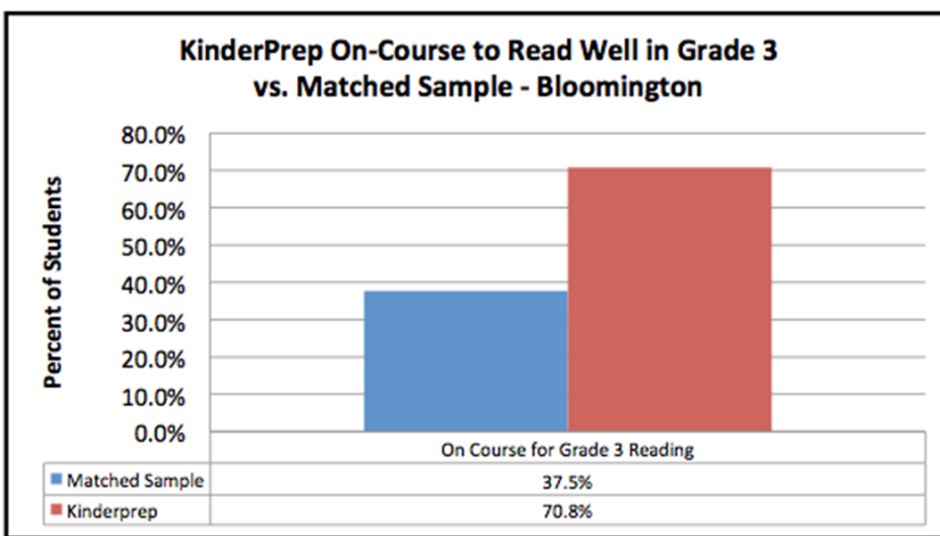


Figure 3:
Bloomington/Richfield School Districts KinderPrep On-Course to Read Well in Grade 3



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, East Metro Integration District (Associate Member), Eastern Carver County Schools, Eden Prairie Schools, Edina Public Schools, Elk River Area School District, 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, 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, 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 Educational Cooperative (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.