

MINNETONKA INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT #276
District Service Center
5621 County Road 101
Minnetonka, Minnesota

Summary of September 17, 2020 Study Session

The School Board of Minnetonka Independent School District #276 met in study session at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, September 17, 2020 in the Community Room at the District Service Center, 5621 County Road 101, Minnetonka, Minnesota. Chairperson Katie Becker presided. Also present were Board members Mark Ambrosen, John Holcomb, Mike LeSage, Christine Ritchie, Chris Vitale, Lisa Wagner, and Superintendent Dennis Peterson, ex officio.

REVIEW OF 2020 PAY 2021 PRELIMINARY LEVY

Superintendent Peterson said that Minnesota Statute requires that each school district certify a preliminary property tax levy by September 30 of the calendar year. He then called upon Executive Director of Finance and Operations Paul Bourgeois, who he said had done an enormous amount of work on the levy in the past few weeks.

Mr. Bourgeois explained that the property tax levy set at the preliminary amount is the maximum amount that the school district can levy when it certifies its final levy in December of the calendar year. Adjustments to the preliminary levy amount can only be made downward after the preliminary levy is certified. School Districts must work with the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) to calculate the levies allowed under the various statutes utilizing the MDE computerized levy system. The Certified Preliminary Levy must be physically received by the home county auditor no later than September 30, 2020.

The total levy is made up of several dozen individual levy amounts that are calculated based on formulas set in Minnesota Statute by the Legislature. Many of the levies are levies that provide partial revenue for a particular program with the remaining amount coming as a match from the State of Minnesota, and it is a requirement for the full local share to be levied in order to receive the State contribution. A reduction in those levies will result in a proportional reduction in State aid. Other levies including the Operating Referendum and Technology Levies are voter approved and determined based on the number of enrolled pupils or the value of property in the District. Finally, debt service levies are required to be calculated at 105% of debt service in order to ensure that District bond payments are met even if there are some property tax delinquencies.

Mr. Bourgeois then reviewed the following major levy categories: the Operating Referendum Revenue; the Local Optional Revenue; the Technology Referendum Revenue; the Equity Levy; the Q-Comp Levy; the Operating Capital Levy; the Instructional

Facilities Lease Levy; the Debt Service Levy; and the OPEB Bonds Levy. He also reviewed several other levies including the Transition; Career Technical Ed; Safe Schools; Ice Arena; Health and Safety; Community Education General Revenue; Early Childhood Family Education and the Home Visiting Levy. He went over prior year adjustments and also discussed the tax impact of the levy as it relates to home values in the District.

Mr. Bourgeois noted that as of this evening, the 2020 Pay 2021 Preliminary Levy is still being finalized. Initial numbers have been input, but Administration is still working with and reviewing information input by MDE. MDE has the authority to make further prior year adjustments after September 30 if they calculate a correction to a prior year adjustment. According to District figures at this time, the 2020 Pay 2021 Preliminary Levy amount is estimated at \$55,020,219.58, which is an increase of \$815,998.84 or 1.51% from the 2019 Pay 2020 Final Levy that the School Board certified in December 2019 at \$54,204,220.74.

Mr. Bourgeois also pointed out that the District has two refunding bond transactions scheduled for sale on September 22, 2020, which under current estimates could result in an additional small further reduction of the levy by between \$40,000 and \$50,000. The new payment for those refunding bonds will be added to the 2020 Pay 2021 Preliminary Levy, and the former payment for the refunded bonds will be removed.

Chairperson Becker noted that the 2020 Pay 2021 Levy would be certified at a special meeting of the Board on September 24.

ACT, SAT, IB AND AP REPORT

Director of Assessment Dr. Matt Rega began by saying that the 2019-20 school year, despite its many challenges due to COVID-19, was a truly outstanding year of achievement for Minnetonka students. On several measures of success, the District is reporting high student performance levels, and the District reached the highest levels of performance in history on some. It is also important to note that students completed AP tests online with a modified test, and IB scores reflect a combination input, both from the classroom teachers and from IB predicted calculations. Investments in the areas of professional development, use of technology, expanding academic rigor and increasing expectations, and especially the development of excellent teachers over the past 19 years have led to results that show a clear return on these investments. The ACT scores have increased over the past 19 years from 23.1, and reached the all-time high during the three-year span of 2018-2020 with a 27.7 Composite score and in 2016-17 a second highest Composite score of 27.5. The Top 100, 200, and 400 mean scores continue to be strong, while the Top 400 average yields an incredible mean score of 30.8 that competes with the top 100 scores for the elite private schools in the Twin Cities. Students are also ready for college and career posting the fourth highest percentage of students meeting all four categories in this area (70 percent).

With regards to SAT results, Dr. Rega explained that available student data reflects results from the former version of the SAT taken prior to March 2016, and the current version of the SAT, taken after March 2016. Although there are only four years' worth of historical data with the new test, the results are encouraging. Colleges and universities accept either the ACT or the SAT, so there is no need for students interested in East Coast or West Coast schools to take the SAT. There are important differences between the former SAT and the ACT Tests. For example, the SAT featured more extensive subject-area tests whereas the ACT combines all subtests into one exam. Also, the SAT was recognized as an exam that requires more abstract thinking and questions are phrased in ways that intentionally challenge students' vocabulary. Students who took the SAT before March 2016 took the former version of the test. Beginning after March 2016, the new test was administered and has a scoring scale of 1600. 87 Minnetonka students took the newer version of the test last year, and in the third year of the current version, 100 students took test, surpassing the total number of students taking the SAT the prior year, increasing from 87 to 100. Last year, 8 percent of students scored in the 1500-1599 range of the test compared to 26 percent in the previous year. 72 percent of students scored 1200 or higher last year compared to 82 percent from a year ago. There was a shift in overall score ranges, moving from 1200-1299 to 1100-1199. A score of 1500 on the SAT is comparable to a score of 33 on the ACT, with a score of 1300 translating to an ACT Composite score of 27. No matter how the data are analyzed, Minnetonka students continue to reach high levels on the new version of the SAT. However, with the decrease in SAT Composite scores for Minnetonka as a whole group, it will be important to understand individual student results to better support all students. The ACT and the current, newer version of the SAT structures questions in a more straight-forward manner, yet still holds high expectations for problem solving and abstract thought. A key change with the current SAT, other than the total score and updated subtest names, is that the new test focuses on the knowledge, skills, and understandings that research has identified as most important for college and career readiness success. This measurement is what Minnetonka students and families have grown accustomed to with the ACT.

Dr. Rega noted that IB results remain competitive compared to previous years and to World-wide averages, surpassing those averages in 18 of 32 areas. IB averages were calculated with a combination of teacher input submitted to IB with IB's predicted student performance calculation, should students have been able to complete the IB exams. IB has shared the following regarding the scoring process for 2020:

In order to award a Diploma or certificate following the cancellation of all external written components of our examinations for the May 2020 session:

- *Students complete their Internal Assessment coursework as usual.*
- *Schools submit their registered student coursework as required.*
- *Schools submit predicted grades for each subject taken by a student.*

Following the submission of the above the IB will be using historical assessment data to ensure that we follow a rigorous process of due diligence in what is a truly unprecedented situation. We will be undertaking significant data analysis from previous exam sessions, individual school data and subject data.

Every item of coursework in most subjects will be fully marked by trained and experienced Examiners. Normally, only a sample of marks in one subject from an individual school is moderated to ensure uniform standards between schools, so this is a major change for us.

Predicted grades will play a larger role in determining grades this year. Usually they provide an indication of how our schools believe this year compares to previous years which supports any changes to the overall outcomes. This year they are an active element of determining what final mark each student receives.

As a result of the statements listed above regarding students not being able to take IB exams in 2020, the results should be viewed cautiously.

Students taking AP exams completed a reduced version of the test that was 45 minutes in length and allowed for open notes. The exam consisted of short answer responses. Below is a statement from the College Board regarding 2020 AP exams:

Because creating a good testing environment at home is a challenge for some students, the exam is much shorter this year. In a year when the exam provides you with fewer questions than usual to show the extent of what you learned this year, we want to ensure you have a fair opportunity to show what you know and earn college credit. AP teachers will have the chance to review your score and your exam responses this summer. If you don't receive a score of 3 or higher and your teacher is convinced you should have, your teacher will be able to engage with the AP Program's college faculty partners to review and confirm your score, ensuring it's fair and appropriate.

Dr. Rega noted that AP results also remain competitive compared to Global averages, surpassing those averages in 27 of 34 areas. For the IB Program, the number of students participating in at least one IB course decreased from 721 to 700 students during the 2019-2020 school year. In addition, the number of students taking multiple IB courses decreased from 305 to 215 students taking two or more IB courses. After a three-year drop, IB SL average test scores improved from 2.9 to 4.3, a second all-time high. The IB Math HL average increased as well, improving from 3.4 last year to 3.7 in 2020, consistent with historical results. The average IB Biology SL increased from 4.9 to 5.4, which is an all-time high scoring average. Bio HL remained the same, with an average score of 4.9, tying a second all-time high. IB Physics showed an increase in students from 35 to 66, with an increase in average score from 4.2 to 4.8, which is an all-time high average. IB English scores have improved with Language and Literature SL increasing from a 5.1 to 5.6 points, an all-time high. The Literature & Performance average increased slightly from

4.2 in 2019 to 4.4 in 2020, marking three years in a row of increase. English HL scores remained strong with an average score of 5.1 on the seven-point scale, maintaining an all-time high score.

AP Science means increased on three of seven tests: Biology, Chemistry, and Physics 1 decreased. Chemistry has experienced a drop for three straight years, beginning at an all-time high score of 3.7 in 2017 and decreasing to 2.8 by 2020. This was the most significant drop in Science scores, with significant increases in Physics C-Mechanics (0.6 point increase) and Environmental Science (0.3 point increase). AP Math means increased in one of three areas with two of the subjects keeping pace with scores from last year: Statistics increased by 0.1 points and Calculus AB and BC remained steady after improving from the prior year. Computer Science A dropped from 3.5 to 3.3 points, and Computer Science Principles saw a 0.2 point drop in average scores. The fluctuation in student participation can impact the results from one year to the next. Computer Science Principles showed an increase from 18 students in 2019 to 62 students in 2020. AP languages showed an increase in two of five areas with a significant increase of 0.8 points for French, tying an all-time high average score of 4.4 points. After a strong improvement with average Spanish scores a year ago, there was a drop in 2020, decreasing from 4.4 points to 4.2 points. There was also a significant increase in enrollment, moving from 155 to 235 students.

Overall, the AP program saw enrollment increase from 1,475 to 1,639, which is an all-time high, and an increase in the number of tests taken from 2,595 to 2,829. The percentage of students scoring a three or higher on the five-point scale increased from 83.2 to 85.2 percent. The number of National AP Scholars increased from 62 to 66 students and the number of AP Scholars with Distinction also increased from 231 to 278 students. This means that students reached a mean of 3.5 on all AP exams and earned a grade of three or higher on five or more exams.

The profile of the VANTAGE Statistics student is slightly different than that of the non-VANTAGE student. According to the AP Stats results, the average ACT for a VANTAGE student who took the AP Stats Test is 27.2, and the average ACT for the non-VANTAGE student is 27.8. The VANTAGE student taking the same test had an average score of 2.66, compared to the non-VANTAGE student who scored 2.97. It can be concluded that students taking the VANTAGE course earned strong average scores on the AP test as a result of their experience in VANTAGE. There were no IB Business SL scores to report for non-VANTAGE students, thus no year to year comparison. An important point to note, AP Psychology average scores were higher for VANTAGE students, despite this group of students having a lower average ACT and a lower average GPA compared to non-VANTAGE students. It will be important for VANTAGE instructors to continue to ensure alignment among the courses in which they teach and the IB and AP exams.

Dr. Rega concluded his report by offering the following recommendations:

- Teachers will need to study the new SAT Test as the changes are more aligned with the Career and College Readiness Standards.
- Math teachers will need to focus on the three areas critical for success on the ACT Math Test: Pre-Algebra/Elementary Algebra, Intermediate Algebra/Coordinate Geometry; and Plan Geometry/Trigonometry.
- The Science Department will need to continue to look carefully at how problem-solving skills can be better integrated into the Science curriculum and continue to study course options for all students.
- World Language teachers will continue to focus on studying the AP Exams carefully to ensure student success each year.
- VANTAGE instructors will need to monitor changes made to curriculum and assignments in order to support students and address the differences in test results.

REVIEW OF DRAFT OF ANNUAL REPORT

Dr. JacQueline Getty, Executive Director of Communications, began by saying that the District publishes an annual report every October. Minnetonka uses this report as a primary tool to communicate District goals, results and accountability to parents and citizens of the District. Dr. Getty said that Minnetonka's annual report is far more comprehensive than the report of most Districts and includes financial data, reports on Innovation initiatives, and student achievement beyond test scores. Per state guidelines, the report also includes elements required by the World's Best Workforce bill, which was passed in 2013 to ensure every school district in the state is making strides to increase student performance. Each district must report on the following five goals:

1. All children are ready for school.
2. All third-graders can read at grade level.
3. All racial and economic achievement gaps between students are closed.
4. All students are ready for career and college.
5. All students graduate from high school.

The Board then received an early draft of the report and discussed the outline, content and key messages contained within. Suggestions included adding hotlinks to the pdf of the annual report that is posted online, more information regarding the students who are choosing the military after high school, and more clarity regarding the District's recent purchase of iPads for students in Grades K-3. The image for the cover art was also chosen.

Chairperson Becker noted that the report will be officially approved at the Board's regular meeting on October 1 and then printed and distributed immediately thereafter.

CITIZEN INPUT

Chairperson Becker extended an invitation to members of the audience who wished to address the Board on any topic. She also read the guidelines for Citizen Input, for the benefit of those who wished to comment.

The following people then addressed the Board:

- Excelsior resident Britney Busse – spoke of her concerns regarding the Board’s Goal 2, including that the Goal places too much emphasis on value systems – she is afraid the District’s quality will decline.
- Chanhassen resident Cindy Pugh – praised Dr. Peterson for his leadership, and also expressed concerns regarding Goal 2, including possible training sessions with an agenda of white privilege and critical race theory.
- Shorewood resident Michelle Ebben – also had concerns regarding Goal 2. She expressed her belief that our youth are entitled to a politically neutral education, and the classroom should be a safe place to express any and all ideas. She is concerned about the current cancel culture, believing it to be the opposite of inclusion and acceptance.
- Excelsior resident James Johnson – also had concerns regarding Goal 2, noting his belief that equity in education will be a disservice to students of color, and gives those students an excuse not to achieve. He believes that equity initiatives stress passion over reason, and dogma over data.
- Eden Prairie resident Jessica Reader – also had concerns regarding Goal 2. She wants the Board to define equity and explain in more detail why it chose equity as a goal. She objected to mandatory training sessions that she believes push white privilege and critical race theory. Focusing on students’ differences only fosters division.
- St. Louis Park resident Cindy Shelton – also had concerns regarding Goal 2. Her children open enroll to Minnetonka, and she moved them from Edina Schools due to their equity program there. She noted that Edina’s test scores have declined since the program was implemented, and the achievement gap has actually increased. Students in Edina with views supporting a specific political party were shamed.
- Chanhassen resident Dr. John Odom – also had concerns regarding Goal 2. He expressed his desire that the Board focus their curriculum on excellence vs. equity. He noted that the teaching of morals, values, and personal responsibility should happen in the home.

Chairperson Becker thanked all the members of the community for their comments. She noted that the Board’s focus will always be on academic excellence. She said the District’s academic program will not suffer in any way, nor will the Board change the District’s focus on providing an outstanding academic experience. She noted that the Board sees equity through a lens of excellence—and will continue to do so. The Board’s

goals are for the District to support the academic, social and emotional needs of all students to the best of its ability.

DISCUSSION ON BOARD'S COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE AND BELONGING

The Board held a discussion on its draft statement regarding its commitment to excellence and belonging:

A Commitment to Excellence and Belonging

The Minnetonka Public School District believes that students who feel a sense of belonging or connectedness to their school are more likely to experience success inside and outside the classroom. The School Board, District Leadership, teachers and staff commit to working tirelessly to provide a school environment where all students feel safe, welcome, supported and accepted. As a District, we will strive to make sure each student feels heard, respected, included, valued and connected to our community—a feeling that they belong.

The District believes that diversity and equity strengthen Minnetonka Schools and commits to the following:

- *Deepening our understanding of racial and socio-economic factors in academic performance.*
- *Discovering new strategies for closing all achievement gaps.*
- *Providing students with the tools, opportunities and support for success in high school and preparation for beyond high school, whether their post high school plans are to choose 2-year or 4-year college, trade school, technical college, the military or employment.*
- *Providing teaching and learning to allow each student to achieve excellence where personal and academic achievement will flourish.*
- *Programs and services will be in place at all schools in our District to ensure that student academic performance will not fall into patterns identifiable by factors such as race, ethnicity, English language proficiency, socio-economic status, religion, sexual orientation or disability.*

After discussion, the following modifications to the statement were agreed upon:

1. Add the following opening statement: *The Minnetonka School Board has a vision for world class, child centered excellence.*
2. Replace the second paragraph with the following language: *In order to support excellence and belonging, the District commits to the following:*
3. Reorder the bulleted statements in the following manner:
 - *Providing students.....*
 - *Programs and services will be in place.....*

- *Providing teaching and learning.....*
 - *Deepening our understanding.....*
 - *Discovering new strategies.....*
4. An additional bullet to address the need that students have for connection will be written by Board member Holcomb and inserted after bullet #3
 5. The word “closing” will be changed to “eliminating”

DISCUSSION ON BOARD’S ACTION PLAN, RESOURCE GUIDE AND WEBSITE RELATIVE TO GOAL 2

The Board reviewed draft pages of the proposed website, action plan and resource guide relative to Goal 2. After discussion, it was agreed that Board members would send their recommended changes to Chairperson Becker, who would then compile them and submit them to the District’s Communications Department. Revised pages will then be carried in to the Board’s special meeting on September 24, and further discussion and/or approval will take place at that time.

REVIEW OF POLICIES RELATED TO GOAL 2

The following policies, with recommended changes by Administration, were presented to the Board for a first reading:

- 504: Student Dress and Grooming Code
- 514: Bullying Prohibition
- 534: Equal Educational Opportunity
- 604: Inclusive Education Program
- 606: Instructional Material Review, Selection and Use
- 607: Controversial Topics and Materials

After a brief discussion, it was agreed that Policy #504 would be presented for a first reading this evening, and the other policies would be brought to the October Study Session for a first reading.

Dr. Peterson then read Policy #504 and explained his rationale for the changes he was recommending to the policy. He noted that many of the recommended additions were coming from the MSBA’s Model Policy on Student Dress.

After discussion, the Board agreed to the following changes/additions, in addition to those recommended by Dr. Peterson:

- Letter H - Add “student is notified” to 2nd Offense and 3rd Offense boxes
- Letter I does not need its own callout

- The District's Policy #427: Harassment and Violence should be added to the list of cross references

ADJOURNMENT

The Board adjourned the Study Session at 10:40 p.m.

/cyv