

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

**Summary of November 18, 2021 Study Session**

The School Board of Minnetonka Independent School District #276 met in study session at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, November 18, 2021 in the Community Room at the District Service Center, 5621 County Road 101, Minnetonka, Minnesota. Chairperson Chris Vitale presided. Other Board members present were: Mark Ambrosen, Katie Becker, Mike LeSage, John Odom, Lisa Wagner and Superintendent Dennis Peterson, ex officio. Absent: John Holcomb.

**REPORT ON NWEA FALL RESULTS**

Director of Assessment Dr. Matt Rega led the discussion. He explained that the NWEA is an adaptive test that measures what students are ready to learn in the areas of Math and Reading. This is the fourteenth year of district-wide implementation. The following are key summary points in the analysis of the Fall 2021 administration of the NWEA:

- Most grade levels saw increased RIT scores in Math compared to Fall 2020.
- For students who are Limited English Proficient (LEP), Fall scores rebounded with average RIT scores improving in 8 out of 18 areas with four areas showing improvement in both Math and Reading.
- According to Reading non-cohort data, Immersion students surpassed their same grade counterparts from the Fall of 2020 in 9 of 22 areas.
- Math non-cohort data show that Immersion students surpassed their same grade counterparts from the Fall of 2020 in 18 of 27 areas
- For Reading, 12 of the 22 Immersion cohorts met Fall-to-Fall growth targets.
- For Math, 24 of 27 Immersion cohorts met Fall-to-Fall growth targets.
- The longer students are in Minnetonka Schools the more likely they are to make more than a year's worth of growth in one year. The acceleration becomes evident in Third and Fourth Grade and then accelerates greatly after Fourth Grade.
- More students are reaching the upper limits of the NWEA Test by middle school more than ever before ("Beyond Twelfth Grade"). The average Seventh Grader is performing at or beyond the Twelfth Grade level in Math and Reading.

The NWEA assessments were completed in September and October with schools conducting grade level meetings and data discussions to review the data. Teachers use this information to guide instruction and set goals for the school year.

This is the eighth year that Grades 2-5 and middle school students took the NWEA MAP Reading Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Assessment. NWEA changed to the common core assessment due to Minnesota Department of Education's shift to the MCA III Reading. The MCA III Reading is aligned to the Common Core State Standards.

Throughout this report, there are data indicating increases among certain grade level average RIT scores compared to the Fall of 2020, indicating a rebound from decreasing RIT scores due to the COVID pandemic that has impacted school districts since March of 2020. This is important to understand as there is clear evidence that the students return to school in a relatively typical learning environment has positively impacted student performance.

This year is a unique year regarding student performance. The new 2020 norms were created with student data from 2015-2018. Students testing this Fall will have percentiles that are compared to students from a norming group who tested under typical conditions during the latest NWEA norms study. It is predictable that students testing this Fall will have lower than typical percentiles, because current student performance during the COVID pandemic does not compare in the same manner as student performance has compared in the past. Like any year when new norms are introduced, the results should be viewed cautiously. Due to the current environment, it is recommended that the results from 2020 are considered baseline and a new trend in student performance continuing this Fall should be monitored since the onset of the pandemic.

Despite predictions from the NWEA organization, Minnetonka students flourished in Math, even though it was predicted that Math would suffer more than Reading. Overall Math scores improved in more areas in Reading, and both subjects saw notable improvements.

### Summary of Results

- Minnetonka First through Eighth Grade students are coming to school ahead of grade level. Primary teachers lay the foundation and the intermediate teachers can build on it very quickly. For example, in the Fall, a Second Grade student is in the middle of the Second Grade year for Reading and the beginning of Third Grade year for Math. However, after students have been exposed to the academic program over the course of several years and Immersion students begin their English language instruction, the performance of students truly begins to reflect the rigorous academic program in place within the District.
- According to Fall results, Fourth Grade student performance begins to increase at a faster pace compared to the nation, and Fifth Grade students are performing two years above grade level.
- As Minnetonka students move into the middle school the acceleration of the middle school student is evident. For example, a typical Minnetonka Seventh Grade student is performing “beyond the Twelfth Grade” level at the beginning of Grade Seven according to the NWEA results. If a student is on grade level and performing at the Seventh Grade he or she will notice a significant difference in performance when his or her peers are four grade levels ahead of that individual.

Dr. Rega then walked the Board through the data, showing specific grade-level and cohort results, comparing resident students to open-enrolled students, and showing results for Limited English Proficient students as well. He also shared data regarding e-learning

students and noted they were performing on a similar level with their in-person peers. Dr. Rega concluded his report by offering the following recommendations for action:

- Utilize NWEA Learning Continuum and Student Profile for general education teachers as well as interventionists (ELL, Special Education, Title 1)
- Utilize Proliftic Software to analyze data and predictive performance toward Minnesota State Standards
- Focus on MCA Test Specifications in accordance with Learning Continuum
- Focus on Essential Learnings in Reading and Math
- Analyze the following data:

K-1 Reading and Math cohort

Reading 4<sup>th</sup> Grade cohort

Monitor test duration and address appropriate duration with students

## **REVIEW OF NEW COURSE PROPOSALS, CHANGES AND DELETIONS**

Assistant Superintendent for Instruction Amy LaDue, MHS Associate Principal Justin Sawyer, and Director of Curriculum Steve Urbanski presented this item to the Board. Ms. LaDue noted that all new course proposals have been reviewed by department chairs, building administration, district administration, and the Teaching and Learning Advisory Committee. Courses that are approved by the School Board will be included in the Skipper Log and available to students as they register for the 2022-23 school year. Course development and implementation funds will be allocated if the course has sufficient enrollment.

### **Department Proposals**

The following proposals respond to programmatic needs that have been identified by the respective departments and administration. Full descriptions and rationales for these new courses are included in the New Course Proposals attachment.

| <b>Course Title</b>  | <b>Grade(s)</b> |
|--|-----------------|
| Automotive Braking Systems   | 10-12           |
| Automotive Career Investigation  | 9-12            |
| Automotive Electrical/Electronic Systems                               | 10-12           |
| Automotive Engine Performance  | 10-12           |
| Automotive Steering and Suspension Systems                             | 10-12           |
| CIS College Algebra  | 11-12           |
| Disability Studies   | 11-12           |
| Engineering Design and Development                                     | 12              |
| Forensic Science   | 11-12           |
| Mathematics of Home Renovation/Home Renovation and Applied Mathematics | 11-12           |
| Metal Sculpture 2  | 9-12            |
| The Geology and Biomes of US Parks and Forests                         | 10-12           |

|                    |       |
|--------------------|-------|
| VANTAGE Education  | 11-12 |
| Virtual Enterprise | 11-12 |

Course Removal List

Each year courses that have not reached the minimum student enrollment for three years in a row, or that have been replaced by new courses, are removed from the Skipper Log. AP Physics 1 (AP 316 and AP 318) will not be included in the 2022-23 *Skipper Log*. Building and District administration will continue to monitor courses that have not run for subsequent years.

Course Title Changes

Departments have recommended revising several course titles to more accurately reflect the content of the courses and course sequences. The proposed and current titles are listed below

| <b>Proposed Title</b>                | <b>Current Title</b> |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Automotive Investigation             | Auto 1               |
| Unified PE                           | Integrated PE        |
| TO Personal and Family Relationships | TO Relationships     |
| Textiles & Applied Design            | Quilting             |

In the discussion that followed, Board members asked questions regarding the interaction between students with different levels of ability in the Disability Studies course, the process for students in the automotive courses to receive ASE Certification, the possibility of partnering with the future new Hennepin County Medical Examiners facility on Highway 62, whether some of the new courses would have an online option, and the input received from the Student Advisory Group at MHS.

**SECOND READING OF POLICY #709: STUDENT TRANSPORTATION POLICY**

Executive Director of Finance and Operations Paul Bourgeois presented this item to the Board. He explained that several clarifications regarding the contracting out of several of the items in the policy to the District’s contracted vendor for student transportation were being presented for the Board’s review. These changes reflect actual practices for bus driver training, licensing, and ongoing safety training as all buses are driven by the employees of the contracted vendor, in this case, First Student. Mr. Bourgeois also noted that this policy had been presented to the Board for discussion at the Study Session in October, and Board members had asked for more time to review the recommended changes.

In the discussion that followed, Board members indicated they were in support of the recommended changes. Chairperson Vitale noted that the policy would be brought back to the December 2 regular meeting for approval.

## **CITIZEN INPUT**

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

The following individuals then addressed the Board:

Bloomington resident Elizabeth Pillai spoke regarding her concern with certain English texts that are required reading at MHS

Minnetonka resident Josh Larson spoke in support of mask choice and medical mask exemptions

Minnetonka student Emilia Esch spoke in support of mask choice for students

Minnetonka resident Alan Arlt spoke regarding the Safe Learning Plan and how the District is tracking students who are contracting COVID

Excelsior resident Nicole Nejezchleba spoke against quarantining of students and in support of medical mask exemptions

Chanhassen resident Faith Staut spoke regarding her concerns with how the District is presenting its COVID-19 data and the timing of Citizen Input at Study Sessions

Excelsior resident Kathryn Bonine spoke in support of mask choice

Excelsior resident Kristen Hanson spoke in support of mask exemptions for special needs children

Excelsior resident Kathryn Rogness spoke in support of mask exemptions for special needs children

Minnetonka resident Carrie Hahn spoke about the impact of ableism and how it is a consequence of insufficient efforts in the areas of diversity, equity and inclusion

Excelsior resident Kara Tyler requested greater transparency in District communications regarding COVID transmission in school

Chairperson Vitale thanked the speakers for their comments.

## **REVIEW OF SELF-INSURANCE FUND**

Mr. Bourgeois led the discussion. He explained that the District has had a Self-Insurance Fund for health and dental insurance since Fiscal Year 2001 (FY2001), being established on July 1, 2000. In the 19 fiscal years since FY2002 after the fund established its reserve, average premium increases have been 3.51%, significantly below regional health insurance cost trends.

For FY2022, the School Board retained premiums for health insurance coverage and dental insurance coverage at the same level as FY2021. For FY2021, premiums for health insurance were increased 2.2%, with the rates set in February 2020 before the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on health insurance expenses were known. Dental insurance rates from FY2020 were retained for FY2021.

The COVID-19 Pandemic shutdown of schools from March 16 through the end of the FY2020 school year had a significant impact on the Self-Insurance Fund in terms of its financial performance, as claims during that period dropped off significantly while fixed revenue premiums continued to be received. Expenditures per member per month dropped to \$377.57 in FY2020, down from \$474.14 in FY2019. Fiscal Year 2021 saw continued muted health insurance claims, with expenditures per member per month of \$410.4, which was an increase from the \$377.57 rate for FY2020 but remaining significantly below the \$474.14 amount for FY2019. The Self Insurance Plan took in \$16,947,029 in revenues, which was an increase of \$762,768 or 4.7% over FY2020. Covered lives increased 5.1% from 2,240 to 2,355, with the remainder of revenue resulting from the mix of health plans chosen. The Self Insurance Plan incurred \$15,107,438 in expenses, which was an increase of \$1,963,832 or 14.9% more than the COVID-19-suppressed level of FY2020, but approximately even with the total expenses of FY2019. The Self Insurance Plan incurred a cash surplus of \$1,839,590.52 for FY21, which followed on a cash surplus of \$3,040,655 for FY2020. Both of those surpluses were a result of the COVID-19-suppressed level of health care activity during the pandemic.

Moving forward in to FY2022 and thereafter, the Self-Insurance Fund is in a very strong position. The cash balance was \$12,079,142 on June 30, 2021, while the Fund Balance after accruing for liabilities stands at \$9,733,876, of which \$3,453,482 is Designated for Umbrella Stop Loss Gap Coverage to 25% of Claims and \$6,280,394 is Unassigned.

Looking forward, it is anticipated that claims will accelerate back up to and possibly above prior projections as people go to the doctors for procedures that might have been delayed because of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Claims on a per-member-per-month basis for the first four months of FY2022 were running 13.2% higher than the first four months of FY2021, which tends to support that assumption of increased activity. It is probable that the increased activity for FY2022 will use up some of the Self-Insurance Fund Balance.

For FY2023, the District must set rates at the first Board Meeting in March 2022, so that rates can be communicated to employees by April 1, 2022, which is 90 days prior to them becoming effective. The 90-day advance notice is a requirement of the Affordable Care Act. The District Self-Insurance Advisory Committee will be meeting in December, January, and February to come up with recommended health and dental rates for the School Board's consideration at the first Board Meeting in March 2022.

Chairperson Vitale thanked Mr. Bourgeois for the presentation.

## **REVIEW OF 2021-26 ENROLLMENT PROJECTIONS**

Superintendent Peterson noted that this was a discussion the Board had been having every year at this time since he had come to the District in 2001. He said that this discussion supported the Board's primary job, which is to secure resources to run the District's programs. He said the effort to open up the District's schools to open enrollment has brought in millions of dollars to the District, and that revenue has been used for programs to benefit all students. He then presented a draft of actual, projected and target

enrollment data for Board review and discussion. He explained the methodology he used to update the projections that he said were based on the current year's enrollment figures and extended out to the 2025-26 school year. He noted that the Board's decision to cap enrollment at 11,100 going forward was also factored into the projections.

### **DISCUSSION ON SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH PROCESS**

Chairperson Vitale said that the Board would be discussing the timing and process to begin the search to replace Superintendent Peterson, who would be retiring at the end of the current school year. He said he had been in conversation in the past few days with both the District's legal counsel and MSBA (Minnesota School Boards Association). MSBA offers a two-hour virtual workshop on the recommended process for a superintendent search, and they also function as an independent search firm. Mr. Vitale noted that while there is no requirement that the Board conduct a search, the District's legal counsel had recommended the use of a search firm.

After discussion, it was agreed to form a Board sub-committee to lead the process, composed of Board members Wagner, Becker, and Odom. Board member Wagner will chair the committee, and will reach out to search firms to ask for RFPs in the coming days. The sub-committee will report regularly to the Board on its progress.

### **REVIEW OF VISION DOCUMENT**

The Board reviewed pages 1-9 of the Vision document and agreed on several revisions. Executive Assistant Carrie Voeltz will compile the recommended changes and email them to the Board. The review of the document will continue at the December 16 Study Session.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

The Board adjourned the Study Session at 9:50 p.m.