

AMSD Platform Calls for Stabilizing Funding

The 2021 legislative session convenes on January 5 and the primary focus of the session will be the adoption of the biennial budget. It is a critical session for public education.

Over the past year, school districts have been working to meet the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers, staff, administrators and school board members have stepped up to meet the needs of their communities including providing free childcare for essential workers and serving breakfast and lunch to students. One-time federal CARES Act funding has provided critical funding and helped mitigate the impact of these costs as well as helping school districts provide students with devices and internet connectivity to engage in distance or hybrid learning.

The challenges for education don't end there.

Prior to COVID, AMSD's Reimagine Minnesota initiative had highlighted the importance of addressing Minnesota's significant racial disparities and opportunity gaps. The events of 2020 — the death of George Floyd and the national civil unrest — have magnified the urgency of addressing these disparities and gaps.

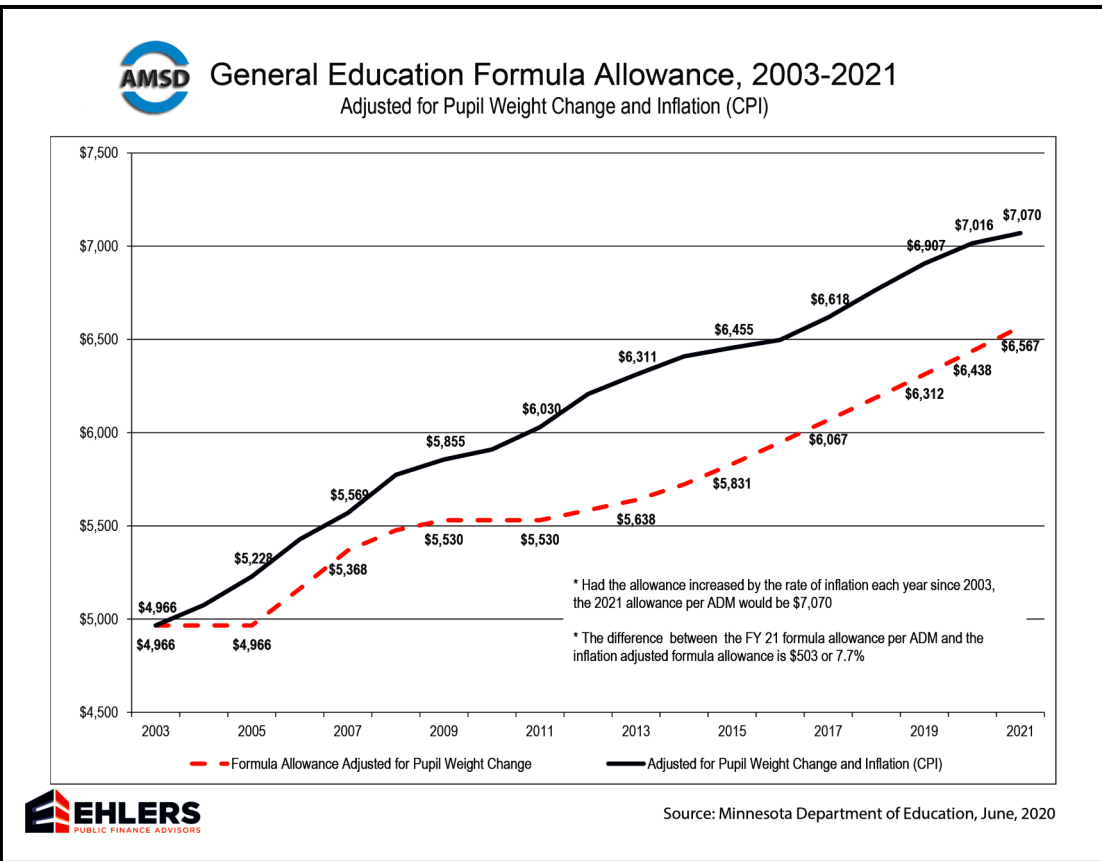
To address these and other important issues, the Association of Metropolitan School Districts Board of Directors adopted a legislative platform focused on five key areas:

Stabilizing Education Funding. Stable education funding remains a key priority for AMSD member school districts. In addition, the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic brought additional unforeseen costs and challenges that will need to be addressed by state policymakers.

In 2019, the Minnesota Department of Education convened a School Finance Working Group, which last month released a comprehensive set of recommendations that would stabilize the education funding system. The recommendations would reduce

reliance on state aid and revenue from voter-approved operating referendums by establishing an equalized local levy and recognizing cost differentials related to geographic location and district size. The AMSD Board of Directors recognizes that the current budget situation will require that these recommendations be phased in over time.

Key among those recommendations is to link the basic formula to inflation to provide a stable and consistent funding stream that allows school boards and administrators to engage in long-range planning. As the chart to the left shows, the basic formula has lost significant ground to inflation since 2003. In addition, AMSD is urging lawmakers to mitigate the impact of the enrollment decline that is a direct result of the COVID-19 impact. School districts adopted budgets last spring that were based on enrollment projections available at that time.



The basic funding formula would be \$503 per pupil higher for 2021 if it had kept up with inflation