

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

Summary of March 17, 2026 Study Session

The School Board of Minnetonka Independent School District #276 met in study session at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 17, 2026 in the Community Room at the District Service Center, 5621 County Road 101, Minnetonka, Minnesota. Board Chairperson Kemerie Foss presided. Board members present were Sally Browne, Karen Jordan, Taunya Kolbinger, Dan Olson, Mike Remucal, Meghan Selinger and Superintendent David Law, ex officio. Student School Board representative Sierra Lindemann was also present. The Study Session was livestreamed on the District's YouTube channel.

CITIZEN INPUT

Chairperson Foss 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 speak.

No one responded to this invitation to speak.

UPDATE ON IMMERSION CURRICULUM REVIEW PROCESS

Associate Superintendent for Instruction Amy LaDue, Director of Academic Programs Elida Kane, and Literacy Coordinator Alyssa Rutherford presented this item to the Board. They provided an update on the District's K–12 Immersion programming, including current program structures, curriculum review work related to partner-language literacy, and ongoing efforts to strengthen instructional resources and assessments for students enrolled in the District's Spanish and Mandarin Chinese immersion programs.

Established in 2007, Minnetonka's immersion program provides students with the opportunity to develop high levels of bilingualism, biliteracy, and cultural competency while meeting rigorous academic standards. Students begin immersion programming in elementary school and have opportunities to continue their partner language learning through middle school and high school coursework.

Review and Improvement Process

Minnetonka Public Schools maintains a comprehensive curriculum review process to strengthen instruction and ensure alignment with district priorities and state standards and requirements. As part of this process, the District established a K–12 Immersion Review

Committee to align immersion programming with updated English Language Arts standards, district literacy priorities, and integrate evidence-based literacy instruction.

The review process has engaged multiple collaborative teams composed of immersion teachers including department chairs and grade-level expanded chairs along with administrators, and district leaders. These teams evaluated current programming which included curriculum, standards, and existing instructional resources along with assessment results. From this evaluation, opportunities to strengthen curriculum and instruction across the immersion program were identified. The inclusion of the K–12 expanded grade-level chairs model ensured representation from each respective immersion site and grade level, allowing classroom perspectives to inform both curricular decisions and professional learning priorities.

Over the past two years, the review committees have conducted a comprehensive needs assessment examining new Minnesota English Language Arts standards alongside evidence-based literacy practices specific to dual language immersion programs. With language arts instruction delivered exclusively in the partner language in grades K–2, and with a high percentage of partner-language instruction continuing through grades 3–8, the review teams focused on identifying which literacy skills are cross-linguistic and which demand language-specific teaching.

This analysis led to the identification of areas for improvement across grade levels. Review teams prioritized standards, identified essential learnings, and began revising instructional units and assessments, and identified instructional resources to support the guaranteed and viable curriculum. Committee members also participated in professional learning focused on evidence-based practices for language and biliteracy development.

During the past year:

- Spanish immersion elementary teachers piloted literacy resources identified through the Minnesota READ Act Curriculum Review Series.
- Chinese immersion elementary teachers piloted revisions to literacy screening assessments, updated scope and sequence, and integrated explicit instruction in character recognition and fluency.
- Secondary Spanish and Chinese immersion teachers aligned unit plans and assessments with district language proficiency expectations and English Language Arts courses.

While initial implementation of updated curriculum and instructional resources will begin during the 2026–27 school year, refinement and monitoring will continue in subsequent years. In addition, guidance from the Minnesota Department of Education's newly established Dual Language Advisory Committee (March 2026) may inform future adjustments to ensure alignment with emerging state guidance. Immersion teacher

participation on district math and social studies curriculum review committees will also support continued program alignment across subject areas.

MN Standards in Language Arts

The Minnesota Academic Standards in English Language Arts are organized into three strands: Reading; Writing; Listening, Speaking, Viewing, and Exchanging Ideas (LSVE). These strands guide the development of foundational literacy skills including decoding, vocabulary development, comprehension, writing across disciplines, and effective communication. Twenty anchor standards remain consistent across grade levels, while grade-specific benchmarks outline the language arts knowledge and skills students are expected to develop as they progress through school.

Within Minnetonka's immersion program, these standards serve as an important framework for developing literacy in both English and the partner language. The standards emphasize foundational literacy skills, engagement with diverse texts and perspectives, writing for multiple purposes, and strong communication skills. Alongside the ACTFL standards for world language learning, these elements support the development of biliteracy, critical thinking, and effective communication across languages and cultures.

Because students in Kindergarten through Grade 2 immersion programming receive language arts instruction in Spanish or Mandarin Chinese exclusively and grades 3 through 8 receive a significant portion of their instruction in the partner language, the curriculum review committee carefully examined how the ELA standards apply within different linguistic structures. For example, Mandarin Chinese is a character-based logographic language, while Spanish and English are alphabetic languages. As a result, foundational literacy instruction must address language-specific skills.

To support this work:

- Spanish immersion teams are piloting new structured literacy resources aligned with evidence-based approaches to Spanish literacy development.
- Chinese immersion teams have revised the scope and sequence of the curriculum to ensure a systematic and sequential approach as well as ensuring explicit instruction related to phonological awareness, character recognition, and development of fluency with high-frequency characters.
- Grade 3-5 English teachers of immersion students have implemented *Functional Phonics and Morphology* to address English-specific word recognition skill development.

Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum

Minnetonka's immersion curriculum extends beyond state standards by integrating district priorities and research-based instructional design. Consistent with School Board Policy

#603, the district uses the Understanding by Design (UbD) framework to guide curriculum development and ensure a guaranteed and viable curriculum.

The UbD model organizes curriculum development into three stages:

Stage1 – Identify Desired Results

Teams analyze standards and learning outcomes to determine essential learnings and priority skills students must master.

Stage 2 – Determine Acceptable Evidence

Teams develop common assessments and performance tasks that provide clear evidence of student learning.

Stage 3 – Plan Learning Experiences

Teams design instructional sequences and select resources that support student mastery of learning goals.

Over the past two years, immersion curriculum teams have engaged in all three stages of this design process. Teams prioritized academic standards and established K–12 essential learnings using a process that considers endurance, leverage, and readiness across grade levels. Essential learnings were then aligned with ACTFL proficiency guidelines and world language standards to ensure students develop both academic literacy and language proficiency.

Elementary immersion teams are working to align partner-language instruction with transferable English Language Arts standards and to inform the formal introduction of English literacy instruction beginning in Grade 3. Work on stages two and three, including assessment development, unit design, and resource selection, is currently underway and will support implementation beginning in fall 2026.

At the secondary level, curriculum writing teams have been revising unit plans to align essential learnings, assessments, instructional strategies, and instructional resources. Middle school teams include teachers from both sites to ensure consistency across programs, while high school teams include teachers from multiple grade levels to support both horizontal and vertical alignment. Furthermore, the 6-8 immersion review team has been aligning their curriculum with the MN English Language Arts standards in collaboration with the 6-8 English Language Arts teachers. This has been especially important in developing and supporting a cohesive, consistent curriculum across sites, grade levels, and language programs.

Professional learning communities will continue refining assessments, instructional units, and resources to ensure the curriculum remains responsive to the needs of Minnetonka learners.

Professional Learning

Implementation of the Minnesota READ Act has significantly influenced the development of the updated immersion language arts curriculum. The READ Act requires extensive professional learning in evidence-based reading instruction, and Minnetonka has intentionally included immersion teachers in this work to ensure alignment across all literacy programs.

During Phase 1 of the READ Act, K–5 immersion teachers participated in the required training, strengthening their knowledge of evidence-based literacy instruction. Additional professional learning has focused on dual language immersion best practices and the Science of Reading for Mandarin Chinese.

Beyond READ Act requirements, the district has implemented several initiatives to strengthen literacy instruction, including:

- Launching the K–5 Literacy Instructional Model in fall 2024 which all immersion teachers revisited during workshop week of 2025.
- Expanding Data Response Planning meetings to analyze literacy screening results in both English and the partner languages
- Strengthening MTSS intervention systems and resources
- Updating immersion literacy screening tools, particularly for Mandarin Chinese

Secondary teachers and specialists have also received training in disciplinary literacy strategies, ensuring reading and writing skills are reinforced across content areas.

Future professional learning will focus on implementation of the updated immersion language arts curriculum and continued development of the middle school instructional model. Spanish immersion teachers will integrate strategies from CORE training with new instructional resources, while Mandarin Chinese immersion teachers will continue refining literacy instruction related to character recognition and pinyin development. In addition, Phase 2 READ Act training will support secondary teachers in implementing evidence-based literacy strategies for adolescent learners.

Instructional Design

Elementary immersion teachers continue to implement the K–5 Literacy Instructional Model, which provides a comprehensive framework for structuring effective literacy instruction. This approach includes whole-group instruction which ensures that all students engage with grade-level standards through explicit instruction and gradual release

practices (“I do, We do, You do together, You do alone”). It also includes small-group instruction that allows teachers to differentiate based on assessment data, providing targeted instruction for advancing learners, students requiring intervention, and students developing language proficiency.

At the secondary level, teachers implement disciplinary literacy practices through the Read, Write, Discuss framework. This approach recognizes that each academic discipline has distinct ways of reading, writing, and communicating knowledge. Structured discussion protocols, reading strategies, and writing routines support students in analyzing complex ideas and communicating their thinking across mathematics, science, social studies, and language arts courses. This approach strengthens academic language development and ensures that literacy instruction is integrated across language programs and disciplines, supporting students’ ability to analyze information, communicate ideas clearly, and engage deeply with content.

Instructional Resources

Selecting high-quality instructional resources is an important component of the curriculum review process. While state standards do not mandate specific instructional programs, they inform resource selection. In addition, School Board Policy #606 provides guidance for the review and selection of instructional materials.

In response to the READ Act, the Minnesota Department of Education and the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI) evaluated K–5 literacy programs using a comprehensive evidence-based rubric. Using this guidance, Minnetonka’s Spanish immersion review team identified high-quality literacy resources available in Spanish.

Following an extensive review of three highly rated programs, the team piloted *Adelante*, a comprehensive Spanish literacy resource aligned with structured literacy practices. Pilot teachers reported that the resource has strong alignment with evidence-based Spanish literacy instruction while supporting rigorous learning experiences for Minnetonka students.

While CAREI has not conducted similar reviews for grades 6–12 or for languages other than English, district review teams have continued evaluating curriculum and instructional resources using state standards and evidence-based practices as guiding criteria.

The Immersion Curriculum Review Committees will continue their work through Summer 2026 to support implementation of updated curriculum and instructional resources beginning in the 2026–27 school year. Ongoing monitoring and refinement will ensure the program continues to meet the needs of Minnetonka students while maintaining the district’s commitment to world-class bilingual and biliteracy education.

Members of the team also shared the following information during their presentation:

Exhibit 2.1. Overview of the Key Attributes of Dual Language Education Programs, by Program Type



	Two-Way Dual Language Programs	★ One-Way Dual Language Programs		
	Two-Way Immersion/ Dual Language Immersion	World Language Immersion Programs ★	Developmental Bilingual Education Programs	Heritage Language Immersion Programs
Student Population Served	ELs and non-ELs (ideally 50 percent in each group, or a minimum of 33 percent)	Primarily English speakers; can include ELs and heritage speakers ★	ELs and former ELs only	Students whose families' heritage language is/was the partner language
Languages	English and the ELs' home (partner) language	English and a partner language ★	English and the ELs' home (partner) language	English and the heritage (partner) language
Staffing	One bilingual teacher, who teaches in both languages, or one teacher per language	One bilingual teacher who teaches in both languages, or one teacher per language ★	One bilingual teacher who teaches in both languages, or one teacher per language	One bilingual teacher who teaches in both languages (prevalent model)

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

6-8 Social Studies (taught in Chinese & Spanish): Currently under review

Chinese Imm MS Social Studies Unit Plan

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Tab 1

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4.3 写作能力 (Writing Skill...
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4.3 写作能力 (Writing Skill...
3.5 阅读理解 (Reading Co...
4.3 写作能力 (Writing Skill...
6.3 口语和演讲表达 (Spe...
3.5 阅读理解 (Reading Co...
4.3 写作能力 (Writing Skill...

Minnetonka Chinese Immersion Middle Level Social Studies Unit Plan

Grade 6: Ancient Civilizations and Minnesota History

Unit 1: Rise of Civilizations

Social Studies Standards (Established Goals):
Physical Geography: Students will analyze the influence of geography on economic, social, cultural, and political development of early civilizations and Minnesota.

Essential Understandings (overarching):

- World Map: the 7 continents and 5 oceans and locations of key civilizations.
- Archaeologists, historians, and geographers work together to interpret history.
- Climate and physical features influence the development of civilizations.
- The development of agriculture affected human settlement and community development.
- There are five characteristics of civilizations.

Chapters:
Chapter 1 Discovering History
Chapter 2 Early Humans
Chapter 3 Stone Age (From Hunter-gatherers to Farmers)
Chapter 4 Rise of the Sumerians



[Link to document](#)

6-12 Spanish & Chinese Language Arts: Currently under review

Minnetonka Chinese Immersion MS LA Instructional Framework/Unit Plan* Grade: _____

*This instructional framework is designed to integrate ACTFL Five C's framework to build language proficiency and help students become more culturally aware, empathetic, and equipped to participate in an interconnected world.

Unit:				Duration:				
Essential Learnings: (Bolded essentials are assessed in the common summative assessment)								
Core Texts: (Whole Class Texts and Student Choice Texts)								
Language Objectives (Communication)		Cultures, Connections and Comparisons		Literary Skills		Assessments (Note #1)		Community
Can do Statements (ACTFL)	Grammar (sentence structures) and Key Vocabulary	Activating Background Knowledge Activity	Cultural Connections (to other cultures/self history/disciplines)	Listening Comprehension Skills and Practice Activity	Reading Comprehension Skills and Practice Activity	Interpersonal communication Skills and Practice Activity (task based oral/written activity)	FA's SA's	See Note #2



K-5 Chinese Language Arts: Currently under review

- Well designed reading and writing activities.
- Well designed reading comprehension skills.

Enhancements In Progress:

Explicit and systematic instruction in:

- Chinese character recognition
- Phonemic awareness and pinyin
- Vocabulary

Kindergarten: Better Chinese
Grades 1-5: Singapore Chinese (Huan Le Huo Ban)



K-5 Systematic Spanish Screening & Assessments

In progress!

Comprehensive data to inform instruction and identify struggling readers

1. Screening & Diagnostic Assessments (FastBridge)
2. Unit Assessments (Being updated - embedded in *Adelante*)
3. Integrated Performance Assessments (Being updated)
4. Tier 1 Progress Monitoring Materials (FastBridge)



K-5 Systematic Chinese Screening & Assessments

In progress!

Comprehensive data to inform instruction and identify struggling readers

1. Screening & Diagnostic Assessments (In progress)
2. Unit Assessments (Being updated)
3. Integrated Performance Assessments (Being updated)
4. Tier 1 Progress Monitoring Materials (groundbreaking work)



In the discussion that followed, Board members thanked members of the team for providing literacy training for staff across all areas, not just language arts. They also discussed the makeup of the MDE Advisory Committee, the work of the U of MN's CAREI team, and the various screening assessments that the district uses to intervene for our students. They also discussed the challenges of finding rigorous Chinese curriculum, with Dr. LaDue noting that we have collaborated with the North St. Paul and St. Cloud districts in the past on this area. Board member Selinger commented that she heard from several K-2 immersion teachers that the professional development time devoted to this topic in January had been very beneficial.

REVIEW OF 2027-28 CALENDAR

General Counsel and Executive Director of Human Resources Anjie Flowers presented this item to the Board. By way of background, she explained that Minnesota state law requires the School Board to adopt a calendar prior to April 1 of the school year preceding the year the calendar will be in effect. As is the District's practice, we are working on setting a calendar a full year in advance of the due date. This is very helpful for parents, staff and families. Accordingly, on February 24, a committee of teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, parents, and students worked to develop a draft recommended calendar to the School Board. The Committee followed contractual and state law parameters in developing this recommendation.

The outline for the recommended calendar is as follows:

- First day of school for teachers: Monday, August 23, 2027
- First day of school for grades 1-12 students: Monday, August 30, 2027
- First day of school for kindergarten students: Wednesday, September 1, 2027
- Fall conference dates: Thursday, Oct. 7, 2027: 4-8pm; Friday, Oct. 8, 2027: 8am-4pm; an additional 4 hours of conference time to be assigned by building site the weeks of Oct. 4, 2027, or Oct. 13, 2027
- Spring conference dates: Thursday, March 2, 2028: 4-8pm; Friday, March 3, 2028: 8am-4pm; an additional 4 hours of conference time to be assigned by building sites the week of February 29, 2028, or March 6, 2028
- Winter Break: December 23, 2027 – January 3, 2028 (8 work days)
- Spring Break: March 27 – 31, 2028
- Last student day: Thursday, June 8, 2028
- Last teacher day: Friday, June 9, 2028

In the discussion that followed, Ms. Flowers noted that, as with the 2026-27 calendar, this 2027-28 calendar shows a start date prior to Labor Day. She also noted that our current calendar observes both Yom Kippur and Eid, and the recommendation from the committee for 2027-28 is that we also observe Chinese New Year as a non-student day. She said

that while that recommendation was not unanimous, it was preferred by a majority vote of the committee.

Superintendent Law noted that the calendar would be brought back to the April 9 regular Board meeting for approval.

ADJOURNMENT

The Board adjourned the study session at 6:50 p.m.