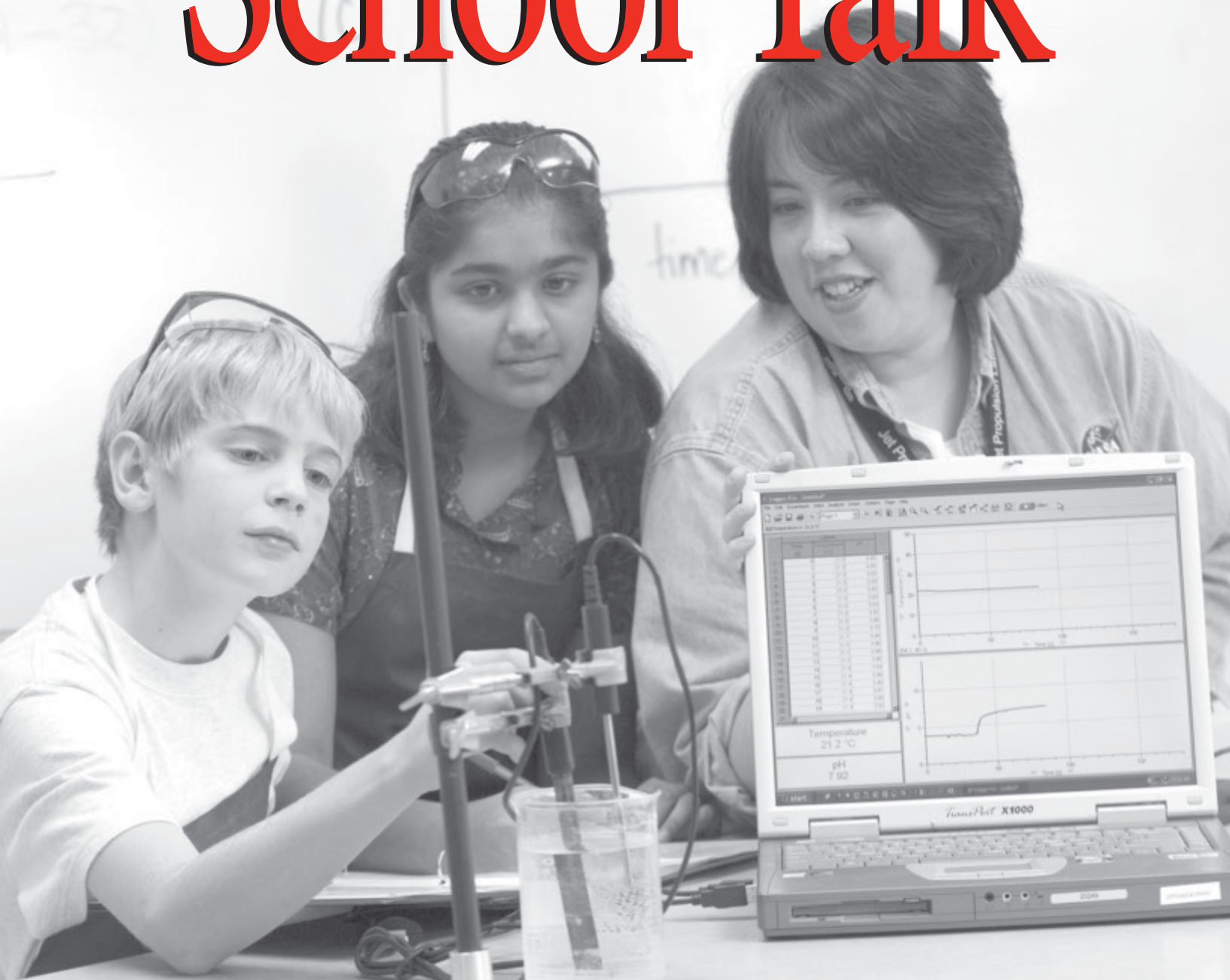


FALL 2006

# School Talk



## MEASURING UP

**How does Mounds View compare with others?**

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE · TAXPAYER VALUE · SCHOOL REFORM

## Defining 'above average'

Residents and parents often say to me, "We know Mounds View is a high achieving district, but how do our schools compare with others in the metro?"

I'm sometimes tempted to simply respond as they would in Lake Wobegon, where, of course, all of the children are above average. Yes, all of our schools are above average, but I can be more specific.



- When it comes to academic achievement and student test scores, our district routinely ranks among the Top 10 in the metro. *Newsweek* calls our two high schools among the best in the nation. And we also lead the state that leads the nation in ACT scores.
- Standard & Poors says Mounds View has an above average return on its spending. And the State Auditor's report shows Mounds View's expenses are slightly below the Metro 50 average for administrative expenses, teacher salaries, employee benefits and operating expenses.
- These days, Mounds View is also earning a reputation for innovation and reform. Our district was one of the first to reform teachers' salaries to a more performance-based system. And our commitment to improving science, technology, engineering and math has earned us praise from state leaders as well as from cutting-edge corporations who are eager to partner with us in our educational cause.

I suppose knowing how we compare with other school districts is a sign of the times in a world that's growing increasingly competitive. But I also think it's a fair question – and one that deserves some explicit examples. As you read this issue of *School Talk*, I think you'll see how Mounds View is among the best districts in a state that leads the nation in public school education.

I guess you can say that really is "above average," after all.

Sincerely,

Jan Witthuhn  
Superintendent

School Talk is published by Mounds View Public Schools, Independent School District 621. Send correspondence to School Talk editor, 350 Highway 96 West, Shoreview, MN 55126, e-mail [naomi.rettke@moundsvIEWSchools.org](mailto:naomi.rettke@moundsvIEWSchools.org) or call 651-604-9789.

### Editors

Naomi Rettke  
Colin Sokolowski

### Designer

Jeanne Schacht

### Photographers

Greg Helgeson  
Naomi Rettke

### Superintendent

Dr. Jan Witthuhn

### 2006 School Board

Barb Bollum  
Lori Grivna  
Bob Helgeson  
Marre Jo Sager  
Bob Sundberg  
Noreen Thompson  
Jon Tynjala

On the web:



[www.moundsvIEWSchools.org](http://www.moundsvIEWSchools.org)

On the cover:

Highview Middle School seventh-grade students Peter Thor and Prakrithi Srinand discuss how a water lab science lesson would work with their teacher Susan Herder. Mounds View Public Schools is one of the growing number of districts in Minnesota that offers students learning opportunities through the nationally respected engineering program Project Lead the Way.

# MEAS

The latest public opinion polls confirm it. Education is clearly a top issue for most Minnesotans today.

With education on everyone's mind, it's nice to know that in Mounds View Public Schools, 86 percent of residents believe the schools are excellent or good. But what's less clear to many is how District schools compare with others in the metro.

Using a few indicators of school success – academic performance, taxpayer value and school reform – *School Talk* reveals how Mounds View measures up.

## ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

### ACTs: Leading the state that leads the nation

This year, while Minnesota led the nation with the highest ACT scores, students in Mounds View Public Schools outperformed the state average.

#### AVERAGE ACT SCORES

U.S.	21.1
Minnesota (#1 in U.S.)	22.3
<b>Mounds View</b>	<b>23.8</b>

### National Merit: Top 5 in metro

Recognition by the National Merit Scholarship program is one of the highest honors a student can receive for outstanding academic achievement. This year, Mounds View Public Schools ranked among the top five districts in the metro for the most National Merit semifinalists.

RANK/DISTRICT	# OF SEMIFINALISTS
1. Eden Prairie	23
2. Wayzata	21
3. Edina	16
4. St. Paul	13
<b>5. Mounds View</b>	<b>12</b>
5. Minnetonka	12

# URING UP

**Mounds View Public Schools is known as a high-performing district. But exactly how does the District compare with others?**

## Reading and math: top 25% of the U.S.

About half of all Mounds View students perform in the top 25 percent of the nation in both reading and math. Last year, 47 percent of students scored in the national top 25 percent for reading, and 52 percent scored in the national top 25 percent for math.



## Best high schools in the nation

Newsweek ranked Irondale and Mounds View High School in the top five percent of the nation. The high schools were recognized on the magazine's annual list of top 1,200 schools in the U.S.

## TAXPAYER VALUE

### Mounds View's spending: middle of the metro

Mounds View is the 9<sup>th</sup> largest of the 50 metro districts, yet it ranks in the middle of the metro when it comes to spending. That's the conclusion drawn from the recent State Auditor's report on Minnesota school districts. The report compares enrollment and financial data that benchmark specific indicators against other school districts or state averages.

SPENDING CATEGORY	MOUNDS VIEW'S RANK OF 50 METRO DISTRICTS
Administrative spending	33 <sup>rd</sup>
Teacher salaries	32 <sup>nd</sup>
Employee benefits	29 <sup>th</sup>
Operating expenses	22 <sup>nd</sup>

Source: *Financial Trends of Minnesota School Districts, 2001-2005, Minnesota State Auditor*

### District's efficiencies encourage business leaders to expand

*Expansion Management* magazine designated Mounds View a Gold Medal School District for ranking in the top 16 percent of all school districts nationally. The honor compares more than 2,800 districts in the U.S. to give business leaders a way to evaluate a community's potential for business expansion, based on the quality of schools. Mounds View received the highest possible ranking for its graduation outcomes, spending and teacher salaries.

### Standard & Poors: Mounds View has above average return on spending

Compared to other districts in the state, Mounds View Public Schools achieves an above average return on its spending when it comes to student performance.

That observation comes from a recently released analysis of Minnesota schools produced by the national credit ratings and investment research firm Standard & Poors. The report analyzes academic, financial and demographic data from 1999 – 2005, and compares key performance indicators with state averages and trends.

#### STANDARD & POORS CONCLUSIONS

	MOUNDS VIEW	STATE	S & P OPINION
Reading and math proficiency*	85.4%	77.3%	Well above average
Core spending** per student	\$6,809	\$6,994	Average
Return on spending index	12.2	10.8	Above average

\* Grades tested include 3, 5, 7, 10 and 11

\*\*Core spending includes instruction, instructional support, pupil support, administration, and operations and maintenance.

The entire report is available at [www.schoolmatters.com](http://www.schoolmatters.com)

# MEASURING UP

## SCHOOL REFORM

### Reforming teachers' salaries

Mounds View was the fourth district in the state approved to participate in the governor's Q Comp program. Now, pay is no longer based exclusively on teachers' years of experience, but on demonstrated continuous improvement.

### Upgrading science and math education

With corporate and state grants, and by using revenue from the recent sale of land, the District is funding upgraded equipment and technology for enhanced math and science courses at all levels. This year, Mounds View is the only district in the country piloting the nationally recognized Project Lead the Way engineering program in elementary schools. Last year, the Minnesota Department of Education named the high schools among the top 20 schools in the state for science, technology, engineering and math.



**Mounds View Public Schools is renewing a commitment to preparing students in the areas of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Above, Mounds View High School students use classroom wireless technology to study statistics with math and statistics teacher Mike Huberty.**

**At right, two Mounds View High School students compete in the school's annual Physics Fair. The fair provides an opportunity for students to demonstrate what they've learned in class while their projects are judged by teachers and local engineers.**



### Improving student nutrition

Mounds View was the second district in the metro area to have all of its schools earn the "Governor's Fit Schools" distinction. Each of the District's 11 schools received the award by completing the program's criteria for making fitness and healthy eating a priority for students and staff.

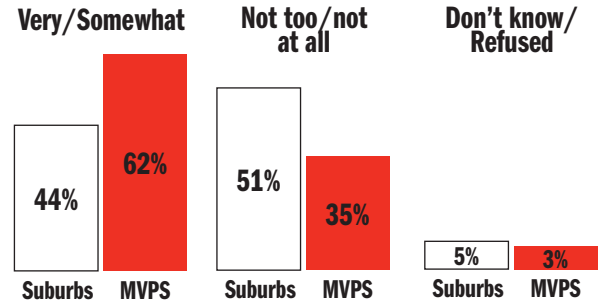
# How do YOU compare?

How do your feelings about your schools compare to how residents of other districts feel about their schools?

Overall, you feel more informed than others, and you feel more strongly that your schools are excellent, a good value and that their reputations increase your property values.

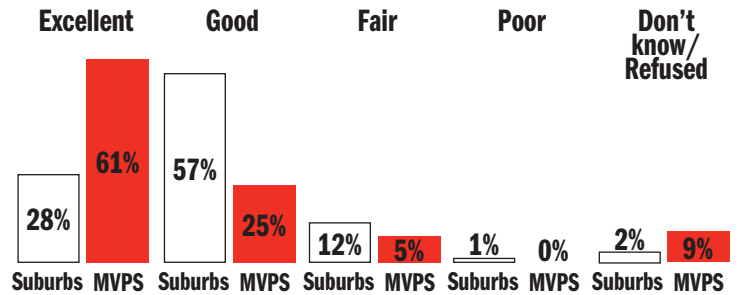
## Well informed?

Mounds View residents feel better informed about the decisions made in the District than residents in other districts reported about their schools.



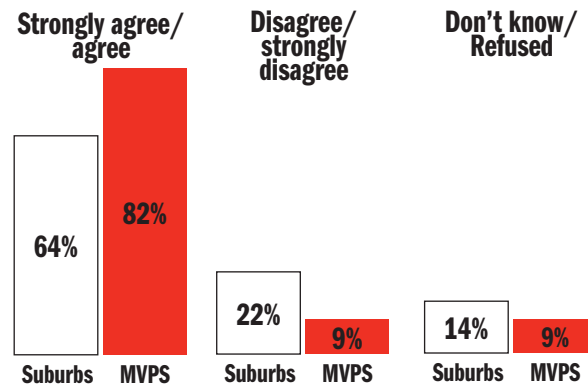
## Excellence in education?

In Mounds View, nearly two out of three residents rate the education as excellent. By comparison, only about one out of three residents of other suburbs rated their districts similarly.



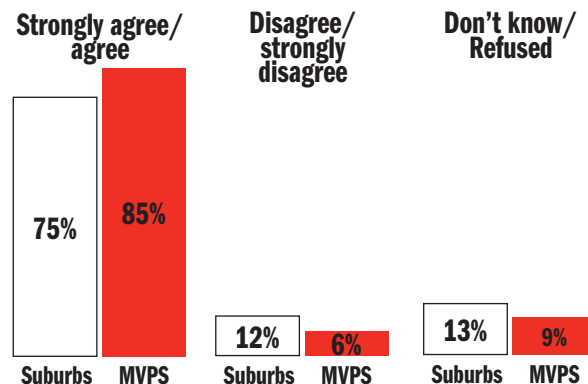
## A good value?

A strong majority of Mounds View residents believe they receive a good value from their investment in public schools.



## Reputation increases property values?

Most suburban residents agree that their schools' reputations increase their properties' values, but residents of Mounds View Public Schools feel more strongly.



Source = 2006 resident survey, Decision Resources. Suburban norms of districts include Edina, Minnetonka, Hopkins, Chaska, Burnsville, South Washington County, Centennial, Anoka-Hennepin, Brooklyn Center and Osseo.

# Around the District

## The November 7 levy: An important piece of the puzzle

Without it, schools lose more than \$3 million a year.



**O**n Election Day 2006, voters in Mounds View Public Schools will consider a levy referendum. If successful, the levy will keep class sizes, programs, co-curricular fees and transportation fees stable for another year. If voters reject the levy, class sizes and fees will rise, pools will close, programs like elementary school band and orchestra will be cut and schools will lose more than \$3 million a year.

“We’re not alone,” says Noreen Thompson, School Board chair. “Dozens of districts around the metro are pursuing levies this fall because we’re in the same boat. We need levies just to stay afloat – not to get ahead of the game. Funding has not kept pace with inflation, and most districts now rely on levies to fund basic academic programs.”

### Why a levy?

For many reasons, a levy would provide critical funding for Mounds View:

- An existing levy that provides more than \$3 million a year is about to expire. It hasn’t increased with inflation since voters approved it in 1986.
- Mounds View has experienced the largest decline in enrollment of all suburban metro districts since 2001. As enrollment declines, the total per-pupil revenue declines.
- Expenses and fixed costs continue to outpace inflation.

### Can’t cuts match funding?

Many ask, “If enrollment is declining, shouldn’t expenses decline too?” The answer is yes, but not at an equivalent rate. For every classroom of students lost, the District loses 3 classrooms of funding. Here’s how:

\$150,000 ← Funding lost with 1 classroom of students lost  
–\$ 50,000 ← Money saved by cutting 1 classroom teacher  
\$100,000 ← Remaining expenses to cut

This is why the State Auditor’s report says, “Districts that experience declining enrollment often are not able to reduce expenditures at the same rate, resulting in increasing per pupil expenditure.”

**“Districts that experience declining enrollment often are not able to reduce expenditures at the same rate, resulting in increasing per pupil expenditure.”**

—Minnesota State Auditor, 2006  
*Financial Trends of Minnesota School Districts and Charter Schools*

districts and providing competitive compensation within financial constraints.

### Impact on residents

The levy will provide schools with nearly \$7 million in new money and will cost property owners annually about \$76 for every \$100,000 of the taxable market value of a property starting in 2007-08. For more levy information, or to calculate the projected tax impact of a successful school operating levy, visit [www.moundsviewschools.org](http://www.moundsviewschools.org).

### Solving the puzzle

Like many districts in Minnesota, Mounds View faces significant financial challenges. A successful levy will play a critical role, but levies only fund 10 percent of the District’s budget. Even with a successful levy, funding shortfalls are expected in the near future. That’s why solving the District’s financial puzzle requires ongoing work in several areas. These include continued downsizing, seeking legislative support for declining enrollment



*Prepared and paid for by Mounds View Public Schools (Independent School District 621), 350 Highway 96 West, Shoreview, MN 55126. This publication is not circulated on behalf of any candidate or ballot question.*

# Enrollment declines, but not significantly

For the ninth year in a row, K-12 enrollment in Mounds View Public Schools has declined. But for the first time in nine years, the percentage of decline was not significant. Mounds View's fall enrollment is 9,929 students – about 40 students fewer than last year. It's also some 300 students more than projected. Yet all schools have the capacity to accommodate all of their students.

“It's a welcome surprise,” says Superintendent Jan Witthuhn, who explains the larger-than-expected enrollment gave the District the money necessary to hire more teachers and improve some class sizes. In elementary schools, class sizes have been reduced nearly in half during portions of the day to give students small-group instruction in language arts and math.

This year's enrollment raises some questions the District will work hard to answer in the coming months. Questions include “Is the trend of enrollment decline slowing or ending?” and “Are schools attracting a larger proportion of school-aged residents?”

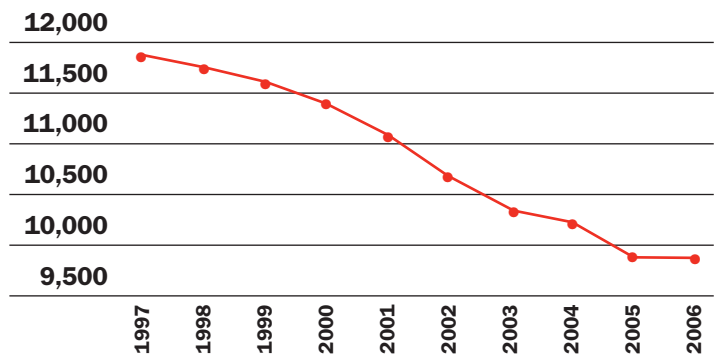
However, a few facts are clear.

- After nine consecutive years of decline, one year with larger-than-expected enrollment does not signify a trend.

- Non-resident enrollment is not responsible. This year, the District had more non-resident applications than ever before, but more than half of them were denied enrollment in order to keep class sizes within approved ranges. This fall, Mounds View enrolled 60 new non-residents – about 30 fewer than last year.
- Kindergarten enrollment is not responsible for more students than expected. The District enrolled only eight more students in that grade this year.

## A DECADE OF DECLINE

In 10 years, the District's enrollment has lost 1,870 students.



## First in fitness

Governor Tim Pawlenty recognized Mounds View Public Schools this summer as a leader in school fitness. Mounds View Public Schools is among the first school districts in the state to have all of its schools earn the “Governor's Fit School” distinction. The District's 11 schools received the award by making fitness and healthy eating a priority for their students and staff. Pictured from left to right with Superintendent Jan Witthuhn and Governor Pawlenty are students: Dustin Weinmann, Ryan Weinmann, Laura Schlotterback, and Mikayla Huesman. They are former Pinewood Elementary School students who are currently sixth-graders at Edgewood Middle School in Mounds View.

## No Child Left Behind results delayed due to state changes

Districts across the state will have to wait until mid-November this year to learn their results for the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and its bi-product report, the adequate yearly progress (AYP) watch list. Typically, NCLB and AYP results are released before the start of the school year, but changes to the state's standardized exam, the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA), have delayed results until November 15.

### A new test

In spring 2005, the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA), which was tied to the Profile of Learning, came to an end and the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment-II (MCA-II) was introduced during the 2005-2006 school year. The MCA-II aligns and assesses students in grades three-nine in reading and math, with science added in 2008. The state administers these assessments in order to determine whether schools and districts have made adequate yearly progress toward having all students being proficient, as outlined by NCLB.

### Delays in results

For families and the District, MCA-II creates an altered test scoring timeline. Historically, results of the MCA were provided by the Minnesota Department of Education in late August on the first day of the State Fair. But adjusting to the new MCA-II scoring system and meeting quality-control standards for the scoring, caused delays at the state level. These modifications mean families and school districts won't receive student results until November 15, 2006. It also means a delay in the state's announcement of which schools and districts are identified for not making adequate yearly progress (AYP). Watch for that announcement on November 15 as well.

### Mounds View Public Schools' approach

These delays and testing changes accentuate why Mounds View Public Schools is committed to high-quality district-administered testing and to common assessments throughout the District's schools. Through this practice,

teachers can effectively monitor student progress across time, adjusting instruction when necessary to meet an individual student or classroom-level need. By doing so, District teachers can find answers to the essential issues surrounding their students' academic achievements.

Many standardized tests focus on students whose achievement is just above or just below a proficiency mark. However, by using tests that accurately measure individual student progress across time, the progress of all students, regardless of achievement level, is monitored.

### Subgroups and Stars

On November 15 the media will report statewide school and district status on the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) list. AYP is determined by measuring the proficiency of students within a school's nine subgroups. Subgroups are defined by the rules of the federal NCLB Act and generally follow demographic lines. If any one subgroup fails to meet proficiency rates – even if by just one student – the entire school is labeled as not making adequate progress, even if the overall student body scored very high on the annual exams. After two years on the watch list, sanctions begin to take effect on that school.

In addition to AYP, the Minnesota Department of Education grades all state schools and districts via a report card and a star rating system. Receiving three or more stars indicates that enough students in every subgroup achieved or improved proficiency or that a school's state test scores compare higher than schools of comparable size and demographics.

### What is NCLB?

When President Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) into federal law, every school in the nation was affected. Implemented in the summer of 2003, NCLB aims to improve accountability for schools and districts by putting into action specific academic standards and requiring reports that demonstrate progress and improvement. The law also includes stiff penalties for schools that do not meet the federal government's accountability benchmarks.

In Minnesota, the Department of Education uses the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments-II (MCA-II) as an annual barometer of school performance to meet federal NCLB legislation. If a school or subgroup's scores don't reach a government-defined threshold, the entire school or district is placed on the adequate yearly progress (AYP) watch list. Placement on the AYP list carries with it sanctions for schools and districts that receive federal Title I funds. Sanctions grow progressively more stringent with each year a school remains on the AYP list.

**To this day, Mounds View Public Schools remains one of only 14 districts in the metro to have all of its traditional schools meet the AYP requirements every year since NCLB was introduced.**



## Discover Mounds View Public Schools

Students and parents are invited to learn more about enrollment in Mounds View Public Schools by attending Enrollment Information Nights.

### High schools

January 8  
 Irondale: 5:30 & 7 p.m.  
 Mounds View: 5:30 & 7:30 p.m.

### Middle schools

January 9, 7 p.m.

### Elementary schools

January 11, 6:30 p.m.

## Alumni: Stay in touch with your classmates

Trying to reconnect with an old friend? Hoping to organize a class reunion? Visit the new Alumni E-mail Directory at [www.moundsviewschools.org](http://www.moundsviewschools.org). Once online, you can post your e-mail address, edit your entry as often as necessary and search the database for classmates' e-mail addresses. More than 1,400 alumni have already published their e-mail addresses since the site was launched.

## Signs of the times

After decades of deterioration and recent storm damage, Island Lake Elementary School's wooden exterior sign has been replaced by a more durable and informative sign.

But Island Lake is not alone. Across the District, every site has received a similar sign to make identification of the schools easier for emergency response vehicles, out-of-town visitors and community members. They also improve consistency in site identification. Many of the District's schools previously had no sign, while others had signs that were deteriorating or did not identify the school district name or if the site was an elementary, middle or high school.

To fund the signs, the School Board approved using profits from the recent sale of the Snail Lake Landing property. By law, no classroom money was used to fund this project.



## Securing sign language interpreters for parents who are deaf or hard of hearing

Mounds View Public Schools provides sign language interpreters for parents who are deaf or hard of hearing during school-related activities that are necessary to the educational program of their students. This information can be found on the District web site at [www.moundsviewschools.org](http://www.moundsviewschools.org). Click on "Our Schools" or "Curriculum" and find the Parent Services page. The procedure for requesting these services has changed and is as follows:

- Parent/parents may request sign language interpreter service for conferences and other important educational activities regarding their child or children by contacting Sue Cameron at Snail Lake Education Center. She can be reached in any one of the following ways:
  1. Use Minnesota Relay Services on-line at <http://www.ip-relay.com>, click on Call Now. In the left-hand box type the pound sign followed by 651-604-9780. Then it will dial the number. It will ring once and Sue will pick up. Type the message. When finished, type "ga" to send the message. Hit "hang up" when done. If you are having problems with ip-relay,

help can be provided. Or use TTY by dialing 711 or 1-800-627-3529, type in this phone number: 651-604-9780.

2. Send an e-mail to [sue.cameron@moundsviewschools.org](mailto:sue.cameron@moundsviewschools.org).
3. Fax request to phone number 651-639-6204.
4. Directly request school office personnel to assist (contact Sue Cameron at ext. 2129 or e-mail).
  - Information needed in the communication: School, parent's name, student's name, date needed, time, estimated length of time, activity/reason, teacher, room number and meeting place.

The District staff member will immediately contact a sign language interpreter. If an interpreter is not available then Communication Service for the Deaf (CSD), a sign language interpreter referral agency, is contacted. CSD's phone number is 651-224-6548. Joan Del Rio is the contact person for the service. The District will confirm the availability of an interpreter within two days of the event. Preferential seating will be arranged for those individuals who need the services of an interpreter.

# Around the District

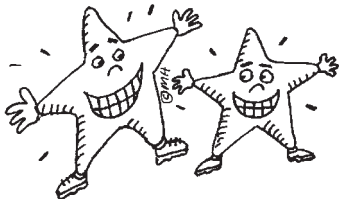
## Bel Air builds responsive classrooms

This summer, 11 Bel Air Elementary School staff members took part in a week-long “Responsive Classroom” training course as part of the school’s annual improvement goals. The program focuses on building community within a classroom to enhance a safe and respectful atmosphere and support the schools’ overall positive climate. Responsive classroom teachers hold Morning Meetings with students that foster respectful relationships and develop classroom rules with logical consequences. All-

school assemblies that discuss student expectations are also part of the program. This summer’s training builds upon last year’s program, which trained eight Bel Air staff members in Responsive Classroom strategies.



**Pictured during a Morning Meeting is second-grade teacher Barb King with students Leah Damerow, Sydney Weierke, Estafany Salcedo and Charisma Kramlinger.**



## A Reading Buddies love story

It was a perfect Reading Buddies match when Land O’ Lakes employees Chris Feile and Laura Berdan met while carpooling to Turtle Lake Elementary School for their weekly volunteer time with students. As the school year progressed, the pair became better and better friends, in addition to helping Turtle Lake students with their reading and academic skills. Feile and Berdan are now engaged to be married in May 2007. The Reading Buddies program matches elementary-age students with community volunteers for once-a-week reading practice and positive student-adult interaction time. To find out more about getting involved in the Reading Buddies program, call 651-639-6020.

## Community Ed catalog now available online

District residents may have noticed a much slimmer Community Education course catalog in their mail this fall. The new mailer, which arrived in homes in September, advertised



opportunities available through Community Ed and announced that the full course catalog is now available online at [www.moundsvIEWSchools.org](http://www.moundsvIEWSchools.org). Community Education offers learning opportunities and assistance for young families, youth, adults and seniors.

## Turtle Lake sings at the Dome

135 students from the 4th and 5th grade choirs at Turtle Lake Elementary School in Shoreview sang the National Anthem in the Metrodome before the Minnesota Twins game on September 25. More than 700 tickets were purchased by Turtle Lake families who attended the event.



## National Anthem day for Chippewa

The Chippewa Middle School choir performed as part of a National Anthem Day event at the school on September 14.

The festivities were attended by elected officials and local leaders from the VFW and American Legion. Diane Hershey is the choir director at Chippewa.

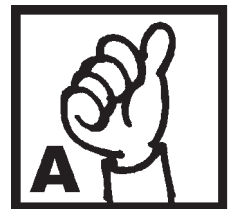


## New sign language course offered

Students taking American Sign Language (ASL) courses at Mounds View and Irondale High Schools

now have the opportunity to continue their studies in a level three ASL course. The course, which currently has 22 students enrolled,

is offered as a continuation of lower-level ASL courses already available at the schools and helps advanced students build proficiency and fluency while possibly working towards a career in the field. Only a handful of Districts in the metro area offer ASL programs. Christine Wall is the District's ASL instructor.



## School supplies donated around the District



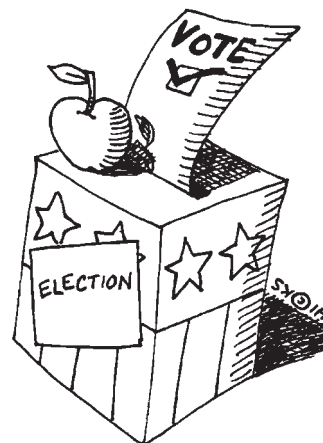
Community members and organizations from around the District donated school supplies for students in need this fall. At the Ralph Reeder Food Shelf, 20 volunteers collected supplies to help more than 370 students through the Good Neighbors Back to School Project. Staff members at Boston Scientific donated more than 500 pounds of supplies to Valentine Hills Elementary School in Arden Hills (pictured are Valentine Hills

students Hannah Paulsen and Anna Quanbeck). At Bel Air Elementary School in New Brighton, donations of 100 backpacks and various other supplies came from the Minnesota PTA, Office Depot stores and community member Dorothy Pehl whose grandchildren, Gregory and Natalie, attend the school.

## Kids Voting teaches citizenship

This fall, Mounds View Public Schools students and community volunteers will staff election booths for kids at all 21 District polling locations as part of a national, non-partisan program called Kids Voting USA. Kids Voting USA strives to build good citizenship habits by demystifying the voting process for students, making it more likely that

they will be active voters when they reach adulthood. The program will have special booths at all polling places set up for students in grades K-12. Kids can vote on Election Day when they accompany their parents to polling sites. Students who participate in the



program will find their ballot contains the same choices as their parents' ballot. The program also provides curriculum on election- and voting-related topics for classroom use. Kids Voting stations will only be open from 3-8 p.m. this year.

## Pesticides and Herbicides: Parents' right to know

A Minnesota state law went into effect in the year 2000 that requires schools to inform parents and guardians if they apply certain pesticides on the school property.

Specifically, this law requires schools that apply these pesticides to maintain an estimated schedule of pesticide applications and to make the schedule available to parents and guardians for review or copying at each school office.

State law also requires that you be told that the long-term health effects on children from application of such pesticides or the class of chemicals to which they belong may not be fully understood.

If you would like to be notified prior to pesticide applications made on days other than those specified in the estimated schedule (excluding emergency applications), please contact Tom Heimkes at 651-266-7253.

## Teachers prep for Project Lead the Way

Technology Education teachers from across the District took part in intensive software training courses this summer in preparation for new Project Lead the Way classes that began this fall. The software allows students to create 3-D, animated drawings for engineering projects. All middle school students take technology education courses that will include this software. The summer coursework for instructors included design, build, test and presentation requirements. Pictured is Chippewa Middle School Technology Education teacher Keith Anderson.



## Volunteers grow garden at Chippewa

Parent volunteers at Chippewa Middle School donated time this summer to create a gathering place for students at the front entrance of the school. The triangular-shaped garden is bordered by a sitting wall, benches and is filled with shrubs and colorful perennials. Donations for the project came from various community organizations, including the North Oaks Garden Club.



## Early Childhood taught in Nicaragua

Margi Couillard, a teacher in the District's Early Childhood Family Education program, spent four weeks in Nicaragua this summer, leading discussions and small-group activities on various child development topics for early childhood and elementary school teachers. Her lessons included information about the District's early childhood practices, history and philosophies as well as problem-solving techniques and activities to encourage child growth. She also visited Nicaraguan schools and libraries and met with school-age students. Pictured are Couillard with her niece Santhi Sheehan who lives in Nicaragua.



## District-wide annual asbestos notification

Mounds View Public Schools has continued to respond to asbestos in buildings in a cautious and proactive manner. Building administration will continue with its ongoing asbestos operations and maintenance program, including periodic surveillance inspections, which are conducted on a semi-annual basis. Also required as part of AHERA (Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act-EPA) are re-inspections, which are conducted by accredited inspectors every three years since the implementation of the District's Management Plan. The building administration's ongoing efforts related to the management and control of asbestos containing materials are focused on providing a safe environment for our building occupants and employees. If you have any questions, would like to review the management plan, or are interested in recent response actions completed at the buildings, please contact Tom Heimkes at 651-266-7253.

## Turtle Lake studies illustrating

Author and illustrator Rick Chrustowski visited Turtle Lake Elementary School in September to share his work with students and staff. Chrustowski spent time with each class, sharing his processes for writing, drawing and researching. Students also worked with Chrustowski to create a gallery of drawings in books that can be used as nature and poetry journals throughout the school year. Pictured with Chrustowski is Jane Norgren's K+ class in front of some of the drawings created during the project.



## Info meeting on teacher relicensure

The District will hold an informational meeting on teacher relicensure procedures on Thursday, November 2, from 4-5 p.m. at the Snail Lake Education Center in Shoreview. This meeting is open to all teachers – those currently teaching, those not currently teaching, teachers on leave, non-public school teachers and retired teachers. A teacher needs 125 clock hours within the last five years to renew their license. The Minnesota Department of Education has added new requirements during the last five years. These will be discussed and necessary forms will be provided at the meeting.

# Around the District

## Helping residents understand taxes and schools

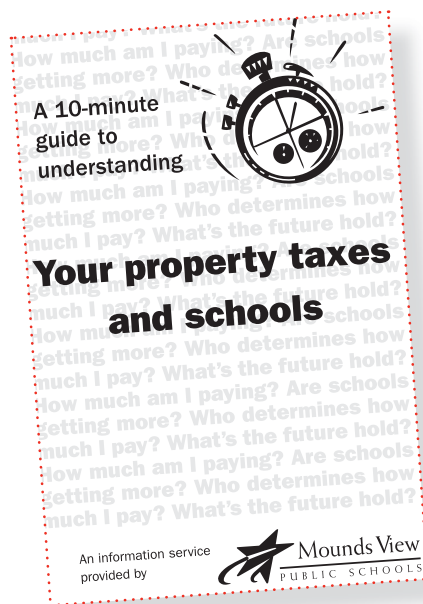
Recent public opinion polls confirm something many of us already knew. Education and taxes are clearly top issues for most Minnesotans today. That's why it's more important than ever that residents understand the relationship between property taxes and school funding.

This fall, District residents received a booklet in the mail produced by Mounds View Public Schools. *A 10-minute guide to understanding your property taxes and schools* was created as an information service to taxpayers, and it answers some of the most frequently asked questions about property taxes and schools.

Questions like:

- Am I paying more property taxes today than five years ago?
- Are schools receiving more property taxes today than five years ago?
- Who determines how much I pay?
- Why are property taxes increasingly important for school funding?
- What's the future of my property taxes paid towards schools?

This booklet also lists resources for residents who would like to seek tax relief through a refund program, and it provides contact information for those seeking more information about taxes. For more information on property taxes and school funding, visit [www.moundsviewschools.org](http://www.moundsviewschools.org) or call 651-639-6205.



## Bel Air teacher hones craft of writing

Lynn Macal, the high performance teacher at Bel Air Elementary School in New Brighton, was one of 14 participants in the 2006 Minnesota Writing Project Invitational Institute at the University of Minnesota in July. The Institute, which is partially funded by the National Writing Project, uses current theory and practice to train teachers to become better writing and literacy instructors while they work to improve their own writing skills. Participants' writing will be published in an anthology of work available sometime this fall.

## Athletic Hall of Fame 2006 inductees

### Irondale High School

Jeff Hartin, 1970  
Ann Grindatti, 1976  
Sabrina Tormoen, 1983  
Leslie Smith, 1983  
Wendy Bigler, 1989  
Mike Maslowski, 1993

### Mounds View High School

Fred Kunzman, 1959 (posthumous)  
Joe Holmberg, 1963  
Jim Rosenkranz, 1965  
Lynne Larson Plummer, 1974  
Mary McCauley Long, 1983

*For biographies of inductees, visit the Alumni web page at [www.moundsviewschools.org](http://www.moundsviewschools.org).*



# With Honors

## 36 National Merit honorees for 2006–2007

The National Merit Scholarship program recently reported that 36 students from Mounds View Public Schools earned semifinalist, commended or achievement student status for the 2006-2007 school year.

The students from Irondale High School in New Brighton and Mounds View High School in Arden Hills all attained high scores on the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) during their junior year. The District's 12 semifinalists are among 16,000 students nationwide who earned semifinalist status and the

24 commended students are among 34,000 nationwide. More than 1.4 million students take the exam each year.

In addition to attaining commended student status, one student from Mounds View High School and one from Irondale High School were named National Achievement Program Participants. This program, which is also based on PSAT/NMSQT results, provides recognition for outstanding Black American high school students. Of the more than 130,000 students who entered the National Achievement Program each year, approximately 4,600 are honored.



### Irondale High School Semifinalist and Commended students

(pictured L to R, front to back).

Semifinalists are designated with \*. Achievement student designated with ^.

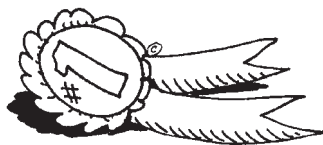
**Row 1:** Gregory B. Tallman,

Alexander J. Wiedmann,  
Mahader Tamene^

**Row 2:** Aaron T. Hawkins\*, Amy V. Fritz\*

**Row 3:** Benjamin T. Smith,  
Haixiao Vu

**Row 4:** Jeffrey Z. Lou\*, Amy L. Grant, Christine V. Mennicke\*



### Mounds View High School Semifinalist and Commended students

(pictured L to R, front to back).

Semifinalists are designated with \*. Achievement student designated with ^.

**Row 1:** Anton M. Safonov,  
Tanner J. Winslow, Vanck L. Zhu\*, Pouya Hemmati\*,  
Samuel J. Carpenter\*

**Row 2:** Anthony M. Johnson^,  
Victor F. Saunders, Michael W.

Bonin\*, Lisa M. Barnes\*, Nikhil A. Gupta\*, Edward Y. Kwon

**Row 3:** Fanny Zhang, Allison J. Goebel, Laura J. Amlie, Curtis Y. Chiang, Graham C. Stecklein, Patrick F. Delahunt, Sarah Cadorette, Alex P. Bonemeyer

**Not pictured:** Alejandro B. Gomez\*, Jessica R. Hennen\*, David C. Hess, Alexander L. Kilbo, Zachary L. Mann, Michael D. Rydzeski, Megan Wang

### National Merit: Top 5 in metro

Recognition by the National Merit Scholarship program is one of the highest honors a student can receive for outstanding academic achievement. This year, Mounds View Public Schools ranked among the top five districts in the metro for the most National Merit semifinalists.

#### RANK/DISTRICT

1. Eden Prairie
2. Wayzata
3. Edina
4. St. Paul
- 5. Mounds View**
5. Minnetonka

#### # OF SEMIFINALISTS

- 23
- 21
- 16
- 13
- 12**
- 12



## Irondale teacher named tech award finalist

Pat St. Peter, the instructional strategies facilitator at Irondale High School, has been selected as a finalist for a 2006 Tekne Award from the Minnesota High Tech Association. The annual award recognizes technology innovators and leaders in the business and education sectors who have made lasting contributions to enhancing the quality of life and competitiveness of Minnesota. St. Peter's nomination focused on the varied and innovative ways she uses technology to enhance classroom learning throughout all subject areas at Irondale. The award winners will be announced in late October.

## Mounds View *Viewer* staff wins state awards

Student journalists from the staff of *The Viewer*, the Mounds View High School student newspaper, won seven awards during the 2006 Minnesota High School Press Association contest, including an Honorable Mention award in the Best in Show category. Other awards included:

**1st place sports story** - Ashley Aram

**1st place center spread design** - Laura Regan, Lauren Tjernlund

**1st place editorial cartoon** - Alex Eldridge

**2nd place news story** - Britt Ahlstrom

**3rd place arts review** - Megan Wang

**3rd place sports photo** - Kit Hale

Teacher Martha Rush is the adviser for *The Viewer*.

## Sunnyside teacher gets extra credit in math

Sunnyside Elementary School second-grade teacher Amy TerEick spent her second summer studying at the Park City Math Institute (PCMI) in Utah this year. PCMI, a program that works with the Institute for Advanced Study, is designed to provide comprehensive professional development opportunities for mathematics educators and researchers. During the three-week session, participants improve their own math skills through study sessions, work on teaching practice lessons and develop math-relevant small-group projects to share with colleagues. TerEick received a full scholarship to attend the institute.

## School Readiness program receives grant for new class

The District has been named the recipient of a \$10,000 Minnesota Early Learning Foundation (MELF) grant to fund a family English class in collaboration with the Suburban Ramsey County School Readiness program. The class will provide parents and children an opportunity to improve their reading, writing and English speaking skills and give parents time to participate in parent training and discussions. As a recipient of the grant, the District must now raise matching funds by working with local community organizations.

## Valentine Hills art at the Fair

Art students at Valentine Hills Elementary School in Arden Hills were well represented at this year's Minnesota State Fair. As part of the Crayola "The Art of Childhood" exhibit, 24 Valentine Hills' student works – out of 250 entries submitted statewide – were selected for display. Three Valentine Hills students won awards at the show: Nicole Johnson took first place in the grades 5-6 division, Jillian Kristufek took second place in the grades 2-3 division and Carina Anderson won third place in the grades 2-3 division. Mark Trampf is the art teacher at Valentine Hills.

## A Pinewood celebration

In late October, Pinewood Elementary School in Mounds View will mark its 50th anniversary year with a community celebration. Event festivities include a school parade with costumes from past decades, a reunion and luncheon for all current and former Pinewood staff members and an open house with music and dancing, a display of past yearbooks and photographs and memorabilia from Pinewood's history. For dates, times and more information, go to [www.moundsviewschools.org/pinewood](http://www.moundsviewschools.org/pinewood).



# ANNUAL REPORT 2005–2006

## Student assessments in Mounds View Public Schools

### *How testing provides valuable information for instruction*

Despite the media attention given to No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and other mandated assessments, many tests contain significant limitations for educational systems to evaluate its programs or translate findings into instructional adaptation for students. To date, no state measures exist that provide an across-time perspective on student progress. State and federal assessments also do not provide problem-solving information that can be applied to instruction or individual achievement. Due to these government-mandated test shortcomings, districts must find other ways to accurately assess instruction and student achievement.

For Mounds View Public Schools, these important questions are answered through a high quality, comprehensive K-12 assessment program that provides valuable information for individual student and classroom-level instruction. In this way, the District can find answers to the essential issues surrounding the academic achievement of all students.

### **Common Assessments and Classroom Assessments**

These assessments occur throughout the District from Kindergarten portfolios to high school team-developed exams. These assessments provide timely and instruction-relevant feedback to staff members and indicate whether or not students are on course to meet the state-level proficiency, individual growth targets and District learner outcomes.

Mounds View Public Schools has also implemented state-of-the-art technologies that allow staff immediate access to current and historical assessment information in table, graph or roster form. This system, called Just5Clicks, creates a seamless transfer of critical information that is available regardless of grade-level configurations, school closures, transfers or new enrollment. This effort also allows staff members to view individual test results and across-time results for individual students, a whole classroom, or an entire grade-level, school or District.

In addition to locally administered assessments, District students participate in an array of state-mandated exams that include reading, math, writing – and in the near future – science. These assessments include high-stakes accountability at two levels:

- Individual students to become eligible for graduation.
- District and school accountability to meet Adequate Yearly Progress to address federal No Child Left Behind Legislation (NCLB).

### **Continuous Progress Monitoring (CPM)**

Building on a strong tradition of best practices, Mounds View Public Schools continues to assess all students in grades one and two in oral fluency and math computation three times per year with optional monthly assessments available to teachers. All math and reading assessment probes have been updated in collaboration with a Minnesota company called Edformation and their web-based program, “Aimsweb.” Aimsweb provides both the content and online reporting capabilities so that teachers can easily monitor the ongoing progress of students on a frequent basis and when necessary, make instructional adaptations to enhance student achievement. Early literacy and numeracy skills are assessed using our Beginning and End of Kindergarten Assessment.

### **Results**

- Findings of early literacy measures indicate continued strong performance with student reading fluency and math numeracy increasing across the year. Overall, grade level performance in reading for first grade was 76 words read correctly in one minute, and grade 2 was 118. Both of these are well-above Aimsweb 50 percentile of 56 wrc, and 96 wrc respectively.

### **Basic Skills Tests (BST) to sunset**

Minnesota students enrolled in high school during the 2005-2006 school year must continue to pass the BST exams in reading, mathematics and written expression (first administered in grade 10) as well as meet course credit requirements to be eligible to receive a high school diploma (Graduation Year of 2009 or earlier). However, beginning with this year's ninth graders the NCLB assessments known as the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA) will replace the BST as the graduation exam for students with graduation year of 2010 and beyond. To learn more about the new Graduation Standard go to the MDE website located at: [http://education.state.mn.us/mde/Accountability\\_Programs/Assessment\\_and\\_Testing/Assessments/GRAD\\_Component\\_MCA\\_II/index.html](http://education.state.mn.us/mde/Accountability_Programs/Assessment_and_Testing/Assessments/GRAD_Component_MCA_II/index.html).

**For more information:**



[www.moundsvIEWSchools.org](http://www.moundsvIEWSchools.org)

Fall 2006 ★ School Talk

17

# ANNUAL REPORT 2005-2006

## Implications

Students with a graduation year of 2010 and beyond will begin the graduation exams with a grade 9 writing, grade 10 reading and grade 11 MCA exam. The MCA-II exams are more rigorous exams than the previous BST.

## Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA)

The state of Minnesota uses the MCA exams to meet federal NCLB legislation to report the percent of students who are proficient within each district and school by nine categories: All students, five racial/ethnic groups and special programming for English Language Learners, special education and students in poverty. The Minnesota Department of Education web site ([www.education.state.mn.us](http://www.education.state.mn.us)) provides district- and school-level information that may be compared across years as well as by various student characteristics.

## Results

The results from the 2005-2006 administration of the MCA-II will not be released until mid-November by the MDE. This is due in part to:

- MDE constructing all new exams in grades 3-8 and high school to align the MCA-II exams to the new content standards approved by the legislature in reading, math, and science.
- With the deployment of all new MCA-II exams MDE was required to establish new proficiency levels to determine the level of performance deemed acceptable for proficiency designation based on new tests, new scales, and new content standards.
- The additional time MDE needed to calculate AYP status of districts and schools following the standard setting procedures described above that occurred in late summer.

## Northwest Achievement Evaluation Association (NWEA-MAP)

Since 1997, Mounds View Public Schools has partnered with NWEA to assess student performance on an annual basis for students in grades 2 through 8. During the 2005-2006 academic year, all NWEA assessments in reading and math moved to a computer-delivered system<sup>1</sup>. Scores obtained from the NWEA assessment provide both national ranking (national percentiles) as well as comparisons to established growth targets. Thus, the scores provide a rich source of information for families, teachers and administrators concerned about the academic progress of individual

students. Additionally, the NWEA assessment system provides instruction-relevant results immediately after each assessment. This information serves as the backbone of the school improvement process and District accountability framework.

## Results

• During the 2005-2006 school year Mounds View Public Schools students maintained a high level of performance with nearly 50% of the student body performing above the 75th percentile nationally. In addition, in both subject areas, reading and math, students perform on average one grade-level above national norms compared to same-grade peers. With the move to computer-delivered exams it is important to note that Reading RIT scores are lower by grade throughout the District with grade 5 & 6 showing the largest decline. These differences are a reflection of the move to the computer-delivered system rather than an overall drop in performance (i.e., re-calibration)<sup>2</sup>. Math RIT scores are nearly identical for grades 2-7. Grade 8 students show the most change with the general math students performing about 8 RIT points below the previous cohort and their grade 7 average. Algebra scores overall remain high.

The District's community members have high expectations for student achievement and District teachers and staff members work to meet these expectations on a daily basis. It's expected that the November 15 MCA-II data release on the District will report continued high achievement.

## Graphic summary

The next page includes a summary of Mounds View Public Schools' student performance for the 2005-2006 academic year at the elementary, middle and high school levels. Where applicable, results will include references to historical performances. Updates will be made on the District web site as state test results become available.

<sup>1</sup> The move to computer-administered tests with NWEA follows an 18-month pilot with the MAP system. In addition, the landscape of assessment is rapidly changing. Plans are in place for all state-mandated assessments to be online by 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Re-calibration. Reading historically under the paper-pencil administration was restricted to 8 common levels of test booklets for elementary and middle school, which is contrary to how the math system was set up – 8 unique levels for elementary and middle school. Further, the level 8 reading booklet alternated between form A and B by year. There is some indication now that forms A and B were not of equal difficulty. Finally, based on the overall RIT values for all grades within the District it appears that the reading exam on the computer is a bit more challenging format than the math exam.

**For more information:**

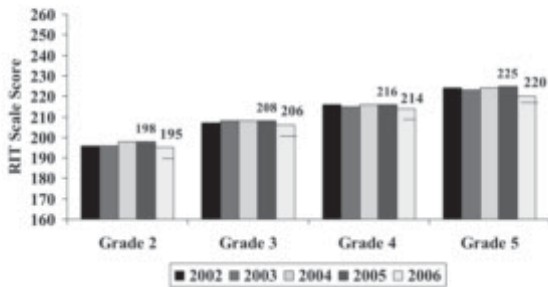


[www.moundviewschools.org](http://www.moundviewschools.org)

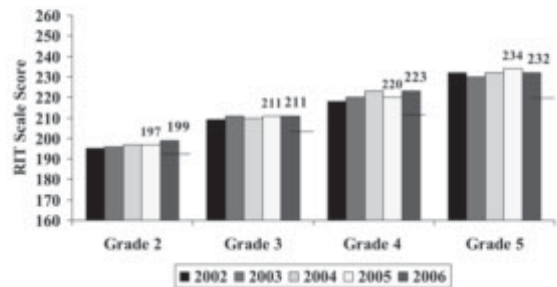
# ANNUAL REPORT 2005-2006

## STUDENT-PERFORMANCE RESULTS

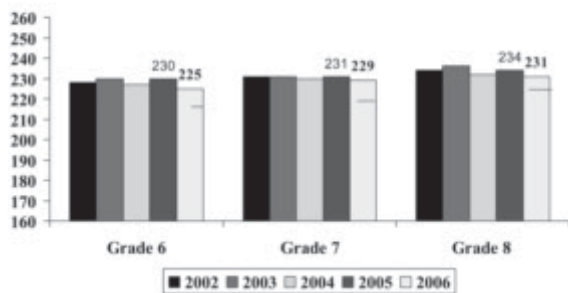
District 621- Elementary NWEA  
Median Reading Scores by year



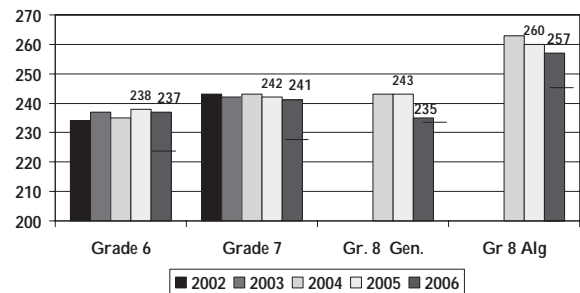
District 621- Elementary NWEA  
Median Math Scores by year



District 621- Middle School NWEA  
Median Reading Scores by year



District 621- Middle School NWEA  
Median Math Scores by year



### AP Achievements

The designation of AP Scholar has been given to 169 students from Mounds View Public Schools in recognition of their exceptional achievement on college-level AP exams. AP courses are one option for District students to take college-level courses while in high school. Exam scores are based on a 5-point scale.

- 7 District students qualified for the National AP Scholar Award by earning an average grade of 4 or higher on a 5-point scale on all AP exams taken and grades of 4 or higher on eight or more of the exams.
- 58 District students qualified for the AP Scholar with Distinction Award by earning an average grade of at least 3.5 on all AP exams and grades of 3 or higher on five or more exams.
- 38 District students qualified for the AP Scholar with Honor Award by earning an average score of at least 3.25 on all AP exams taken and a score of 3 or higher on four or more exams.
- 66 District students qualified for the AP Scholar Award by completing three or more AP exams with a grade of 3 or higher.

### District ACT and SAT scores above average

Overall, students in Mounds View Public Schools score higher on the ACT and SAT than state and national averages.

#### AVERAGE ACT SCORES

**DISTRICT: 23.8**

**STATE: 22.3**

**NATION: 21.1**

#### AVERAGE SAT SCORES

**DISTRICT:**  
Reading - 618  
Math - 642  
Writing - 607

**STATE:**  
Reading - 591  
Math - 600  
Writing - 574

**NATION:**  
Reading - 503  
Math - 518  
Writing - 497

For more information:



[www.moundsviewschools.org](http://www.moundsviewschools.org)

## *The November 7 Levy*

# An important piece of the puzzle



On Election Day 2006, voters in Mounds View Public Schools will consider a levy referendum. Why?

- An existing levy that provides more than \$3 million a year is about to expire. It hasn't increased with inflation since voters approved it in 1986.
- Mounds View has experienced the largest decline in enrollment of all suburban metro districts since 2001. As enrollment declines, the total per-pupil revenue declines.
- Although enrollment is declining, expenses don't decline at an equivalent rate. For every classroom of students lost, the District loses three classrooms of funding. That is why the State Auditor's 2006 report says, "Districts that experience declining enrollment often are not able to reduce expenditures at the same rate, resulting in increasing per pupil expenditure."
- Expenses and fixed costs continue to outpace inflation.

If successful, the levy will keep class sizes, programs, co-curricular fees and transportation fees stable for another year. If voters reject the levy, schools will lose more than \$3 million a year. Class sizes and fees will rise, pools will close and programs like elementary school band and orchestra will be cut.

To make an informed decision, residents need the facts. To learn more about the levy, turn to page 6 or visit [www.moundsvIEWSchools.org](http://www.moundsvIEWSchools.org) for more information.



# ***VOTE!***

## **November 7**



350 Highway 96 West  
Shoreview, MN 55126-1951

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
ST. PAUL, MN  
PERMIT NO 4112