



SCALE

Scott County Association For Leadership And Efficiency

On Friday, May 13, members and guests of the Scott County Association for Leadership and Efficiency (SCALE) gathered for a meeting that featured legislative updates; remarks from **Metropolitan Councilmember Gary Van Eyll**; the approval of new members; and a panel presentation and discussion about the recently released *Minnesota Student Survey*.

Scott County lobbyist **John Boland** and Metro Cities' Executive Director **Patricia Nauman** began the morning's meeting by updating the members on recent legislative developments, noting that the general speculation around the capitol is that a special session is likely. "The House and Senate are still working on the major funding bills," Boland said, "Only one — the Agriculture bill — of the eleven funding areas has been completed and signed by the Governor." Nauman concurred, adding that "... there are a lot of moving pieces right now, but they do appear to be making some progress." Later in the meeting, **Representative Michael Beard** provided his perspective on the session's status, stating that "... adjournment is set for [May 23], but I'm not particularly hopeful."

Following the legislative comments, Metropolitan Councilmember Gary Van Eyll updated the SCALE members on current issues and events at the Council. "Of the 17 councilmembers, 16 are brand new... so many of us are still in the process of learning what we should and shouldn't do, setting goals and objectives, and going out to meet with groups such as this," he stated.

The remainder of morning's meeting focused primarily on selected results of the *2010 Minnesota Student Survey*, led by Prior Lake-Savage Area School **Superintendent Sue Ann Gruver**, Belle Plaine School **Superintendent Kelly Smith**, and Jordan School **Superintendent Kirk Nelson**. "This survey is administered every three years," said Gruver, "And it is completely anonymous, confidential, and voluntary. It is a very important vehicle for us to learn about what our youth are thinking, feeling, and doing during these formative years, and we do use these results to make policy and program decisions."

While the larger survey covers everything from perceptions of personal safety to sexual health issues, the morning's panel spotlighted three particular areas: mental and emotional health issues, bullying, and alcohol and drug use. The presentation also centered primarily on Scott County-specific data as compared to the statewide figures. "One of the first areas of concern we saw was in the reported levels of depression, sadness, self-harm, and suicide ideation in our ninth graders, particularly among girls. Something seems to be triggered around this age, and the pressure to look and act 'perfect' is most certainly part of it," Gruver said.

Superintendent Nelson covered the bullying section of the presentation, adding that — although the "typical" environments for bullying are still school bathrooms, hallways, and buses — there is a significant rise in the use of technology in bullying behaviors. "This is a source of our biggest frustration," he noted. "This bullying in cyberspace... via cell phone, twitter, texting, social media sites, and the like." He also added that most of the school districts now have stricter bullying policies in place, as well as policies regarding cell and smartphone use.

Superintendent Smith addressed the alcohol and drug use statistics, stating that "... in general, the use of 'hard drugs' [i.e., methamphetamine, heroin, cocaine, and the like] is down, and this is good news. In addition, the incidence of underage drinking also appears to have diminished. However, the bad news is that 'binge drinking' behaviors are on the rise — so when these kids do drink, they hit it hard." He also noted that, second to alcohol, marijuana appears to remain the "drug of choice," as it is "... both easier to get and is still perceived by the kids as 'safe.'" To review the entire 2010 Minnesota Student Survey, please visit the Prior Lake-Savage Area School's website at www.priorlake-savage.k12.mn.us, and click on "MN Student Survey—Local Results."

In other actions of the morning, SCALE members unanimously welcomed the Scott County Soil and Water Conservation District and Metro Cities (formerly known as the Association of Metropolitan Municipalities, or AMM) as members. **Next month's SCALE meeting will be held on Friday, June 10 at 7:30 a.m. at the Regional Training Facility outside of Jordan.**

"The mission of SCALE is to forge new and innovative ways in which government entities can collaborate to provide superior services while making the most of limited resources."

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