

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Dr. Candace F. Raskin
Austin Public Schools
507 433-0966

The Hormel Foundation Expands Funding to Austin Public Schools in Support of Programs of Excellence

The Hormel Foundation approves funding for phase three of support for enhancing student programs in Austin Schools at their January 28, Board of Directors meeting. The Hormel Foundation has committed \$810,740, over a three-year period, for this third phase of support.

Dr. Candace Raskin will provide the Austin Public School board an overview of this third phase of funding at the February 11 school board meeting which contains funding for additional teachers, additional teacher training, and opportunities for students to access enrichment programs. This initiative represents the third major initiative funded by The Hormel Foundation during this year.

Over the past year, The Hormel Foundation has committed funding for a series of three initiatives designed to increase opportunities for Austin students and teachers. This funding is in addition to ongoing support The Hormel Foundation has provided annually in the areas of technology, family literacy, and funding transportation for preschool programming.

The first phase, the renovation of the science labs at Austin High School, will bring state-of-the-art facilities for all students of Austin High. Construction will begin immediately following the dismissal of school for the summer and will be completed prior to the start of the 08-09 school year.

The second phase of funding focuses on enhancing teacher training. Through a partnership with the University of Minnesota, teachers of both Austin Public Schools and the Austin Catholic Schools will receive advanced coursework in the areas of mathematics, science and literacy over the next five years. This will result in advanced degrees and certificates for the teachers. To date, 95 teachers in grades pre-kindergarten through grade 12 are involved.

The second phase will result in an expansion of courses in grades 7-12 in the areas of mathematics, science and literacy. In the 2008-2009 school year, Austin Public Schools will offer a new grade 7 elective, Applied Physics and Technology. The following year this expansion will include a grade 8 chemistry class also as an elective. Finally the expansion will result in new advanced placement offerings at the high school level in biology, chemistry and physics. These accelerated courses will be phased in over a three to four year period. In the area of mathematics, this second phase will allow the district additional future advanced placement courses. The first and second phase of the Hormel Foundation gift has the ability to impact all students in the Austin District in the areas of science, mathematics and literacy.

The third phase, which was developed in conjunction with the Minnesota Department of Education, is scheduled to begin during the summer of 2008 and includes the following major components: teachers for gifted and talented students, student tuition and transportation for the University of Minnesota Talented Youth Mathematics Program (UMTYMP), tuition for students to attend the Minnesota Institute for Talented Youth (MITY) summer enrichment program, advanced coursework for teachers delivered in Austin by St. Mary's University faculty that will result in Gifted Education Certificates, and a three-day Hormel Foundation Gifted Education Symposium for Austin and regional teachers bringing in national presenters in the area of gifted education.

"We are very fortunate to have the support of The Hormel Foundation, whose vision is to help the school system meet the needs of all students. The impact of the three phases of these initiatives will be felt by every student of the district," said Austin Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Candace Raskin.