

Message from the Superintendent

Northshore School Board and Community

Budgets are about the future. As I contemplate our future as a District and as a community I am energized! This energy comes from my thinking about the opportunities to emerge from the COVID pandemic era as an ever stronger school system and community. We have worked to be very thoughtful as we adapted to the many changes that we've all experienced over the past fifteen months. With this budget, we turn our attention to the best ways to emerge from this experience.

In truth we've had our eyes on building back stronger for quite some time now. The many safety concerns for both staff and students, evolving regulatory environment and needing to adapt almost weekly kept our teams very focused on current operations.

While meeting current needs, we developed new project management tools that enabled our teams to begin to shift our focus to the summer and the new 2021-2022 school year. In doing so, we've reviewed numerous sources of insight and inspiration. Much of my thinking about how best to frame the message of this budget is informed by The report, "Summer Learning and Beyond" by the Spencer Foundation & Learning Policy Institute.¹ I'm borrowing from this work as I characterize their six principles that reflect the challenges and the opportunities that this next school year presents for us here at Northshore.

"Summer learning should also build on what students have experienced over the past year."

Summer Learning and Beyond, Spencer Foundation

We have also had many conversations about refreshing our District Strategic Plan over the past several months. These have had to adapt to the constraints of the pandemic, however I believe the refreshed plan will reflect well on this work and provide a map to the future. While the refreshed plan will not be adopted by the board in time to inform this particular budget, many of the conversations and observations that inform the refresh can be found in our recommendations for the next school year as well.

Consistent with guidance from our State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) we have developed a comprehensive plan to address learning loss. Many efforts will begin this summer and carry into the next school year. We are directing a significant portion of the federal funding made available to school districts (known as Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief) toward "learning loss" programs. It is in crafting these plans that we consider the six principles.

While addressing learning loss is often thought to mean intensive academic remediation, this approach alone will not meet student needs. Students will need a much more holistic approach to find optimal success. These principles will help us to provide all the elements that students need to move forward effectively in their education and growth journey.

Social relationships "are at the heart of learning and teaching". The first principle calls for the development of healthy and enduring social bonds. Learning recovery starts with reconnecting the social structures that enable students to relax and reengage. It will be important to prioritize mending

¹ [Summer Learning and Beyond: Opportunities for Creating Equity](#), Spencer Foundation & Learning Policy Institute

the many relationships that the pandemic has strained. We will work to provide environments where students can reconnect in safe and fun ways thereby enhancing the learning context for each student.

Consistent with Building Block Number 2 within our District Strategic Plan, learning should embrace and affirm students' full personhoods and cultural backgrounds. Each student should feel like they belong in

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our classrooms, our schools and our programs. They can bring their individual strengths to their learning experience in safety. With this confidence our students can push themselves to be their very best, both in the classrooms and in life.

The third principle calls upon us to provide for more than just the academic needs of our students. We will examine our curricular materials with all student needs in mind. Our efforts will examine ways in which our teaching supports the social, emotional and well-being of our students as they learn in our District. Our portrait of a Northshore graduate work is being very intentional about all the various life skills a productive and successful member of society should attain, and our role in supporting that effort.

While the past year saw disruptions in many norms, including traditional teaching, it also made the continuing struggle for many of our disadvantaged populations very evident. Our students have been part of these conversations and, in many cases, action. We will work to create the best kinds of spaces for our students to continue to work through these issues and how it relates to them. We can't go back to "normal" and have an opportunity to move beyond what has been "okay" for too long.

We will create an environment where the learning in our classrooms leverages the learning that goes on all around our students as they experience life. Even the pandemic brought many opportunities for our students to learn from their life experiences. We will engage students in our classrooms in ways that blend their need for academic rigor with their shared life experiences. Providing students the opportunity to help shape the conversations as we blend our lessons into relevance from their perspective will enhance their learning and their future abilities to continue to learn.

Encouraging natural curiosity about real-life subjects can draw our students into a powerful learning world of exploration. We will work to create relevance for our students in their academic work that make the learning enticing. Our efforts will seek to address each student where they are and challenge them to aspire to more. While we want to help our students recover from any learning loss that occurred during COVID, our approach will be focused on creating enthusiastic life-long-learners rather than drilling them on missed lessons.

This work is delivered by our educators. The Northshore School District is blessed to have professional educators in a variety of roles that care deeply about each student. Their persistence and professionalism sustained many through the challenging COVID times. Now we need to support them as effectively as ever as they return to their classrooms full of eager students. We are developing a summer return program that infuses joy into our work and back into our classrooms. Our students are best served by educators who show up eager and ready, every day to engage students in the many ways we've discussed to this point.

As I think about the future I'm filled with renewed enthusiasm for this crucial work. We are pleased to provide this budget as a means to discuss the future we intend to create with the resources that our community places in our trust. I am looking forward to discussing that future with you.

Imagine the Possibilities...