

ST. HELENS SCHOOL DISTRICT #502 – 2022-2023 BUDGET MESSAGE

In accordance with ORS 394.391, I am submitting to you the proposed 2022-2023 budget for the St. Helens School District. I am pleased to serve as Superintendent of the St. Helens School District and as always, I want to take a moment to thank all those that have put in the exceptional work to build a budget that continues to support our district's core values, mission, and vision for the children of our community.

The St. Helens School District and the world finds itself in a unique situation as we learn to live with COVID surges, global unrest, rising inflation and a labor shortage impacting all aspects of the economy including public schools. In the midst of all of this Oregon is experiencing one of the strongest economies in history. As of the March Economic and Revenue Forecast, net General Fund and Lottery revenues are up a combined \$1.173 billion just since the December forecast with numbers expected to grow significantly in future forecasts. The State's reserve accounts (Education Stability Fund, Rainy Day Fund, and Cash Reserves) grew significantly again and are currently projected to top \$5 billion during the 2021-23 biennium. This is equivalent to 20% of the General Fund Budget. Add in the strength of Corporate Activity Tax collections, and it is safe to say that Oregon's budget is in the best financial position since the passage of Measure 5 in 1990.

With all of this good news schools continue to be underfunded and we see many schools across the state beginning to layoff staff for the upcoming school year. Although the growth of the state's reserve accounts should allow a buffer for most any economic downturn, without releasing some of the revenue now it is short changing the current students that we are desperately trying to support as we recover from and endure the pandemic. While most school districts are experiencing a 5-10% loss of student enrollment, the St. Helens School District is seeing a 3% increase which is allowing us to avoid any such reduction. With, however, the additional revenue comes additional students and the expenses to support those students. We are cautiously optimistic that our growth will continue as this is the first increase since the 2008-09 school year. Affordable housing, new schools, our community's commitment to education as well as the growing options offered in the St. Helens School District like the St. Helens Virtual Academy and the Early College High School program have all attributed to the new growth for the St. Helens School District.

As a District we are leveraging resources and taking advantage of Federal Elementary and Secondary School Relief Funds (ESSER) to reduce class sizes and increase social emotional support in our schools. We are also using ESSER funds to upgrade HVAC systems and technology so all schools are equipped with 21st century state of the art tech tools to enhance student learning. Other funds are supporting our commitment to a robust purchase of curricular materials, AVID, CTE Programs and ongoing imbedded Professional Development all of which is having a positive impact on student learning.

The budget being presented is strong and will allow our district to continue to make improvements in the student experience and our District Strategic Plan. As a district we have braided and managed funds from competitive grants to federal Title funding and the Student Investment Account to increase our capacity to meet the needs of 21st century learners. The strength of this budget and its commitment to students and staff will allow us to push toward our vision of *Exceptionally Educated Students by the Most Skilled and Highly Compassionate Staff.*

On behalf of the staff and our community, we express our appreciation for the members of the 2022-23 District Budget Committee and for the time each of you have committed to help create stronger schools for all students.

Respectfully submitted by,

Scot A. Stockwell

St. Helens Superintendent