

ST. HELENS SCHOOL DISTRICT #503 – 2019-2020 BUDGET MESSAGE

In accordance with ORS 394.391, I am submitting to you the proposed 2019-2020 budget for the St. Helens School District.

It is a pleasure to serve as Superintendent of the St. Helens School District. I want to thank all those who have spent time developing the budget before you. The St. Helens School District finds itself in a better position financially than most other districts across the state through hard work, strong fiscal management and to some degree; luck. With that said, I need to clarify that “better” simply means we are not in a position where we need to consider cuts or reductions.

Each new biennium we hear the rhetoric of politicians declaring their support to fully fund schools, yet the support regularly falls short of need. Year in and year out, school districts are provided with just enough to get by in a good year and forced to make draconian cuts in bad years. Once again we are hearing rumors of potential game changing funding for the 2019 – 2021 biennium, yet we have heard this in the past. The Legislator’s Joint Committee on Student Success is working on a \$2 billion student funding package. If passed, it would help stabilize school budgets and provide desperately needed funds to support social emotional learning, lower class sizes, and fully fund the arts and career technical education. The funding discussions taking place in Salem are promising and we hope they move beyond talk for this biennium.

Unless action beyond the rhetoric is taken, it appears Oregon children will be short changed once again based on the budget being considered for the next two year biennium. If not for the exceptional work of the staff in the St. Helens School District, the lofty vision set forth by our Strategic Plan would be for not. As a district we have braided and managed funds from competitive grants to federal Title funding in an effort to increase our capacity to meet the needs of 21st century learners. We have worked diligently to foster partnerships, such as the partnership with the City of St. Helens Recreation Department and throughout our community in an effort to supplement the needs remaining due to years of cost cutting measures. As we push toward our vision of Exceptionally Educated Students by the Most Skilled and Highly Compassionate Staff, we struggle within our current budget constraints.

The Governor’s proposed budget of \$8.97 billion for the 2019-2021 biennium does not adequately fund schools to meet the needs of our student population. We have stretched our budget and readjusted staffing allocations to improve the quality of experience for St. Helens students. We have been able to return to a curriculum adoption cycle and are in the process of purchasing new materials. We have expanded our offerings in the arts, choir, music and career technologies. In addition we are doing some very good work in the areas of social emotional learning, yet it is just beginning. As a school district we have maximized our resources and now wait for the State Legislators to act. Unless the Student Success funding package is passed, the St. Helens School District will not be able to continue its improvement path and will be forced to make decisions on critical items such as class size versus social emotional support.

On behalf of the staff and our community, we express our appreciation for the members of the 2019-2020 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