

SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

2014 - 15 OPERATING BUDGET

Dear Springfield,

I am presenting the proposed 2014–2015 budget that, I'm happy to say, represents a plan to build upon the work and success achieved during the past several years and strengthening the education that we offer Springfield's children.

Each element of the proposed budget aligns carefully with Springfield Public Schools' goals for student success that were developed and adopted by the District and Board of Education this year.

In 2014–2015, we will begin to work toward a more focused set of goals. These goals build upon the work occurring in our schools during the past several years and provide a stronger platform from which we will work toward our vision of Every Student a Graduate Prepared for a Bright and Successful Future.

The 2014–2015 Board-approved District Goals are:

1. *All Students Are Future Ready:* The Board and Superintendent are committed to building excellent schools and educating all students to their full potential. Furthermore, the District will maintain a commitment to quality, comprehensive programs.
2. *Communication:* We will develop and implement strategies to improve community involvement and engagement through communication and building relationships with families, staff and the community – with a focus on audiences not reached through current efforts.
3. *Advocacy:* The Board will direct resources to, and advocate on, the local, state, and federal levels to achieve fiscal stability and

guide educational policy that aligns with the educational goals of Springfield Public Schools.

4. *Leading Technology for Learning:* Provide staff and students with access to 21st-century tools, resources, and learning environments so that students can become proficient in utilizing technology to improve their academic achievement.
5. *Stewardship of District Resources for Facilities Management:* The Board and Superintendent will direct resources to support fiscally responsible and prudent decisions to maintain and improve district buildings and grounds.



SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE (Continued)

These five goals will guide the District's efforts during the 2014–2015 school year and beyond.

In order to meet these goals, we must reinvest our slowly increasing resources carefully. Making strategic investments, rather than simply restoring old practices, will ensure Springfield students are given the best possible opportunities to learn, grow, and succeed. Each decision was weighed carefully against the District goals and chosen based upon whether it would allow us to provide quality services to students and improve achievement. These reinvestments represent our commitment to making sure that our students graduate career and college ready.

The reinvestment we are most excited about is the return to a full school year – 2014–2015 will be the first year since 2008 that Springfield schools have no furlough days. This has been a priority for all levels of district leadership, and we are proud to be submitting a budget that does not include any reductions in school days.

Each area of reinvestment has been carefully considered based upon whether it helps to meet the District's goals and improve student outcomes. While the need is still far greater than available resources, we can and we will make progress on behalf of our students and community with this reinvestment strategy.



The reinvestments – focused on providing students with the support they need to thrive – that Springfield Public Schools is able to make in 2014–2015, based on slightly increased revenue, include:

- **Goal One: All Students Are Future Ready.**

- Restoring a full school year calendar.* Students will attend school for 175 days in 2014–2015. Eliminating furlough days has been a priority of both the District and the community for several years. The additional cost to restore a full school year is \$3.52 million.

- Increasing General Fund reserves.* Board policies require the District to maintain a reserve of at least four percent in order to offset unexpected or catastrophic events. In an attempt to keep budget reductions from affecting classrooms, the District has used those reserves and at the end of 2013 reserves were below one percent. It is vital to the District's long-term financial health to begin building its reserves back to the four percent minimum. The planned reserves for 2014–2015 are \$2.5 million.

- Full-day kindergarten planning.* Springfield elementary schools will begin offering full-day kindergarten classes in response to the State's changing education laws during the 2015–2016 school year. A full-day kindergarten program will help students better prepare to be successful in elementary school and beyond, especially when it comes to reading. This reinvestment will allow for comprehensive curriculum planning, as well as the purchase of additional classroom materials needed for the full-day program. The estimated cost to begin planning for full-day kindergarten is \$50,000.

SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE (Continued)

--*Strengthening special education programs.* As federal resources for special education continue to decrease, the District must offset those costs with general fund revenue. Also, the Life Skills program will welcome an addition of 8.28 FTE in the form of certified and classified staff. The Life Skills program serves moderately to profoundly disabled students and low staff-to-student ratios are key to meeting the physical needs of many of the program's students. The proposed increase to strengthen special education programs is \$665,000.

--*Preserving co-curricular activities.* Providing a well-rounded education is important, and co-curricular athletics are a wonderful part of many students' education. The District will be reinvesting in student safety and ensuring that co-curricular opportunities continue to be offered to as many students as possible by hiring two athletic trainers and addressing increasing costs, such as transportation to and from events. The required increase to address co-curricular needs is \$250,000.

- **Goal Four: Leading Technology for Learning.**

--*Increasing student access to technology.* Technology is an important tool to help students gain 21st-century job skills. In order to address the most critical needs of a 6,000 computer "fleet," including more than 3,500 computers (60 percent) that are more than seven years old, and the equipment needed to ensure it can access the Internet, the Technology Department is reallocating a portion of its budget. This reallocation will support limited equipment replacement and additional tools through the Synergy system for better parent access and engagement. The technology reallocation is \$300,000.

There are also cost increases required by multiple programs and services that must be addressed, including property and casualty insurance costs and an increase in payments to charter schools as a result of increased charter enrollment and special education costs.



SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE (Continued)

The District is also reinvesting in the support available to schools and teachers via a Special Programs coordinator and a director of secondary education. Both positions were eliminated during the budget reductions made between 2008 and 2012 in an attempt to shield classrooms from the effect of reductions. Currently, a single administrator at the district level supports the approximately 850 students, across twenty-two schools, served by Special Programs. The addition of a Special Programs coordinator will allow those students and families to be better served. The director of secondary education is made possible, in large part, through funding reallocated by reorganizing the administration of the Facilities Department and does not reflect the use of any new funding. A director of secondary education will allow our focus on successful middle-to-high school transitions and higher graduation rates to be approached with greater focus and intent. Those positions are key to ensuring that our schools are able to meet the needs of all students.

During my first year in the Springfield community, I have learned much about how we value our students and the education they receive. The efforts made to preserve a quality educational program during a period of extreme budget reductions were largely successful, and to know that our students continued to improve, even during that difficult time, is a testament to the efforts made on their behalf.

As we reinvest in quality programs and strategies that will enhance our students' skills and abilities, we continue moving forward on our journey to fulfill our vision – a journey that I am excited to be a part of and help lead.

Warmly,



Hertica Martin, Ed. D
Superintendent
Springfield Public Schools

