

ST. HELENS SCHOOL DISTRICT #502 – 2024-2025 BUDGET MESSAGE

In accordance with ORS 394.391, I am submitting to you the proposed 2024-2025 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 that have put in the exceptionally difficult work to build a budget that stays true to our district's core values, mission, and vision for the children of our community.

I am thrilled to announce that our fiscal future for the 2024-2025 school year is indeed strong. Thanks to prudent financial management and strategic planning, we find ourselves in a position of stability and growth. One of our greatest achievements is our ability to negotiate the highest salaries for beginning teachers in the Portland Metro area, while also ensuring that our most experienced educators rank among the top 25% for compensation. This accomplishment is a testament to our commitment to recruiting and retaining highly qualified staff, and I am pleased to report that our efforts are beginning to yield dividends.

Furthermore, I am pleased to report that we have utilized ESSER Federal Funds wisely, avoiding the fiscal cliff that many districts across the country are currently facing. Our careful stewardship of these funds has allowed us to not only maintain our existing programs and services but also to add staff to better support our students and educators. It is a testament to our strong fiscal management that we are in a position to invest in our human capital rather than resorting to layoffs, as unfortunately many school districts across the state of Oregon have been forced to do.

I am particularly excited to share that due to favorable expense variances and additional revenues in investment income, as well as the General Purpose Grant's reconciliation from the prior biennium, our ending fund balance for the 2023-24 fiscal year is estimated to increase by \$1,508,382 on a budget basis. This brings our total beginning fund balance for the upcoming year to \$6,584,133. This healthy financial position not only provides us with a solid foundation for the year ahead but also enables us to continue investing in the success and well-being of our students and staff.

Although the current outlook for the last year in the 2023-2025 biennium appears strong for the St. Helens School District, it's essential to note that if the state of Oregon fails to adequately fund schools in the next biennium, maintaining the progress we've achieved as a school community will be challenging. Moving forward, let's remain steadfast in our commitment to excellence and equity in education. Let's continue to value and support our staff, who are the heart and soul of our district. Together, we will build on our successes and overcome any challenges that may arise, ensuring a bright and prosperous future for all members of our school community.

Thank you once again on behalf of the staff and our community, we express our appreciation for the members of the 2024-2025 District Budget Committee and for the time each of you have committed to help create exceptional schools for all students.

Respectfully submitted by,
Scot A. Stockwell
St. Helens Superintendent