

**Superintendent Elizabeth J. Blanco, Ed.D.**  
**Welcome Back Staff Event**  
**August 14, 2024**

In searching for a theme for this upcoming school year, our leadership team realized we have the talent and capacity within the walls of PUSD to empower students, achieve greatness, and actualize the District's Mission and Vision. This is why we selected "The Power of Us" to lead us into the new school year.

The "Power of Us" is at the heart of PUSD. It is about our shared commitment and collaboration to provide a high-quality, equitable education for every student. We must ensure that every student feels valued, supported, and connected to the PUSD family.

We acknowledge that not every child is where we want them to be. We have a call to social justice in all we do at PUSD. We will continue to accelerate their growth and provide the resources they need.

Together, with the support of our amazing community, we are going to tap into the "Power of Us" to advance literacy, math, and college and career opportunities for our students.

Many of our students are still recovering from the impact the pandemic had in their academic and social-emotional development. This year, we will have a laser-focus on improving outcomes for literacy, math, and college and career readiness.

We will continue to provide the academic and social-emotional support necessary for our students to thrive.

Last year during my 100-day plan we visited every school and department to hear directly from you. Those conversations were invaluable and shaped our work throughout the year.

We took bold actions as a result of these visits. To name a few:

We heard from our teachers regarding the need for updated curriculum and we purchased new materials for English Language Arts, and Mathematics.

We heard our students were in need of support in the areas of academic intervention and Social Emotional Learning and we expanded services for them.

We heard our M&O team members needed updated equipment and vehicles to serve our schools and we provided these tools to accomplish their goals.

We listened to the parents of students with IEPs, parents of black students, the parents of foster youth and parents of English learners and we are redesigning the programs that serve them. We heard employees' concerns regarding the high cost of living and the need for livable wages. We worked with our labor partners and provided raises for our staff.

Our Superintendent's Leadership Team and other members of our central office will continue to visit sites and engage with all of you this year.

My 100-day plan complements our strategic plan that is built on five pillars:

- Learner-Focused Instruction - students are at the center of what we do
- Outstanding and Respected Employees - we're honoring you here today
- Quality Learning Environment - clean safe campuses and new technology
- Effective, Responsive, and Accountable Organization - our central office exists to serve schools
- Collaboration with Families & Communities - actively engaging with families, community schools, and other partnerships.

We have made great progress on all five pillars, and I especially want to highlight the incredible work of our Facilities and Maintenance & Operations teams.

In less than a year, they have tackled numerous Measure O projects—upgrading restrooms, installing new chillers, and adding thousands of new locks. Here at PHS, they have replaced the auditorium roof, and are working on the campus identity project that you see happening in the front of the school.

Next month, the Superintendent's Budget Advisory Committee will begin meeting. Their charge is to review our program plans and discuss priorities for the fiscal health of the district. Students and our classrooms will be at the forefront of our budget decisions.

We are also exploring ways to increase revenue, including an asset management plan for our district-owned properties.

In addition, the Board of Education has placed two measures on the November 5th ballot—a \$900 million facilities bond and a \$90 parcel tax.

If approved, the bond money will continue upgrading our campuses, and the parcel tax will generate \$5 million a year to support students and retain our valuable staff. This is a fantastic opportunity to secure local funding for our classrooms.

Our efforts are only as strong as the involvement of our families and community. They are part of the US in PUSD.

We also want to thank the many community organizations, businesses, and local leaders who enrich our students' education.

As we kick off the new school year, let's reaffirm our commitment to our students.

Let's innovate, inspire, and open doors together. Here's to a year of growth and achievement.

This is the power of US.