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Guest Column
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A New School Year Reminds Us What Strong Schools Are All About

There is something special about the start of a new school year.

In just a few days, our schools will once again be filled with students greeting friends, teachers welcoming new classes, buses arriving, activities getting underway, and families settling into new routines. For some students, it will be their very first day in Centennial Schools. For others, it will mark the beginning of their final year before graduation.

Whatever the grade level, the start of school brings a renewed sense of possibility, as well as a reminder of what our schools are here to do.

At Centennial, we are proud of the educational experiences our students receive every day. Those experiences are made possible by talented teachers and staff, strong academic programs, individualized student supports, extracurricular opportunities, and learning environments designed to help students grow.

Strong schools, however, don't happen by chance. They require ongoing investment, thoughtful planning, and a commitment to maintaining what works, while also preparing for changing student needs.

That has been at the heart of the *Centennial Forward* work our district and community have undertaken over the past several years.

As students return this fall, the connection between that planning and the daily work happening in our schools becomes especially clear. Maintaining strong schools means having excellent teachers in our classrooms, along with the support staff, programs and services students rely on. It also means providing safe, functional buildings with learning spaces and infrastructure that can support students today and well into the future.

Those are different needs, but both are essential to the educational experience.

This November, Centennial voters will consider two separate referendum questions reflecting those priorities. Question 1 is an operating levy that would provide additional funding to help maintain teachers, academic programs, student services, reasonable class

sizes, and day-to-day school operations. Question 2 is a facilities bond that would address identified needs related to school safety, aging infrastructure, learning environments, and facility improvements across the district.

Over the coming weeks, you will hear more about both questions. Our goal is to make sure every resident has access to clear, factual information about what is being proposed, why the needs have been identified, what each question would fund, and the estimated property tax impact.

But before we get too far ahead of ourselves, we have a school year to begin.

I am excited to welcome our students and staff back to Centennial Schools and grateful for the families and community members who support them. A new school year brings new opportunities to learn, grow, build relationships, and discover what's possible. Whether you have children in our schools today or haven't stepped inside a classroom in years, our schools remain an important part of what makes Centennial a strong community.

The first day of school is always a reminder of that.

Here's to a great 2026-27 school year — and to continuing the work of maintaining strong schools for today's students and the generations who will follow them.

To learn more about the November referendum questions, visit isd12.org/centennial-forward.

Dr. Jeff Holmberg, Superintendent, Centennial Schools