

April 12, 2022

Budget Committee Members, Bend-La Pine Schools' Staff,
Students, Families, and Community Members:

As we finish out the 2021-2022 school year and start to think about the upcoming school year, it is vital that we reflect on whether we have delivered upon the commitments we have made as good stewards of our taxpayers' dollars. The past couple of years, we have received, and spent, dollars that were unanticipated, unexpected, and unprecedented to navigate a world-wide pandemic and all the challenges that came with it. Whether we are using taxpayer dollars to add staffing, buy personal protective equipment, or provide updated curricular materials, we take our responsibility of stewardship very seriously in Bend-La Pine Schools.

The challenges from the past 24 months have led us to some substantial, unforeseen expenditures, ranging from upgrading our HVAC systems to adding nurses, from reshaping and growing our online programming to purchasing and deploying masks, hand sanitizer, tech hardware and software. The pandemic has provided many new and surprising opportunities for problem solving. Fortunately, we have been able to navigate these challenges and to continue providing engaging and meaningful learning experiences for our students. This is due to the diligence and commitment of our amazing staff. Much of what we have learned during these challenging times can be summarized in the following statement:

“Resources deployed in a strategic, thoughtful manner, to effectively support staff in the mission of the district can create a positive and important impact on the trajectory of our students' lives and experiences in our schools.”

As we have navigated through the pandemic, we have tried to stay consistent with our embedded decision-making systems: make decisions thoughtfully, seeking input and feedback from our constituents whenever possible on how to best strategically meet the needs of our students.

We have historically built our budget on the promise that each Bend-La Pine Schools' student is known by name, strength, and need, and graduates ready for college, career and civic engagement. To this end, the Bend-La Pine Schools' Board of Directors established goals that serve as the focal point of improvement of our schools and our overall system. The Board's commitments are stated below:

- Students develop a strong academic foundation;
- Students have a passion, purpose, and plan for their future;
- Students are engaged;
- Students, families, and staff experience inclusion and belonging; and
- Staffing reflects the diversity of students and families.

In 2019, the Oregon legislature committed an unprecedented amount of additional money through the Student Success Act (SSA) to infuse almost \$2 billion in additional funding into our schools. With a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to ask our community how to best utilize approximately \$13 million in additional funds annually, the district sought out community feedback through our Excellence and Equity review. After analyzing the feedback and other relevant information, Bend-La Pine Schools developed the following strategic priorities to help us achieve the district's promise and the board goals described above:

- Empower student, family and community voice;
- Create safer, healthier, more equitable school environments for students and families;
- Review and redesign curriculum to include anti-racist resources and diverse perspectives;
- Focus on core curricula, instruction, and assessment practices that elevate learning for all students; and
- Diversify staff in all classifications.

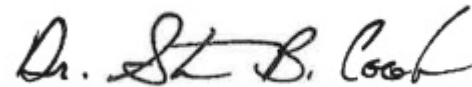
The budget we are proposing for the 2022-2023 school year will demonstrate a continued commitment to deliver upon the aforementioned strategic priorities and board goals. We also believe it is time to re-engage in a deep look into how well we are delivering upon the promises that we hold for our students and families. Are we producing graduates truly ready for college, career and civic engagement? Are our systems the most effective and most efficient they can be to produce the outcomes that our families and our community want and expect for our students? These are questions we must collectively address: staff, students, families, and community members. In addition to a districtwide analysis of our current

state, our board will also be reviewing their goals to determine whether they most accurately capture the focus of our work and best serve the needs of our students and greater community.

Lastly, this proposed budget meets the requirements of Bend-La Pine Schools' policy in *Executive Limitation 10, Financial Planning and Administration*. The policy requires proposing a budget with an ending fund balance equal to 5% of resources in the General Fund Operations budget.

We are truly grateful for your ongoing support of the Bend-La Pine Schools.

In partnership,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dr. Steven Cook". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Steven Cook
Superintendent, Bend LaPine Schools