



April 13, 2021

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

As we approach the end of the current school year and plan for 2021-22, it is important that we recognize the journey each of us has taken over the last thirteen months. Educating our students through a pandemic has impacted families, staff, and especially our students themselves. While some have thrived, many have been challenged by new modes of learning, changed roles for families in their children's education, and constant shifts in state and district plans. Collectively, you have risen to these challenges. I thank you for your patience, resilience, and continued commitment to the power and promise of public education.

The district will continue to monitor the course of the pandemic and follow public health guidance. Given the current state of affairs, especially the shift by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to requiring three feet between students in classrooms, our plan for the rest of this year and for the upcoming school year is to return to full time, in-person teaching and learning for grades K-12. We are planning for student experiences next year that include not only in-person learning, but robust opportunities for co-curricular and extracurricular experiences, activities, and athletics.

Our budget is built upon our promise that each Bend-La Pine Schools' student is known by name, strengths, and needs, and graduates ready for college, career and civic engagement. To accomplish this, our Board of Directors has established measurable outcomes in five relevant categories:

- 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**.
- Staffing reflects the **diversity of students and families**.

Bend-La Pine Schools has developed its Strategic Investment Plan based on our Board of Directors' promise and outcomes and informed by the 2019-20 *Excellence and Equity Review*. From this information, district leadership has established five priorities as the focus of professional learning and staff development at all levels of our system:

#### *Our Strategic Priorities*

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

At the same time, we acknowledge increased needs for academic acceleration among our students, as well as heightened social, emotional, behavioral, and mental health concerns as a result of

the pandemic. As we plan for the 21-22 school year, our budget must address these needs, alongside our strategic priorities.

At the date of this budget message, the current budget established by the co-chairs of the Ways and Means Subcommittee of the Oregon Legislature does not provide Oregon school districts with the funding they will need to maintain current service levels into the future. Due to Bend-La Pine Schools' decades-long commitment to fiscal planning, we are better positioned financially than many districts across the state, but we still face a budget shortfall that has required difficult decisions to balance the 21-22 proposed budget.

This proposed budget reflects a reduction in revenue year-over-year due to Oregon's current disinvestment in education, as well as a decline in our student enrollment, which has declined in most districts across the state. When compared to the 2020-21 year, the revenue available for the 2021-22 school year will require us to operate at a reduced level. But our priorities remain unchanged.

Within, you will find my recommendation for a \$375 million investment into our communities' schools next year. This budget is built with a focus on high levels of achievement and positive experiences for each and every student K-12, preparing them for success in post-secondary education and beyond. We will continue to work diligently to use available resources in the best manner possible to serve our students.

The proposed 2021-22 budget totals \$375 million for all funds. The General Fund Operations budget totals approximately \$200 million and incorporates resources available to the district, including the following: \$9.3 billion State School Fund (SSF) level, with a 49%/51% split over the biennium; Student Investment Account (SIA) investment of \$11.5 million; and federal support from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) fund of an undetermined amount at the time of this proposed budget's publication.

Finally, the 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 thank you for your continued support of Bend-La Pine Schools.

Sincerely,



Lora Nordquist  
Interim Superintendent, Bend-La Pine Schools