

## **Budget Message 2019-20**

### **The Promise of Public Education: The Time to Invest is Now**

At Bend-La Pine Schools, we fundamentally believe that it is not *what we do*, it is *why we do it* that unites us in our work and ultimately matters most for our students' success. Our nearly 2,000 employees are driven by an unrelenting passion for education and a commitment to provide our more than 18,000 students the learning environment they deserve.

At Bend-La Pine Schools, it is our collective belief that we must renew the promise of public education, pushing back against a narrow, "test-driven" definition of success for our students. We care deeply about academic excellence, but we care just as much about students' character; their preparedness for the next steps in their lives; their abilities to think critically, work creatively, communicate, and collaborate. We are developing future-ready students: the next generation of thinkers, doers, leaders, and frankly, neighbors. I know this goal matters to our community; and more than ever, it matters to our country and our democracy.

Delivering an exceptional public education is a promise, one we work hard every day to keep for our students. While Bend-La Pine Schools' students have enjoyed many successes and our district has made much progress toward this promise, making it a reality for each and every student requires adequate and stable state funding.

The Governor's proposed base-level education budget provides, at best, funding that will allow us to maintain current staffing, services, and programs. This budget will not allow us to improve our staffing ratios, reduce class sizes, add instructional time, or provide more support for students over the next two years. The state's decades-long disinvestment in K-12 education makes for challenging times as we plan for continuing high performance and growth for all our students.

If the co-chairs of the Joint Ways and Means Committee's budget is approved - which is \$110 million lower than the Governor's base budget - our district, along with districts throughout the state, will be in the unenviable position of making reductions in personnel, school days, and positions. The co-chairs' budget is simply unacceptable.

To truly fulfill the promise of public education, Oregonians need to invest in our future: K-12 education. This requires adequate and stable funding. With appropriate levels of funding, Bend-La Pine Schools could go beyond our current service levels and focus on the following investments:

#### ***Smaller Class Sizes***

A priority for our district is that every student is known by name, strength, and need. Smaller class sizes help teachers foster strong relationships with each student and promote learning. Additional, targeted reductions in class sizes would help to support our most vulnerable students.

### ***Increased Health and Safety Services***

Across our state and the nation, schools and districts recognize growing needs for staff and programming to support the social and emotional well-being of all our students. We would add counselors, therapists, mental health providers, and prevention specialists, as well as targeted programming focused on student wellness and prevention, intervention, and response to at-risk behaviors.

### ***More Learning Time***

We recognize the time students need to achieve success varies. We would expand extended-day and extended-year programming for students with the highest needs to help ensure they gain the skills they need for success.

### ***A Well-Rounded Education***

Students gain critical skills through a broad range of educational experiences, including the arts, Career and Technical Education (CTE)/vocational programs, internships, and extra-curricular/co-curricular sports and activities. We would expand these programs and classes to ensure students have access to a broad range of educational experiences.

Please join me and our staff as we demand that our elected officials provide the adequate and stable state funding that our students need to be successful both today and in the future.

Though both the Governor's base budget and the co-chairs' budget are woefully inadequate, we will not waiver in our efforts to reach our goal and deliver on the promise of public education for every student. The budget I am presenting is built with our commitment to promote high levels of student achievement and to help our students progress to post-secondary education and beyond. Within our available resources, we will continue to do what we believe is best for our students and families, and we will work diligently to use all available resources in the best manner possible.

Thank you for your continued support of our students. Together with our community, we will continue to advocate for the promise of public education and ensure each and every student has access to the exceptional education they deserve.

Sincerely,

Shay Mikalson, Superintendent  
Bend-La Pine Schools