

Dear Parents & Caregivers,

Please allow me to begin the March e-newsletter article with several calendar milestones. The first reminder is that our clocks will "spring" forward on Sunday, March 9th, meaning we will gain a full extra hour of sunlight at the end of the school day. As I write this newsletter during the last week of February, I have noticed the extra sunlight we have been gaining both in the morning and the afternoon as we move closer to spring. The second reminder is that the district will observe the annual spring break at the end of the month. Specifically, there will be no classes on Friday, March 21st, and classes will resume on Monday, March 31, 2025. Finally, if you are an advanced planner, you can find a [2025-26 calendar](#) link here to see when spring break is scheduled for next year.

LONG-RANGE FACILITY PRESENTATION

As previously shared as part of our weekly family message, this is a follow-up reminder that the second long-range facility planning presentation will take place on Wednesday, March 5, 2025, and it will take place at WDHS in HH Bennett Hall beginning at 6:00 pm. Please use the west side activities entrance door #5 to enter the high school if you attend the meeting. PRA Architect Steve Kieckhafer will lead the presentation on future three and four-track school options. Presently, there are no immediate plans to move forward with any future referendum plan. Rather, most future projects are at least a couple of years away.

2025-26 BUDGET FORECAST & PLANNING

At the board work session on Monday, February 10, 2025, Business Manager John Belter provided a preliminary budget forecast to the board. The initial preliminary forecast is typically the worst-case scenario, as the estimates are traditionally conservative on the revenue side and use a cast-forward methodology with estimated increases on the expenditure side of the budget.

As the district begins to budget and plan for next year, it also sees itself in the last year of a four-year non-recurring referendum. To cut to the chase, the district estimates it faces a shortfall of \$800K. As such, as planning for next year takes place, we will look at how expenditures can be reduced. Some of this has already begun to be factored into next year's planning. For example, factored into this estimate is the reduction of two academic classroom sections in grades PK-8. The district currently has 64 PK-8 classroom sections this year, is budgeting for 62 sections next year, and is planning on 61 sections for the 2025-26 school year. Thus, this is an example of our conservative budget estimate at this point.

As a reminder, when the 2025-26 school year begins, the district will be in the last year of a four-year non-recurring referendum, and one of the challenges in forecasting a four-year referendum is that you don't know what the biennium state budget will look

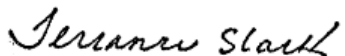
like in the final two years. This is the same when planning for next year, as the legislature and the Governor have just begun negotiating the budget for the next two years. For example, if the state were to increase funding special education reimbursement from roughly 33% to 50%, this would provide an increase in revenue coming to the district in an estimated amount of \$500K. FYI, the district was required to transfer over \$3.2M from fund-10 (General Fund) to Fund-27 (Special Education) last year. Thus, this one item being debated at the state government level is critical to not only our district's funding but also that of all districts. As the biennium state budget is developed, unknown variables will become known, and hopefully, this will provide relief to the development of next year's budget. Finally, because of the preliminary forecast, the district will address its service level, seeing some reductions in some service level areas to reduce as much as practical for next year's budget deficit.

MARCH SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS

In March, the district will celebrate and recognize several items. To lead off, March is music in our school's month, and the district is grateful to have such dedicated music, band, and choir teachers. The district has a rich tradition of strong fine arts programming, and much of this has to do with our teaching staff. Thank you for your daily efforts! Additionally, March is Youth Art Month, and again, the district has some dedicated art teachers who engage our students to bring out their creative abilities. It's great to see our student's artwork on display at each of our schools regularly. Finally, the week of March 3-7 is National School Breakfast Week. At the SDWD, the district has emphasized the importance of eating a healthy breakfast daily. As a reminder, the district has partnered with a local non-profit to ensure that ALL students can access a free breakfast daily. In closing, please allow me to publicly thank our dedicated food service staff, who provide healthy and nutritious meals to our students daily.

Finally, let me close out this newsletter article by saying thank you for the opportunity to serve our community's children. It is both our highest priority and privilege to do so!

Respectfully submitted,



Terrance Slack