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Duluth

Public Schools

Every Student. Every Day.

Superintendent's Report

March 24, 2026



OUR MISSION

Every student, every day will be empowered with learning opportunities for growth, creativity and curiosity, in preparation for their future in a global community.

OUR VISION

Duluth Public Schools provides an academically engaging, safe and inclusive environment with high expectations and responsible use of resources.

OUR CORE VALUES

Learning



Developing a love of learning through life-long inquiry.

Excellence



Having high standards for all through accountability, integrity and authenticity.

Equity



Creating conditions of justice, fairness and inclusion so all students have access to the opportunities to learn and develop to their fullest potential.

Collaboration



Working in partnership with staff, families, students and community.

Belonging



Providing a welcoming and accessible environment where everyone feels safe, seen and heard.

Topics

- 2026 Student Representative Reports
 - Osiris Garcia Henderson- ALC
 - Tamia Bowles - Denfeld
 - Kalina Mattila - East
- Budget Reduction Update
- Legislative Update
- Litigation Update
- Other

Budget Update

The Current Challenge: A \$4 Million Gap

State funding and mandates are not keeping pace with rising operational costs.



Special Education

Rising costs and significant underfunding.



Health Insurance

Impact of rapidly rising premiums.



Transportation

Increased costs of student transit services.



Unfunded Mandates

Other costs driven by legislative requirements.



The Bottom Line:

To maintain fiscal health, we must optimize resource allocation and reduce spending for the upcoming school year.

Budget - The Decision Making Process

These decisions were informed by a wide range of data and feedback channels, including:

- ThoughtExchange (Staff & Family feedback)
- Principal collaboration and Labor Management Feedback
- Registration and Enrollment Data
- School Board Feedback and the Guiding Change Document
- Budget Forecasting Tools (Frontline) and projected retirements

Thought Exchange - Key Priorities Identified

- 1. Class Sizes and Teacher Support:**
 - Participants consistently emphasize the importance of maintaining small class sizes and supporting teachers to ensure effective learning and individualized attention.
- 2. Special Education and Mental Health Services:**
 - There is strong support for prioritizing special education and mental health services, recognizing their critical role in supporting vulnerable students.
- 3. Core Academic Programs:**
 - Core subjects like math, reading, science, and English are seen as foundational and should be prioritized to ensure students receive a strong educational base.
- 4. Arts and Music Programs:**
 - Arts and music are valued for their role in fostering creativity and supporting overall student development.
- 5. Direct Student Support Roles:**
 - Positions that directly interact with students, such as paraprofessionals and interventionists, are seen as vital and should be preserved.

Thought Exchange - Potential Areas for Reduction

- 1. Administrative Costs:**
 - Several responses suggest reducing administrative overhead, including high salaries and non-student-facing roles.
- 2. Technology Spending:**
 - There is a call to reduce spending on technology, particularly Chromebooks and other digital tools, especially for younger students.
- 3. Extracurricular Activities:**
 - Some participants suggest that sports and other extracurricular activities could be funded more by families or community support rather than the district.
- 4. Professional Development Days:**
 - Reducing the number of professional development days or conducting them virtually could save costs.
- 5. Four-Day School Week:**
 - Implementing a four-day school week is mentioned as a potential cost-saving measure.

Budget Realignment: Guiding Change



Principles Over Politics for Greater Transparency

Open, honest communication with the board, staff, and families.



Student-First Focus

Prioritizing the educational and developmental needs of every learner.



Mental Health Needs

Expanding essential support systems for student and staff well-being.



Overhead Reduction

Streamlining administrative costs to maximize classroom funding.



Referendum Promises

Upholding our commitments to the community and maintaining trust.



Inclusive Process

Engaging diverse perspectives in every step of the decision-making cycle.

Budget Targets and Recommendations

After months of work, the district has come to a decision on **General Fund recommended reductions totaling an estimated \$4,288,500** across the district.

Budget Impact by Level

Based on feedback prioritizing classroom stability, a higher percentage of cuts was taken at the district level.

- **District Level:** Reduced by an estimated \$1,249,000 (15.61%)
- **Secondary Level:** Reduced by an estimated \$1,781,500 (5.8%)
- **Elementary Level:** Reduced by an estimated \$1,258,000 (4.1%)
- [Budget Reductions and Realignment](#)

Legislative Update

Legislative Strategic Updates



Day at the Capitol

Participated in the MSBA/MASA Day at the Capitol on March 9th to advocate for district needs.



Duluth St. Louis County Days

Active participation on March 18th and 19th, strengthening regional legislative ties.



State Budget & Efficiencies

While the state budget outlook has improved, the Governor's budget tasks the Blue Ribbon Commission with finding \$300M in efficiencies, an increase from the initial \$240M target.



Session Adjournment

The State Legislature is currently scheduled to conclude its legislative session on May 18th.

Legislative Updates



Legislative Updates



Litigation Updates

- We have joined in a lawsuit against the federal government, suing for a return of protected status to schools related to immigration enforcement. This guidance was in place for several decades and ensured that schools were a safe location for learning.
- Fridley Public Schools and Education Minnesota are also plaintiffs in the lawsuit, which was filed in court yesterday.
- We are also seeking damages for the time and resources put into planning for potential immigration enforcement within our schools.
- We are also taking this stand to support our neighbors, the schools in the metro area, as well as those around the country.

Questions