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Duluth

Public Schools

Every Student. Every Day.

Superintendent's Report

April 22, 2025



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

- Student Representative Reports
 - My'Aiana Taylor - ALC
 - Latasaija Garner - Denfeld
 - Kate Dean - East
- Recognition Days
- Budget Reduction and Realignment Updates
- Legislative Updates
- Other

Recognition Days

- Today is School Bus Driver Appreciation Day! We are so grateful for the work of our transportation professionals. Not only do they provide safe and reliable service getting our students to and from school every day, they are also often the first and last smile they see from our staff each day!
- Tomorrow is Administrative Professionals Appreciation Day! We are deeply appreciative of everything that our school secretaries, executive assistants, and other clerical colleagues do each and every day to support our students, staff and families! I'd like to give a special thanks to Executive Assistant Patty Paquette, who not only serves as my executive assistant, but also as executive assistant to the school board!

Budget Reduction and Realignment

Budget Reallocation and Realignment

- In the summer of 2024, the board directed administration to develop an inclusive process to create a comprehensive list of reductions, rather than to create a menu of individual reductions for the board to choose from
- As part of that process, the board and administration created our Budget Reduction and Realignment Guiding Change, which the board approved last year
- Administration used our guiding change, the Educational Leadership System and other processes to listen to stakeholder feedback and create a list of budget reductions

**What frameworks were used for
Budget Reduction and Realignment?**



Focus Statement: Achieving necessary budget adjustments while aligning resources to the district priorities and positioning us to make effective decisions now and into the future.

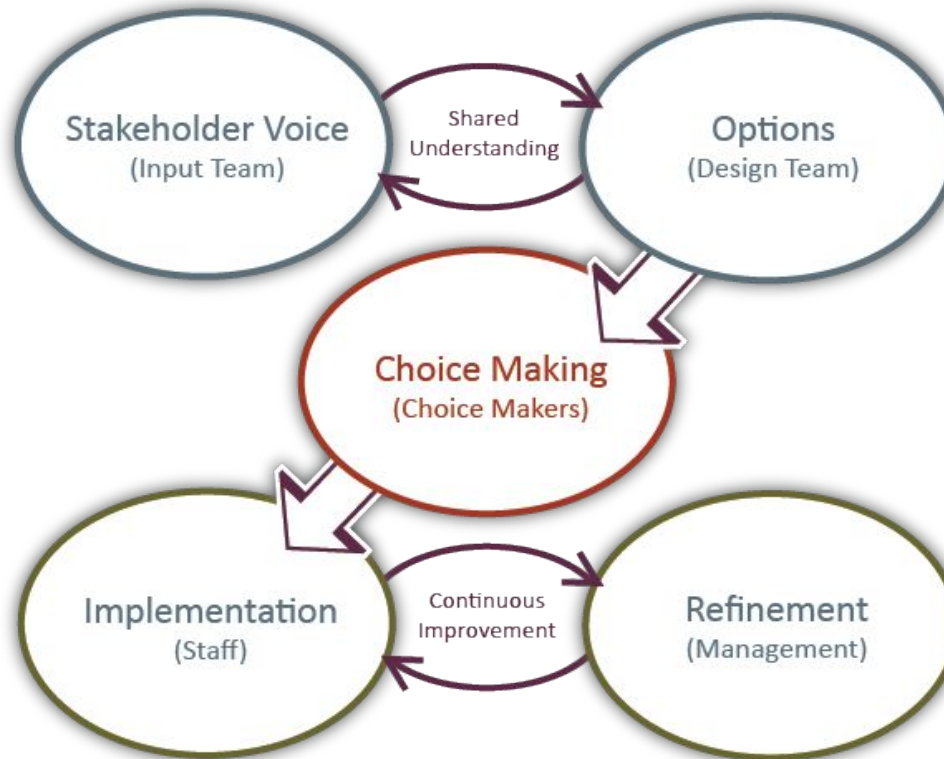
Reality "The Why"	Unacceptable Means "The Not How"	Results "The What"
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elimination of federal pandemic relief funds • Inflation costs • New unfunded legislative mandates requiring resources • Ongoing effects of employee contract settlements • Relatively stable enrollment • Current projected deficit of for FY26 \$7.5M • Actual FY26 deficit dependent on prior intended reductions in FY25 budget - minimum of \$2.6M in overloads, summer extension, overtime, travel, floating subs and attrition. • FY26 deficit will be reduced to \$4.9M if current goal of \$2.6M in FY25 reductions is met • FY26 Priority areas supporting every student, advancing equity and improving systems including new MS and HS new schedule and model, literacy work • Increasing costs of special education services • Have been able to mitigate some financial impacts through unassigned fund balance (a savings account) and Long-Term Facilities and Maintenance fund balance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violate laws, board policy, regulations & contracts • Going into Statutory Operating Debt • Avoid going below 8% fund balance • Violate identified November 2023 referendum commitments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Maintain most social emotional and mental health supports ◦ Implementation of a new high school schedule ◦ Maintain and strengthen most academic supports • Develop reduction and reallocation options in isolation without representative stakeholder input • Make decisions without proper or sufficient data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balanced budget for 2025-26 • Utilize a transparent and engaging process for budget reductions and reallocations for FY26 • Prioritize and protect classroom needs as much as possible • Alignment of funding and operations to district priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Continue to support student needs throughout the district ◦ Continue to advance equity efforts throughout the district (e.g. Continue to allocate additional resources to students with the greatest need.) ◦ Continue to improve systems throughout the district • Develop and forecast balanced budgets • Examine all legacy practices with a lens of fiscal accountability • Protects school district's fiscal health by continually seeking efficiencies and identifying new sources of funding, such as grants and investment opportunities



Part of the FrameWorks Series

Used For:

- Choice Making
- Managing Participant's Time and Roles
- Clarification of Authority



Budget Reallocation and Realignment

- Reducing our budget by \$7.6 million has not been an easy process. We recognize that no matter what is reduced, it will have a negative impacts. None of the reductions are things that we want to do, but they represent what we, from an administrative perspective, agree are the “least worst options” given our financial realities. If a decision is made to add FTE in any area, we recommend that we take it out of our unassigned fund balance and seek to find additional reductions elsewhere in the coming year.
- Media specialist and middle school music supports were recommended as part of our comprehensive budget reduction plan. In both situations, we modified our original proposals, adding support time to the media center and individual and small group music support at the middle school level.

Budget Reallocation and Realignment

The following are some of the adjustments that will be made to the music program:

- **Shift in Teaching Model:** The district plans to shift from the co-teaching model that provides two certified staff for one class period and is an expensive model that creates some confusion for staff and students. The end result will be one Music instructor for the class period which could potentially provide more cohesive instruction.
- **Provide Music Lessons:** To ensure continued support of music, the district will be providing teaching time (FTE) to support the development of students through Music lessons in both band and orchestra. This will allow the Music department to provide lessons on a regular rotational schedule so that to support small groups' or individual students' development on their instrument. This schedule will be on a regular rotation during the school day and students may be pulled from classes for lessons.
- **Community Partnerships:** The district is actively pursuing community partnerships to enhance music education opportunities for students. Initial discussions have taken place with a stakeholder group regarding these partnerships, with a focus on introducing opportunities to young learners. The goal is to leverage grants and partnerships to bring Artists in Residence into the schools, while also ensuring the long-term sustainability of these programs through external support.

Budget Reallocation and Realignment

Programming

Each band and orchestra class will have a designated teacher of record responsible for the instruction and management of the entire class. Supplemental teacher support will be provided through a combination of in-class assistance (push-in) during regular band and orchestra classes, and pull-out sessions for small group or individual lessons. The specific schedule will determine the nature of this support, and flexibility is crucial for the program's success. When scheduling pull-out lessons, every effort will be made to minimize disruption to core content area instruction.

For example, the lessons teacher would have the flexibility to provide instrumental lessons to either band or orchestra during a given period. This may involve pushing into the class when appropriate or pulling out individual or small groups as needed. The preference is to utilize the push-in model as much as possible to minimize disruption to the student day. Collaboration with the band and orchestra teacher during Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) will be essential to identify students who require additional support and to schedule appropriate classroom assistance.

Legislative Updates

- We continue to seek funding for the Duluth Promise, for our special education funding anomaly, and for other areas. We recognize, however, that House and Senate budget targets are quite limited and funding special legislation is becoming increasingly less likely.
- We also recognize that with the timing out of “the rule of 90” pension planning, staffing costs to districts are likely to rise sharply throughout the state as more senior staff members will choose not to retire as frequently. With this in mind, we have signed onto a joint letter to Governor Walz and the Minnesota Legislature urging for pension reform.

Questions