

## Monthly Committee of the Whole Board Meeting

Duluth Public Schools, ISD 709

### Agenda

Tuesday, April 8, 2025

District Services Center

709 Portia Johnson Dr.

Duluth, MN 55811

4:30 PM

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

2. **ROLL CALL**

3. **AGENDA ITEMS**

A. Strategic Plan Alignment

1) Advancing Equity

a. 24/25 Concurrence/Non-Concurrence- School Board Response- 2  
DRAFT

2) Supporting Every Student

a. Denfeld High School BARR Program Update 17

b. Duluth Head Start Annual Approvals 31

c. Duluth Promise 60

3) Improving Systems - N/A

B. Budget Update

1) FY26 Proposed Budget 68

C. Other

4. **ADJOURN**

**COW Agenda Cover Sheet**

**Meeting Date: April 8, 2025**

**Topic: Drafted School Board's Response to the 2024-2025 Vote and Resolution of Non-Concurrence**

**Presenter(s): Anthony Bonds, Assistant Superintendent and Sheila White, AIE Coordinator**

**Attachment: Yes**

**Brief Summary of Presentation or Topic (no more than a few sentences):**

The American Indian Parent Advisory Committee issued a vote and resolution of non-concurrence on February 25, 2025. State Statute requires a Board response within 60 days. The provided document is a draft of the School Board's Response. The finalized document will be presented during the regular School Board meeting on April 22, 2025.

**This Requires School Board Approval : No**

## School Board's Response to the 2024-2025 Vote and Resolution of Non-Concurrence

<b>1. Recommendation</b>	<p>We recommend providing the opportunity for AIPAC committee members to tour all sites where we currently have American Indian Liaisons. We recommend inviting school board members to attend the tour alongside the advisory board. We recommend inviting other interested parties, i.e., the Duluth Indigenous Commission, to attend the tour.</p>
<b>Response</b>	<p>Sheila White, American Indian Coordinator, will set up tours and invite interested parties. The following action steps have been planned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sheila White requested detailed weekly schedules from all 6 Liaisons by February 11, 2025. All schedules were received and reviewed to begin planning for the tour for mid-to-late April.</li> <li>● Tour times will be scheduled when Liaisons are not meeting with their students. A google poll will be sent to the AIPAC and invited stakeholders to choose the dates/times that will work for them.</li> <li>● Dates and times of the tours will be set at the next Liaisons Monthly meeting and a tour draft completed on April 4, 2025.</li> <li>● Tentative plans: Tours will take place the last two weeks in April or First week in May depending on Liaisons' schedules/activities. There will be 2 tour groups; Morning Group 1 West side schools; Laura MacArthur, Stowe, Denfeld HS, Lincoln Park and Afternoon Group 2 East side schools; East HS, Ordean East, ALC. Sheila will lead the tours and document participants and debrief with the groups after each visit; AIPAC questions include: Where are liaisons and American Indian Education staff located? Do they have adequate space? Are they sharing space with other programs? Do the spaces appear to represent and be inclusive to the indigenous cultures they are supporting?</li> <li>● Invited stakeholders: Duluth Indigenous Commission- March 13, 2025; Left a message and emailed contact person listed on website for information on who I would contact to invite them to the tour, Fond Du Lac Tribal and school board members will be invited.</li> <li>● Sheila will present responses from the tour to the AIPAC at the May/June meeting.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Recommendation</b>	<p>We recommend implementing an action plan by the 4th quarter of SY 2024-2025 that identifies American Indian students who need additional transportation support and utilize district vans/drivers to intentionally target American Indian students that need additional transportation support to get to school.</p>

<b>Response</b>	In late April, the district will initiate a survey asking families to share if they have transportation challenges. This data will be used to determine the viability of additional transportation options. <sup>4</sup>
<b>3. Recommendation</b>	We recommend utilizing the American Indian Education Coordinator, the various American Indian parent committee members, and the local Indigenous community such as AICHO, local Tribal Urban Offices, and The Duluth Indigenous Commission to assist in vetting Professional Development opportunities and curriculum. District wide Professional Development (PD) must not solely come out of American Indian Education Aid funds and must be used proportionally while achievement gaps exist.
<b>Response</b>	Sheila White and Annie Schilling will collaborate to develop the Professional Development (PD) plans for the final PD of the year which is on May 27th and the initial PD Plan draft for the school year 2025-2026. Funding of all PD Opportunities on PD Days (including American Indian focused PD) will be consistently funded from the General PD budget. Plans and development of American Indian focused PD offerings throughout SY 2025-26 will be vetted and sourced in collaboration with AICHO, local Tribal Union Offices, and other area Indigenous organizations.
<b>4. Recommendation</b>	Minnesota Statute 122A.70 requires retention strategies for American Indian educators within the school district. An HR plan has not been shared or discussed with the American Indian parent committees. We recommend providing the statistics within the district about how many American Indian staff we currently employ, how many American Indian applications were received that met minimum qualifications and were not offered interviews, and how many American Indian staff we have lost within the past 2 years.
<b>Response</b>	<p>Sheila White will work with our Human Resources Department to ensure timely posting of vacancies. Please find below comments and initial action steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A copy of the District's draft Recruitment and Retention Plan was shared with the committee on April 1. This plan includes specific strategies tailored to recruiting and retaining American Indian educators and staff. We are eager to receive your feedback on this draft.</li> <li>● The District currently employs 29 American Indian staff, which represents 1.79% of our total staff.</li> <li>● To date for this school year postings, we have received 16 American Indian applications.</li> <li>● There are 13 American Indian employees that left the District from January 2023 to date.</li> <li>● Due to Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) guidelines, we are unable to delineate which applications met minimum qualifications and were not offered interviews. EEO data, which includes race and ethnicity, is kept separate from the application review process to ensure impartiality and prevent any potential bias. This separation is standard practice and helps us maintain a fair and equitable hiring process for all applicants. We understand the importance of transparency and</li> </ul>

	<p>are committed to providing you with information we can, while also adhering to legal and ethical guidelines.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● We are dedicated to working collaboratively with the AIPAC committee to ensure the successful recruitment and retention of American Indian staff across all positions within our district.</li> </ul>
<b>5. Recommendation</b>	<p>AIPAC is unaware of the funding amount that has been earmarked for the pilot school within a school program known as the “Denfeld Indigenous Cohort”. There has been little to no collaboration or status updates with the American Indian Parent committees. We would like to ensure that the Indigenous Cohort is supported by a licensed American Indian Language and Culture teacher. We recommend providing the criteria for admitting American Indian students into the Indigenous Cohort, the policy for removal from the cohort, and include any additional support for success given to American Indian students after removal and/or prior to removal.</p>
<b>Response</b>	<p>Doreen AtatiseSkinaway and Sheila White will partner to ensure AIPAC is well informed and the cohort is adequately supported. Please find below comments and initial actions steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The cohort teacher is paid from the general budget and the Liaison is paid by Title VI. AIE pays for snacks and has paid for 1 field trip to the movie theatre to watch Star Wars in Ojibwe.</li> <li>● The cohort PLC team consists of Amanda Horton, Ojibwe Language Teacher; Jamie De La Cruz, Liaison; Memegwesiikwe, Ojibwe Language Teacher; Aakawe’aashiik, Ojibwe Language and Cultural Coordinator; and Sheila White, Coordinator of American Indian Education. Team members will update on attendance and academic data and program planning at the April 9, 2025 AIPAC meeting. They are also presenting at the May Committee Of the Whole (COW) meeting.</li> <li>● The cohort teacher is a licensed teacher in Communication Arts/Literature, Master of Education and credentials to teach Aanishinaabe Language From the Red Cliff Nation. She is also currently in the process of obtaining her Aanishinaabe Language, Culture and History licensure (K-12).</li> <li>● Students and caregiver(s) in the cohort were given program guidelines and a contract to sign.</li> <li>● The school guidance department works with the cohort program and provides all necessary support.</li> <li>● The Cohort team meets every Thursday to work on reviewing guidelines/policy, areas of improvement and program planning.</li> <li>● Team members have been trained on Educlimber, an interactive system that integrates all whole child data.</li> <li>● Dr. Mary Owen and Mangan H. Golden advise on community based relationships and provide assistance with data collection on focus groups, qualitative data from students, staff, parents and community members.</li> </ul>

<b>6. Recommendation</b>	We recommend prioritized hiring of open American Indian liaisons and American Indian education department positions and increasing the number of positions hired to ensure manageable caseloads per student count in each building in accordance with current evidence-based literature recommendations. Most evidence-based recommendations are 1/30 students per caseload or less.
<b>Response</b>	<p>Sheila White will work with our Human Resources Department to ensure timely posting of vacancies. Please find below comments and initial action steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Anthony Bonds, Assistant Superintendent, has started discussions with HR on the requirements for hiring a permanent full-time Coordinator for the AIE Department.</li> <li>● One American Indian Home School Liaison position was posted on Frontline on March 17, 2025 with a deadline on March 31, 2025.</li> <li>● Sheila will meet with Liaisons for their input on a manageable caseload for their building.</li> <li>● Sheila will research and reach out to other districts about manageable caseloads for liaisons.</li> </ul>
<b>7. Recommendation</b>	We recommend counselors implement an action plan to identify the American Indian students within their caseload, identify the Tribal Nation these students belong to and provide targeted opportunities for scholarships and career training to both enrollees and descendants.
<b>Response</b>	<p>Jen Larva and Sheila White will work together to develop an action plan. Please find below comments and initial actions steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Identification of these students are limited by self identification by families in our Infinite Campus system.</li> <li>● Counselors will be required to meet with these students individually, informing them that they are welcome to invite family members or liaisons to these meetings or information sessions, as well.</li> <li>● Lists of scholarship opportunities are always available but Career Centers will be asked to identify those open to students who are tribal enrollees and/or descendants.</li> <li>● The district has purchased Career Advisement professional development “seats” for all counselors, career center staff, Integration Specialists, Check and Connect Mentors, and American Indian Home School Liaisons. To date, only 2 AIHSLs have logged into the training to begin.</li> <li>● Information on this training will continue to be shared.</li> </ul>

<b>8. Recommendation</b>	<p>We are unaware of the locations of dedicated spaces that have been set aside to be utilized by American Indian liaisons and/or American Indian staff. Due to the repurposing of DNT storage, the American Indian Education Department is fiscally responsible for paying for an external storage unit for our materials, records, supplies and cultural items that should be more easily accessible to all American Indian Education staff and students. We recommend the school district assist with an accurate inventory of all American Indian Education Department program materials and supplies, i.e. cultural materials, books, sewing machines, etc and anything bought from American Indian Education Department funds. All items in American Indian Education Department storage need to be inventoried to ensure maximum availability and utilization of previously spent funds on these materials.</p>
<b>Response</b>	<p>Sheila White will work with the facilities department leadership team to ensure proper storage of materials and artifacts. Please find below comments and initial action steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sheila White rented a storage unit with the Title VI budget to have all AIE resources and materials moved from the DNT storage.</li> <li>● Facilities moved 2 truck loads of pallets so far and will be letting the AIE department know when they can move the rest.</li> <li>● Once all AIE materials are moved into the storage unit, Sheila, the AIE clerical and AIPAC volunteers will sort and bar code all materials.</li> <li>● Sheila is looking for a space to store all cataloged materials so that they can be signed out by teachers, students, and AIPAC.</li> </ul>
<b>9. Recommendation</b>	<p>We recommend providing regular district reports to the AIPAC regarding direct services for American Indian students attendance and academics.</p>
<b>Response</b>	<p>Sheila will be trained using Educlimber to provide regular attendance and academic reports to AIPAC and work with the Liaisons to support students who are struggling or missing school. All American Indian Home School Liaisons will monitor their students' attendance and academics and provide a monthly report to the AIPAC.</p>
<b>10. Recommendation</b>	<p>American Indian Education Aid is for American Indian students specifically, until accountability factors are the same or better than non- American Indian peers. We recommend integration specialists intentionally target American Indian students within their caseloads and provide the data about the number of American Indian students that are being served to the AIPAC.</p>
<b>Response</b>	<p>Integration Specialists are funded through the Achievement and Integration (A&amp;I) plan and allocation. Like the AIE Aid, the A&amp;I Plan</p>

	<p>has State Statutes that must be followed. The A&amp;I plan supports all marginalized students, including American Indian students. Many American Indian students are supported by Integration Specialists. Sheila White will share A&amp;I case load data with the AIPAC at a future meeting.</p>
<b>11. Recommendation</b>	<p>AIPAC has not received updates from the district in accordance with the MDE timeline. We have not received full meaningful collaboration from the district with meeting minutes, tabling opportunities, events, Tribal Consultation meetings, nor with reserving spaces within the district for meetings, work sessions and posting our meetings on the district website, calendar, social media or parentsquare. We recommend meetings with district representatives and AIPAC members be completed in compliance with the EASIE Title VI Meaningful Collaboration Chart. Per MDE, AIPAC was not provided with ESSA data when developing the American Indian Education plan and budget</p>
<b>Response</b>	<p>Sheila White will continue to partner with the AIPAC to ensure proper communication and statutory compliance . Regarding AIPAC's concerns regarding communication, timelines, and collaboration, we acknowledge that there is always room for growth and are dedicated to continued improvement. We respectfully disagree with the assertion of a lack of meaningful collaboration, but recognize there are areas for improvement. We remain committed to enhancing our communication protocols and ensuring adherence to established timelines, including those outlined by the MDE. We also acknowledge that two recent changes in district program leaders have impacted our ability to consistently meet these timelines.</p> <p>We commit to a review of our communication practices, including meeting minutes, tabling opportunities, event coordination, Tribal Consultation meetings, and the use of district resources like website postings and ParentSquare. We acknowledge that there was at one rescheduled tribal consultation meeting where an AIPAC member was not invited after the initial meeting was postponed and will ensure that this does not happen again. We will also continue to ensure compliance with the EASIE Title VI Meaningful Collaboration Chart and provide timely access to necessary data, including ESSA data, for the development of the American Indian Education plan and budget. We remain deeply dedicated to rebuilding trust and fostering a more productive partnership.</p>
<b>12. Recommendation</b>	<p>We recommend ethical stewardship of funding for AI students to ensure program fidelity and accountability. The previous American Indian Education coordinator was not present at the OCT 8th, 2024 quarterly American Indian Education Budget meeting. It is absolutely necessary for the American Indian Education coordinator to be present at such meetings. AIPAC needs to know total salary and fringe for each American Indian Education Department employee by FTE, building and program code. And any reimbursements received from Special Education. As for all other expenses, each building needs to be designated per expense code, not just district wide 005. 005 should only be used if it is truly a district wide expense. All P-card purchases and purchase orders</p>

	need to be brought forward monthly to AIPAC with receipts to ensure fiscal responsibility and fidelity with American Indian Education funds.
<b>Response</b>	<p>Sheila White and the finance leadership team will continue to work together to ensure fiscal transparency and compliance. Please find below comments and initial action steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● American Indian Coordinator Sheila White has been attending weekly 30 minute meetings with the finance department, since the week of January 13, 2025. The meetings include Skyward and budget (Ufars) training.</li> <li>● Salary and Fringe request. This information has been provided. Please <u>see attached</u>.</li> <li>● The current explanation for the 005 District Wide designation is that the employees are working at different sites throughout the week.</li> <li>● After consultation with the AIE Minnesota Department of Education about bringing forward to the AIPAC all monthly P-card and POs, MDE said that we do not need to provide the AIPAC with that information.</li> </ul>
<b>13. Recommendation</b>	We recommend that the School Board has an appointed AIPAC delegate reserved for and invited to all school board meetings with an opportunity to have meaningful collaboration with our school board and administrators. We are requesting an official seat at the table.
<b>Response</b>	<p>We deeply value the dedication and contributions of the American Indian Parent Advisory Committee to our school community. Regarding your request for an official seat at the School Board table, we must adhere to our established governance structure. As a School Board, our non-elected members are limited to our student representatives. This framework ensures compliance with established protocols and maintains the integrity of our decision-making processes.</p> <p>However, we understand the importance of maintaining a strong and collaborative relationship with AIPAC. To ensure thoughtful two-way communication and meaningful collaboration, we have designated a regular board member to serve as the primary liaison with AIPAC. Additionally, the board chair will act as the designated alternate. This assigned board member will regularly report to the full board on all AIPAC-related business, ensuring that your insights and concerns are effectively communicated and considered. We are committed to fostering open and transparent communication and believe this designated liaison will facilitate a productive and valuable partnership.</p>

<p><b>14.Recommendation</b></p>	<p>AIPAC recommends that the district create additional pathways for student success in collaboration with AIPAC, AICHO, 1854 Treaty Authority, and local Tribal Urban Indian offices. These recommendations include; giving seat time to our students that participate in cultural activities offered by these agencies and offices (Assigned to Community Ed and principals); giving a civics credit to our AIPAC student reps that a mirror of AEO/ALC be offered at AICHO for our students at all levels of the district as an alternative to non-Indigenous spaces of learning. Also, to ensure full ability to participate in these programs by providing transportation via the vans purchased and mentioned in Recommendation #2 in this document for this purpose. (See above)</p>
<p><b>Response</b></p>	<p>Over the February break, Denfeld staff worked with students at AICHO and NYS to provide credit and attendance recovery opportunities. This will be repeated in April. MN state standards must be addressed for Civics credit. Also, the Community Education Department is working with curriculum leaders and principals to develop opportunities for students to earn service learning credit and additional elective credits. Additionally, Duluth Adult Education Department provides onsite programming at AICHO for GED and Diploma attainment. Due to licensing and curriculum requirements, a program mirroring ALC/AEO cannot be created at AICHO. However, an outreach program proving an AEO/ALC teacher could be created for after school credit support at AICHO.</p>
<p><b>15.Recommendation</b></p>	<p>AIPAC recommends restorative efforts be made to repair the trust relationship between the district and its American Indian Education parent committees. Volunteer AIPAC members provided more than 30 hours of supplemental meeting time at the district's request since losing our dedicated coordinator in November 2024. AIPAC was not presented with American Indian Education application documents in the appropriate format and/or with the appropriate allocation amount prior to February 11, 2025. Of concern is that budget amendments must be completed by March 1. Tribal consultation dates reported on federal documentation are false. Publicly available district audit information indicates JOM funds have passed through Fond-du-Lac for JOM program expenses, but Parent Committee members are told that we have not requested a JOM reimbursement from our fiscal agent (FDL) for the last 5 years. Publicly available district audit information indicates a restricted American Indian Education balance of \$114,974. Is this carry-over or is this a Special Education reimbursement for American Indian Education Liaisons? No explanation for these discrepancies have been provided.</p>
<p><b>Response</b></p>	<p>Sheila White and the finance leadership team will continue to work together to ensure fiscal transparency and compliance. Please find below comments:</p>

- Pass through language is an audit term that indicates another agency is the fiscal host. Our auditor has also given this statement: “The explanation of “passed-through” would be that the funding didn’t come directly from the U.S. Department of the Interior. It was first awarded to the Fiscal Agency and then “passed-through” to the District as a subrecipient.”
- JOM funds: The invoice and supporting receipts were sent to Fond Du Lac on September 3 of 2024. [\(click this link to the email\)](#). This information was also shared with JOM Chair Don Melton on January 29, 2025. [See email link:](#) A previous American Indian Education Coordinator was attempting to work with Fond du Lac to be the Fiscal Host and Agency and not have #709 as the pass through. This is why invoices had not been sent in a yearly process.
- The \$114, 974 dollars were unspent AIE state funds. These are not Special Education funds. Through the audit process MDE initiated a fund balance account to hold this number. MDE American Indian Education Director and Program Administrator met virtually on February 5, 2005 with the AIPAC, Sheila, and Anthony Bonds and MDE confirmed that unfortunately, we will not receive these funds as the district is in non-concurrence. Please see below:

#### Carry Forward Per MDE:

If a school district or Tribally Controlled School does not expend the full amount of the American Indian education aid in accordance with the plan in the designated fiscal year, they may carry forward and expend up to half of the remaining funds in the following fiscal year. See [Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 124D.81, subdivision 2b](#).

#### Important Previous Year Information:

The carry forward process can be up to half of the previous school year’s unspent funds, not the current year. (Example: \$10,000 unspent, \$5000 may be eligible for carry forward)

To carry forward SY 2023-24 funds for the April 1, 2025 deadline, please submit:

- Carry forward request document
  - Financial Expenditure report 320 for the previous year (FY 2023-24)
  - Budget worksheet for the previous year (FY 2023-24)
- 
- Tribal consultation dates were held on January 9, 2023, May 8, 2023, October 23, 2023 and March 4, 2024 at the Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● MDE training - MDE will be attending the AIPAC meeting on May 7, 2025 to provide training to the AIPAC on roles and responsibilities to help strengthen district and parent partnerships.</li> </ul>
<b>16.Recommendation</b>	<p>AIPAC recommends utilizing the Indigenous People's Task Force endorsement of strengthening our communities and students by utilizing methods that are based in Indigenous values and ways of knowing. A vital way of doing this is returning to the first medicines and connecting our students and people to Indigenous healing traditions that have been passed down through the generations since time immemorial. A recent survey of middle school students in Duluth indicated that they were very interested in learning medicine. There is a local medicine gatherer that is willing to teach this. Her name is Natalie Smith.</p>
<b>Response</b>	<p>Sheila White will partner with American Indian staff and curriculum leaders to accomplish this request. Please find below comments and initial action steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Information about smudging was shared by Sheila White.</li> <li>● Doreen Atatise-Skinaway reached out to AICHO to see what they can provide for our students. They are willing to visit our schools and run circles focused on indigenous values and ways of knowing. Scheduling visits will be the next step after spring break. The contact person is Darrian Moose.</li> <li>● Doreen Atatise-Skinaway also reached out to Indigenous People's Task Force to inquire about the Youth Program. The contact person is Brenna Depies.</li> <li>● There are two programs for high school students, Traditional Tobacco and Ikidowinan Theatre .The programs focus on mind, body and medicine for youth. Sheila White and I will visit the Indigenous Task Force in the cities to talk about "Train the Trainer" and continue to network with them to bring the programs to our district.</li> <li>● Dale Uselman is working with the Health Content Specialist and middle school health teachers to plan for embedding learning about first medicines and Indigenous healing traditions into middle school health classes.</li> <li>● Doreen and Dale will continue to collaborate to look into the feasibility of implementing first medicines and Indigenous healing traditions into middle school health classes and/or other programming as possible.</li> </ul>

On Thursday, February 20, 2025, your American Indian Parent Advisory Committee convened to review and discuss the data received from the district to determine whether or not the district has met the needs of American Indian students. 8 voting members were present, effectively establishing a quorum. The AIPAC voted 8-0 Nonconcurrency. As required when issuing a vote of nonconcurrency, the AIPAC discussed and developed the following written recommendations for improvement.

1. We recommend providing the opportunity for AIPAC committee members to tour all sites where we currently have American Indian Liaisons.
  - a. We recommend inviting school board members to attend the tour alongside the advisory board.
  - b. We recommend inviting other interested parties, i.e. the Duluth Indigenous Commission, to attend the tour.
2. We recommend implementing an action plan by 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of SY 2024-2025 that identifies American Indian students who need additional transportation support and utilize district vans/drivers to intentionally target American Indian students that need additional transportation supports to get to school.
3. We recommend utilizing the American Indian education coordinator, the various American Indian parent committee members, and the local Indigenous community such as AICHO, local Tribal Urban Offices, and The Duluth Indigenous Commission to assist in vetting Professional Development opportunities and curriculum. District wide Professional Development must not solely come out of American Indian Education Aid funds and must be used proportionally while achievement gaps exist.
4. Statute 122A.70 requires retention strategies for American Indian educators within the school district. An HR plan has not been shared or discussed with the American Indian parent committees. We recommend providing the statistics within the district about how many American Indian staff we currently employ, how many American Indian applications were received that met minimum qualifications and were not offered interviews, and how many American Indian staff we have lost within the past 2 years.
5. AIPAC is unaware of the funding amount that has been earmarked for the pilot school within a school program known as the “Denfeld Indigenous Cohort”. There has been little to no collaboration or status updates with the American Indian Parent committees. We would like to ensure that the Indigenous Cohort is supported by a licensed American Indian Language and Culture teacher. We recommend providing the criteria for admitting American Indian students into the Indigenous Cohort, the policy for removal from the cohort, and include any additional supports for success given to American Indian students after removal and/or prior to removal.
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7. We recommend counselors implement an action plan to identify the American Indian students within their caseload, identify the Tribal Nation these students belong to and provide targeted opportunities for scholarships and career training to both enrollees and descendants.
8. We are unaware of the locations of dedicated spaces that have been set aside to be utilized by American Indian liaisons and/or American Indian staff. Due to the repurposing of DNT storage, the American Indian Education Department is fiscally responsible for paying for an external storage unit for our materials, records, supplies and cultural items that should be more easily accessible to all American Indian Education staff and students. We recommend the school district assist with an accurate inventory of all American Indian Education Department program materials and supplies, i.e. cultural materials, books, sewing machines, etc and anything bought from American Indian Education Department funds. All items in American Indian Education Department storage need to be inventoried to ensure maximum availability and utilization of previously spent funds on these materials.
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10. American Indian Education Aid is for American Indian students specifically, until accountability factors are the same or better than non- American Indian peers. We recommend integration specialists intentionally target American Indian students within their caseloads and provide the data about the number of American Indian students that are being served to the AIPAC.
11. AIPAC has not received updates from the district in accordance with the MDE timeline. We have not received full meaningful collaboration from the district with meeting minutes, tabling opportunities, events, Tribal Consultation meetings, nor with reserving spaces within the district for meetings, work sessions and posting our meetings on the district website, calendar, social media or parentsquare. We recommend meetings with district representatives and AIPAC members be completed in compliance with the EASIE Title VI Meaningful Collaboration Chart. Per MDE, AIPAC was not provided with ESSA data when developing the American Indian Education plan and budget
12. We recommend ethical stewardship of funding for AI students to ensure program fidelity and accountability. The previous American Indian Education coordinator was not present at the OCT 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024 quarterly American Indian Education Budget meeting. It is absolutely necessary for the American Indian Education coordinator to be present at such meetings. AIPAC needs to know total salary and fringe for each American Indian Education Department employee by FTE, building and program code. And any reimbursements received from Special Education. As for all other expenses, each building needs to be designated per expense code, not just district wide 005. 005 should only be used if it is truly a district wide expense. All P-card purchases and purchase orders need to be brought forward monthly to AIPAC with receipts to ensure fiscal responsibility and fidelity with American Indian Education funds.

13. We recommend that the School Board has an appointed AIPAC delegate reserved for and invited to all school board meetings with an opportunity to have meaningful collaboration with our school board and administrators. We are requesting an official seat at the table.
14. AIPAC recommends that the district create additional pathways for student success in collaboration with AIPAC, AICHO, 1854 Treaty Authority, and local Tribal Urban Indian offices. These recommendations include -
  - a. giving seat time to our students that participate in cultural activities offered by these agencies and offices
  - b. giving a civics credit to our AIPAC student reps
  - c. that a mirror of AEO/ALC be offered at AICHO for our students at all levels of the district as an alternative to non-Indigenous spaces of learning.
  - d. Also, to ensure full ability to participate in these programs by providing transportation via the vans purchased and mentioned in Recommendation #2 in this document for this purpose.
15. AIPAC recommends restorative efforts be made to repair the trust relationship between the district and its American Indian Education parent committees. Volunteer AIPAC members provided more than 30 hours of supplemental meeting time at the district's request since losing our dedicated coordinator in November 2024. AIPAC was not presented with American Indian Education application documents in the appropriate format and/or with the appropriate allocation amount prior to February 11, 2025. Of concern is that budget amendments must be completed by March 1. Tribal consultation dates reported on federal documentation are false. Publicly available district audit information indicates JOM funds have passed through Fond-du-Lac for JOM program expenses, but Parent Committee members are told that we have not requested a JOM reimbursement from our fiscal agent (FDL) for the last 5 years. Publicly available district audit information indicates a restricted American Indian Education balance of \$114,974. Is this carry-over or is this a Special Education reimbursement for American Indian Education Liaisons? No explanation for these discrepancies have been provided.
  - a. We recommend ensuring that numbers reported on the American Indian Education State Aid Grant application match the information and data provided to AIPAC.
  - b. As part of the restorative process, we recommend providing annual AIPAC training to newly elected and returning committee members and district staff.
16. AIPAC recommends utilizing the Indigenous People's Taskforce endorsement of strengthening our communities and students by utilizing methods that are based in Indigenous values and ways of knowing. A vital way of doing this is returning to the first medicines and connecting our students and people to Indigenous healing traditions that have been passed down through the generations since time immemorial. A recent survey of middle school students in Duluth indicated that they were very interested in

learning the medicines. There is a local medicine gatherer that is willing to teach this. Her name is Natalie Smith.

**COW Agenda Cover Sheet**

**Meeting Date:** April 8, 2025

**Topic:** Denfeld BARR Program

**Presenter(s):** Jennifer Wellnitz, BARR Coordinator & Tom Tusken, Principal

**Attachment:** Yes

- [Presentation](#)
- [Coaching Report](#)

**Brief Summary of Presentation or Topic (no more than a few sentences):**

Update the School Board and District Administration on what the BARR Program is at Denfeld as well as the innovations and interventions created based on data analysis. Provide information on what it takes for BARR to be successful at Denfeld and what our next steps are.

**This Requires School Board Approval :** No

# Denfeld High School BARR Program Update

Jennifer Wellnitz, BARR Coordinator  
Tom Tusken, Principal

## 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.

19

## 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.

# What is BARR?

20

- Building Assets Reducing Risks
- Developed in St. Louis Park, MN in 1998 due to concerns with 9th grade course failure
- Based on 40 Developmental Assets research from MN based Search Institute
- Now a nationwide evidence based best practice in 350 schools, impacting 360,000 students in 24 states and Washington, D.C. and growing
- Essentially create teams of students and teachers within identified grade(s) who meet weekly to review real time **data** to determine tiered interventions as well as deliver weekly “I Time” SEL (Social Emotional Lessons) to build **relationships**.
- **Data and Relationships are the 2 pillars on which BARR is built.**
- **Meets the district’s mission, vision and core values!**

# BARR's 8 Interlocking Strategies

21



# 2024-25 BARR Data

22

**1st Quarter: 9th Grade (34%)**

**10th Grade (34%)**

**2nd Quarter: 9th Grade (44%)**

**10th Grade (34%)**

**Semester: 9th Grade (34%) (38% pre-intervention)**

**10th Grade (33%)**

**3rd Quarter: Coming soon!**

# Historic Trends with BARR Data

23

- Prior to BARR, 9th Grade failure rates were around 49%.
- With BARR, prior to pandemic, rates hovered between 30-35%
- During pandemic, rates rose to 50-60%
- Since pandemic, rates for 9th and 10th have returned to 30-35%

Denfeld's traditional response has been to host Pause Days to reduce course failure. Students who need additional support remain in class with their teacher, students that don't go to the Media Center with our BARR Coordinator. This intervention traditionally brings failure rate down 15% in the weeks prior to quarter/semester end.

Pause Days continue this year and other interventions are now being developed based on our data analysis as you will see on the next slide.

# Data Analysis Leads to Interventions this Year

24

- **Academic Skills for Success section for Sophomores** created at semester time when a section of math was collapsed
- **1st Semester 9th Grade Rescue Mission** - During the Feb. 12 Opportunity Day, students who had a 1st Semester course failure with a grade between 50 - 59% recovered 45 semester credits!
- **3rd Quarter 9th Grade Rescue Mission** - During the March 26 Opportunity Day, students who were going to fail 3rd Quarter with a grade between 50 - 59% completed work to pass. 75% of identified students participated. The data is being finalized this week.
- **Rescue Mission for students in Grades 10 -12** over spring break at both AICHO and NYS Inc. for those students with 3rd Quarter grades between 50 - 59% completed work to pass. The data is being finalized this week.

\*None of this would be possible without collaboration with our partners in the Community Schools as well as staff members willing to pitch in as well as take risks and trust the process!

# Data Analysis Leads to Innovation

25

During the 2023-24 school year, BARR data was instrumental in several innovations:

- Indigenous Cohort
- Summer Transition Academy - Held for 3 weeks in August last year. 12 Students earned a full credit (.5 Civics & .5 Phy Ed) before 9th grade even started this year!
- Functional Academics Special Education Program created for students who do not qualify for more support but who are not receiving enough

# Most Recent Coaching Report

As you can see, Denfeld is fully implemented and continues to refine our practice<sup>26</sup> with the guidance of our Coordinator, Jenny Wellnitz and feedback from our BARR Coach, Angie Johnson.



One recommendation from our coach to improve our Contextual Support was to share information about BARR with the School Board which is why we're here!

# What does BARR take to be successful?

27

- District Support - thank you for financial support with our BARR contract as well as systematic support with BARR as a PLC over the years.
  - Building Commitment (see next slide)
  - Coordinator Leadership (1.0 FTE)
- 
- **Dedicated Teachers and Support Staff willing to dig in, persevere and trust us as we evolve!**
  - **Students and Families willing to take this journey with us as we evolve!**

# Thrive by BARR

28

Denfeld has been annual subscription with BARR for \$35,000 which is funded with compensatory education and provides the following benefits:

- Biweekly calls and 24/7 availability with coach
- 2 onsite coaching visits
- BARR Recognition as a National School of Excellence **which Denfeld is!**
- New team member training for 5 staff annually
- BARR Network Membership benefits including PLCs for administrator & coordinator and member pricing for annual BARR Conference (As a School of Excellence we can send two staff for free each year.)
- Continued access to online BARR Member Portal for things like “I Time” SEL Curriculum

## Next steps:

**Thank you** for adding 2 District / Admin led PLCs per month for a total of 6 has allowed our BARR Program to continue as a PLC by allowing:

- 1 Small Block meeting (just teachers on that team)
- 2 Big Block Meeting (teachers + support staff)
- 2 Content PLCs (integrates BARR teachers w/ non-BARR peers)
- 1 all BARR monthly meeting

**Our ask:** move to total minutes and away from a set number of meetings per month to increase flexibility to fully implement the BARR model at Denfeld while adhering to the contract with small block meetings.



## Questions?

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- Any questions?
- Comments?
- Concerns?
- Feedback?

**COW Agenda Cover Sheet**

**Meeting Date:** April 7, 2025

**Topic:** Head Start Approvals

**Presenter(s):** Sherry Williams

**Attachment:** Yes (3)

**Brief Summary of Presentation or Topic (no more than a few sentences):**

Three items require approval of the School Board for the FY 26 Head Start Grant:

1. Self Assessment Report
2. Transportation Waiver
3. FY 26 Federal Head Start Grant

**This Requires School Board Approval :** Yes

[Self Assessment 2023-24](#)

[Transportation Waiver](#)

[FY 26 Federal Head Start Grant](#)

**This will come forward on the Consent Agenda at the April 22, 2025 School Board Meeting**



# Duluth Head Start

Annual Approvals Needed

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33

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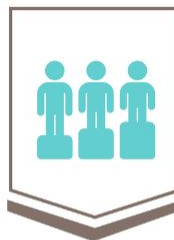
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### Belonging



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



Head Start requires an annual Self Assessment that analyzes progress made toward established goals and addresses any systemic concerns regarding our program. We are required to communicate and collaborate with program staff, parents, and governing body and policy council in the self assessment process. This year's self assessment took place in February.

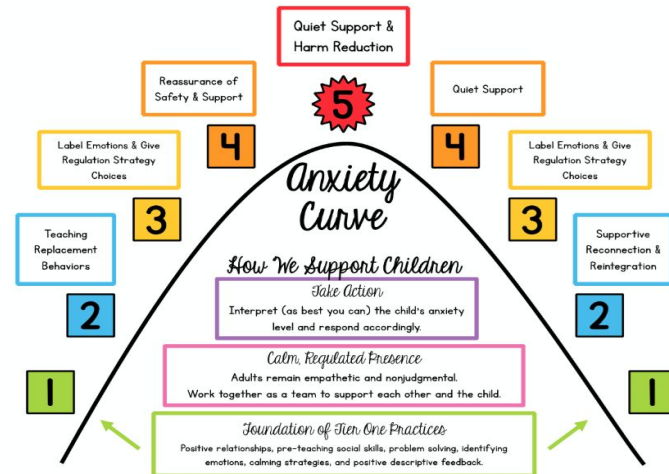
## Self Assessment: Main Points

35

### High Quality Inclusive Classrooms: Navigating Trauma

We continue to see many incidents of physical aggression.  
In response, we have:

- Created Professional Development around this topic
- Created a program wide approach to support teaching teams called the Preschool Support Team



## Responding to the Unique Needs of Our Community

36

- **Oshki-Inwewin:** a preschool class that incorporates Ojibwe language and culture into programming continues to grow. More than twice as many families have been accepted into the program this year than last year at this time.



# Fostering Resilience with a Focus on Health and Wellness

37

## YMCA Partnership

Our partnership with the YMCA includes:

- 4 full day classes attend Safety Around Water, a 6 week class focusing on skills to prevent drowning
- Day passes for every Head Start family
- Swim classes for parents - new this year! 7 parents attending
- City-wide Father/Father Figure Event at the YMCA. 19 Head Start families attended.



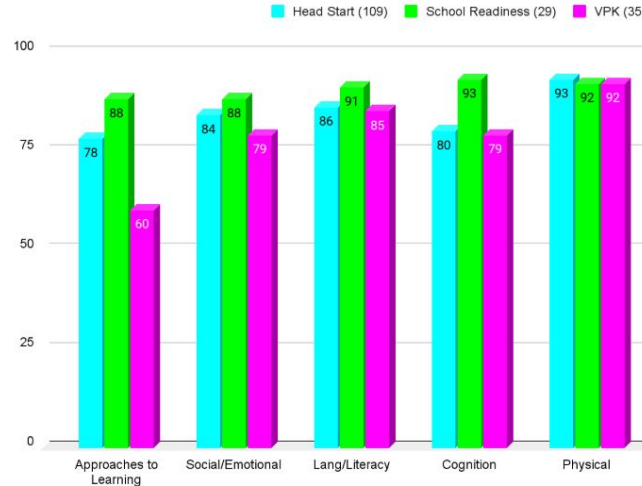
# School Readiness

We expect children to make the following gains from fall to spring:

- 25% growth in Approaches to Learning
- 30% growth in Social Emotional Development
- 25% growth in Language and Literacy
- 35% growth in Cognitive Development
- 35% growth in Physical Development

Percent of Growth from Fall to Spring in 23-24	Approaches to Learning	Social Emotional Dev.	Language and Literacy	Cognitive Dev.	Physical Dev.
Half Days	44%	60%	57%	52%	65%
Full Days	61%	55%	68%	65%	72%

Program Comparison 4 YO's SPRING



## **Self Assessment Recommendations:**

39

1. Plan for a smooth transition to a new Head Start Director.
2. Begin a process of visualizing an ideal Head Start program in preparation for a competitive grant.
3. Add a staff interview to Internal Monitoring to catch things that may be happening outside the timeframe of the walkthrough.
4. Encourage and capture family engagement at the site level

## **Full Self Assessment Report**

\*This report requires approval from the Governing Board and Head Start Parent Policy Council

## Head Start Transportation Waiver

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Voluntary PreK, a funding stream from MDE, requires that transportation be provided to 4 year olds. In Duluth, we extend this to include our 4 year old Head Start students.

Head Start has 2 requirements that we ask to waive in order for this to happen:

1. The use of a child restraint system
2. Bus monitors on board

Safe Delivery of Preschool Students was implemented following a deficiency in this area. Due to this protocol, we have not experienced any similar incidents.

114 four year old children take the bus to school on gen ed buses on any given day.

[Transportation Waiver](#)

## Federal Grant FY 26

We have received notice that our Federal Grant will go into competition sometime<sup>41</sup> after July 2025. Until then we will extend our current grant goals for another year (continuation grant)

Funding Type	Federal Head Start
Program Operations	\$2,841,531
- Training and Technical Assistance	\$28,958
Federal Funded Enrollment	190
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>\$2,870,489</b>

Federal Grant FY 26



## Questions?

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- Any questions?
- Comments?
- Concerns?
- Feedback?

## 2023-2024 Duluth Public Schools Head Start Self Assessment Report

### Purpose of Self Assessment

Head Start Performance Standard §1302.102(b)(2)(i) indicates that a program must effectively oversee progress towards program goals on an ongoing basis and annually must conduct a self-assessment that uses program data, and professional development and parent and family engagement data as appropriate, to evaluate the program's progress towards meeting program goals, compliance with program performance standards throughout the program year and the effectiveness of the professional development and family engagement systems in promoting school readiness.

Head Start Performance Standard §1302.102(c)(2)(iv) indicates that a program must use information from ongoing monitoring and the annual self-assessment, and program data on teaching practice, staffing and professional development, child-level assessments, family needs assessments, and comprehensive services, to identify program needs, and develop and implement plans for program improvement.

Questions that helped guide the process were:

- Is our program meeting the Head Start Performance Standards?
- Are our services responding to the changing needs of children and families?
- Are we doing what we need to do, or are we just doing things the way we have always done them?
- Are we achieving the goals we intended?

Duluth Head Start used a process for the self assessment that involved teams to determine success in the following areas:

1. High Quality Inclusive Classrooms: Navigating Trauma
2. Responding to the Unique Needs of our Community
3. Fostering Resilience with a Focus on Health and Wellness
4. Program Management and Quality Improvement
5. Family Engagement and Enrollment

### Program Strengths

Duluth Head Start is a school based program with a mission to create a strong learning community in order to achieve success in the classroom and beyond. Currently located in eight of the nine elementary schools in Duluth, MN, we are spread across this 27 mile long city along the shores of Lake Superior.

We have been in our public schools since 1965 and are staffed with teachers and paraprofessionals who are part of the school district bargaining units. Being compensated as public school employees means we have very low staff turnover, and many of our teaching staff have advanced degrees. Being within a public school also gives us the opportunity to work together with our school district to align initiatives and collaborate with schools directly in finding the best ways to support children and families.

Some of the challenges of this arrangement is that we don't always fit perfectly within the K-12 model. Elements of the union contract need to be viewed differently when looking at early childhood programs. Despite this challenge, our

program does exceptional work preparing children for kindergarten, and helping to make sure kindergarten is ready for young children.

## Methodology

The management team developed a self assessment plan with tasks and timelines. Self Assessment teams analyzed 5 areas:

1. High Quality Inclusive Classrooms
2. Responding to the Unique Needs of our Community
3. Fostering Resilience with a Focus on Health and Wellness
4. Program Management and Quality Improvement
5. Parent, Family, and Community Engagement; Enrollment; Transportation

Until receiving our Notice of Competition, we believed we had entered the final year of this grant, and approached Self Assessment differently. We wanted to celebrate our accomplishments, identify challenges, and articulate which practices to include in our service delivery moving forward.

Each team included coordinators, a parent, a teacher, and various partners with specialized knowledge of the content area. All staff and the entire Parent Policy Council were invited to attend any portion of the Self Assessment.

## Grant Goals and Key Insights

High Quality Inclusive Classrooms involved partnering with Early Childhood Special Education in a more collaborative relationship than previously done. We shared professional development, our staff newsletter, and goals.

The Pyramid Model was introduced to our program in 2017.

This implementation has been very successful and we find the approach vital to classroom success.

Collecting Behavior Incident Reports allows us to have greater insight into the challenges being faced in individual classrooms. Physical aggression, elopement, uncontrolled tantruming, self harm, and withdrawal are behaviors teachers are required to document. 42% of Behavior Incidents Reports in 2023-24 were for aggressive behavior.

Documentation on these mandatory categories allow us to see not only which children are exhibiting behaviors, but also to identify any patterns of behavior that may be useful in identifying reasons why and appropriate interventions to assist children in gaining necessary skills to decrease the number of behavior incidents.

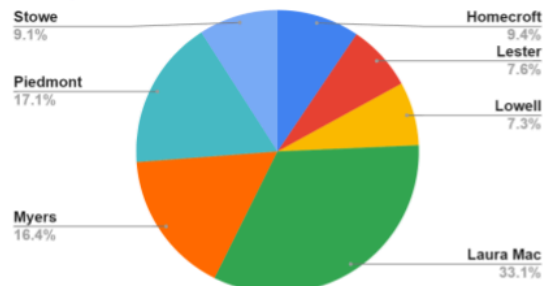
This data informs the Preschool Support Team, which works with classroom teams to discuss, model, and coach interventions to fidelity. The Preschool Support Team includes the Mental Health Coordinator, Inclusion Coordinator, Education Coordinator, Program Director, and Early Childhood Special Education teacher if the child is on an Individualized Education Plan. This team continues to support and make necessary adjustments to the plan, as needed, to assure the child has what is needed to experience success.

Since this data collection did not exist prior to this grant goal, we are pleased to have such data to guide an unbiased account of how children are doing. When dealing with challenging behaviors, it can be difficult to see changes, as they rarely occur as quickly as teams would like them to.

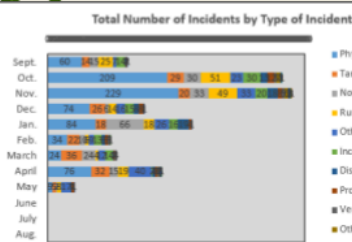
## Behavior Incident Reports

	Total Number of Incidents Reported each Month	Number of Children with Reported Incidents each Month
September	141	29
October	411	50
November	428	57
December	170	31
January	253	42
February	111	23
March	122	34
April	200	28
May	49	18
June		
July		
August		
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1885</b>	

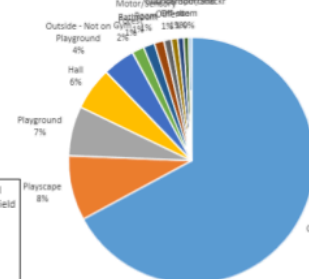
BIRs by site



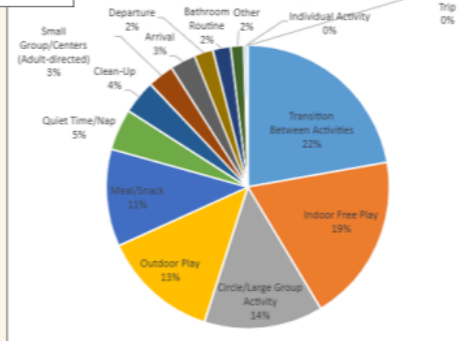
## Behavior Incident Reports



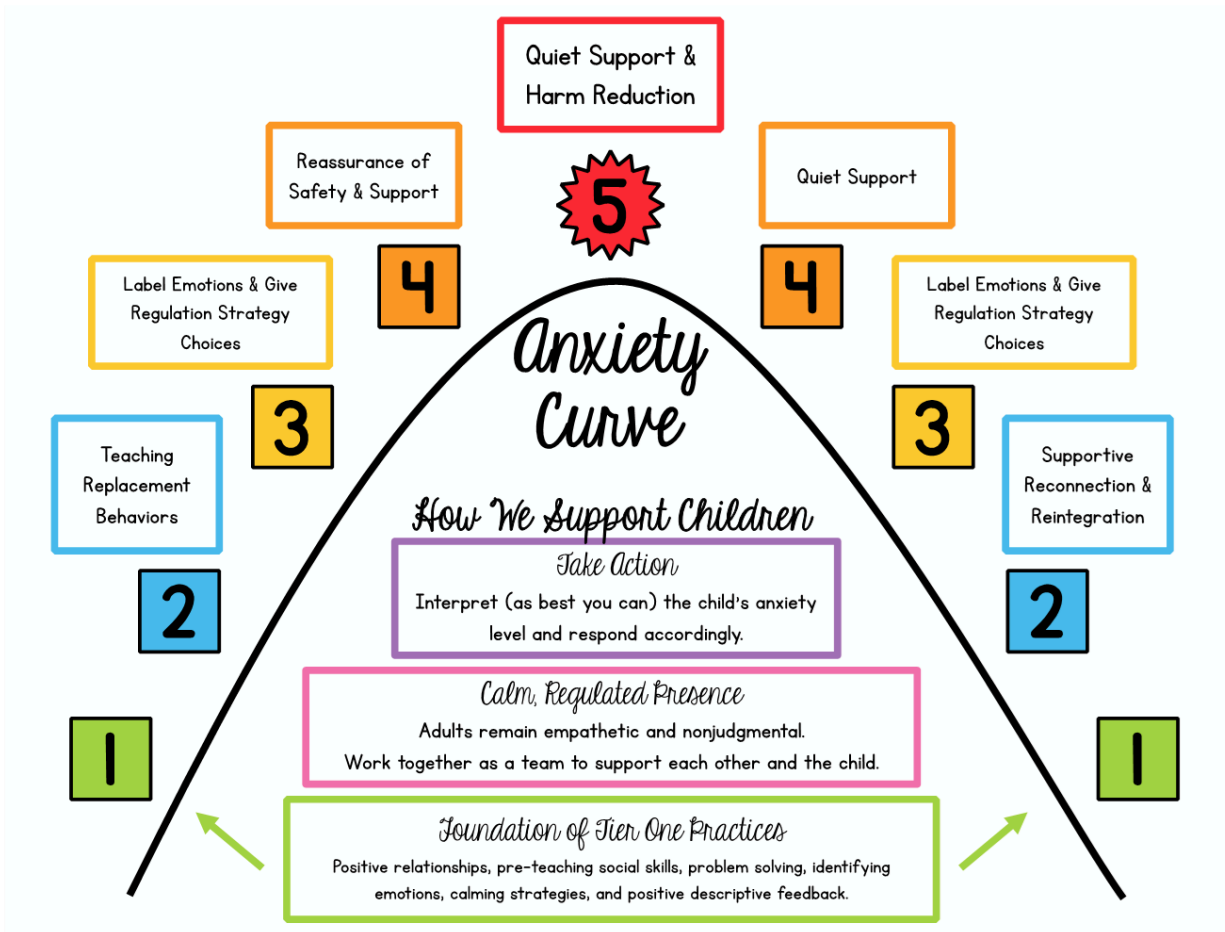
Summary of Incidents by Location



Summary of Incidents by Activity



Physical aggression is the behavior we targeted in professional development, and staff received powerful, effective training on how to respond to dysregulated children based on the Anxiety Curve.



This professional development, along with another topic: Teaching Replacement Behaviors were enthusiastically received by our staff. This PD was designed by staff within our program and will be used as an annual training for how to support children who are dysregulated.

### Responding to the Unique Needs of Our Community

Working with families experiencing poverty means that our students come to school not having had similar experiences available to peers from different socioeconomic backgrounds. This can impact vocabulary, background knowledge, and various aspects of child development. We call this an opportunity gap.

Our program works to close opportunity gaps. Some examples of this are:

- **Nature based programming:** Nature based preschool programs are some of the fastest growing preschool program types in MN and the US. During

the course of this grant, we built 3 Nature Playscapes at schools with the highest concentration of poverty in the Duluth Public Schools.

In addition to the playscapes, we provide children with high quality outdoor gear so they can feel comfortable outside in any weather.

- **Oshki-Inwewin:** This bicultural preschool incorporates Ojibwe language and culture into programming. It draws families from across the city who are interested in having this experience for their children. It is located in an elementary school that houses an Ojibwe language immersion program. Interest in this program continues to grow. Currently, we have more than twice as many families accepted into the program at this time of year than ever before. People from across the city are getting their children to Oshki.
- **Artist in Residence Program:** We partner with the Duluth Art Institute to provide an artist in residence program for full day classrooms. Artists provide an art lesson for 9 weeks and then have an art showcase at the end of the experience. We plan to continue this going forward.
- **Scholarships:** Our program partners with various community partners offering enrichment opportunities for children and families. Several of these have streamlined scholarship applications so that families' participation in Head Start indicates eligibility taking the burden of proof of the family.

Fostering Resilience with a Focus on Health and Wellness

#### **YMCA Partnership:**

Our partnership with the YMCA provides:

- 4 full day classrooms to attend a six week Safety Around Water class during the school day.

- Day passes for every Head Start staff and family
- In spring of 2025, we will add a swim class for Head Start parents - a result of last year's self assessment. This will include childcare. We currently have 7 parents signed up to attend this class.

**Health and Wellness for Staff:**

Our Health and Wellness Committee provides opportunities for staff to gather outside of work time and participate in wellness challenges and monthly prize drawings.

**Noticing Good Work:**

After administering Gallup's Employee Engagement questionnaire to all staff we found some areas that provide our program with opportunities for growth.

The measure "In the past 7 days I have received recognition or praise for good work" scored a 48%. The measure "In the past 6 months, someone has talked to me about my progress" scored 46%. These measures remind us how important it is for all of us to notice good things when we see them, and how important it is to provide meaningful feedback to employees.

**Reflective Practice:** In analyzing the effectiveness of our Professional Learning Communities, PLC Activators discussed how helpful it was to start PLC meetings with a period of peer reflection. Participants would share what current struggles they were having and peers would offer constructive feedback, even though it may have been outside the focus of the PLC. Reflective Practice such as this, is a common Early Childhood process that helps staff feel supported and seen by peers. We feel this practice has mental health benefits for staff.

**School Readiness**

Ultimately, Head Start is a school readiness program.

Rather than target a blanket end of year goal, we establish goals for enrolled children to achieve a certain percentage of growth for each of the developmental domains.

We expect children to make the following gains from fall to spring:

- 25% growth in Approaches to Learning
- 30% growth in Social Emotional Development
- 25% growth in Language and Literacy
- 35% growth in Cognitive Development
- 35% growth in Physical Development

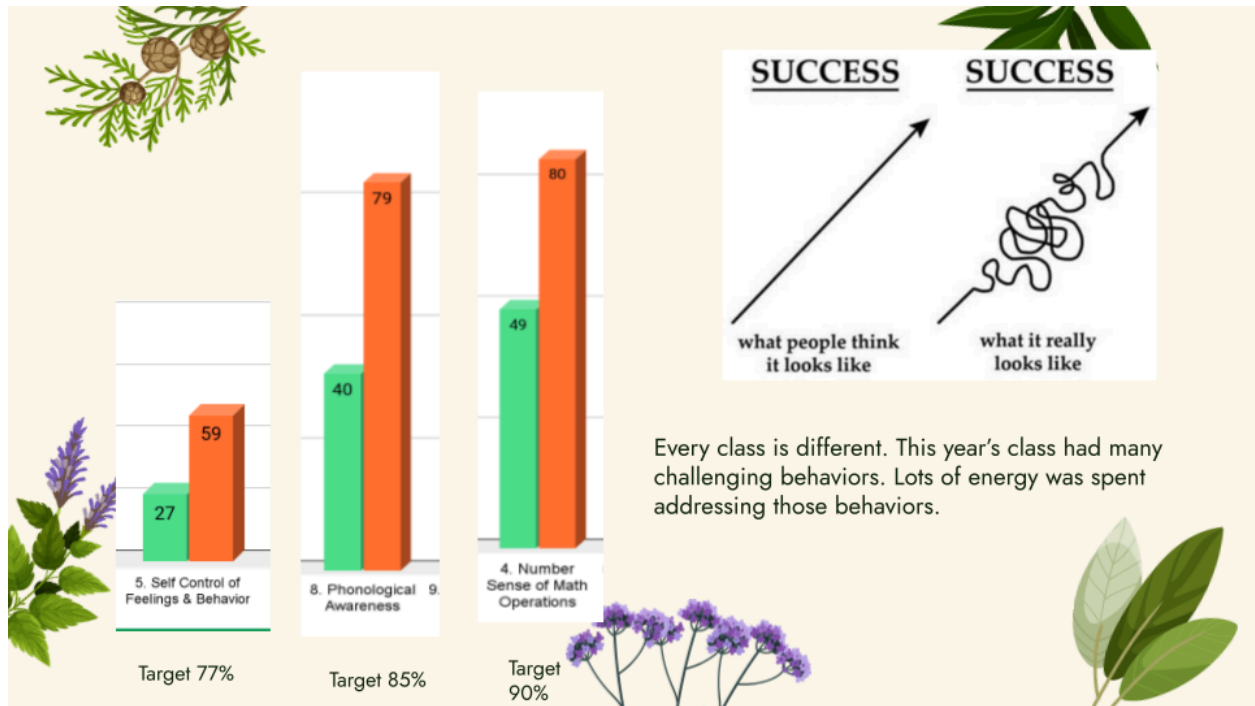
Percent of Growth from Fall to Spring in 23-24	Approaches to Learning	Social Emotional Dev.	Language and Literacy	Cognitive Dev.	Physical Dev.
Half Days	44%	60%	57%	52%	65%
Full Days	61%	55%	68%	65%	72%

Growth in each area ranges from 44-72%

These measures can be further broken down to objectives. Our program also sets goals for the lowest scoring objectives in Approaches to Learning, Language and Literacy, and Cognitive Development. These targets more easily align with established district-wide goals.

\*These are end goal targets that do not consider where children are at as they enter our program.

We fell short of these goals in 23-24.



### Program Management and Quality Improvement

**Federal Monitoring:** We were monitored by the Office of Head Start in the spring of 2024. There was one finding that was corrected regarding Oral Health Determination. Several program strengths were noted including:

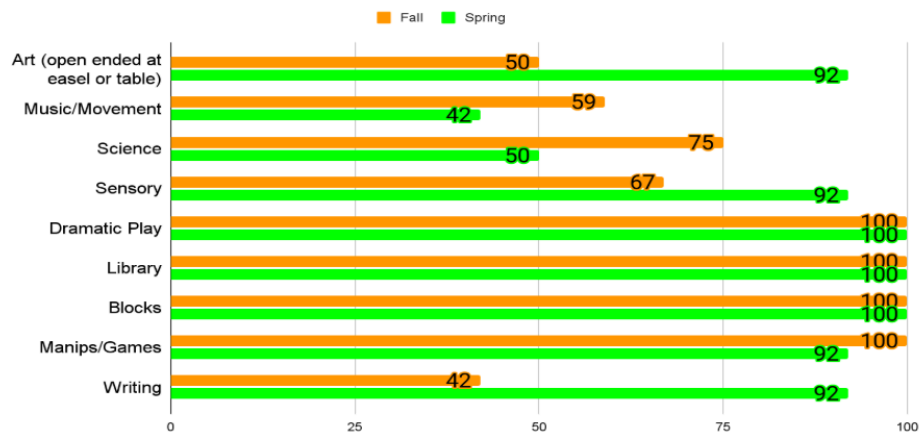
- Formal systems that remove barriers for policy council member participation
- Use of ongoing program data to innovate in the classroom based on needs of individual or subgroups of students
- Regularly offering families information or activities designed to support families' mental health and wellness
- Solicits and uses inputs from families to improve programming
- Provides economic mobility support to help families with pathways out of poverty
- Continuously evaluates the success of recruitment strategies and adjusts strategies as appropriate
- Provides targeted support for children and families who are at risk of low attendance

**Internal Monitoring:** We monitor classrooms twice per year: in the fall and spring. We monitor to see the following:

- Pyramid Model practices are in place
- Evidence of curriculum fidelity
- Active Supervision procedures are in place
- Meals are being served family style

We will add a portion to Internal Monitoring that includes a staff interview, as there are some items not seen simply because of the time of day the monitoring has occurred.

Curriculum Fidelity-12 Classrooms



1302.32 (2) A program must support staff to effectively implement curricula and at a minimum monitor curriculum implementation and fidelity, and provide support, feedback, and supervision for continuous improvement of its implementation through the system of training and professional development.

**Transportation Internal Monitoring:** Transportation is monitored three times per year, at the beginning of the school year, after the winter break, and in April following Spring break

We look to see upon arrival at school that

- Bus vests are being used
- Children are not released until teachers are present
- Staff are maintaining active supervision as they walk children to the classroom
- Drivers have current Release To information

- Drivers are in possession of a current route sheet

At home drop off stops we look to see that

- Parents are going up to the bus to pick children up

When a child is returned to school because an adult was not present, that provides evidence that our plan is being followed.

Bus Concern Forms are used when staff or families have concerns about a parent, driver, or child's behaviors. This form is sent to our Enrollment Coordinator who follows up with them. 42 Bus Concern forms were completed in 2023-24. These were all followed up with by our Transportation Coordinator.

### Enrollment and Family Engagement

We were identified in 2023 as being chronically under enrolled. This was due, in large part, to us limiting enrollment in classrooms struggling with challenging student behavior. Some behaviors made it difficult to keep classrooms safe.

We have since created systems of support to increase the capacity of teaching teams to navigate these challenges.

We have maintained the required full enrollment for the 2024-25 school year.

We also took a hard look at our enrollment process and made improvements where we could. We continue to review our enrollment process annually and have created an action plan to address any concerns that are identified.

A quarterly Office Flow Meeting has been established to create pathways for talking through changes, challenges, and celebrations.

Finally, we have created a recruitment team that meets 2-3 times per year to look at sites that may need strategic recruitment, along with a recruitment timeline to keep us on track with the many tasks involved in launching a new program year.

Family Engagement at the site level has not recovered from the pandemic. Parent Committee meetings at sites have had low attendance (1-2 families), with the exception of the very first one of the year: the Ice Cream Social, held in early October, which had 8-17 families in attendance across all sites.

We have seen success in bringing families together when we invite them from across the city to meet at community sites like the zoo, aquarium, or YMCA. Attendance has ranged from 21- 107. Attendance at many of these events seems to be influenced by the weather.

Attendance at city wide events feels satisfying for family advocates and pleasurable for families, though it does not seem to result in changes to engagement at the site level.

Connecting families to their school site will be a focus moving forward. This needs to be a program wide initiative.

### Noteworthy Additions

The program director will be leaving their position at the end of the year.

There is a \$225,000 budget deficit due to increased cost of salary and fringe benefits that will need to be addressed this year.

Our grant will open for competition sometime the second half of the year due to 2 deficiencies we had post-Covid in our program. Competition allows us an opportunity to redefine how our program responds to identified community needs.

### Recommendations

The following program wide recommendations are recommended for continuous quality improvement.

1. Plan and prepare for a smooth transition to a new Head Start director.
2. Begin a process of visualizing an ideal Head Start program in preparation for competition that both meets current community needs and the Head Start Program Performance Standards.

3. Continue to Internal Monitoring, adding a staff interview to determine if any elements are happening at times other than during the walkthrough.
4. Encourage and capture data regarding Family Engagement at the site level.

By signing below, this report has been approved by the Governing Board and Head Start Policy Council.

\_\_\_\_\_ Kelly Durick-Eder, School Board Chair

\_\_\_\_\_ Date

\_\_\_\_\_ Kristi Meyer-Fladwell, Policy Council Chair

\_\_\_\_\_ Date



### **Transportation Waiver for Duluth Head Start FY 2026**

- Voluntary PreK is required to provide transportation to and from school for 4 year olds
- Due to this, we are asking that 4 year old Head Start children also be allowed to ride the bus to and from school. We know transportation can be a significant barrier to accessing preschool for families experiencing poverty.
- We are asking to waive the following Head Start regulations:
  - Restraints 1303.71(d) and 1303.72(a)(1)
  - Monitors 1303.72(a)(4)
- Our Parent Policy Council supports this plan contingent on maintaining the following safety provisions:
  - Preschool children will wear reflective vests making them highly visible to the bus drivers and other staff, both to and from school
  - Preschool children will sit in seats closest to the driver
  - An adult must meet the children at the bus door at drop off, and must bring the child to the bus door at pick up. We encourage parents to establish communication with the driver.
  - Unfamiliar designated adults must present an ID to the bus driver when picking up a child from the bus.
  - All Head Start children must participate in a bus safety presentation on the first day of school.
  - Riding the bus is voluntary, so parents may choose to self transport if they prefer.
    - The number of four year olds varies from year to year, but last year 114 preschool children ride the bus on any given day.

We appreciate your commitment to removing barriers for children whose families are experiencing poverty by safely getting preschool children to and from school. We know establishing patterns of regular attendance is very important for school success, and we can directly correlate transportation increased attendance.

By signing below, you are acknowledging that this waiver has been approved.

\_\_\_\_\_ Kelly Durick-Eder, School Board Chair

\_\_\_\_\_ Date

\_\_\_\_\_ Kristi Meyer-Fladwood, Policy Council Chair

\_\_\_\_\_ Date

**Duluth Public Schools Federal Head Start Continuation Grant  
Fiscal Year 2026**

<b>Funding Type</b>	<b>Federal Head Start</b>
Program Operations	<b>\$2,841,531</b>
Training and Technical Assistance	<b>\$28,958</b>
Federal Funded Enrollment	<b>190</b>
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>\$2,870,489</b>

This is year five of a five year grant cycle. We will compete for our grant for the next grant cycle.

**Broad Grant Goals remain:**

**1. High Quality Inclusion: Navigating Trauma**

- a. Partnership with Early Childhood Special Education

**2. Meeting the Unique Needs of our Community**

- a. Oshki-Inwewin: A program that infuses curriculum with Ojibwe language and perspectives at a site where an Ojibwe Immersion School operates.
- b. Nature Based Programming at all sites
- c. Artist in Residence Program for full day classes

**3. Fostering Resilience with a Focus on Health and Wellness**

- a. YMCA Collaboration: Safety Around Water classes for 72 children annually;
  - i. Family Day Passes for all Head Start families
  - ii. Swim lessons for Head Start parents: 7 parents enrolled
- b. Health and Wellness Opportunities for Families and Staff

By signing below, we approve the federal Head Start grant.

\_\_\_\_\_ Kelly Durick-Eder, School Board Chair  
\_\_\_\_\_ Date

\_\_\_\_\_ Kristi Meyer-Faldwood, Policy Council Chair  
\_\_\_\_\_ Date

**COW Agenda Cover Sheet****Meeting Date:** 4/8/2025**Topic:** Duluth Promise**Presenter(s):** John Magas**Attachment:** No**Brief Summary of Presentation or Topic (no more than a few sentences):**

The Duluth Promise represents a robust collaborative effort between multiple educational and workforce development entities. The Duluth Promise offers a comprehensive approach to workforce development by aligning educational pathways with industry needs. Our coalition ensures students receive relevant training and support to succeed in high-demand fields.

**This Requires School Board Approval :** No (Informational)

# Duluth Promise

Committee of the Whole - April 8, 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.

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## 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.

# What is the Duluth Promise?

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The Duluth Promise is a coalition of educational institutions and workforce partners committed to building a strong local workforce. We focus on creating clear pathways to employment in high-demand fields.

We are beginning our efforts with a focus on healthcare, manufacturing and business services.

# What challenges will we address?

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- Shrinking Workforce - Duluth's labor force is decreasing, impacting the ability of businesses to find skilled workers
- Skills Gap - There is a disconnect between the skills taught in educational institutions and those required by employers
- Retention Issues - Graduates often leave the area, leading to a loss of talent and economic potential

# How will the Duluth Promise address this?

The Duluth Promise offers a comprehensive approach to workforce development by aligning educational pathways with industry needs. Our coalition ensures students receive relevant training and support to succeed in high-demand fields.

Benefits include:

- Strategic Partnerships - Linking education and employers
- Stackable Credentials - Making education accessible, relevant, and supportive of lifelong learning and career advancement
- Community Engagement - Connecting students to the community, encouraging them to stay and contribute to economic growth

# Next Steps

# Questions

**COW Agenda Cover Sheet****Meeting Date:** 4/8/2025**Topic:** FY26 Budget Timeline & Impact Overview**Presenter(s):** Simone Zunich, Exec. Dir. of Finance & Business Services**Attachment:** Yes**Brief Summary of Presentation or Topic (no more than a few sentences):**

The purpose of the presentation is to provide a high level overview of the budgeting process and the multiple opportunities for board input and discussion prior to final adoption of the FY26 budget in June.

**This Requires School Board Approval :** Not this presentation

# FY26 Budget *Timeline & Impact Overview*

Committee of the Whole  
April 8, 2025



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**Duluth**  
Public Schools

# Purpose and Objectives

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The purpose of tonight's meeting is to provide a high level overview of the budgeting process and the multiple opportunities for board input and discussion prior to final adoption of the FY26 budget in June.

## **Objectives:**

- Examine the current context of our budget decision making
- Share timeline, analysis and impact of the proposed FY26 budget
- Provide a high level overview of the key factors that impact our budget
- Review the timeline of future board actions

# How we got here

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- Significant recent state education funding has helped, but it's not enough to make up for decades of underfunding and to cover increased Duluth Public Schools' operating costs.
- The district also faces several unfunded mandates. These include unemployment costs as of June, July and August of 2026. Paid FMLA (Family & Medical Leave Act) effective January 2026, potential compensatory hold harmless. Other areas to be factored in are the Read Act and other federal mandates that are unknown at this time.
- The cost of nearly all expenses have increased -- salaries, benefits, utilities, transportation, food, and contracted services.

# Overview of Budgeting Process

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Timeline	Analysis	Impact
<p>Understanding the Situation:</p> <p>Budget Imbalance: The core issue of the deficit budget needs to be addressed.</p> <p>FY26 Focus: The primary objective is achieving a balanced budget for the 2026 fiscal year.</p> <p>Administrative Analysis: Senior leaders are actively reviewing budget reductions and reallocations and how this will impact the FY26 budget. We are also having small group school board meetings in April to help understand the five year impact of our budget.</p>	<p>Strategic analysis of expenditures which include labor, benefits, programming and contracted services</p> <p>Revenue Considerations: State and federal funding. The district is aware of budget recommendations that will be brought forth by the Governor at the end of March 2025. We have received an increase in the basic formula.</p>	<p>Minimizing the budget impact is a key goal for the budget team. We strive to minimize the impact on schools and students for FY26.</p> <p>We will present a budget that is not only balanced for FY26 but also sustainable in the long term. We will consider the potential impact of future economic conditions and enrollment.</p>

# Initial Forecasting: High Level Overview

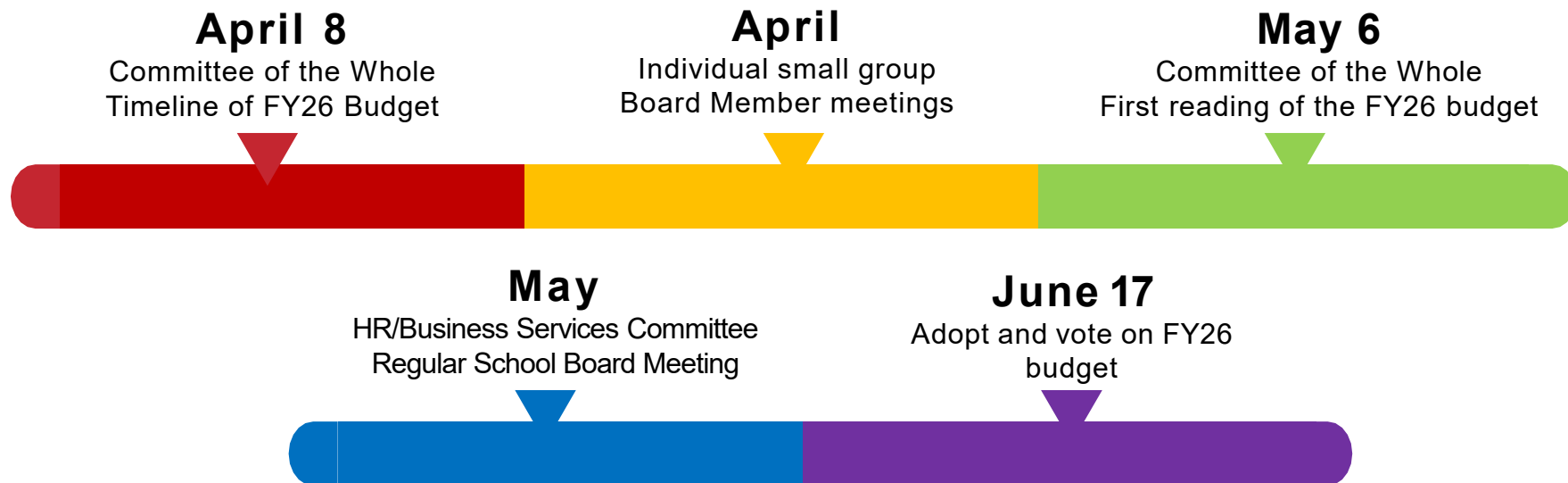
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<p><b>Review of Enrollment</b></p> <p>For FY26 an increase of enrollment from 8,068 (FY25) to 8,099 for FY26</p>	<p>Basic formula increase of 2.74% - from \$7,281 to \$7,465 per ADM (Average Daily Membership)</p> <p>Compensatory aid remains consistent with FY25 (we will know more in April)</p>
<p>Special Education Cross Subsidy and Aid combined will increase by 6.73% from FY25</p> <p>Title Aid remains under review</p>	<p><b>Child Nutrition</b></p> <p>FY26 continues to serve free breakfast and lunch to all students</p>

# Future Board budget discussions and actions

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**We look forward to continuing to discuss the proposed budget with the Finance Committee and School Board on:**



# Questions?