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School Board Report January 21, 2026

Happy New Year! January has certainly reminded us of what a Minnesota winter feels like. Despite the cold slowing things down outside, we continue to move forward with progress in the district. Here are a few items to share with the board.

- 1. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Concerns** – The district has heard a number of concerns regarding the potential presence and perceived presence of ICE officers in the community. We have worked to be as proactive as possible on the matter. I held an all staff meeting on Tuesday, January 20 to share our protocol with the staff and hear staff concerns and questions. At the meeting I shared that our obligation is to provide a safe environment for students and to provide students with an opportunity to learn. I received positive feedback from staff regarding the updates and the discussion. As of writing this board report, I have not received any formal confirmation of ICE officers in the Pipestone area. I have received reports, however, of ICE agents in Worthington and Marshall.
- 2. Artificial Intelligence (AI) Work Group** – I learned a great deal at the Future of Educational Technology Conference that I attended. It is increasingly evident that as a school district, we must be proactive in finding ways to embrace artificial intelligence and implement artificial intelligence appropriately in our schools. A significant part of this process will include developing AI guidelines and consider some district adopted and approved AI tools. I envision that in the weeks to come we will create an AI work group for Pipestone Area Schools to help create district guidelines and approaches to the incorporation of AI in our system. I think this work needs to consider both academic applications as well as operational applications for AI in the district.
- 3. Facilities Committee Meeting** – We have scheduled a facilities board committee meeting in February to discuss some of the issues and concerns we have with the new elementary. As reported previously, we have received reports that the flooring system is failing in the school and the vinyl tiles are starting to lift off the floor. Also, we have found that there are some sloping issues with drains in some bathroom spots. We also learned that a drain was not properly function as the contractors broke the drain pipe from using pit-run gravel rather than crushed gravel fill around the pipes. We will be meeting with legal counsel to discuss these items and the options before the board on solutions for the district. I anticipate the committee will provide a recommendation at the regular February board meeting.
- 4. Legislative Session** – The legislative session will convene on February 17, 2026. There are going to be a number of items to watch throughout the session. While the concerns over fraud in the state have dominated the news, there are a number of questions regarding funding for public institutions. The budget forecast in December predicted a \$456 million surplus for the current biennium and a nearly \$6 billion shortfall in the 2028-2029 biennium. The State is expected to provide an update forecast in late February, which would allow legislative

action this session to address spending for the remainder of the current legislative biennium, which ends June 30, 2027. We will monitor things through the advocacy work of MSBA and MREA.

5. **Budget Preparations** – I have asked our team to begin considering budget needs for the district for the next fiscal year. I anticipate the administrative team will complete the budget parameters in the next 60 days and have the parameters ready to present to the finance committee and the board.
6. **Strategic Design Work Session** – I have attached the documents from the strategic design work session. These will be shared with potential partnering vendors who may help facilitate the strategic design work. We will be able to cover the costs of the strategic design work from the grant that I was able to obtain for the district through the Minnesota Department of Education. We must expend this funding by June 30, 2026 as there is not continuation of the funding for the 2027 fiscal year.
7. **Staffing Needs for 2026-2027** – We are starting to consider what staffing needs we may have in the district for the next school year. Given the tremendous shortage of candidates at all levels of educational work including paraprofessionals, teachers, and school administrators, the earlier we can address needs the better. Here is an article highlighting the serious challenges school districts are facing in finding candidates: [Teacher Shortage Crisis: Understanding the Impact | ACE Blog](#).
8. **Social Media** – I have attached a report on social media use for the board. As you can see, we make quite an impression on social media. The attached report comes from our social media partner. We continue to use social media to promote the programs, services, staff, and district in a variety of ways.

That is all I have at this time. As always, please let me know if you have questions or concerns. Thank you for your service and commitment to the Pipestone Area Schools! #ProudArrows