

THE VISION

AVOCA SCHOOL DISTRICT 37 NEWSLETTER

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GRATITUDE AND GREATNESS

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It feels overwhelming to try to capture here what leading a school district has been like during the pandemic. Nearly a year since COVID first arrived, I can only point to what has inspired me to want to do better for our community every day.

Our students have been amazing, resilient, engaged, and shown wisdom beyond their years. Since March I have visited classrooms in ZOOM and onsite. In every encounter our students' desire to be in school, learn, and engage has been inspiring. When we have doubts, we must listen to our children and follow their love of learning.

Second, our parents and guardians. While struggling with their own employment or family health challenges, they have played the role of teacher at home and have done so with grace. Even while experiencing frustration, they have offered the school support and feedback to improve what we do. Their partnership makes Avoca great.

Third, our staff. From our custodians to bus drivers, instructional assistants to office staff, from our teachers to our principals, our staff are the real heroes in the last year. From fully remote, to hybrid, to onsite daily, my colleagues have learned, adapted, adjusted, persevered and excelled.

Finally, our Board of Education. As our elected representatives, our Board has been confronted with circumstances it never knew would be part of its job. In these times, it would be easy for Board members to feel they needed to act in extreme ways. But our Board has been calm, measured, and listened at every step - whether to community members making comments at Board meetings, to parental survey feedback, or to a neighbor they see at the grocery store. Our Board has been a source of stability and thoughtfulness. Our community should be grateful for such leadership.

So let's be empathetic to each other, flexible in how we respond to our mutual needs, and remember that our spirit of community is what makes Avoca special. For all of these reasons we can be glad and grateful.



DISTRICT FINANCES NARROWING THE GAP

Despite increased expenses from COVID-19, the District is on track to reduce its annual operating deficit compared to the deficit budgeted for this fiscal year ending in June 2021. The major driver of this narrowing deficit is the collective bargaining agreement concluded between the teachers and the Board of Education in November. Specifically, compared to previous years and budget projections, this contract:

- Decreased the rate of growth for salary expenditures
- Decreased District expenditures on health benefits
- Increased the range of contact minutes staff have with students

These contract changes and others allow the District to continue to attract and retain high quality teachers while lowering the overall costs for doing so. The District is still projected to face an operating deficit for the current fiscal year, making a dent in financial reserves. This cannot be fixed only by lowering expenditures. Please follow the QR code below to access the video where I talk about the Citizens Financial Advisory council I will convene this summer.

That Council will review our financial data and issue a report to the Board of Education.

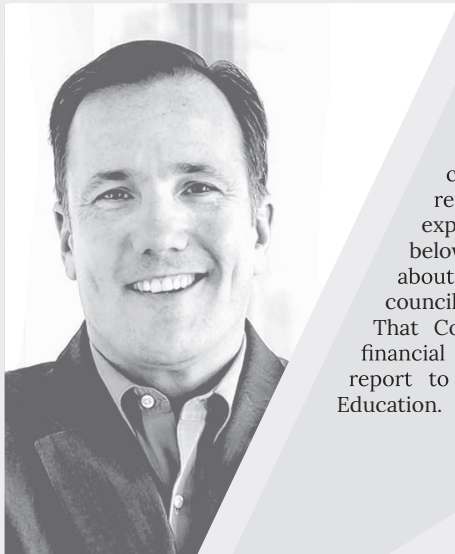


STUDENT VOICES, STUDENT GIVING

Our character is most often revealed by what we do for others and by what we do when circumstances are difficult. In the last year, our Avoca students have demonstrated their character again and again.

- Marie Murphy's *Roots & Shoots Student Activity Club* raised donations to buy holiday presents for more than 20 families in need in the Avoca District.
- Avoca West's *Amplify Avoca Student Club* produces weekly video announcements to share news, encouraging messages, and student talents with students learning at school and remotely.
- Marie Murphy student Alice Katrich designed a mask that was printed up by the District for sale, with the profits going to The Viking Fund to help Avoca families who need support paying school fees.

Most inspiring about working at a school is when student voices are shared and student giving is prominent. Even in these difficult times, our students can be heard loud and clear.



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VIDEO MESSAGE



Scan the QR code to watch Dr. Osburn's message or go to <https://bitly/3aJf8a>

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Avoca Community Preschool: @avocaprek



Avoca West: @avocawest37
Marie Murphy: @mariemurphyschool
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