



Milton-Freewater

Unified School District

AARON DUFF Superintendent

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Dear Budget Committee Member,

As Superintendent, it is my privilege to present the proposed budget for the **2026-2027 school year** to the Milton-Freewater School District Budget Committee. This document, prepared in accordance with Oregon local budget law (**ORS 294.305 through 294.520**), represents our commitment to fiscal transparency and academic excellence. As we convene to deliberate on the allocation of resources, it is imperative that we broaden our perspective beyond the immediate fiscal cycle. While our primary task is to ensure the efficient utilization of funds for the year ahead, we must also acknowledge the uncertainty inherent in future funding prospects.

Our commitment to the long-term sustainability of our district demands that we anticipate and prepare for fluctuations in state funding. Therefore, I urge the committee to adopt a forward-thinking approach that encompasses strategic planning and prudent financial management. We are not merely budgeting for the present; we are investing in a future that secures continued excellence for generations to come.

Much like the state as a whole, our district is experiencing a decline in student enrollment. This shift has prompted us to make necessary and responsible adjustments in staffing to meet the evolving needs of our student body. To ensure our staffing levels remain perfectly aligned with our current population, we have implemented the following strategies:

- ❖ **Strategic Attrition:** In several instances, we have chosen not to replace staff members who have departed, allowing for natural right-sizing.
- ❖ **Resource Realignment:** We are continuously evaluating positions to ensure every role directly supports our core educational mission.

Despite fiscal challenges, we continue to broaden our programs through the aggressive pursuit of grant funding. These resources have empowered us to enrich our educational offerings and furnish our students with supplemental tools that would otherwise be out of reach. It is imperative that we persist in seeking these opportunities, as they enable us to enhance the educational journey without placing additional strain on our general fund.

As we delve into the details of this budget, I ask the committee to weigh these factors with care:

- ❖ **Economic Vigilance:** We must stay alert to the state's changing economic outlook.
- ❖ **Resource Optimization:** Our focus remains on maximizing every dollar to serve our students optimally.
- ❖ **Resilient Excellence:** Our goal is to uphold a top-tier education tailored to our students' needs, even amidst challenging circumstances.

MISSION:

Developing lifelong learners in a safe, positive environment to be contributing citizens in the community.

VISION:

Delivering Superior Education to ALL

GOALS:

- Provide social emotional support and guidance
- Eliminate gaps in achievement
- Cultivate positive relationships and collaborative working environments to foster a safe and positive community



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Together, we can ensure that the Milton-Freewater School District remains a pillar of strength and opportunity for our community.

The proposed general fund has \$26,427,600 in budgeted resources for the 2026-2027 school year. This reflects an estimated \$2,600,000 in beginning fund balance and a \$1,502,300 cash carryover for the 2027-2028 school year.

Highlights for the 2026-2027 budget include the following items:

- ❖ The budget is built without a reduction in force but utilizes staff retirements and grant funding for positions.
- ❖ The budget assumes roll-up costs through the implementation of the collective bargaining agreements, as well as maintaining the 5.5% PERS increase.
- ❖ The District enrollment has declined over the past two years. This has an unfavorable impact on our state funding. The District will continue to monitor enrollment to ensure the right-sized staff and services for the student population.
- ❖ The District will continue to support programs like preschool, dual language, mental health, food service, high school electives, and online learning.
- ❖ The District will continue to contract with the IMESD for business services, human resources, and technology services.

Other Fund Highlights:

- ❖ The District continues to budget for federal, state, and local grants and utilizes all available resources to enhance the District's programs.
- ❖ Federal Grant and Title programs, including Title I, Title II, Title III and Title IV are budgeted flat, to match projected federal funding levels.
- ❖ State grants, including High School Success (Measure 98), Outdoor School (Measure 99), SIA (Student Investment Account), Early Literacy and Summer Learning, are budgeted in 2026-2027 to match the proposed Grant awards.

I would like to thank you for serving on the Milton-Freewater School District Budget Committee. Your work for the district is vital to the success of staff and students.

Sincerely,

Aaron Duff

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Milton-Freewater School District

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