

January 3, 2024

Subject: Important Information Regarding Washington Elementary

Dear Esteemed Parents and Community Members,

I am reaching out to make you aware of significant developments in the educational programming at Washington Elementary School, with the proposal to transform Washington Elementary into the Washington Innovation Center. This transformation will help us embrace innovation and address the evolving needs of our community.

In proposing this transformation for the upcoming 2024-2025 school year, my vision is to create a hub that caters to diverse educational needs. The primary initiative is the establishment of an Early College High School—a pioneering venture in the State of Montana. This groundbreaking program allows high school students to graduate with both a high school diploma and an associate degree simultaneously, providing unique college and career pathways. Additionally, the Washington Innovation Center will house the Opportunity School, offering students the prospect of acquiring career certifications in information technology within a proficiency-based graduation pathway. This comprehensive program encompasses areas such as computer repair, programming, cybersecurity, coding, robotics, and Artificial Intelligence, preparing students for the demands of the modern workforce.

The decision to propose Washington as a venue for these new programs is based on several factors including enrollment and financial challenges in the Elementary District. Washington ES currently has the lowest enrollment in the elementary district, and out of all schools in the district, it is the most expensive, per student, to run. The budget deficit in the Elementary District is approximately four million dollars accumulated over several years. My objective is to alleviate this deficit by moving 1.5 million dollars in costs from the Elementary District to the High School District. In addition, I intend to reorganize services, resources, and personnel at the Lincoln Center and all district schools. This financial restructuring is undertaken in the context of ongoing negotiations with three unions, addressing critical safety infrastructure challenges, and the imperative to enhance the quality of educational programs within our district. With all our high schools operating at or beyond capacity, including the Career Center, my commitment is to present a balanced budget for the 2024-2025 school year without compromising essential services for our students.

In the coming days, I will present these proposals to the Board of Trustees and keep the communities of Washington, Broadwater, Miles Avenue, and Newman informed. Collaboratively, we will ensure a seamless transition for students, teachers, and staff to their respective campuses. While our district and city grapple with challenges, now is the time for us to collectively address the critical needs of our entire school community and envision a broader future for our students. Your unwavering support is invaluable as we embark on this transformative journey.

Thank you for your understanding and commitment to the future of education in our community.

Sincerely,

Erwin Garcia, Superintendent