



A Budget Message from Superintendent Melissa Goff

Community. It is what makes the Greater Albany School District “GREATER”. It is what makes our celebrations so joyful. It is what brings us comfort during times of struggle.

Where We Were

The Spring of 2020 found us completing a nine month strategic planning process involving unprecedented community engagement, particularly of students and parents who have been historically marginalized in planning our educational future. On March 12, 2020, we were on the cusp of building the details on the District plan itself which would focus on academic rigor; social, emotional, and mental health; and equitable practices across all aspects of our learning system. On March 13, 2020, we turned off the lights at the GAPS School District Office for what we thought might be several days. We had no idea that as a school community we were about to face the greatest challenge of our lives. The COVID-19 pandemic altered just about everything we knew about “how we do things”. We used to communicate in small groups, hanging around the coffee maker, the copier, or our lockers to talk about how we spent the night before or the adventures planned for our day of learning. Suddenly, we were in various states of isolation communicating primarily via text, email, phone, and these unfamiliar tools called “Google Chat” and “Zoom”. We used to greet each other in the morning with big smiles and high fives with an occasional hug for those most special to us. We instead found ourselves in isolation except for when we ventured out for groceries or other needed items. We failed to immediately recognize friends, as we could only see their eyes and their hair due to the masks covering their visages. Our greetings became fist bumps and muffled hellos.

With these changes in our way of being together, we had growing concerns about student physical and mental health. Were students getting the meals they needed? Were they feeling connected with others? Were they exercising or even spending time out of the house at all?

Where We Are

COVID-19 affects our health. It is changing lives and families, sometimes irrevocably. It also tests our sense of community. As educators, students, parents, and partners, we thrive when we come together in a safe place where we can challenge each other and be challenged ourselves to be better.

That is exactly what we have done. With the support of our incredible community partners and our Greater Albany community, we have served over half a million meals to students, supplied masks for every student and staff member, provided child care to parents and staff in need, closed the technology gap through a 1:1 device deployment to our students and supporting their access to internet services, created protocols and sanitized facilities for student returns, and provided transportation of meals and student supplies so that we can provide these services to students in their homes when they cannot come to us. We added new instructional models and provided choices to students so that parents could navigate their own comfort levels with their students returning to in-person school. We embraced “flexible learning” and we embarked on a distance and hybrid learning journey together, as a community.

Where We Are Going

This budget is a celebration. It contemplates a full return to school - hopefully in Fall 2021. For all of us at GAPS, it means getting back to what we really want to do. Moving forward on our three major commitments to our students, families, and community and building bridges to lifelong learning and brighter futures.

As a community, we are doing our best to create a safe and challenging place. The art of education is to recognize that learners need both. Denying either one to a budding learner usually does not end well. Learners who feel unsafe struggle to react productively to challenges. Learners who are not challenged struggle to reach their potential. The rest of this document explains the nuts and bolts of next year's budget. Although the General Fund still suffers from chronic shortfalls, some increased permanent and temporary grant funding allows us to do some exciting new things for learners. Read on to learn more about our well-thought out investments and the approach we are taking to ensure our hopes for our students are realized right here . . . in our community.