



Together, we inspire  
and challenge all  
learners to realize their  
unique potential and  
become active  
contributors to their  
community

Office of the Superintendent  
Kirk Downing, Superintendent  
Laura Friend, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning

## Superintendent's Report to the NRSD School Committee February 15, 2023

### Announcements:

#### FY24 NRSD Budget Updates:

Presented this evening is the updated FY24 Proposed Budget (**Strategic Initiative #4.2: Articulate district priorities through the budget**). Last week, we received our insurance rates for FY24 through our assigned representative. The rate changes shared with the district are expressed in reductions to the associated budget lines in the proposed budget. As of February 15, 2023, we have been able to decrease the proposed budget by an additional \$429,326 due to the stated rates. Our proposed FY24 Budget is currently at \$64,997,516 representing a 4.45% increase over the FY23 budget. As we shared at the last School Committee meeting, Governor Healey's budget will be released on March 1st and she has indicated the education budget will be released prior to that date. This will include updates to Foundation Enrollment and Chapter 70 Funding.

### Updates on Strategic Work

#### Topic: Equity Audit:

**Strategic Objective #3** *Ensure equitable opportunities and outcomes for all through increased awareness, representation, practices, and communication around diversity, equity, and inclusion*

**Strategic Initiative #3.1** *Examine data from equity audit and other available sources to prioritize and create scope and sequence for professional development, 2023-2027*

(Sent to the NRSD community on 2/3/23)

Steeped in our core values are the ideals we believe all people in our community deserve. Our NRSD Strategic Plan outlines a framework wherein our students not only achieve academically, they grow

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personally. We want our graduates to become lifelong learners who develop a personal voice, grow to understand how choices have impact beyond intention, and develop a strong sense of agency and responsibility. Those competencies thrive fully in safe, caring, and collaborative environments where a sense of belonging is felt by all. We strive to be an organization that fulfills our vision, "Be your best self. Pave your path. Impact the world." While we strive every day to be that organization, we know it's hard out there for many of our students and families.

We have experienced many events locally and nationally that challenge our collective community and have made it hard to foster that sense of belonging for all. Displays of racism, anti-semitism, sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination, and intellectual superiority have impacted members of our community in ways that are deeply personal and that we can only begin to understand. Those moments are intended to hurt people and sow the seeds of mistrust and anxiety in our community and across the nation.

Displays of hate in our community, no matter how seemingly small, impact our children who attend the Nashoba Regional School District. As your Superintendent, I intend to work hard to learn how our families are impacted by these moments and pledge my time and attention to helping us be better as a collective community. It is in that way that I want you all to know the actions I am advancing to better understand the experiences of students and families in our school community

First, our school leaders will reach out to their communities and invite families to come forward and participate in important conversations regarding race, equity, inclusion and belonging. These critical conversations will help us understand the student experience and give us insight into how we can be better. By listening to their stories, we will have greater clarity on our next steps as a school community.

Second, we will seek to have a third party conduct an objective equity audit of the school system. We have posted a request for proposals for a racial equity audit of our school system on the district web site. [Click here to view the posting.](#) The DEARJ committee (Diversity, Equity and Racial Justice) has offered to participate in the review of the proposals along with district officials. The purpose of our racial equity audit is to "understand our current place and future role in delivering an educational experience for our Students of Color that understands their perspectives and incorporates their experience in their academic lives." We will also be using our participation in this audit to learn how we can build sustainable practices to examine how we will incorporate the perspectives and experiences of all marginalized groups into our district.

Third, we have formed a district wide equity committee for employees to study how personal identity impacts social norms and expectations. This committee is a volunteer group of faculty and staff who are interested in understanding issues of equity in a deeper way to better understand the role they play in creating a sense of belonging for all.

Fourth, our leadership team is studying the impact of implicit bias in the hiring, evaluation, and retention of employees who identify with a marginalized group.

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Fifth, the DEARJ committee will review the content of our school handbooks and offer recommendations to school administrators for improvements to ensure our practices promote safety and inclusion for all of our students.

Finally, and most importantly, we believe we will learn the most by hearing about the experiences of our students. Our leadership team will offer opportunities to engage our students and share how they are impacted by expressions of hate and discrimination within our schools.

These efforts will be our next steps in learning about the experiences of the people we serve. Our goal is simple; we want ALL students to feel welcome, appreciated and respected as people within the Nashoba Regional School District. It is clear, when students feel they belong, they learn. This is our mission.

## **Topic: Genocide in Education Grant**

**Strategic Objective #2:** Support and inspire all learners through improving and implementing clearly aligned and articulated curricula, equitable innovative instructional and assessment practices, and shared leadership

**Strategic Initiative #1:** Engage in an audit of district-wide curriculum and conduct a curriculum revision cycle

**Strategic Initiative #7:** Increase authentic experiential learning opportunities across all classrooms K-12

The Nashoba Regional School District has recently been awarded grant funding in the amount of \$19,500 through the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's competitive [Genocide Education](#) grant funding program. The Genocide Education Grant supports learning related to the history of genocide. As stated in MA General Law, [Chapter 98 of the Acts of 2021](#), "Every school district shall, for the purpose of educating middle and high school students, provide instruction on the history of genocide consistent with the content standards articulated in the history and social science curriculum framework." The 2-year Genocide in Education Grant will support professional development and curriculum writing consistent with the history and social science framework while strengthening our students' understanding of the history and patterns of prejudice that can lead to violence and genocide. As a first step, we have partnered with Primary Source to provide professional development and training for 10 of our ELA/SS teachers in grades 7-12 at the end of April.

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