

A Message from Superintendent Dr. Veronica C. Garcia:

Kate Noble, president of the Santa Fe Public Schools (SFPS) Board of Education, believes that the district's upcoming reinvention could uphold educational excellence for the next 100 years. This large undertaking, with innovative "community listening" at its core, is much more than an equity study. The framework and process that I presented to the Board in February are aimed at district reinvention utilizing an equity lens so that all students are afforded a truly equitable opportunity for educational success.

Our district has long been a standard-bearer for educational change. Through the Board's forward-thinking leadership, we were one of six districts to challenge the sufficiency of state funding for education. Our Board has also championed early childhood education and sustainability, fully invested in supporting our exceptional staff and affirmed the rights of students to express their points of view across a wide spectrum of issues.

Through reinvention, we will build on this success by bringing our community together to bridge cultural, economic, educational and societal issues that have been developing over many years.

This will not be a one-sided effort nor take a cookie-cutter approach. Rather, we will work collaboratively, hear and engage all voices and aim high to build strong and supportive school communities to meet the needs of our unique city.

At the Board's February 18th meeting, we started the process by providing a proposed framework on how to root this work in our community. Its first action was to ensure that our definition of equity includes sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

The Board is on schedule in its efforts and has not delayed action on the framework or budget. As planned, it will act on both at its study session on March 26th and agree on commitments to the process going forward.

Envisioned is a broad, 14-member steering committee to lead the effort that includes tribal representation and representatives from each board district, the city, county, union, principals' association, community college and our Equity and Diversity Council.

The committee will utilize multi-prong innovative and traditional community engagement processes, with stakeholder input central to its work.

The proposed budget will support a project manager with experience in managing a large community engagement process and analyzing volumes of data to ensure high-quality reports and transparent and robust communication with all stakeholders. Subject matter experts will ensure that well-sourced recommendations advancing educational equity and excellence are forwarded by the committee to the Board.

An experienced lead facilitator will work with the committee to engage and seek input from entities and will deploy community-based facilitators who will engage the community in traditional and innovative ways.

Final recommendations will be made to the Board no later than the end of January 2021.

Fortunately, we are free of any immediate crisis and can continue to advance progressive initiatives like exceptional computer science programming, enhancing programming at The Academy at Larragoite and our community-wide “Read First Santa Fe” literacy initiative.

Opportunities abound to offer students and families more and better options and ensure that all students learn, graduate and stay in Santa Fe or return for challenging and exciting careers.

By collectively launching monumental change, we will become a beacon for a state that needs creative and innovative educational reinvention to address learning inequities.

We can only do this together. Yes, it will be challenging and, at times, chaotic. I firmly believe, as does Margaret Wheatley, scholar and author of *Leadership and the New Science*, that when the chaos ends a new order emerges.

I am excited to work with you to prepare the path forward for a century of dynamic learning.