

Welcome Back Letter from
Dale Brandsoy, Superintendent
BOLD Schools

Welcome back to school. We are excited to begin the new year with the vision of the BOLD School District "United to achieve excellence and expecting the best - Be BOLD!" This can be accomplished by setting high expectations for everyone at BOLD.

A lot has happened in our District over the past few months and we are excited but anxious about our future. I am sure you have heard some of the work we are doing as a district to secure our ability to deliver top notch curriculum and stabilize our operations and the long hard look we have taken at our facilities and educational environments for our students throughout the district.

I want to take this opportunity to provide an update about what has been happening and the significant challenges we face as we carry out our mission to "provide all learners in the BOLD community an education designed to develop the creativity, character, confidence, and skills essential to flourish in a changing global society."

First, our operations: State and federal school funding has not kept up with inflation, new mandates and student needs. Our current revenue per student is 56% less than the state average. In the past our district has been fiscally conservative and built a fund balance to be proud of while delivering award winning programs. Meanwhile, our largest expenditure as a district, our staff deserve a competitive salary and our students deserve access to up to date technology and curriculum offerings. The efforts of being fiscally conservative cannot keep up to our operational demands and the last two years we have had to reach into our savings to cover costs of rising salaries, programs and most importantly maintenance of our facilities. We have made cuts and prioritized maintenance but without additional revenue we will deplete our savings within two years.

Second, our facilities: Our current enrollment does not require the size of facilities we are operating. We could function efficiently as a district in less than two thirds the square footage we have. We have had two separate independent consultants review our Bird Island Elementary School and they both determined that the building is beyond its useful life and anything beyond emergency repairs would not be recommended. Our facility in Olivia is in only a slightly better position due to the newest portions of the building being "**only**" 27 years old. Both facilities have little or no ventilation, leaking roofs and very inefficient heating systems. Continual repair to these important infrastructure components is another major factor to what depletes our savings.

So, what do we do now? Our School Board engaged a consulting firm that specializes in helping Minnesota public education school districts solve these types of problems. Starting last spring that firm facilitated a 55-person task force to guide the Board on a plan of action. In late June the task force provided two recommendations to the board:

Number 1 – Solve our operational deficit spending: The Board heard this loud and clear and has approved moving forward with an Operating Referendum November 5th this year. The single ballot question would increase our operating levy by \$635 per pupil. This investment will put BOLD only slightly above the average in the state and allow us to maintain current class sizes and programs, stabilize the operating budget and avoid future cuts.

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Number 2 – Do not continue to operate two inefficient, deteriorating and outdated facilities: The final solution to the facility problem has not been determined, however, we are exploring the co-location and additional collaboration opportunities with the Renville County Hospital. While we are very excited about what a co-located facility may offer our students and communities, there is a lot of input and understanding that needs to be worked out before any final decisions are made, both from a district perspective and a hospital perspective. It is only responsible, appropriate and logical that this opportunity is explored with complete due diligence.

In order to make sure voters have all the information needed to make an informed decision on the November ballot question, and keep up to date on our facility planning, we have created a website dedicated to providing referendum facts and progress made towards a facility solution. I encourage everyone to visit www.BeBoldStepUp.org. We want all residents to continue to be a part of the process as we work hard on solving our operational and facility challenges.

Beyond all of that, we are prepared for another great year at BOLD. We know our students have and will continue to amaze us both in the classroom and outside of it.

If you have any questions, you can reach me at dale.brandsoy@bold.k12.mn.us or call 320-523-1031.

As always, Be BOLD, Step Up.

DALE BRANDSOY, Superintendent
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