



September 6, 2017

Dear Seattle Public Schools families:

Welcome to the 2017-18 School Year!

As a life-long educator the start of school signifies a special time of year filled with excitement and possibility. I can remember preparing for school as a student and the excitement and anticipation I felt for the year ahead - excitement about the friends I would make, my teachers, and what I might learn. When I visit schools I see and hear this same hopeful energy from many of our students and their families. I am personally committed to making sure Seattle Public Schools is a place your child feels welcome, is known and is academically challenged and successful.

High performing districts focus on handful of goals for a number of years. For the fourth year in a row, the Seattle School Board has focused on three goals:

- Academic excellence for every student
- Eliminating opportunity gaps; and
- Engagement of community and families

Thanks to strong teaching and instructional leadership we continue to make notable progress. Last year, twenty-three schools were recognized by the state for their academic achievement and students from across the district continue to demonstrate high academic performance. On average, students in Seattle perform one grade level above peers in the state and across the nation.

While many of our students are thriving, opportunity gaps persist for some. Eliminating opportunity gaps and supporting all of our students is the *Issue of our Time*. It is our moral imperative and a commitment all of our leaders are working hard to fulfill.

Over the last year, school leaders, educators and central office staff have been examining what works to close gaps, testing our assumptions and we have seen significant gains in a number of our schools. I am encouraged by the progress. We now have over a dozen schools leading the way in improving outcomes for students of color, students the district has historically failed.

This school year, we will focus on replication of strategies and approaches that have proven to eliminate gaps and reflect our Formula for Success. They include:

- High quality instructional practices in every classroom
- Coordinated academic, social and emotional and behavioral supports for students; and
- Culturally responsive practices focused on knowing each student by story, strength and need



These are strategies that benefit all students, and will help us fulfill our promise of educational excellence for each and every student in our care.

I want to thank the many district staff, educators and community partners who have been working hard over the summer to enhance learning opportunities and prepare for a great school year including:

- Over 2000 K-4 students participated in summer learning through our Summer Staircase program and 350 high school students participated in the credit recovery program earning back over 200 credits;
- We welcomed 2,000 of our earliest learners to Jump Start, a kindergarten transition program;
- Music teachers hosted 206 students at the annual Seattle Public Schools Summer Music Program;
- Staff delivered new physical education equipment to 13 schools, delivered 43 pallets of books to schools, and tagged and delivered close to 3,300 new computers;
- Staff also enrolled hundreds of new students, practiced new bus routes, and deep cleaned hundreds of classrooms;
- We provided career connected learning opportunities through paid internships for 225 students through our Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Skills Center programs, and many earned high school credit;
- Over 450 9-12<sup>th</sup> grade students participated in summer Skill Center courses, including new courses such as Media Arts, Teaching Academy, and Maritime Operations;
- Over 4,000 educators participated in training focused on building positive student-adult relationships and creating supportive learning environments;
- We opened five state of the art school buildings and held numerous community celebrations; and finally
- Our partner, Union Gospel Mission, coordinated 20 churches and nearly 900 volunteers to remove weeds, set up classrooms, and help us prepare for the first day of school in over a dozen schools.

Staff is looking forward to putting our summer learning into action and collaborating with you throughout the year to ensure your child's academic strengths and needs are known and supported. It is going to be a great year!

Thank you for the privilege of serving as the Superintendent of Seattle Public Schools. It is a great honor.

Warm Wishes,

Larry Nyland  
Superintendent

