

Gladstone schools to boost wellbeing, achievement

New programs will boost mental health, support students academically, and provide high-interest, hands-on learning

Today, too many students struggle with depression or anxiety. Others wrestle with fractions or algebra. And some long for more engaging, hands-on instruction.

The Gladstone District spent six months listening to community members share student challenges and needs. On February 12, the Board responded with a plan to improve mental health, support academic success, and provide more project-based, real-world learning.

The Student Success Act will fund the plan, an increase of about 7% to the district budget. School districts across the state will benefit from the new funding stream, which totals \$1 billion each biennium. Another \$1 billion will benefit early childhood programs and state education supports each biennium.

Gladstone will invest approximately \$1.4 million annually to support students' mental health and academic achievement. The plan will help every student, with close attention to the unique needs of students with disabilities, students of color, and low-income students. Gladstone's plan has three major components:

Social-emotional health supports

- **Two more counselors** [1 elementary and 1 middle school]
- **Social-emotional coaches** at all levels
- **More health room staffing** in every school

Targeted academic supports:

- **Math support programs** for grades K-8.
- **Reduced staff/student ratios** for grades K-1
- **Culturally-specific services** for historically underserved students
- **English learner classroom support** for secondary students.
- **Summer school programs** to support kindergarten reading skills, social-emotional skills, and transitioning to high school.

Engaging learning opportunities:

- **More affordable after school activities** for grades 1-8.
- **More middle school electives**
- **A make space instructor** for elementary STEM learning
- **More elementary PE and secondary music**

Beyond the SIA plan, the district also plans to reduce class size targets to ranges not experienced since the early 1990s:

- Grades K-1: 20-24
- Grades 2-8: 24-28
- Grades 9-12: 24-28 [for core academics: math, English, social studies, science]

“This is the largest investment Oregon has made in education in more than three decades,” said Superintendent Bob Stewart. “Gladstone Schools is prioritizing new programs that will have a long-term impact, raising our graduation rate and leveling the playing field for underserved students. We can’t wait to see the results.”

A copy of the plan is available on the district website: www.gladstone.k12.or.us

PHOTO: Last fall, Gladstone Superintendent Bob Stewart held over 20 small group meetings with parents, students, staff, and community leaders to gather input on student needs. Their priorities are the foundation of the district’s new plan, funded via a \$1.4 million annual investment provided by the Student Success Act.

PHOTO: Hanne Hopkins and Aubrey Holowati work on a woodshop project in Gladstone High’s new engineering and design course required for all freshmen. The school’s goal is to boost student engagement through hands-on projects while exposing them to a variety of career pathways.

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Wetten Elementary holds book battle

Which character recently learned to skip with both feet? Which nation is the setting for Number the Stars? Which book tells the story of a girl who wins the Nobel Peace Prize? Teams of children lean in to discuss each question and present their answer to the judges.

This is the third year John Wetten Elementary students have participated in Oregon Battle of the Books [OBOB], a statewide program to encourage students to read and remember a lengthy list of books for school and regional competitions.

In Gladstone, 70 third, fourth, and fifth graders participated, reading at least eight books each to prepare. The competition was so fierce, children even gave up recess time to practice with their teams.

“My favorite book was Malala: My Story of Standing Up for Girls Rights,” said fourth grader Colin Mayer of the Octopi Team. “I like that it was a true story about a girl who made a real difference in the world.”

His teammate Asher Hunt, however, prefers action stories. “Fablehaven was my favorite book. It was adventurous and had a lot of monsters.”

The school is already preparing for next year’s competition, with free copies of several titles on next year’s reading list provided by a \$1,100 grant from First Book.

PHOTO: Ben Cornelison, Faith Vargas and Reid Brookins of Team Fire Wolf Fantasy huddle to discuss an answer during the competition.

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Gladstone High wrestlers go to State

Five wrestlers from Gladstone High School qualified for the state competition this weekend in Memorial Coliseum.

Competitors include sophomore Tony Rodriguez [182 lbs.], and seniors Josh Heywood [285 lbs.], Hunter Lehman [160 lbs.], Chael Williams [170 lbs.], and Stefan Smith [285 lbs.]

Freshman Brody Kitzmiller finished 5th, just shy of earning a place at State.

PHOTO: Gladstone High wrestlers competing at State include Tony Rodriguez, Josh Heywood, Hunter Lehman, Chael Williams, and Stefan Smith.