

Question 1: How would I recommend using a \$15m bequest?

Strong and steady leadership is essential in the face of significant change, especially when politically charged and emotionally laden. Change often brings uncertainty, anxiety, and fear regardless of its origin. As leaders, we are responsible for remaining calm, focused, and committed to our shared mission, especially during disruption.

As Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning during the onset and height of the COVID-19 pandemic, I quickly recognized that consistent communication and a calm presence were critical. These experiences deepened my understanding of how leadership grounded in clarity, compassion, and resolve can stabilize a community in crisis.

Many in our school community view the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) as a safeguard—particularly for students with disabilities, English learners, and other historically marginalized populations. As superintendent, my first responsibility would be to reassure our families, faculty, staff, and students that our unwavering commitment to equitable, high-quality education remains unchanged, regardless of federal-level shifts.

While the USDOE was established in 1979 to provide guidance, research, and oversight, our core mission—to meet the individual needs of every student—long predates its founding and will endure well beyond any federal restructuring. We will continue implementing evidence-based practices and proven interventions to support all learners, particularly those who need us most.

It is also essential to recognize that Congress, through legislation such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, plays a critical role in establishing and maintaining educational protections. We will uphold these laws with fidelity, integrity, and professionalism as long as they remain in effect. Our commitment to legal compliance, high expectations, and equitable service delivery will remain steadfast.

At the district level, we have always been responsible for identifying student needs and ensuring the appropriate services and supports are in place. Under my leadership, that commitment will not waiver. We will remain grounded in best practices, uphold rigorous academic standards, and focus relentlessly on student access and success.

Programs supported by federal funding will continue, and our team will work diligently to advocate for continued support at the state level. Simultaneously, I will draw upon my experience in research administration and revenue diversification to explore strategic partnerships and private funding opportunities. These efforts will serve as a financial buffer, helping to mitigate potential disruptions should federal funding diminish or shift.

Our community can be confident that, regardless of changes in Washington, our district will continue to serve all students—regardless of background or circumstance—with excellence, compassion, and purpose. In uncertain times, we stay grounded in what matters most: the students we serve.

Question 2:

If the district received a \$15 million bequest with the instruction that it be used “as the district deems necessary,” how would you recommend the board allocate the funds?

If entrusted with the responsibility of recommending how to allocate a \$15 million bequest, I would approach the opportunity with a deep sense of stewardship, strategic foresight, and community partnership. My recommendation to the board would reflect a balanced commitment to addressing immediate needs and investing in the district’s long-term success.

First, I would propose that the board allocate a substantial portion of the funds—potentially 50%—to establish an endowed fund. This fund would generate sustainable revenue to support core district priorities for years to come. Depending on the district’s strategic plan, the endowment could be directed toward initiatives such as post-secondary scholarships, innovation grants to enhance instructional programs, recruitment and retention of high-quality educators, or capital improvements focused on sustainability, safety, and equity. By creating an endowment, we would ensure that this extraordinary gift leaves a lasting legacy for future generations.

Concurrently, it is essential to demonstrate responsiveness to current needs. I recommend setting aside a portion of the funds for immediate investment in high-impact areas where students, families, or staff may face challenges. This could include addressing staffing shortages in critical subject areas, expanding mental health services, or strengthening programs such as early literacy, acceleration, or gifted education. Strategic, short-term use of the funds would allow the district to respond to pressing needs while visibly affirming our commitment to student and staff well-being.

My experience as a school board member has shaped my belief in the importance of balancing short-term responsiveness with long-term planning. It has also reinforced my commitment to fiscal responsibility and transparent decision-making. As superintendent, I would leverage this opportunity with prudence and vision.

Finally, I would lead an inclusive stakeholder engagement process to gather insights from students, educators, families, and community members. Their voices are essential to ensuring the funds are used in ways that align with our collective values and aspirations.

This bequest presents a rare and exciting opportunity to elevate our district’s work now and in the future. I would be honored to lead, maximizing its impact with integrity, transparency, and a clear alignment with our strategic goals.