

Leading with Values During Budget Development

A NASS Leadership Lens

Quote:

“A budget is a moral document.”

— Jim Wallis

Narrative Reflection:

Budget development is more than a financial exercise—it is a leadership moment. While spreadsheets, projections, and constraints dominate the calendar, the deeper work is alignment: aligning values with decisions, strategy with resources, and vision with action.

Superintendents are often asked to make difficult choices under pressure, balancing immediate needs with long-term sustainability. In these moments, leadership is not about defending numbers; it is about telling a coherent story of purpose. When leaders communicate early, explain trade-offs clearly, and consistently center student impact, budget conversations become opportunities for trust-building rather than tension.

Transparent, values-driven budgeting does not eliminate disagreement, but it does foster understanding. Clarity steadies systems—especially during challenging seasons.

Leadership Toolkit: Budgeting with Purpose

- Anchor budget decisions to strategic priorities
- Translate financial complexity into plain language
- Communicate early—before uncertainty fills the gap
- Protect investments that most directly impact students

Reflection Prompt:

Where is alignment strongest between your values and spending—and where might it need attention?

Prepared by:

Dr. Jill Gildea, Superintendent/CEO

drjillgildea@gmail.com

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