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Checking in on SPS' new chief

Ben Shuldiner has now led Seattle Schools for 100 days; how much progress has he made on his key promises?



NICK WAGNER / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Ben Shuldiner, superintendent for Seattle Public Schools, chats with students at Decatur Elementary School on Monday. Principal Laurie Miller said the students and staff were proud to help Shuldiner complete his promise of visiting all SPS schools within 100 days.

By CLAIRE BRYAN
Seattle Times education reporter

Monday marked Ben Shuldiner's 100th day as Seattle Public Schools' new superintendent. At times he's charmed educators and parents with his easygoing demeanor, candor and willingness to speak bluntly about longstanding challenges facing the district. But some educators and parents are still skeptical about whether an outsider with bold plans could fully understand Seattle's racial dynamics and the district's history. From the moment he was announced as the new superintendent, Shuldiner pledged to make Seattle the country's single greatest urban school district. With just over three months on the job, he hasn't done that yet, but

here's where he stands on his key promises.

PROMISES KEPT

Visit every school: When Shuldiner walked into Wedgwood's Decatur Elementary School on Monday, students greeted him holding a yellow sign reading "106 schools. One big welcome!" The visit marked the fulfillment of his most tangible promise: to visit all 106 SPS schools within 100 days.

EDUCATION LAB

His first school day on the job, he visited seven schools, then stopped by two to four schools nearly every day for the following months. Shuldiner used the school visits to survey what's working — and what isn't — in Seattle's schools. He's asked every principal "How can the district help you help the kids?" Vivian Song, Seattle School Board director

for District 5, said she saw Shuldiner's contagious enthusiasm when she joined him for numerous school visits. "He's been really consistent pushing teachers and principals about having high standards for our students," she said.

That was on display Monday, when Shuldiner talked to Decatur's principal about how math is taught in the school of 178 students, all in the district's highly capable advanced learning program.

Principal Laurie Miller said the students and staff were proud to help Shuldiner complete his first promise.

"I have been an educator for over 30 years and this is the first time a superintendent set foot in a building I've been at," said Miller. "It was exciting."

See > SHULDINER, A6

Schultz calls Seattle 'hostile' to business in op-ed

STARBUCKS | Wilson's rhetoric 'vilifies employers,' former CEO says.

By ALEXIS WEISEND
Seattle Times business reporter

Former Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz has taken a jab at Seattle's mayor and its business climate for what he called "hostile" and "socialist rhetoric."

Schultz, still Starbucks chairman emeritus, spent decades in Seattle building the coffee company into a global empire. But two months after departing his longtime Seattle home for Miami, he heavily criticized Seattle and Washington's business environment in a Wall Street Journal op-ed published Monday.

Schultz, 72, said he felt a responsibility to "speak up about the business and job climate in a city and state that gave me so many opportunities."

The billionaire has a lot of complaints about Seattle, according to his op-ed — chronic homelessness, persistent budget deficits, declining public safety, falling foot traffic, slower hiring and downtown vacancies among them.

Seattle has changed — the city that once birthed business giants like Starbucks, Amazon, Costco and Microsoft rewarded risk taking and encouraged private enterprises, he said.

But now, Seattle's attitude toward business has turned hostile, he said.

See > SCHULTZ, A6

Seattle-area prices jump 4.9% from a year ago

By ALEXIS WEISEND
Seattle Times business reporter

The war in Iran has hit Seattle-area consumers' pockets as higher energy prices have pushed costs up across the board.

In the Seattle, Tacoma and Bellevue region, prices for goods and services rose 4.9% in April from a year ago, according to the latest consumer price index, published Tuesday. The increase marks the highest rate since August 2023.

That makes the Seattle area one of the hardest hit regions by rising costs over the last year. Nationwide, prices increased 3.8% year over year.

Excluding food and energy, prices in the Seattle area increased 3.8% in April from a year ago, exceeding the national average of 2.8%.

"We are now squarely above the national average," said Thomas Gilbert, an associate finance professor at the University of Washington. "Prices are growing up. Wages are not growing as fast as they used to, and this will continue to eat into people's budgets."

Most of the Seattle area's jump comes from massive spikes in energy costs since the war in Iran began, with prices up nearly 24% in April from a year ago.

Gas prices, specifically, increased by 29% from February

See > INFLATION, A6

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3 from King County possibly exposed to hantavirus tied to cruise outbreak

By ELISE TAKAHAMA
Seattle Times health reporter

Three King County residents were potentially exposed to the type of hantavirus blamed for a deadly cruise ship outbreak last month, health officials announced Tuesday, while also noting the risk to the public remains low.

The possible exposures are the first to be reported among Washington residents in connection with the MV Hondius. The Dutch ship departed Argentina last month and sailed across the Atlantic Ocean, arriving Sunday at Spain's Canary Islands. Three cruise passengers, from the Netherlands and Germany, have died and several others have been infected.

One of the King County residents was a passenger on the ship, and the two others were seated on a plane near someone who had been on the cruise and has since died of the virus, according to Public Health - Seattle & King County.

None of the King County adults have tested positive, and no one in the county has reported symptoms, Dr. Sandra Valenciano, health



MANU FERNANDEZ / THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Media and emergency services personnel work next to the hantavirus-stricken cruise ship MV Hondius after its arrival at the port of Granadilla in Tenerife, Canary Islands, Spain, on Sunday.

officer and acting director for the health department, said in a Tuesday news conference.

"This is a deadly virus, so I can certainly understand why it may be a fear-inducing situation," Valenciano said. "It may bring back memories from the COVID-19 pandemic, but it's also quite different than what happened with COVID-19."

When SARS-CoV-2 emerged, it was a novel virus we didn't know much about, Valenciano said. In contrast, hantavirus disease surveillance has been going on since the 1990s, and we have a lot more information about the virus and how it spreads, she said.

The two King County residents

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