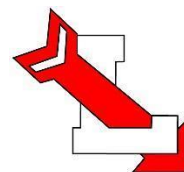


A Summary of the Regular Meeting of the Lowell Board of Education

Board Briefs



Regular Meeting of March 10, 2025

STUDENT COUNCIL REPORT

Conner Casarez stated that the high school is wrapping up winter sports and spring sports are starting. He congratulated the boys wrestling team for winning their 12th straight state championship and the girls wrestling team for their state runner-up title. The musical "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" took place this weekend. Two of the three performances sold out. He thanked the Board of Education for their approval of the new sound system at the Lowell Performing Arts Center. He also thanked the community for their attendance and support.

APPROVED ITEMS

February minutes, payment of bills, and two overnight student trips:

- Baseball April 4-10, 2025, Sarasota, Florida
- Switzerland and France July 2026

REPORTS

- Middle School report on Student Belonging
- Budget Amendment report

ACTION ITEM

Board approved the budget amendment as presented.

HUMAN RESOURCE UPDATE

Dustin Cichocki stated March 15 is the deadline for staff to receive the early retirement incentive. The Michigan Association of Retired School Personnel (MARSP) will be holding information sessions for staff in April. The new software for tracking staff applications will go live in June. Custodial (internal and external) postings are currently active. Mentor meetings took place last week that included curriculum work, technology training and retirement planning.

BUDGET UPDATE

Sonia Hodge stated that the Payroll Manager is back from medical leave. On Friday the 3% staff reimbursements will start with quarterly payments after that. She stated she attended the amazing high school play "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory." She thanked the Board and the LCTV fund for the purchase of a new sound system for the Performing Arts Center.

CURRICULUM UPDATE

Nate Fowler stated that a smaller elementary summer school program will be taking place. The focus will be on reading and math. The program will be called "Summer Boost." The high school will also continue to offer a credit recovery program. On March 13 the K-12 vertical math team will meet with math consultants from the KISD to build a peer observation system. Technology Building Committees are meeting bi-weekly to help support and communicate with staff. Elementary parent teacher conferences will take place next week.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Superintendent Fowler stated that four families have requested a restriction on library materials for their child. The district is administering the Michigan Student Voice Survey. This survey has been administered in the past and the middle school report tonight showed what has been done with the information that was collected to increase student belonging. There was a time, 11-12 years ago, that the district heard from families, who had students of color in the district, about their experiences in the district. It is important to continue to ask those questions of families and continue to have conversations about race that promote belonging for everyone. The district does get \$1.4 million in federal funding. If there are practices or procedures that could affect that funding, the district will make changes. As the district navigates the new orders from Washington, he hopes that there can be conversations in a meaningful and thoughtful way to promote students. The high school library is a place where kids go to work together, work on class projects, socialize, complete online courses, work on college classes, and check out books to improve literacy. There is no adult/mature section. There are young adult titles in the library. Some of the books do have content that our community, based on feedback, determined are more appropriate for older students. Students are not seeking those books out during unsupervised times. If it does become a problem, it will be addressed. The library program is a crucial part of our K-12 literacy program. The district has 125,000 books across the district. There are probably books in elementary libraries that are not appropriate for kindergarteners and at the middle school that are not appropriate for 6th graders, based on a family's standards and values. We have built a system where families are able to communicate their needs with the library staff and teachers. It has been a tough couple weeks since the Work Session video was posted online. The video was disruptive and has taken the focus off our jobs. People have weighed in on the video, outside our community. Fowler feels it is important to think about how to have respectful and appropriate conversations about our school with everyone being heard. He apologized for anything the administration did that led to threats and disruptive behavior to staff. He thanked the community for their support. This type of behavior is difficult for staff to deal with. He thanked the entire library staff and Mrs. Beachler for the work they do. He also thanked the teachers and administrators for helping to promote policies that the Board has put in place. There is a lot to be proud of in our district. He is excited about spring testing coming up. It's an opportunity to see the great work that takes place in the classroom. He congratulated the boys and girls wrestling teams and the gymnastics team. The talent and the professionalism from the students involved in the high school play is remarkable.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

- One audience member made a public comment on an agenda item. No action taken.
- Six audience members made general public comments. No action taken.

BOARD COMMENTS

- Jen Dougherty thanked the middle school teachers for their report. She expressed her support for Christine Beachler. She gave an overview of existing library policies and the rights of parents to restrict a child's borrowing privileges or to challenge a book. She called for an end to misinformation and threats and called for support for school staff.
- Jessica Curtis thanked the middle school students for sharing with the Board tonight. It was an awesome thing to do and it was fun to hear. She is looking forward to seeing the musical this weekend. She also stated that she supports the policies and procedures of Lowell Area Schools as well as the media center staff and our teachers.

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- Annie Whitlock stated she agreed with Jen Dougherty's comments. She discussed the mutually beneficial relationship between the school and the community. She called for an end to attempts to separate school versus community or parents versus teachers. She stated that everyone is on the same side to help students.
- Laurie Kuna agreed with the comments from both Jenn Dougherty and Annie Whitlock. She noted that all people have First Amendment rights, but that there are also limitations to those rights when used to endanger others. She thanked her former students who were in the audience. She remarked that Lowell is a great school district and called for support for the people who make this district great.
- Brian Krajewski stated that he enjoyed Sonia Hodge's budget presentation. He re-emphasized that he supports the policies and procedures of Lowell Area Schools and the media center. He thanked the media center staff, teachers and administrators for their work.