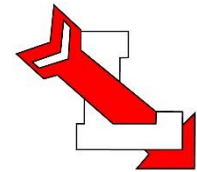


Board Briefs



Regular Meeting of September 9, 2024

Change to the Agenda

The Board of Education tabled Action Item VIII.B.

Student Council Report

Conner Casarez stated he has grown up in Lowell and has been representing his class, as President, throughout high school. He stated it is an honor to be a member of the Board of Education that does so many wonderful things to make Lowell the best school district it can be. His purpose as the student council representative is to help inform the Board and the community about the on-goings of the high school from an inside view. Students were a bit nervous the first day of school but are settling into the rhythm of school. The excitement of a new year and possibilities hangs in the halls. All students are excited for the annual Pink Arrow events. The event shows the spirit of our school and community. It's shaping up to be another amazing year at Lowell High School.

Introduction of New Staff

Superintendent Fowler introduced the new staff.

Consent Items Approved

- Approval of Minutes
- Payment of bills
- Approval of new hires

Action Items

- Bus Wash

Human Resources Update

Dustin Cichocki stated that new staff orientation took place. He is currently working with the nurses in the district to check all of our equipment, check building supplies/first aid kits and schedule CPR training for staff. Postings are still open for paraeducators and bus drivers.

Curriculum Update

Dan VanderMeulen stated that the Michigan Department of Education is requiring a self-assessment of the English Language Learner program in order to establish goals and strategies to be included in the School Improvement Plan. He noted that most of the 16 high school exchange students receive this service. He thanked the Flat River Outreach Ministries (FROM) for their partnership and donations. They have donated folders, art vests, markers, etc. Lowell Area Schools appreciates their support. The new K-5 teachers will receive training this week on best practices for teaching math and reading. He reminded the Board of Education that the K-5 ELA pilot is taking place this year with a recommendation to the Board in June.

Public Comments

Seventeen audience members made public comments. No action taken.

Budget Update

Sonia Hodge stated the State has not provided any further budget details. The Business Office received the draft audit report that she will be reviewing for any discrepancies. The upload to the new finance management software, Skyward, will be taking place this week. Daily trainings will be taking place September 23 – November 23, with a live date of November 1.

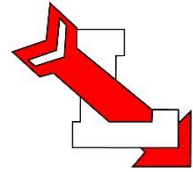
Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Fowler stated that student testing data will be shared with the community at an upcoming meeting. He stated that our students do not "suck" as was mentioned in a public comment. All of our students are good kids. 72% of seniors were proficient in ELA. There is a lot to celebrate and always areas for improvement that Lowell Area Schools will continue to do. It has been a great start to the school year with lots of smiling faces from both students and teachers. Fowler stated he is fortunate to have this job and the ability to see and experience the positive energy in our school buildings. Athletics kicked off their first season in the River Cities Alliance. Fowler had the opportunity to meet with a few gentlemen who were part of the 1959 Lowell High School Champions - Grand Valley league. He thanked Bob Thaler for organizing this meeting. Fowler sent his sympathies to the families of Apalachee High School in Georgia. He wanted the Lowell community to know that all staff take safety very seriously. Administration and first responders have met to review safety plans, ways to strengthen drills, improve communication, secure our facilities, and review the threat assessment process. Last month there was a public comment regarding safe space stickers in our schools. As a school, we strive to find ways that every single one of our students and schools is a safe place to learn at high levels. The goal is to have a positive school climate, see reduced incidents of harassment and work environments. The research that he has read indicates that LGBTQ students are twice as likely to be bullied at school. A public comment indicates research to the contrary. The Board wants to hear about differing research and do what is best for all students. Research would say however, that LGBTQ students are more likely to engage in self harm and have truancy issues. Administration and the Board want to continue to ask the right questions and work to support all of our students. Teachers have displayed these safe space stickers to show that a historically marginalized community that they belong in school. Lowell Area Schools is not interested in supporting any political agenda. This year Pink Arrow will take place over 3 days with soccer on Wednesday, volleyball on Thursday and football/survivors walk on Friday. Next week the rebuilding of Creekside Kingdom will start. Lowell Rotary worked hard to obtain donations and volunteers. It is an amazing testament to the way the Lowell community supports our kids. Fowler thanked the Lowell Rotary for their work. Fowler stated that a comment was made about money paid to the Board. He clarified that the Board of Education receives \$300 per year for their work on the Board of Education. Being on the Board is a thankless job and Fowler appreciates the Board members. He also clarified the Title IX policy procedures. Two policies were introduced at both the June and July Regular Board meetings. The Kansas court ruling was not mentioned at these meetings because administration and the Board had not received that particular information before the meeting. The second reading in August was postponed, leading to today's meeting. The courts will be ruling over time on these policies. Lowell Area Schools has been working to ensure that we do no harm at any of our schools and making sure everybody has a safe place to change clothes and use the bathroom.

Lowell Area Schools Board of Education

Brian Krajewski, President • Lauria Kuna, Vice President • Pat Nugent, Secretary • Tom Kaywood, Treasurer
Jennifer Dougherty, Trustee • Jared Blough, Trustee • Jessica Curtis, Trustee

Board Briefs



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BOARD COMMENTS

- Jared Blough welcomed the new staff especially those that attended MSU. He thanked the community for their input.
- Laurie Kuna stated "Go Pink Arrows"
- Pat Nugent stated that he disagrees with the comment that this Board is uninformed or being asked to vote on things that they do not understand. This Board is hardworking, asks good questions and does independent research outside these meetings. It is an honor working with the members of this Board. He does take offense at that comment being made over and over. He stated that the Title IX guidelines come from the federal level and court cases are being heard at the federal courts. His advice to the community is to redirect their energies. He suggested that instead of coming to this Board meeting, a venue that has no agency to affect these regulations, fighting personal culture wars, seeing who makes what comment, and clapping for others, advances nothing in the educational work of our school district. He recommended spending Monday nights volunteering on a presidential or congressional campaign where someone can have consequential effects on these policies.
- Brian Krajewski stated that the Board has been researching policies for some time and continuing to digest the information. He thanked the Board for taking a pause so that more discussion and clarification can take place. He thanked Kim Lum for her Pink Arrow comments and stated he is extremely grateful to our community, what this community is and what it does for others. He reminded all that the Board looks at every educational component in great detail. Mr. VanderMeulen takes up the majority of the reports during Work Sessions because the education of our students is of the utmost importance. He was offended, disgusted and appalled at a public comment suggesting the Board would take money – which is totally against his moral character. He serves on the Board of Education to support students. For someone to say Lowell students and teachers "suck" is offensive and something he will not stand for. His son struggled to read and Lowell Area Schools surrounded him and helped him get better. He has now graduated from an ivy league school. None of the students or teachers at Lowell Area Schools "suck." That comment is one of the most disgusting things he has heard in public comments to date and he will not sit and take this. Our students are hard-working and deserve better than a comment like that.