



East Lansing Board of Education

509 Burcham Drive, East Lansing, MI 48823

Regular Meeting
November 8, 2021 - 7:00 PM
Board Room
509 Burcham Drive
East Lansing, Michigan 48823



Agenda

I. Opening of Meeting

A. *Call to Order*

B. *Roll Call*

C. *Mission: Nurturing Each Child, Educating All Students, Building World Citizens*

D. *Approval of Agenda*

The Board of Education approve the agenda of the November 8, 2021 regular meeting, as presented.

E. *Approval of Minutes*

- *October 25, 2021*

F. *The Board of Education approve the minutes of the October 25, 2021 regular meeting, as presented.*

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II. Recognition

III. Student Representative Report

IV. Superintendent's Report

V. Public Comment: This is the opportunity to address the Board. Speakers are to confine their remarks to five minutes. If a speaker requires more than five minutes, after all other persons who have requested to speak during this part of the meeting have spoken, that speaker will be allowed additional time. The Superintendent or other district staff may comment to clear up or avoid significant misunderstandings.

VI. Board Discussion

VII. Action Items

VIII. Committee Reports

A. Academic and Technology Committee

B. Facilities Committee

C. Finance Committee

D. Intergovernmental Relations

E. Personnel Committee

F. Policy Committee

IX. Announcements

X. Adjournment

Respectfully Submitted,

***Dori Leyko
Superintendent***

I. Opening of Meeting

I.A. Call to Order

Board President Terah Chambers called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm.

I.B. Roll Call

Dr. Terah Chambers:	Present
Dr. Kath Edsall:	Present
Ms. Monica Fink:	Remotely
Dr. Elizabeth Lyons:	Present
Mr. Chris Martin:	Present
Ms. Kate Powers:	Present
Ms. Debbie Walton:	Present
Student Representatives:	
Elisabeth Beer	Present
Anne McIlhagga	Absent
Ms. Dori Leyko	Present

Present: 8. Absent: 1. Remotely: 1.

I, Monica Fink, am attending this October 25, 2021 regular Board meeting remotely, I am physically located in Carter County, Oklahoma. I am able to have two-way communication for this Board meeting. Please record this public announcements in the meeting minutes.

I.C. Mission: Nurturing Each Child, Educating All Students, Building World Citizens

I.D. Approval of Agenda

Motion: 21-22/036: The Board of Education approve the agenda of the October 25, 2021 regular meeting, as presented.

This motion, made by Ms. Debbie Walton and seconded by Mr. Chris Martin, Passed.

Dr. Terah Chambers: Aye, Dr. Kath Edsall: Aye, Ms. Monica Fink: Aye, Dr. Elizabeth Lyons: Aye, Mr. Chris Martin: Aye, Ms. Kate Powers: Aye, Ms. Debbie Walton: Aye

Ayes: 7, Nay: 0

I.E. Approval of Minutes

- October 11, 2021

Motion: 21-22/037: The Board of Education approve the minutes of the October 11, 2021 regular meeting, as presented.

This motion, made by Ms. Kate Powers and seconded by Dr. Elizabeth Lyons, Passed.

Dr. Terah Chambers: Aye, Dr. Kath Edsall: Aye, Ms. Monica Fink: Aye, Dr. Elizabeth Lyons: Aye, Mr. Chris Martin: Aye, Ms. Kate Powers: Aye, Ms. Debbie Walton: Aye

Ayes: 7, Nay: 0

II. Recognition

- October Principal Appreciate Month - Elementary principals were in attendance tonight. Special thank you to all of the principals:
 - Andrew Wells, East Lansing High School Principal
 - Ashley Schwarzbek, East Lansing High School Associate Principal
 - Quiana Davis, East Lansing High School Associate Principal
 - Nikki Norris, East Lansing High School Director of Athletics and Activities
 - Amy Martin, MacDonald Middle School Principal
 - John Atkinson, MacDonald Middle School Associate Principal
 - Tracey Barton, Donley Elementary School Principal
 - Lorraine Ware, Glencairn Elementary School Principal
 - Josh Robertson, Marble Elementary School Principal
 - Rinard Pugh, Red Cedar Elementary School Principal
 - Amy Webster, Robert L. Green Elementary School Principal
 - Shane Johnson, Whitehills Elementary School Principal
- ELHS Marching Band - competed in the DeWitt Marching Band competition. They finished second place in a very close competition. Congratulations to all the marching band members and conductors.
- FOX 47 recognized the Red Cedar bike train. Thank you to Mr. Potter and Mr. Pugh.
- Marble PE teacher, Casey Bain was awarded \$1,000.00 award to provide extreme sports to the students in East Lansing. The sports include skateboarding and in-line skating.

III. Student Representative Report

Student Representative Elisabeth Beer reported:

- Varsity football team is going to playoffs. They play this Friday in Milford.
- Soccer loss to Okemos.
- Cross Country has their JV Invite tomorrow.
- Cross Country Regionals are on Friday.
- Orchestra concert for grades 6 -12 is October 26 at 7:00 pm. Asking only parents to attend but it will be livestreamed.
- Students are enjoying being back but there are a few frustrations with bathrooms, hallways, etc.

IV. Superintendent's Report

COVID Reporting Updates

As of this afternoon (10/25/21), ELPS is reporting the following COVID data for school-related cases:

School	Active cases (students and/or staff)	Number of individuals currently in quarantine as a result of school-related cases*	Cumulative cases for 2021-22
Donley Elementary	0	0	3
Glencairn Elementary	0	0	26
Marble Elementary	0	0	3
Red Cedar Elementary	0	0	5
Robert L. Green Elementary	1	0	8
Whitehills Elementary	1	0	6
MacDonald MS	1	0	7
East Lansing HS	6	1	20

Through the Test-to-Stay Program, approximately 484 days of in-person instruction have been saved for students as of last week.

The district is hiring an additional individual to administer COVID testing to staff and students – the posting is on our website, and applications are due this Friday.

COVID-19 Testing Update

Beginning November 1, our weekly COVID testing program will be moving to individual testing in place of the pool testing that is currently in place. There is no change to the actual testing process, so students and staff won't notice a difference. Currently, up to ten swabs are pooled together when sent to the lab for processing - should a "pool" come back positive, each of these individuals would be retested individually. This testing program, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, will now provide for individual testing, which will eliminate the potential need for retesting students in the event of a positive pool result.

Elementary Construction Update

All of the new dishwashers are installed and will be up and running pending training.

Snowmelt is completed and ready to go.

Solar panels are almost complete at Whitehills, and the crew will be moving to Marble next.

Discussion followed.

Ms. Leyko read the following statement regarding the district's decision to eliminate Halloween and Valentine's Day parties.

I'd like to take a few minutes to provide some additional information and clarification regarding the district's decision to eliminate Halloween and Valentine's Day parties during the school day. Since that announcement, elementary principals, our assistant superintendent, Board members and I have collectively received over 100 pieces of communication ranging from appreciation and support to disappointment and anger. We knew that there would be people who disagreed with the decision and don't understand the rationale for it - we knew there would be pushback; we knew there would be media coverage; we knew that it would be a controversial decision. What we didn't foresee was the national coverage of it that came with feedback from individuals across the country. It's been a challenge to weed through that communication, but despite the headline and comments within the City Pulse article last week that alleged that community feedback was brushed off, I assure you that we took it all in, and that sticking to our decision does not equate to feedback being brushed off.

First of all, we are not canceling or discouraging the celebration of Halloween or Valentine's Day. We are eliminating the school parties that celebrate these holidays. We still encourage families and students to celebrate holidays and traditions that are meaningful to them. While we do not have specific activities identified yet, teachers and school staff will still offer opportunities for students to celebrate together and build school and classroom community - just in more inclusive ways.

Second, I've stated that some decisions should be made by school and district leaders, and I believe that this is one of them. This recommendation was brought to Assistant Superintendent Mr. Mitcham and me by our elementary principal team and from a group of teacher leaders. Mr. Mitcham and I were in full support and trusted these professionals to suggest a brave and bold change in order to ensure that no students were negatively impacted for even one more school party. The eight of us collectively and unanimously made this decision. Through some of the comments we've received, it's been suggested that parent councils should have been involved or that a survey should have been given to solicit parent input or that a vote of parents should have been taken and that majority wins. I disagree. I think what we've seen in terms of community outrage over the past ten days is exactly what we'd have experienced if this decision would have been put out to the community - it would have caused divisiveness in the community, folks rallying others around their chosen cause, and even greater social media uproar... and I believe that we still would not have full representation of our families. As parents, it's absolutely your job to advocate for your own child and to do your best to provide positive experiences for your child - as school leaders, it's our job to make these decisions for ALL of the children in our care - to ensure that the opportunities and events we hold do not have short- or long-term negative effects on any of our children.

Our teachers, social workers, paraprofessionals, secretaries and principals see and support the children who do not have a positive experience during these holiday celebrations. Some students stay home to avoid the parties, while others come without costumes or treats to contribute to the class party. Many children share this school celebration with a parent or caregiver in attendance, while others have no one there with them. These parties often highlights some of the disparities within our school communities. Suggesting that students can stay home if they don't want to be part of the holiday celebration or that they can participate in an alternative activity during the class parties and parade are even more exclusionary than our current practice.

Next, to clear up some misinformation and assumptions regarding the role of the Justice Leaders Collaborative in this decision. To be clear – no one in this group was involved in the decision - not even involved in the discussion around the topic. They did not come into our schools and complete audits in our buildings and provide us with action steps or suggestions for best practice. These professionals have provided us with learning around equity and social justice. They've provided us with a tool called the EJATT, the Educational Justice Assessment and Transformational Tool, and our building staffs have begun to assess Images and Celebrations through the use of the tool. We are intentionally looking at and evaluating the images that students see in our schools - from posters and signs to the books we are providing to students. Our professional growth and these equity-focused discussions led us to re-evaluate student experiences during our Halloween and Valentine's Day parties. The decision was made by school and district administrators.

Finally, I want to be transparent in sharing that we have also received numerous emails, phone calls and face-to-face comments from families and community members who support this change. It's been confirming to hear some of the stories from current and past students, along with staff and parents, who have described the long-term effects and impacts from their own childhood school parties - and I know this is not true for everyone - many adults have fond memories of these parties but not all. While we've been called a variety of unflattering names over the past week and half, we've also been told that this decision was bold and brave. I've seen a handful of parents and community members publicly share their support and rationale for the decision on social media pages - we've appreciated this support and the trust you have in us to make decisions that are good for ALL students - so thank you, from all of us.

I do hope, and believe, that at least one good outcome has resulted from all of the media reports, conversations and social media posts. I hope that some individuals use this as an opportunity to learn more, to understand the impact of these school parties, and to empathize with the children and families who may not have the same opportunities or experiences during these two school events.

I'll wrap up my comments for now and reserve the opportunity to correct any misinformation or provide additional clarity following public comment.

Thank you for trusting us to make school decisions that put all kids first.

V. Consent Agenda

Motion 21-22/038: The Board of Education approve the consent agenda to include the following item:

- hiring of Katelyn Thomas 1.0 FTE MacDonald Middle School Special Education Teacher at BA Step 4.5 level effective November 15, 2021.

This motion, made by Dr. Kath Edsall and seconded by Ms. Kate Powers, Passed.

Dr. Terah Chambers: Aye, Dr. Kath Edsall: Aye, Ms. Monica Fink: Aye, Dr. Elizabeth Lyons: Aye, Mr. Chris Martin: Aye, Ms. Kate Powers: Aye, Ms. Debbie Walton: Aye

Ayes: 7, Nay: 0

VI. Public Comment: This is the opportunity to address the Board. Speakers are to confine their remarks to five minutes. If a speaker requires more than five minutes, after all other persons who have requested to speak during this part of the meeting have spoken, that speaker will be allowed additional time. The Superintendent or other district staff may comment to clear up or avoid significant misunderstandings.

- Nick Wright – Proactive communication between school and family.
- Josh Robertson, Marble Elementary Principal - Representative for Elementary Principal's team.
- Norm Scott, ELEA president – How are teacher's doing?
- Mike Feldpaush - Halloween and Valentine's Day.
- Jackie and Simon Samara - Halloween and Valentine's Day.
- Lorely Polanco – DEI – Halloween.

VII. Board Discussion

- Dr. Edsall - addressed the issue with the elimination of Halloween and Valentine's Day. This addresses the institutional problems with poverty and racism. The roll out may have been put out quickly but she completely supports the decision. We did not eliminate Halloween or Valentine's Day. Suggestions made tonight were wonderful. Please work with your building principal on putting together other options. We ended the class divisions that Halloween and Valentine's Day bring about among children. We want every child to feel inclusive in these celebrations. This is the time and opportunity to look at long term systemic change in our district. She also clarified that our middle school and elementary have never had security officers. This is a misguided statement from our ELEA president. Discipline problems are likely due to being shut-down for 18 months.
- Ms. Powers - Face to face communication has not been in the forefront due to the pandemic. The Board, Administration and community need to think about how we are responding. Communication is really important. Trying as an individual board member to be a better communicator.
- Dr. Edsall – clarified that school board members are elective officials and are not compensated for their service. The roll of the school board is to hire the Superintendent who then is charged with hiring the administrators of the district.
- Ms. Walton – stated they have received a lot of support for this decision. It is important to note she has received more support than against. Administration and school board are all here to do right by the district and for each child. She urges community to reach out to principals and teachers. Loves the ideas that were brought forth during public comment.
- Dr. Lyons - supports the decision that was made by the administration. This is exactly why she ran for the school board. Appreciates everyone's comments.

- Mr. Martin - Social media is the most visible form of communication. He thanked the individuals who have reached out directly instead of social media. People in the community want to have a real discussion and thank you for being engaged.
- Dr. Chambers - No decision will have 100% support and she is seeking to understand where each individual is coming from. It is okay not to agree on things. Role of the school board is to find an excellent Superintendent and set policy directives. The board's direction is positive in both of these areas. The school board has been committed to addressing equity in the district for years. This decision came out of years of dedicated, thoughtful, conversations. Things like this will happen when change is made. Proud of the team we have in place.
- Ms. Fink – read the following statement:

Having heard from many in the greater East Lansing community about the recent letter from our Elementary Principal Team concerning the cancellation of our Halloween and Valentine's Day celebrations, I feel it's appropriate to address some of the concerns with this change in our traditional school practices. For many years the district has pledged a commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility. The pandemic has shown us that there is a need for a reexamination of our practices and traditions. Now, as we are on the road to a new normal we have the ability to reimagine those traditions and create an environment that is inclusive and recognizes the diversity in our entire student body.

There is a need for creating a space in which students can learn about a myriad of holidays and cultural celebrations. This will reinforce our commitment to an inclusive and proudly diverse school community. Students and teachers should and will be able to engage in rich educational and cultural experiences through celebration while reading and researching the many cultural traditions in our community. This will also be cause to bring in speakers to paint a verbal picture of those traditions. I believe that we should not look at this change in practice as a cancellation, but as a way for everyone to learn to be mindful and respectful of the differences they observe not only in their peers, but in society as a whole, with the overall goal of inclusivity.

I believe that if we are going to do something we must do it well. I don't believe that pausing school celebrations is a mistake. It is our duty to ensure we can truly allow all voices to be heard and all narratives to be told to allow our students to receive a truly robust educational experience. The way in which our school celebrations have been observed, while well intentioned, fell short of the goal of ensuring inclusivity. Our community became increasingly more diverse while our celebrations did not, perpetuating harmful narratives within our district.

While I agree that the pause of traditional celebrations is an equity issue that must be addressed, the following equity issues are equally as concerning to me:

1. Updating curriculum in light of the "Slavery assignment" from the 2020-2021 school year.
2. Declining mental health of our staff and students.
3. An uptick in behavioral and violent outbursts.
4. Bullying.
5. Communication and transparency.

6. Support for teachers and staff.

I fully understand the heightened emotions as well as the desire for a return to a pre-pandemic normal, however, we must take this as an opportunity to fully address our district's broad equity issues in order to fully transition into the inclusive and accessible environment we have pledged a commitment to create.

- Ms. Leyko – Clarified that although she didn't mention Ms. Burton specifically. She was included in the conversation surrounding the decision. She brought forth the perspective from the teacher leaders.

VIII. Action Items

A. 2022 Summer Tax Levy Resolution

Motion 21-22/039: The Board of Education adopt the resolution, as presented, to impose a 100% summer tax levy to collect all school property taxes.

This motion, made by Ms. Kate Powers and seconded by Mr. Chris Martin, Passed.

Dr. Terah Chambers: Aye, Dr. Kath Edsall: Aye, Ms. Monica Fink: Did not reply, Dr. Elizabeth Lyons: Aye, Mr. Chris Martin: Aye, Ms. Kate Powers: Aye, Ms. Debbie Walton: Aye

Ayes: 6, Nay: 0

B. 2021-22 Tuition Rates

Motion 21-22/040: The Board of Education approve the 2021-22 tuition rates as presented.

This motion, made by Dr. Kath Edsall and seconded by Dr. Elizabeth Lyons, Passed.

Dr. Terah Chambers: Aye, Dr. Kath Edsall: Aye, Ms. Monica Fink: Did not reply, Dr. Elizabeth Lyons: Aye, Mr. Chris Martin: Aye, Ms. Kate Powers: Aye, Ms. Debbie Walton: Aye

Ayes: 6, Nay: 0

C. 80/20/Hard Cap Healthcare Resolution

Motion 21-22/041: The Board of Education adopt the Resolution to Comply with PA 152 of 2011 as presented.

This motion, made by Ms. Kate Powers and seconded by Dr. Kath Edsall, Passed.

Dr. Terah Chambers: Aye, Dr. Kath Edsall: Aye, Ms. Monica Fink: Aye, Dr. Elizabeth Lyons: Aye, Mr. Chris Martin: Aye, Ms. Kate Powers: Aye, Ms. Debbie Walton: Aye

Ayes: 7, Nay: 0

IX. Committee Reports

A. Academic and Technology Committee

- Met Monday, October 18.
- Mr. Mitcham discussed work with curriculum.
- Mr. Palasty provided tech items coming up the next few month including the efforts to work with technology for students to use their preferred name.

B. Facilities Committee

- Met Monday, October 18.
- Overlap of the Facilities and Bond committee regarding the outdoor learning areas. Working with the Bond committee regarding the 2017 Elementary Bond on resources that can be used to improve outdoor facilities.
- Upgrade athletic facilities - tennis courts and football field.
- Site visits for tennis and turf will be this Thursday. October 28.
- The committee expects to bring something to board in January.

C. Finance Committee

- Met October 14.
- Discussed the action items on tonight's agenda.
- Tax levy - moving to summer we have more cash on hand at the beginning of the year.
- Esser III funds - changes added \$250.00 per pupil.
- Discussed the MESSA renewal rates.

D. Intergovernmental Relations

- No report.
- City Council election in November and we need to wait until after the election to meet.

E. Personnel Committee

- No report.

F. Policy Committee

- No report but are continuing with Policy Implementation and Racial Equity policy.

X. Announcements

- Marching band will be visiting the elementary this Friday.
- There will be a lot of fun in ways that are more inclusive.
- Age 5-11 vaccine review will meet on Thursday; we would host a vaccine clinic; Please fill out the survey from the ICHD sent via email. The deadline to complete the survey is this Friday, October 29.

XI. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.

President

Secretary