



Lower Merion School District

301 East Montgomery Ave.

Ardmore, PA 19003-3399

Phone: 610-645-1930 ♦ Fax: 610-645-0703 ♦ www.lmsd.org

LMSD Board of School Directors Business Meeting Highlights

Vol. 2, No. 4 – Highlights from the November 14, 2016 Public Work Session and Education Committee Meeting

For a complete agenda, visit the BoardDocs section of the District Website. [Click here](#) to view.

PRESENTATIONS

Enrollment Studies

The Board of School Directors hosted a public work session, "Our Schools, Our Future: The Shape of Things to Come" to review the results of two independent enrollment studies that explore growth trends in the District. The first report was presented by Scott France of the Montgomery County Planning commission (MCPC). The District last received an enrollment study from MCPC in April of 2015, with an update last November following particularly high levels of growth at the start of the 2016 school year. The second report was presented by George Sundell of Sundance Associates, a demographic consulting firm. While there were several minor differences in the results of the two studies, the findings were generally consistent. Among the takeaways:

- Growth will continue overall; there are still many large grades in the District's elementary and middle schools and they are expected to cause significant growth in the high schools
- In addition to the District remaining an attractive destination for young families, private school enrollment continues to decline and multi-family units continue to yield more students.
- It is difficult to predict the full impact of extensive, new multi-family residential developments planned for the next few years in Lower Merion, but it is expected that these new units will continue to yield some students.
- It will be less likely for the District to grow after a sustained period of growth over the last eight years, especially at the elementary school level where large grades have become more consistent from K to 5
- It is anticipated that the District will grow by approximately 1,000 students over the next ten years, with growth impacting high schools the most (almost 700 students added); middle schools will increase by around 345 over the same period
- Elementary school enrollment will stabilize, but some individual schools may have capacity issues

One purpose of the current studies was to determine if the unexpected levels of growth last year signaled a new trend or was an outlier in the data. Both studies concluded that growth has returned to levels that are more in line with earlier projections.

The Board plans to carefully review the data and will continue exploring options that address capacity needs while maintaining the quality of the learning environment in LMSD. No decisions have yet been made and this issue will require extensive public dialogue, deliberation and careful planning. Further discussion on what the findings from both reports mean for the future of Lower Merion School District and its facilities will follow at a later date. The District will continue to keep community members informed.

To review the enrollment studies and presentations, visit the links below:

[Montgomery County Planning Commission Study \(November 14, 2016\)](#)

[Montgomery County Planning Commission Presentation to Board \(November 14, 2016\)](#)

SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

Superintendent Robert Copeland shared the following remarks regarding the recent Presidential election:

The recent Presidential election has fostered a wide range of opinions and thoughts among our students, staff and families. As a District, we have encouraged faculty to address questions and concerns as they arise and provide a forum for productive, respectful, and age-appropriate dialogue. I am proud of the response of our school community and in particular, our students. As we seek to reconcile our differences as a country, our students have provided a model that the nation might follow – of listening to each other with respect and tolerance.

Following the election results, we shared resources with staff from the Southern Poverty Law Center to support constructive conversations in our classrooms and hallways. Many teachers have used the election as a teachable moment, answering questions about topics ranging from the Electoral College to the three branches of government. Some students have expressed hopes for the future, while others have offered concerns. In all cases, we continue to reinforce themes of civility and respect and honor our role in providing children with a safe, supportive environment to share their thoughts and feelings.

The nature of our national discourse requires us to remain vigilant. We are saddened by the acts of vandalism and threats that have resulted from the election in our region and beyond, but remain hopeful that productive dialogue and a spirit of collaboration will enable us to emerge stronger as a society. Whatever our differences may be, it is critical that every member of our community feels valued and respected. We will do all we can to ensure this is the case.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact your child's counselor or principal directly any time. Thank you for your cooperation, consideration and support as we move forward as a community and a country in the months ahead.

EDUCATION PRESENTATIONS

New Course Proposals

The Board reviewed proposals for the following new courses: Computer Science Seminar and Communication Design. Members of the District's curriculum team and high school staff provided presentations on each course, both of which have been developed in support of the District's new strategic plan.

Computer Science Seminar, which will be offered by the high school mathematics department, is intended to serve as a gateway to computer science for students at all grade levels (9-12). It comes in direct response to dramatic enrollment increases in the District's other Computer Science offerings.

Communication Design will be offered by the high school art department and will support the exploration of visual literacy through a tech-integrated visual arts curriculum. Students will develop an understanding of Elements and Principles, Compositional Design, Artistic Voice, and Studio Practice in a supported, tiered curriculum.

To view a slideshow of the presentation regarding these courses, [click here](#).

Making Sense of School Performance Profile Data

Assistant Superintendent Scott Eveslage discussed PA School Performance Profiles and provided an overview of how to interpret data and results. This is the first of three presentations on this topic planned for Board Education Committee meetings.

SPP draws on student achievement data on state standardized tests (PSSAs and Keystones) to assign performance scores to each public school and district. Achievement accounts for 40% of SPP score; "growth" accounts for another

40% and factors like attendance, graduation rates and closing achievement gaps among historically underperforming students accounts for the remaining 20%.

LMSD achievement remains strong across the board as evidenced by overall scores, however it would be misleading to use SPP scores to provide even a basic picture of achievement for an entire school across all disciplines. The scores represent a snapshot of certain students in certain grades on a single test – and often on material that is not being studied by students in that particular school year. The SPP is not a ranking of school quality, it is a number that compares a school/district to itself based on students’ past performance and expected growth on several standardized tests. SPP does not look at the quality of curriculum and instruction, breadth and depth of school programs, co-curricular programs, etc.

To view a slideshow of Dr. Eveslage’s presentation, [click here](#). To view a guide to understanding School Performance Profiles, [click here](#).

Strategic Plan Update

Dr. Eveslage provided an update on various aspects of the District’s Strategic Plan, including a report on the recent professional learning day on November 8. Throughout the day, teachers focused on learning experiences they aspire to deliver to students by engaging in “unit upgrades” – taking an individual curricular unit that they teach and enhancing it through closer alignment with transformative goals from the strategic plan. The unit upgrade process is a creative and collaborative endeavor to engage contemporary learners.

Dr. Eveslage also provided reports from each of the Pathway Teams that are guiding the work of each pathway of the plan. To view a slideshow of the presentation, [click here](#).

UPCOMING MEETING DATES

Upcoming Meeting Dates: November 17 Facilities/Purchasing Committee @ 8:30 AM; November 21 Regular Business Board @ 8:00 PM and November 30 Communications Committee @ 7:00 PM

LMSD BUSINESS MEETING HIGHLIGHTS is distributed to the community and staff of Lower Merion School District to highlight actions taken at Board Meetings. It is not intended to take the place of the minutes of the meeting. Citizens are encouraged to attend meetings; for information, visit www.lmsd.org.