



Lower Merion School District

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LMSD Board of School Directors Business Meeting Highlights

Vol. 2, No. 5 – Highlights from the November 21, 2016 Business Meeting

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

PRESENTATIONS

BuildOn Service Programs

Representatives from the HHS, LMHS, BCMS and WVMS buildOn service clubs presented an overview of their service projects and volunteer activities in the community and beyond. BuildOn is a national organization with school chapters that sponsor local service initiatives and school-building programs in developing countries. LMSD buildOn students have contributed thousands of volunteer hours through hundreds of service projects in the Lower Merion community and beyond. Students volunteer their time through tutoring programs, elderly residency visits, delivering food to families in need, cleaning and beautifying parks, feeding the homeless, supporting fundraising efforts of various charitable organizations, and much more. Over the past four years, the buildOn club has also raised more than \$420,000 to build five new schools in Haiti, Malawi, Nepal and Nicaragua. These schools now serve thousands of students. BuildOn is one of the most popular clubs in the district and reflective of the community's spirit of volunteerism and service to others. To view a brief slideshow from the buildOn presentation, [click here](#).

SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

Superintendent Robert Copeland shared the following recent highlights and achievements from LMSD schools:

Harriton Girls Tennis Wins State Title

The Harriton High School girls' varsity tennis team recently made history as they beat perennial powerhouse and three-time defending state champion, North Allegheny, to capture their eighth state title and first at the AAA (large school) classification. Sophomore Connie Richards notched the deciding victory in a 3-2 team final. Along the way, the Rams beat Mt. Lebanon and Easton before overcoming a North Allegheny squad that was 93-1 over the past four seasons.

Lower Merion Boys Cross Country Advances to States

The Lower Merion Boys Cross Country squad capped its best season in program history with a tenth place state finish at the PIAA AAA State Championships. LM was led by senior Matt D'Aquila, who placed 20th among nearly 240 of the state's top runners. The Aces also finished 2016 as undefeated Central League champions – their first undefeated league campaign in 55 years – and earned their second straight league crown.

COMMENTARY

Superintendent Copeland provided the following response to comments made in a recent Philadelphia Inquirer story regarding the District's growing enrollment:

American Author William Feather once wrote, "Beware of the person who can't be bothered by details."

I was pleased to see that the weekend edition of the Philadelphia Inquirer covered our district's growing enrollment with accuracy. As reflected in the story, two independent demographers anticipate that LMSD enrollment will increase by more than 900 students by the 2020-2021 school year.

The reporter secured statistics that show the transition of students from independent schools into the school district. She interviewed a realtor who spoke to the growing trend of older couples moving out and being replaced by families with multiple children.

Then came a quote from one individual who could not be bothered with details. "One extra child in some classrooms solves the problem," he opines. "No new school, no new teachers, no new administrators."

If only it were that simple. A cursory fact-check would have revealed the inadequacies and potentially catastrophic implications of a "do-nothing" solution. Given the current enrollment surge – and based on students already in the District – if we add no teachers and no additional classroom capacity, some of our middle school classes will exceed 40 students in the next five years. A few years after that, our high schools would experience the same kind of capacity crunch. Class sizes of 40+ students are far from consistent with the educational values of this community. We would severely diminish the quality of our schools and negatively and irreversibly impact the experience of our students.

The Board is committed to fiscally-responsible strategies to address enrollment growth. This year, the District implemented a partner school plan that enables us to place students who are new to the District in a school with existing capacity rather than add a section and hire a new teacher in that student's "home" school. The District also allowed certain class sections to grow beyond "target size" by one or two additional students rather than create a new section. These strategies are intended to enable the District to preserve art and music rooms, limit new hires and keep costs in check in the short-term.

These strategies are, however, temporary solutions, they do not address the big issue: Lower Merion is the fastest-growing district in suburban Philadelphia and one of the top-five fastest-growing districts in the state.

Preparing for growth is essential. Doing nothing would be disastrous.

In the months ahead, the school district and school board look forward to working together to develop a solution that ensures our students are in the most conducive environment to succeed. That is what supporting student achievement is all about and that is our commitment as a District.

HUMAN RESOURCES

The Board approved personnel actions across the District, including staff and coaching hires for the current school year. Several longtime staff members announced their retirement this month. Best wishes to Jean Claude Contassot (World Language/Lower Merion HS), Deborah McAllister (Physical Education/Penn Valley) and Steven McWilliams (Craftsman/Operations).

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

Among the items approved by the Board included two new high school courses, Computer Science Seminar and Communications Design as well as several overnight field trips.

BUSINESS OFFICE AND FINANCE

The Board approved a List of Bills reviewed through the Facilities & Purchasing Committee as well as the October 2016 LMSD Financial Report. The Board also accepted a donation of \$5000 from the Merion Elementary School Home & School Association for the purchase and installation of a new outdoor water fountain.

FACILITIES & OPERATIONS

Bid awarded to i2 Security Solutions for district-wide video surveillance alarm system monitoring...Bid awarded to Bonfitto Inc. for replacement of rooftop chillers at Belmont Hills Elementary school...Modification of contract for professional services with Reynolds Construction approved related to additional review and study of school capacity needs...Proposal approved for professional services from Architerra for campus wayfinding signage at Harriton High School...Proposal approved for professional services from Systematic Roofing Analysis for roof repairs and coating of the District Administration Office building...Proposal approved for professional services from Systematic Roofing Analysis for roof repairs and coating of Bala Cynwyd Middle School...Quote approved from Dell Inc. for a PowerEdge server...Certified receipt of approval of PlanCon Part H: Project Financing dated October 20, 2016 by the Pennsylvania

Department of Education for the Welsh Valley Middle School Additions and Alterations Project No. 3776. Certified receipt of approval of PlanCon Part J: Project Accounting Based on Final Costs dated October 20, 2016 by the Pennsylvania Department of Education for Harriton High School New Construction Project No. 3233...Certified receipt of approval of PlanCon Part J: Project Accounting Based on Final Costs dated October 20, 2016 by the Pennsylvania Department of Education for Lower Merion High School New Construction Project No. 3295...Approved change orders for modular classroom space at PWES and classroom renovations at DAO.

POLICY

The following policies were reviewed for First Reading: [Policy 105.1 Curriculum Review by Parents/Guardians and Students](#) and [Policy 904 Public Attendance at School Events](#).

UPCOMING MEETING DATES

Upcoming Meeting Dates: November 30 Communications Committee @ 7:00 PM; December 5 Reorganization Meeting @ 8:00 PM; December 7 Curriculum Committee @ 8:30 AM; December 9 Policy Committee @ 8:30 AM; December 14 Communications Committee @ 8:30 AM; December 15 Facilities/Purchasing Committee @ 8:30 AM; December 19 Regular Business Board @ 8:00 PM; and December 21 Legislative Committee @ 8:30 AM

HAPPY THANKSGIVING

The LMSD Board and Administration extend best wishes to all for a very happy and healthy Thanksgiving.

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.