



March Regular Board of Education meeting

LICKING HEIGHTS LOCAL SCHOOLS

Regular BOE Meeting / March 19, 2024 / 6:30 PM / LH MIDDLE SCHOOL

- All Board members were present.
- There were no additions or deletions to the agenda



AGENDA HIGHLIGHTS

District presentations

- High school student representatives Michael Landry and Ezra Bobo gave an update from LHHS. Students attended a presentation about social media and cell phone safety. Juniors took the ACT, and students attended the Career Xpress career and college fair sponsored by OhioMeansJobs of Licking County. The event included multiple Lunch and Learn sessions for interested students.

For extracurriculars, the Cultural Identity Club presented their most successful Diaspora show to date, with over \$9,000 in ticket sales. The baseball and softball teams have begun their preseason training, and the first track meet will happen April 16. Boys



volleyball won their season opener against Olentangy Orange last weekend. Lauren and Lilli Seeman went to the State girls wrestling tournament and made Licking Heights history as the first girls to make States. Finally, Ramadan began on March 10.

- Assistant Athletic Director Mrs. Rita Pendexter presented the 8th grade boys basketball team, who won the LCL Championships again this year. Mike Evans, the 8th grade coach, couldn't attend, but he shared a speech for Mrs. Pendexter to read on his behalf. The boys had a 14-3 record in the regular season and used their three losses as motivation to overcome adversity together. Coach Evans thanked everyone for their continued support and thanked the boys for their hard work to be the best versions of themselves and represent the school and community well.

Mrs. Pendexter gave a shout out to the seventh grade team as well for their undefeated regular season.

- Athletic Director Ms. Ellie Geiger presented the high school boys varsity basketball team, who won the LCL Buckeye Division Championships for the fourth time in a row this year. Coach Shaun Fountain presented about the group and their accomplishments. The team notched over 16 regular season wins, and earned LCL accolades including Coach of the Year for Coach Fountain, Player of the Year for Alieu Ceesay, and multiple players named to the first, second, and honorable mention teams.

Coach Fountain shared that his students truly know what it means to be a team and work together. One player who stood out to him in particular was Ezra Bobo, who he says is the best example of a leader he has ever seen in his basketball career. Ezra is not afraid to lead his peers and be an example, demonstrating determination, professionalism, and enthusiasm.

- Ms. Geiger and high school wrestling coaches Mr. Robert Price and Mr. Noah West presented Lauren and Lilli Seeman, the first members of the Licking Heights girls wrestling team to ever go to the OHSAA State Wrestling Championships. Senior Lauren was the regional runner-up and freshman Lilli was the alternate for states. Both sisters won 70% of their matches in the regular season.

Lauren was the first girl to start wrestling for Licking Heights during her junior year, after serving two years as a support staffer for the boys team. This year, the girls wrestling team had the most members ever with seven talented wrestlers. Next year, there will be a stipend offered specifically for coaching girls wrestling. Coaches Price and West did all work with the girls team as volunteers this year.



Coach Price commended the Seemans for their drive and ambition, mentioning that outside of wrestling both girls are honors students, competitive dancers, and Lauren works full-time, too.

- Principal Tooson gave his annual presentation about Licking Heights Middle School, focusing on academic goals, family engagement, and integration of STEM into the curriculum. Academic goals include achieving 70% student proficiency in ELA, math, and 8th grade science, along with infusing the HIVE (Hypothesize, Investigate, Verify, and Evaluate) mindset into learning. To accomplish these goals, Mr. Tooson is progress monitoring students and staff each day, taking time to visit each classroom with teachers and evaluate if the HIVE is alive in the classroom. This includes active learning and student engagement.

The MS is supporting holistic learning with programs like PBIS, students earning Buzz Bucks for good behavior, academic enrichment with IXL/ALEK activities, near-peer mentoring for boys, ROX groups for girls, youth yoga, and STEAM Chasers groups. The school is also consistently looking for new ways to integrate STEM into the curriculum and provide students with volunteer opportunities during Real World Wednesdays.

Robotics Club advisor Mr. Logan Hamilton and student Elijah Roupe then showed the board how they are using the 3D printer to learn valuable career skills and create toys to donate to children at Nationwide Children's Hospital. Elijah passed out gifts that the club had made for the board with the 3D printer that week. Finally, Mr. Hamilton talked about the VR headset the STEM Lab uses to provide students with fully immersive learning experiences.

- Family Support Coordinator and DEI Specialist Mr. Jhuma Acharya and Director of Pupil Services Mr. Mitch Tom presented about family engagement initiatives. District efforts are influenced by The Ohio State University's Family Engagement Center and Model. This model is research-backed from Johns Hopkins University. All buildings started following it this school year.

District initiatives focus on how to create a better life for parents and make student home lives easier. Mr. Tom's department is working to make parents and families active, engaged partners in student learning. They are seeing exceptional turnout with family engagement thanks to the creation of in-depth engagement plans for each school building. Activities include events like Literacy Nights, Math and Science Nights, Haunted Happenings, the Art Show, the Culture Fair, FAFSA nights, scheduling nights, and Triple P parent seminars.



Mr. Acharya then presented the DEI initiatives he has created since starting with the district in January. This includes providing in-depth cultural training to staff at all schools, meeting with student diversity clubs, and approaching immigrant and EL families directly to learn what would make them feel more comfortable and included in school activities.

He has coordinated meetings with Somali mothers, Nepali families, and is coordinating a community meeting at a local Hindu temple. He is also creating a group for Spanish-speaking families. Finally, Mr. Acharya is working with his contacts at CRIS to create flag murals at South Elementary and the new elementary.

- Mr. Tom presented the district's Wellness Policy and recommended edits to the policy. He worked with a group of district personnel to create these suggestions, including secretaries, counselors, social workers, curriculum directors, the district dietician and nurses, and more.

Board committee updates

- The Buildings and Grounds Committee met on March 11 and discussed: replacing the fire systems at North and Central, replacing South's electrical panel, auditing district warranties, landscaping needs for schools, turf prices, repaving the HS parking lot, purchasing light replacements, purchasing radios and repeaters for the new elementary, and purchasing track and field equipment.
- The Finance Committee is scheduled to meet on April 2.
- LPDC met on March 19.

CONSENT/ACTION ITEMS

1. Resignations were approved.
2. Classified employment was approved.
3. Certified employment was approved for both 2023-24 and 2024-25.
4. Administrative employment was approved for two new positions: Assistant Principal of the new elementary, and a districtwide Special Education Coordinator. Mr. Andrew Cunningham, the new Assistant Principal, introduced himself and thanked the district for welcoming him to Licking Heights.
5. Supplemental employment and supplemental volunteers for 2023-24 were approved.
6. Additional days were approved for the Health Aide contracts. This adjustment will be effective for the 2024-25 school year.
7. Expenditures were approved for the high school theatre club.
8. Extra days were approved for the following positions: district nurses, new elementary principal, and two staff members assisting with speech testing and preschool transition.



9. Compensation for extra duty in the 2023-24 school year was approved for a staff member.
10. Student technology interns were approved.
11. Crisis prevention and intervention (CPI) training was approved for select certified and classified staff members.
12. The 2024-2025 school calendar was approved.
13. The substitute list from LRESC was updated and approved.
14. A year-long unpaid leave of absence was approved for a staff member.
15. An update was approved for the exempt and administrator/supervisor staff handbooks.
16. Replacing the fire systems at North Elementary and Central Intermediate schools was approved.
17. An asphalt project was approved for the high school parking lot.
18. Installation of exterior lighting was approved for buildings. This will be paid for through the Ohio K-12 Safety Grant the district received.
19. The purchase of 20 radios and a digital repeater was approved for the new elementary school.
20. The purchase of outdoor track equipment for the new Athletic Complex was approved.
21. Donations were approved. Thank you to our donors for their generosity.
22. The minutes were approved for the Feb. 20 Regular Board Meeting and the March 11 Special Work Session.

ACTION AGENDA/TREASURER RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The February 2024 Financial Report was approved.
2. Permanent appropriations were approved for FY24.
3. A fund-to-fund transfer was approved for construction costs.
4. A Title fund transfer was approved to finance specific district needs.
5. A complaint was filed against the valuation of real property tax for a piece of property within district boundaries.

ACTION AGENDA/SUPERINTENDENT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was approved with the LHEA regarding the School Nurse position.
2. A MOA was approved with the LHESPA regarding the Juneteenth holiday into days off each year.



3. A bid package was accepted and approved for loose furnishings for library shelves in the new elementary school.
4. Water riser revisions were approved for the new elementary school in line with the necessary approval of Southwest Licking Community Water and Sewer Division.

BOARD COMMENTS

- Mr. Tsikiwa said he loved Diaspora and the performances made him proud to be both a parent and a board member. It also made him recognize just how much diversity there is in the district, and he cannot thank everyone who supported the event enough. He also appreciates the emphasis on athletics, as these events are an extension of classroom learning. He thanked the coaches for their leadership and Mr. Acharya for all he has accomplished in the past three months.
- Mr. Johnson enjoyed meeting Mr. Acharya and hearing about the important work he is doing. He gave a special thank you to Coach Fountain and Coach Price for their work to encourage athletes, and is especially thrilled to see how successful the wrestling team is becoming after years of building it. He agreed with Mr. Tsikiwa's comments about Diaspora. Finally, he thanked all employees in support roles and recognized the work of the custodial team at each school.
- Mr. Rader gave a shout out to both the middle and high school basketball teams. He congratulated the wrestlers and thanked donors. He also shared about the importance of 3D printing skills in the workforce and commended the middle school for preparing students for in-demand industrial jobs.
- Mrs. Russ enjoyed watching the high school theatre club perform *The Wedding Singer* this year and thanked the middle school for their work to support student success. She thanked all the families who actively engage with the district and participate in community events.
- Ms. Blumhorst said she is excited about the middle school's STEM program, especially since she has a student who will participate next year. She encouraged her fellow board members to attend a building Literacy Night or Math and Science night to see family engagement in action. Finally, she wished everyone a happy Spring Break next week.

SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS

- Dr. Miller shared about the meetings district leadership is currently having with teachers moving to the new elementary school and district progress on ironing out all details for the move. He gave a special shoutout to everyone who made Career Xpress such a huge success for students.



UPCOMING EVENTS, COMMITTEES, AND MEETINGS

- The board will have a Special Board Meeting to confirm new hires on **Tues., April 2 at 7:15 a.m.** in the District Office Conference Room.
- The Finance Committee will meet **Tues., April 2 at 7:30 a.m.** in the District Office Conference Room.
- The next Regular Board Meeting will be on **Tues., April 16 at 6:30 p.m.** in the Middle School Media Center.