



**Independent School Dist. No. 857**  
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**Superintendent's Report to the School Board**  
**March 8, 2021**  
**Submitted by Gwen Carman**

**Board Meeting Agenda Notes:**

- **2020-21 Amended Budget:** It has been a long and thorough process to develop an amended budget for this school year. Business Manager Grossell and I met with Food Service, Transportation and Facilities/Grounds Directors, Activities Director Menk, the Principals and Community Education Program Coordinators to look carefully at their revenues and expenditures and what we should anticipate for the rest of this school year. Several commented that these sessions were very informative and appreciated as they had not had similar meetings before. It was also extremely valuable for us to take the time to better understand their needs and concerns. Finance Assistant Dundas has also been extremely involved and an important contributing part of our team in this process also. He is very knowledgeable in our revenues, and how our expenditures are coded to various programs or funding sources. In the end, we are very satisfied with our work and glad that we have been able to correct many miscodes, clarify processes, answer staff questions so they can be more informed, and feeling much more confident in knowing our budgets in detail.

This process was also more complicated because we have had significant expenses and revenues related to the pandemic. In total, these expenditures and revenues total approximately \$560,000. It has been a 'process' to sort out what our coding/funding options were for expenses, etc. We still do not yet know our funding amounts for funds approved by the federal government in December 2020. However, this budget does include some expenditures and revenues allocated to those funding streams.

In addition, there are legislative discussions of allocating school districts additional funds from the State and with the federal Relief Recovery Aid package. These funds are extremely important to our financial circumstances and particularly to enable us to adequately address students' additional instructional and social/emotional needs.

It is extremely unsettling to be recommending a budget with an overall deficit of \$376,303. Attached to the agenda is a handout that explains many of the 'whys' of this. The two primary factors are a drop in student enrollment and a significant loss of revenues due to the circumstances of the pandemic.

- **Custodial & Food Service Staff Hires:** There are two non-licensed staff hires on the Consent Agenda. The Food Service position is a short term position for the rest of the school year. This position is needed to support the meal serving needs at the high school with the increased numbers of students with everyday face to face learning. A previous vacant position was not replaced in the fall when school began due to the hybrid schedule.

The custodial position will ultimately replace the upcoming vacancy with the retirement of Mr. Thein on June 4th. I am recommending this hire now to allow for training and because there are increased

cleaning/sanitizing and grounds work needed in the upcoming months. In addition, we do not have substitute custodial staff and so this position will help address that need when it arises.

- 2021-22 Calendar We had two calendar committee meetings, and then two options were put out to all staff. The calendar committee consisted of 10 teachers and the principals. We initially discussed two draft calendars – one with a last student day of June 2<sup>nd</sup>, and one with a weeklong Spring Break in March (last student day of June 9<sup>th</sup>). After much discussion, it was decided to create a 3<sup>rd</sup> calendar with rather than a week long break, to take three of the Spring Break days and ‘sprinkle’ them out during the school year. The June 2<sup>nd</sup> calendar and the ‘sprinkled’ June 9<sup>th</sup> calendar were sent to all staff. 28 staff preferred the June 2<sup>nd</sup> calendar, and 22 staff preferred the June 9<sup>th</sup> calendar.

I defer to the Board on which calendar you choose to adopt. Both are attached to the agenda. I am somewhat concerned that the June 2<sup>nd</sup> calendar may result in more staff and student absences because there are significantly fewer longer weekends and days for intentionally scheduling needed appointments or desired out of town trips.

I plan to recommend a more streamlined process for calendar planning next year. I think it is important to have input from all employee groups for administration’s consideration prior to Board adoption.

### **COVID-19 Related Updates**

- Vaccinations for Staff: It is important for everyone to know how helpful, professional, and organized Winona County Public Health has been in facilitating a process for our staff to be vaccinated for COVID-19. It was a rocky process initially, but once the delivery of the vaccines became predictable, the system worked very well. On behalf of the 108 L-A staff who have chosen to be vaccinated, I am extremely grateful that we were able to have this opportunity early in a long nationwide effort and this will be an important key to keeping students and staff in classrooms.
- COVID-19 Leave Expiration: No staff have needed to utilize the leave available (paid/not using sick leave) if s/he is exposed to COVID-19 at school and needs to quarantine (and unable to work from home). You approved this leave availability in January 2021 and the plan specified it expires March 31, 2021. Given that all staff have now had the opportunity to be vaccinated and the vaccination prevents a need to quarantine after a direct contact, I recommend that we not extend this leave plan.
- Learning Models/Modified Calendar: As you know, we are planning to have 7<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders return to daily face to face instruction on March 22, and the 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> graders will return March 29<sup>th</sup>. This change does require another 20-21 School Year calendar modification. This is to make March 18<sup>th</sup> a 7-12 Transition Planning Day (no school for students in grades 7-12) and March 19<sup>th</sup> a Districtwide Transition Planning Day (no school for students in PK-12). These days are needed because of the transition from the hybrid to full in person learning starting March 22<sup>nd</sup>. MDE’s Safe Learning Plan specifies “School districts that have not yet implemented full in-person learning during the 2020-2021 school year must use at least two previously scheduled instructional days for planning...”

### **Additional Updates**

- Board Meeting Face to Face: We are planning for all Board members and myself to meet face to face in the HS Library for the March 8<sup>th</sup> meeting. I am really looking forward to talking with all of you in a room at the same time for the first time since I started interviewing in April! The public will have a ZOOM link and able to see and hear the meeting. We will need to wear masks and will be seated 6 feet apart. I will have printed agendas for you. Please let me know if you need copies of the attachments. You may bring a laptop to have access to the attachments. You will not need your laptop for the purposes of the ZOOM meeting. Please try to be in the HS Library by 5:45pm so we can be sure we are ready!

- High School Student Board Representative: We have not been able to complete the process to appoint a student member, but a High School Student Council member will be giving us a report!
- Strategic Planning: March 22 Interviews InGensa, ICS and Nexus Solutions (March 8<sup>th</sup>) have all had representatives meet with Joe Banicki and I for a general overview of our district's needs and building tours (led by Joe). We also visited the HS library and discussed our anticipated schedule, plans for presentations, etc.

