

Northland Community Schools

Independent School District #118

School Board Report

Date: February 2025



Report Submitted by: Brandon Otway

DISTRICT MISSION STATEMENT: *To educate and inspire all learners to reach their full potential.*

Celebrations:

- Enrollment sits at 36. This is one of our biggest years ever.
- Our EC LETRS professional development work is going well. The team has been through the first four sessions and is on track to complete the whole thing by the end of the school year. The majority of the trainings are asynchronous online videos with accompanied readings. We will also attend two full-day live sessions in Grand Rapids with all area EC staff in January and March.
- A couple of our paras are going through the CEM module trainings to wrap this up before the trainings are no longer available. This is our final year in the five-year implementation and it comes at a good time. The state has decided to end these innovations in their current form. They will be accessible in some form but won't come with opportunity for JPA's or funding. They are also eliminating MNCoE (MN Centers of Excellence) which means we won't have access to the PDF's (professional development facilitators) that we have grown accustomed to having to support us in all of the work we do. These people were invaluable because they were so knowledgeable about the content we were implementing. We wouldn't have been as successful as we have been without them by our side and will be missed immensely.
- Funding model updates:
 - The state has recalculated scholarship amount eligibility. Previously, we were capped at \$8,500 per scholarship and \$12,000 if we could demonstrate they were a child at risk. Now, the model still caps scholarships at \$8,500 if you apply based on program hours, which we have always done in the past. However, they have changed the formula to a county-by-county cap for maximum amounts if you use the cost-per-child formula. For Cass county, it is now a cap of \$15,000. Lori Backlund and myself worked through the cost-per-child formula spreadsheet and determined that to run our program, each child costs \$12,922.69. This request for changing how we calculate our cost was approved by the DCYF and is the amount of the \$15,000 that we can now apply for each scholarship going forward.
 - The Legislature also passed new legislation that will go into effect July 1, 2025 that will fold the School Readiness Plus (SRP) and Voluntary PreK (VPK) funding into one pot of money under VPK. There will also need to be qualifying risk factors associated with each student getting a VPK next year. Previously VPK seats were eligible to anyone provided they were four-years-old as of September 1 of that school year. The silver lining is that they did include a line in the qualifying factors that states "...and risk factors determined by the local district."

*SERVING REMER, LONGVILLE, BOY RIVER, FEDERAL DAM, OUTING AREAS
EVERY PERSON A LEARNER, EVERY LEARNER SUCCESSFUL; TOGETHER WE CONTROL SUCCESS.*

This gives us some wiggle room to ensure we can give out as many of our 21 VPK seats as possible next year.

- We have increased the amount that Leech Lake Head Start pays for the ten spots we offer. Last year, we could receive up to \$90,000 and this year it is up to \$135,000. This is a \$40,000 that we otherwise would not have access to without the great relationship we have with them and the good work we do in our program.
- They are changing to a four-year application cycle for VPK. I completed this in January. The reason for this is to give districts more stability in knowing they can rely on this program revenue for longer periods of time.
- I will be completing the Pathway II application for the next two years in the coming days. It will be available for completion beginning February 18th. We have received \$37,500 from this scholarship program every year in the past and I anticipate it will remain the same going forward.
- We will hold our spring registration event in partnership with the Family Center and kindergarten on Tuesday, March 11th from 4 – 6 pm in the Commons. We will serve dinner, have a play area for kids while the parents complete paperwork, give tours of the kindergarten room, do bus safety, and give bus rides to anyone that wants one.
- Our outdoor classroom was featured on the MN Department of Health's website in an article about SHIP grant success stories through their MN Moves initiative. We are planning a ribbon cutting ceremony with Lake Country Power and SHIP in the spring.

Concerns:

- We have been very fortunate to receive a lot of Pathway I scholarships in the past but with the change in how the state distributes the funds and the increased value of each scholarship due to the change in how much we can claim per child on a county-by-county basis, I am concerned that this will lead to an overall decrease in how much money we can generate in this funding stream. We are very lucky that the scholarships from the Family Center roll over to us each year but there will simply just be fewer of them to go around, including how many the Family Center is able to get.
- With the impending elimination of EC Coordinator position, I am concerned that our program will suffer in some ways. We have built a program that is thriving and does amazing things for our students. I have every faith in Mrs. Green's ability to continue running this program as well or better than I have done over the last six years. That being said, she has a lot of duties within her job description and as big picture decisions are made on roles and duties for next year, I urge the board to consider the impact these decisions will have on early childhood, future elementary classes and the overall quality of the program. This program draws in a lot of students to our district (36 students is as many or more than any other year in the past) that feeds our K-12 system. The position I have held the past six years was created because past administration were spread too thin and could not give the time and attention this program needed and deserved.