

The Kent ISD School Board held a regular meeting at the Kent Conference Center on Monday, April 21, 2025. President Haidle called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

Members Present: Drake, Hamming, Featherston, Rettig, Haidle.
Member Absent:

Kent ISD Staff Present: Superintendent Gorman, Assistant Superintendents, Finkel, Fee, Myers, Gardner; Directors Arnold, Baine, Behm, Bray, Campbell, Graham, Hissong, Hofstee, Houtman, Karsten, Larkin, Lienesch, Lillis, Maynard, McClintic, Murphy, Sneider, Verwey; Recording Secretary Lovell; Guests: Jacob Bandstra, Cinnamon Mellema, Lindsay Murray, Debra Burkhardt, Ashley Livingstone, David Breen, Deb VanDyke, Bill Behrendt, Joanne Platt, Richard Davis Odem, Sidney Williams, Todd Bowman, Judy Omlor-Sobeslay, Karla Sarver, Jennie Carlson, Arlene Backowski, Lisa Faber, Kelly Cleveland, Kendra Kainins, Macey Faber, Austin Haney, McKenna Carlson, Stephanie Tebben, Teri Warners, Susan Marvin, Julie Swanson, Megan McNaughton, Vicki Vairet, Gary Krull Jr, Larry Marvin, Susan Marvin, Jennifer Klaasen, Katherine Woodburne, Jennifer DeSander, Tiffany Duncil, Faith Deyoung, Cindy Cafmeyer

President Haidle welcomed attendees and turned the meeting over to Director Bryndan Arnold to honor staff members Lindsay Murray and Debra Burkhardt with the Leading Learning Award. Supervisors were given the opportunity to share their appreciation.

Director of Strategic Planning and Organizational Initiatives, Mr. Ron Houtman, presented an update on the strategic plan as it nears completion. President Haidle thanked Mr. Houtman for his extraordinary work compiling data over the year and assisting in the development of our next iteration of LEAD 2.0. Board members had the opportunity to ask questions.

Upon motion of Member Hamming, supported by Member Featherston, it was resolved to combine and approve action items D.1-D.11.

Ayes: Hamming, Featherston, Rettig, Drake, Haidle

Nays: None

Motion declared to have carried.

Upon motion of Member Featherston, supported by Member Drake, it was resolved to approve the capital outlay for the 25-26 school year as outlined in the board packet.

Ayes: Featherston, Rettig, Hamming, Drake, Haidle

Nays: None

Motion declared to have carried.

Upon motion of Member Drake, supported by Member Rettig, it was resolved to approve the capital outlay purchase for technology equipment from SEHI Inc.

Ayes: Rettig, Hamming, Drake, Featherston, Haidle
Nays: None

Motion declared to have carried.

Upon motion of Member Featherston, supported by Member Rettig, it was resolved to approve the revised quote from Turnkey Network Solutions for fiber maintenance services.

Ayes: Drake, Hamming, Featherston, Rettig, Haidle
Nays: None

Motion declared to have carried.

Upon motion of Member Drake, supported by Member Hamming, it was resolved to approve People Driven's bid to purchase replacement hardware for the Wide Area Network.

Ayes: Hamming, Featherston, Rettig, Drake, Haidle
Nays: None

Motion declared to have carried.

Upon motion of Member Rettig, supported by Member Drake, it was resolved to approve the distribution of funds to local districts for the Special Education Act 18 funds.

Ayes: Featherston, Rettig, Hamming, Drake, Haidle
Nays: None

Motion declared to have carried.

Upon motion of Member Featherston, supported by Member Hamming, it was resolved to approve the resolutions to amend the 2024-2025 budgets.

Ayes: Rettig, Hamming, Drake, Featherston, Haidle
Nays: None

Motion declared to have carried.

President Haidle offered the opportunity for public comment. Public comment was provided by Deb VanDyke who made the following statement:

“My name is Deborah VanDyke, and I live in Rockford, Michigan. For transparency, this room should know that I work here at Kent ISD, and I have done so for more than 20 years. I grew up in this county, and 4 of the children I have raised have completed CTE programs right here at Kent ISD.

Over the years, I have been to hundreds of meetings with administration and our board. I have watched them make the best decisions they could to leverage good things for children, from birth to adulthood, every time. Every time.

The change in the Diversity, Belonging, Equity, and Inclusion (DEBI) consultant's title came to my attention over the weekend. I recognize what a difficult decision this must be for our Superintendent and for our board. Agreements were made, and I believe that those were made in good faith. Diversity, equity, belonging, and inclusion were included in our core values as an organization and community partner. It is included in our strategic plan. That was the right thing to do. Now we're told that funding will be withheld if we do not hide our DEBI efforts. That is wrong. Quid pro quo is wrong.

All of us must remain very clear and without illusion. This concession is a temporary measure that will only briefly hold damage at bay. It will not protect our students or our institutions for very long. On April 19, 2025 at 11:51 a.m., Michigan legislator and Appropriation Committee leader Matt Maddock posted on his social media, "We should immediately cut every county intermediate school district," then referred to them as a scam. We need to protect our institutions.

People who called themselves allies must stand up and speak up. Defend our institutions. Welcoming diversity is the right thing to do. Creating belonging is the right thing to do. Providing equity is the right thing to do. Fostering inclusion is the right thing to do. Student success will not happen outside of such an environment. It is white-supremacy and bullying that are wrong. It is putting our school leadership up to this horrible choice that is wrong.

I will end with a Stan Mitchell quote, "If you claim to be someone's ally, but aren't getting hit by the stones thrown at them, you aren't standing close enough."

I will email my comments to the meeting recorder tonight, so that they can be included, in their entirety, in the minutes. There should be a record and history that people stood up and spoke out about what is happening to our students, to our staff, and our leaders."

President Haidle shared that she will attend MASB's Day at the Capitol on May 7, 2025, with Education Advocates of West Michigan Executive Director, Dan Behm.

Superintendent Gorman thanked Mr. Ron Houtman for his strategic plan presentation at this month's meeting. He also expressed appreciation to KIEA Union Leadership, President Cinnamon Mellema, Vice President Jacob Bandstra, and former President Deb VanDyke for their continued partnership.

Superintendent Gorman congratulated Lindsey Murray and Debra Burkhardt on their nominations for the Leading Learning awards and their excellent work supporting staff and students.

Upon motion by Member Featherston, supported by Member Hamming, it was resolved to move into closed session to complete the superintendent's annual evaluation.

Ayes: All present

Nays:

Motion declared to have carried.

The Board moved to closed session at 4:45 p.m.

The board moved to open session at 6:32 p.m.

Board members unanimously agreed to provide Superintendent Gorman with an EFFECTIVE rating for his annual evaluation. Washburn noted that members will receive a copy of the evaluation report.

President Haidle adjourned the meeting at 6:32 p.m.

Minutes approved on May 19, 2025

Andrea Haidle, President

Anne Hamming, Secretary

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