



Independent School Dist. No. 857
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Lewiston, MN 55952
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Gwen Carman, Superintendent
Cory Hanson, High School Principal • Dave Riebel, PK - Elementary Principal

Building A Caring, Adaptable, Respectful, Determined, Successful Community of Learners

Belief Statements (internal operations- beliefs to drive decisions):

- **LIFELONG LEARNERS:** We believe in the value of education for all ages.
- **ACCOUNTABILITY:** We believe we are accountable for our actions and outcomes.
- **COMMUNITY CENTERED:** We believe our schools are the central hub of our community and essential for building strong communities.
- **ADAPTABLE:** We believe in being responsive to an ever-changing world.
- **RESPECTFUL:** We believe in everyone’s right to safety, respect, and dignity in our schools.
- **DIVERSE:** We believe in fostering the value of each other’s individual differences, perspectives, and life experiences.
- **STUDENT FOCUSED:** We believe that we are all responsible for the success of students.

Goals

1. **STUDENT SUCCESS:** Provide all students with the education they need for success: academically, emotionally, and socially.
2. **EFFECTIVE STAFFING:** Hire, maintain, train and support staff to be as effective as possible.
3. **FINANCE:** Be financially healthy and sustainable.
4. **FACILITIES:** Have facilities that are safe, modern and conducive to 21st century education.
5. **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:** Engage with parents, community members and business owners.

Superintendent’s Report to the School Board

Respectfully Submitted by Gwen Carman

March 10, 2025

Meeting Agenda Items Notes

Food Service Updates Food Service Director Vickie Speltz will provide updates on our programs, the schools she is consulting with and what we know/do now know about funding. In addition, she has been asked and would like to pursue leadership positions with the MN School Nutrition Board. This requires support from the school board. It is a 3-year commitment. She will explain this and how it would impact her work in districts. I recommend we support this endeavor as I believe it is important that school administrators do what we can to help support and strengthen all MN school districts and programs.

Purchases of Replacement Buses and Vans The attachment shows the current status of our bus and van inventory. Transportation Director Kevin Ziebell met with the Finance Committee on March 4th. It is the recommendation of the Finance Committee that the FY25 budget be revised to include a purchase of a new bus and new van (approximately \$175,000 total) and that we plan for additional bus and van purchases in the FY26 budget.

Achievement and Integration Plan The Achievement and Integration Program is a state funded program that has been state funded since 2013. The purpose of the program is to pursue racial and economic integration, increase student achievement and reduce academic disparities based on diverse racial or economic backgrounds. Winona Area Public Schools was identified as a “Racially Isolated District” for the purposes of this program. In order for them to participate in the A& I Program, they need an adjoining district to partner with them. WAPS Superintendent Brad Berzinski asked

me to have L-A work with them. Essentially, by doing this, our district is eligible for approximately \$41,000/year to address these important goals. The Plan that I would submit to MDE would primarily have us using the funds to hire a bilingual Student Success Liaison to work with our students, parents and school staff to support the transition and education of our students through facilitation of communications with students, their parents and school staff to problem solve and reduce barriers. In addition, there would be a joint activity with our students and WAPS' students to help develop leadership skills.

Note that this program is state funded. If there are any changes that impact this funding, we would need to adjust accordingly.

Budget We will discuss an updated 5 Year Budget Projection that Julie has done for us (attached). Declining enrollment continues to have significant annual budget implications for us – even with the increased operating levy, which of course we are incredibly appreciative of. In addition, MN's Office of Management and Budget projections are extremely concerning for public school funding. Here is a summary prepared by Superintendent Selfors from Stewartville. She also commented, "As is the case for each of us, staying current and informed with all of the changes and potential impacts has been a challenge. All of us are doing our level best to have the most up-to-date data that is available to have an accurate view of what our financial futures will entail."

Bottom Line Summary

- Short-term surplus shrinking from November forecast from \$616M to \$456M
- Long-term deficit growing from November forecast from \$5.1B to \$6.0B.
- Both the short-term surplus and long-term deficit are going in the wrong direction
- Most simplified explanation of these trends is inflation, which is causing spending to outpace revenues
- Legislators are advising school districts to find areas that can be reduced or eliminated as additional funding is likely not going to be forthcoming
- MN budget forecast does not include potential loss of federal funding. If the state loses any federal funding, the legislators would need to come back into session to rebalance the budget again - which would be reflective of decreases in spending and the loss of revenue

Data Impacting School Districts

- **Unemployment Reimbursement Aid**
 - \$135M one-time aid was allocated for use through FY27
 - In FY23, \$40M expended
 - In FY24, \$56M expended
 - For FY25, only \$39M left
 - There is not enough \$ to continue to provide reimbursement aid through FY27, which means districts will have to absorb these costs from their General Fund
 - SF2188 is being proposed to add an additional one-time allocation of \$105M, which would not provide long-term funding for these costs
- **Paid Family Medical Leave**
 - This is the leave that allows employees to take up to 20 weeks of leave
 - The original cost was supposed to be an employment tax of 0.70%, which could be split between the employer and the employee
 - The tax rate has now increased to 0.88% because 0.70% has been determined to be insufficient to cover the costs of this benefit
 - At 0.88%, the total costs to MN school districts and employees would be \$74.8M, with the district costs being at least \$37.4M - all of which would be unfunded.

OTHER ITEMS

Literacy Aid MOU Negotiations with EdMN/L-A I received a response from EdMN with relatively minor changes to our last proposal. I will confirm support from our Board representatives, and then they will take it to their membership for approval.

Menstrual Products Update In 2023, the MN Legislature passed bills providing 4th – 12th graders in public schools with funding (\$800/year) to provide free period products for students in school bathrooms. We received a survey recently asking for an update on how our district was responding to this. I asked School Nurse Michelle MacPherson to complete the survey and provide an update. She reports that last year we ordered one new free dispenser each for the high school and elementary buildings. The elementary one was placed in the girls bathroom closest to the cafeteria. There is an old coin dispenser in the girls locker room that she put a sign on directing them to free supplies in the bathroom nearest cafeteria or my office. Desirae is responsible for refilling.

The new free dispenser at the High School was placed in the girls bathroom closest to the C gym, as that bathroom did not have a dispenser. We then again placed signs in the other 3 bathrooms stating there is free product in the girls' bathroom nearest C gym and my office. Shannon is responsible for refilling. I believe sometimes she will sell out of products in the other girls bathrooms since we only have the one free dispenser.

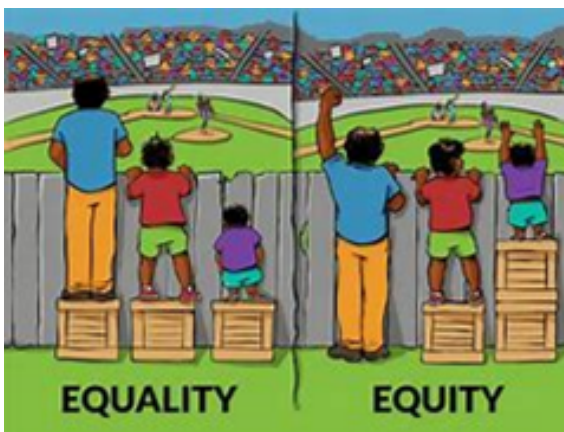
We do not supply products in the boys bathrooms. We provide tampons and pads. They are the economic ones, so some students don't "like" them, but they at least have the option of using them if needed.

College/Career Readiness – Local Business Partnering We are planning to meet with interested business owners on Thursday, March 20th at 3:15pm. David B. has said he is planning to attend, let me know if any others are. I am excited about strategies we have identified to strengthen these relationships and increase ways for students to learn more about local and future employment opportunities.

Construction Projects Updates I will update you at the meeting regarding March scheduled meetings with staff user groups to discuss design details.

Cardinal Foundation I attended their meeting on March 3rd. I continue to be so appreciative of their commitment to our students and school district. They have funded over \$20,000 in grants. They are having a Fish Fry April 18th and their 2nd Annual Golf tournament on August 16th.

Community Outreach/Student Recruitment Thank you to Dr. Hanson for his efforts in reaching out even more to St. John's, Silo and Rollingstone Schools to exchange information and encourage (directly or indirectly) enrollment in our district. We posted on Facebook regarding Kindergarten Registration on March 11th, trying to assure more families (in addition to our know mailing lists) received the information. I am speaking with the Winona Post on Monday regarding updates as well. InGensa staff and I are working on a March/quarterly e-newsletter update that will be shared with staff and families.



Equity is important in all our decision making.