



**Independent School Dist. No. 857**  
**100 County Road 25**  
**Lewiston, MN 55952**  
**(507) 523-2191**

*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*

*February 12, 2024*

**Meeting Agenda Items Notes**

**Teacher Nonrenewals and ULA** There are resolutions to nonrenew six teacher contracts for 2024-2025, and one resolution for the HS guidance counselor have a 0.5 FTE unrequested leave of absence. The circumstances for these vary and I will explain each prior to your action. It is important to note that none of the resolutions are being recommended due to concerns about job performance.

**7-Period Day and Graduation Requirements** We have discussed previously the transition to a recommended change to a 7-period day for grades 6-12 starting in 2024-2025. This will provide financial savings and academic benefits. There is an attachment that shows specifically what the times would be.

In addition, this requires a change in credit requirements for high school graduation. Recommendations were taken to the Systems Accountability Committee on February 5<sup>th</sup> and supported by them. We will continue to plan the exploratory options for grades 6-8 students and how they will be structured. We are planning to continue to have 1.5 periods for Mathematics and English at these grade levels, which leave them with 2 periods/day for additional classes.

**2024-2025 Calendar** Attached is a recommended calendar for 2024-2205. The principals and 3 teachers met and developed two calendar options. Then, the staff had the option to respond to a survey indicating their preference.

Approximately 75% of the respondents preferred the recommended option. This calendar has teachers having two professional development days prior to the last week in August which is not typical and last day for teachers is May 30<sup>th</sup>.

**2024-2025 Calendar and Number of Professional Development Days** As we have had budget adjustment discussions, we have listed the potential option of reducing the number of student contact days/increasing the number of professional development days by 1 or 2. This provides cost savings (fewer transportation, paraprofessional, food service staff days) and also provides important additional professional development time for teachers. The need for full days dedicated to teachers and principals focusing on curriculum and instruction is truly important as we continue to strengthen our standards based mapping, instruction, assessment and grading practices, as well as now with the additional professional development requirements of the MN READ Act.

I am recommending that we amend the 2024-2025 calendar to make a two-day adjustment and change November 1<sup>st</sup> and April 17<sup>th</sup> from being student contact days to professional development days. This provides 169 student contact days which is well above minimum requirements and in alignment with most area districts.

**Solar for Schools Grant Information** Kent Whitcomb from MiEnergy Cooperative is on the agenda. He is going to provide his perspective of the solar panels proposals (elementary roof and high school grounds) from Solar Connections, including the proposed savings. Brok Johnson from Solar Connections will also be at the meeting to address any follow up questions. Based on Kent's initial email, I anticipate he will recommend we pursue the solar panel projects. I am also in communication with Minnwest Bank about financing the upfront costs. The grant proposal would be due June 7<sup>th</sup>.

**Post Referendum Community Survey** Sue Peterson will present the survey results. She will need to present remotely.

**Community Education** On the Consent Agenda are items for HS Dean of Students/Activities Director Ryan Eppen to assume the responsibilities of Community Education Youth and Adult Programs Coordinator. Amanda Koelln will also provide support as needed. I greatly appreciate their flexibility and willingness to assume these additional responsibilities during the school day and this will provide savings for the FY24 General Fund.

**2023-2024 L-A Principal's Contract** Thank you to Board Negotiators (Daniel, Sarah S., Sara D.) for meeting with Principal Riebel and Dr. Hanson for a respectful, one - meeting negotiations process. On the agenda is the mutually agreed upon contract for a one-year contract that reflects increases in benefits (health insurance, health savings account, and no changes to salaries).

## **OTHER ITEMS**

**Katie Ketchum April 23rd** L-A alumni Katie Ketchum has been serving as the MN FFA President. This is an extraordinary honor for her and our L-A FFA program. Katie will be concluding her term in April and she will be speaking at a ceremony in St. Cloud April 23<sup>rd</sup>. It would be important to have a strong representation from our district present to honor her and her accomplishments. Please let me know if you as a Board member, would be interested and willing to attend this.

**January 2024 Steps Counting Challenge** Every January, I coordinate a daily Steps Counting Challenge for staff. This is a fun way to track steps, and hopefully be more mindful of taking 'more' steps. This Challenge is sponsored by the Wellness Committee. Our team of 10 this year took 3,384,648 steps in January! Congratulations to Ginny Reszka (592,646), Kari Huddelston (588,086) and Mary Lou Heier (386,000) for earning prizes as our top counters!

**Elementary Wrestling Room** As you know, there have been questions/concerns about the air quality in the elementary basement wrestling practice space. Ultimately, testing by The Institute of Environmental Assessment (IEA), the company that we contract with for a variety of health/safety services, determined that there was fungal growth present. There is also moisture intrusion from the exterior wall. As a result, I authorized to have the space professionally cleaned by a specialized environmental cleaning service, and then be post-tested for remediation verification. The total cost for this will be nearly \$9,000. All of these costs are eligible to be coded to Health & Safety/LTFM funding (not the General Fund).

**Legislative Priorities** It is important that we continue to advocate for public school funding with the legislature. Attached is an informative/excellent handout that the Stewartville superintendent shared that outlines priority concerns well. I am sharing this with you so that as a resource for you to better understand the concerns and for discussion points as you talk with legislators and community people. It would be simple and acceptable to put our name/log on this but didn't want to do so and create an appearance that I had created the handout.

**Kevin Ziebell and DOT Bus Inspections** Thank you very much to Transportation Director Kevin Ziebell for his high success (again!) having our bus and van fleet successfully pass DOT inspections on February 6<sup>th</sup>. While we didn't get 100%, the sited infractions were easily addressed. Obviously, this is extremely important for student safety but also a tremendous responsibility for Kevin. This was especially challenging this year as he has had to spend much time out of the bus garage driving a daily route. Thank you also to Vickie Speltz for assisting with moving the buses so each could be inspected individually.

**School Board Recognition Month** The MN School Board Association designates February as School Board Recognition Month – and for very good reasons! On behalf of the staff and community, thank you for your time and energy in supporting our students and school district. You are charged with developing a vision and making decisions that will guide the Lewiston – Altura school district for years to come. Thank you for your dedication and commitment.

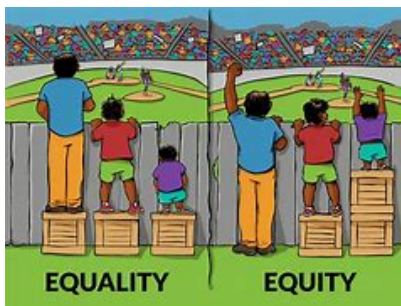
**CTE Planning** Our CTE Committee continues to meet and we have added representatives from the Southeast Service Cooperative who also has many CTE resources. We have established a draft vision statement, programming priorities and a potential equipment needs list. We are also meeting with neighboring districts (SC, R-P) to discuss potential ways we might share resources and expenses. This planning is essential to future facility discussions.

**Minnesota Cannabis Laws and Schools** I attended a meeting February 7<sup>th</sup> at SSC with other superintendents and principals, Olmsted County Public health personnel and Terry Morrow (MSBA Attorney) about the legalization of cannabis and its implications for schools specifically. There continues to be many 'unknowns' regarding enforcement as we wait for the new Office of Cannabis Management to be established and elicit some decision making practices. For schools, like alcohol, possession on school property by students, staff or community members is illegal. Associated paraphernalia is also illegal on school property. No one is permitted to be under the influence of cannabis on school property. Use is illegal for anyone under age 21.

The challenges are in definitive detection of a violation and enforcement of consequences (school or legal).

**Communications** Thank you to the Communications Task Force for meeting regularly to discuss ideas and strategies for improving our engagement with community stakeholders. Thank you for taking the time to meet with Sara Thompson individually to also help inform this work.

**Reminder:** The Lewiston Chamber of Commerce will be meeting on Wednesday, February 15<sup>th</sup> at noon at the Heartland Country Club. Lewiston Public Works Director Erik Friedburg will provide an update on discussions regarding the rehabilitation and/or replacement of the Lewiston Water Tower. I will also be providing an overview of the survey results and next steps for the district's planning.



A reminder of the importance of considering equity in the work we do. Every student deserves our best and what s/he needs to achieve.