



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 Porter

December 8, 2025

Meeting Agenda Items Notes

Truth in Taxation Business Manager Julie Schreiber will present for the mandatory public Truth in Taxation meeting at 6:00pm. The regular meeting will begin after any public comment.

Congratulations to the 2025 MSHSL State Champion Cross Country Team! Coach Matt Kingsbury and other members of the team will be present. The agenda includes a Resolution of Congratulations

Facilities Updates Luke Pfothenauer will be present at the meeting. There was a pre-bid meeting on December 3rd. Several companies were present to get details and tour the construction areas with Dan Buege, Gary Lovitz and Luke. Bids will be opened on Wednesday, December 16th at 2:00pm, in the HS Cafeteria. This is an open meeting and will be facilitated by Gary Lovitz.

Support Staff Wages As discussed at the October Board meeting, Board representatives for the Support Staff Handbook Committee met with Julie and me to discuss possible scenarios for increasing some of the lowest support staff wages. The Support Staff Handbook covers the wages for paraprofessionals, office staff and food service staff. Having wages less than \$16.00 per hour is increasingly problematic. The need for higher wages for our lowest paid staff is important in order to be competitive with area schools and businesses, and to maintain staff.

Sara Daley first met with Julie and I (Daniel and Amber were unable to attend) and we discussed several scenarios and determined a possible recommendation. I then met with Amber and Daniel and explained the background and recommendation. Julie is estimating the cost of this recommendation with the \$151.00 increase per month for health insurance premium approved at the October meeting will be approximately \$15,210, with approximately \$12,000 coming from the General Fund. (Some of the wages will be paid by the Food Service and Community Education funds.) We are also seeing some savings from having an unfilled paraprofessional position for much of the fall.

The recommendation of the Support Staff Board Committee is *“All Support Staff (paraprofessionals, office staff, food service staff, not including student workers) and hired before July 1, 2025 will be increased to \$16.50 per hour starting January 1, 2026. All other support staff will receive a 0.5% raise effective January 1, 2026.”* Note that this will be a minimum of a 2.5% wage increase for 2025-2026 for all support staff. The Handbook already outlines an increase of 2% for 2026-2027.

It is also recommended that Supplementary (van) drivers' wage will increase from \$16.17 per hour to \$16.50 per hour effective January 1, 2026.

These changes do not enable all nonlicensed staff to have a mid-year salary increase. This does however, provide an increase needed for our lowest paid hourly staff. If approved, I will also communicate with staff that this is not precedent setting, i.e., it is not anticipated that mid-year changes in wages will happen again in the foreseeable future.

Tentative Agreement with EdMN/L-A At our 6th meeting, a tentative agreement for the 2025-2027 Master Agreement was reached between the Board Negotiators (Maki, Pringle, Baer) and the EdMN/L-A negotiators. The agreement is tentative, pending Board approval on December 8th and EdMN/L-A support from a vote to take place soon after.

The most significant changes in the new Master Agreement are:

- A 1.5% increase on the salary schedule for Year 1, and 3.1% increase Year 2.
- An additional \$25.00 annual 403b contribution per teacher in Year 2.
- Upon request, the District will buy back up to four days (an increase from two days) of unused personal leave at the daily substitute teacher pay.
- \$500 per semester for an K-5 elementary teacher who teaches a multi-grade classroom.
- Changed the position of Speed/Strength/Agility Coordinator to Class C from Class G on the Extra Pay Schedule.
- The district commits to ensuring that a human decision maker retains the final authority in all employment related decisions.
- There is also an agreement to form two committees to discuss strategies to address the challenges of teacher absenteeism, and strategies to compete with PSEO enrollment.

MN Paid Leave : Minnesota Paid Leave goes into effect on January 1, 2026. Employees will be able to access this Paid Leave, when qualified under certain circumstances, and receive partial wage reimbursement during their absence from work. The funds for the MN Paid Leave program are being generated from a 0.44% payroll tax being paid by both employees and employers in the state.

A decision for the Board is whether or not to permit employees to “top off” remaining unpaid wages with district accrued sick leave or personal leave compensation. I respectfully acknowledge the value of this leave in many situations and the difficulty of having partial wages in what may be difficult personal circumstances. However, providing employees using MN Paid Leave additional school district compensation will be difficult to accurately compute in payroll. Each individual has different leave allocations and availability from the district, and also the percentage of pay they receive in the MN Paid Leave program varies. There is also a common concern that enabling an employee to receive their full compensation will encourage them to extend their leave longer. As you know, we are already challenged by not having enough substitute staff, and this has a direct impact on students.

There are many unknowns about the details of how this system will work. The practice of not ‘topping off’ could be changed in the future if it seems manageable and desired when we are more familiar with how the program will function. Most area districts are not allowing employees to “top it off”, and I recommend the same.

OTHER ITEMS

Senior Dinner We had 53 seniors attend the lunch on December 4th. Thank you to the MANY staff who worked together to make this happen, and to the students for their choir performance, band performance, assisting with door greeting, the guests’ coats, serving coffee and the meals, and clean up. It was amazing to recognize that this was the 50th anniversary of this annual event. Former Community Education Director Kim Wirtz organized the dinner for many years and provided historical details. Former Superintendent Merlin Krenz and Community Education Director Retha Finger organized the first dinner in 1975 and 25 people attended. In the year 2000, to celebrate the 25th Anniversary, 250 attended! It was very interesting to talk with a few of the guests who actually attended the dinner the first year or were staff members at that time.

Enrollment

| Grade Level | May 29, 2025 | Sept 4, 2025 | October 6, 2025 | November 1, 2025 | December 1, 2025 |
|------------------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|
| Kdg | 38 | 29 | 28 | 28 | 28 |
| 1st | 26 | 39 | 38 | 38 | 39 |
| 2nd | 36 | 28 | 28 | 28 | 28 |
| 3rd | 38 | 36 | 36 | 36 | 36 |
| 4th | 25 | 41 | 41 | 41 | 41 |
| 5th | 39 | 29 | 28 | 28 | 28 |
| 6th | 38 | 44 | 44 | 44 | 44 |
| 7th | 38 | 36 | 36 | 36 | 35 |
| 8th | 37 | 39 | 39 | 39 | 39 |
| 9th | 55 | 45 | 45 | 45 | 44 |
| 10th | 58 | 55 | 54 | 53 | 52 |
| 11th | 48 | 58 | 58 | 58 | 58 |
| 12th | 56 | 48 | 48 | 48 | 48 |
| Total | 532 | 527 | 523 | 523 | 520 |

| Grade | Homeschool | Immanuel Lutheran | St. John’s | Total |
|------------------------|------------|-------------------|------------|------------|
| Kdg | 0 | 9 | 8 | 17 |
| 1st | 0 | 15 | 6 | 21 |
| 2nd | 2 | 15 | 9 | 26 |
| 3rd | 2 | 11 | 7 | 20 |
| 4th | 0 | 10 | 7 | 17 |
| 5th | 5 | 8 | 5 | 18 |
| 6th | 7 | 16 | 8 | 31 |
| 7th | 6 | 3 | 5 | 14 |
| 8th | 3 | 12 | 13 | 28 |
| 9th | 2 | X | X | 2 |
| 10th | 0 | X | X | 0 |
| 11th | 6 | X | X | 6 |
| 12th | 3 | X | X | 3 |
| TOTAL | 36 | 99 | 68 | 203 |

Nonpublic Enrollment Data (Reported November 2025)

Equity is important in all of our decision making.

