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## School Board News

February 1, 2024

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### In This Issue

- School Report: Scenic Heights Elementary
  - Community Comments
  - Review and Possible Approval of Policy #626: Secondary Grading and Reporting Pupil Achievement (Weighted Grades)
  - Policy Approvals
    - a. #417: Chemical Use Violations
    - b. #709: Student Transportation Safety
    - c. #719: Nutrition Services
    - d. #613: Graduation Requirements
  - Approval of Middle School Program Proposal
  - Approval of Enrollment Cap
  - Approval of iPad Lease Purchases
  - Acceptance of Bid for Water Supply System Replacement at MME
  - Consent Agenda
  - Board Reports
  - Superintendent's Report
  - Announcements
- 

### Recognitions

DECA State Qualifiers; DSC Honored Artists from MHS.

[Watch Recognitions](#)

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### School Report: Scenic Heights

Scenic Heights Principal Joe Wacker and Assistant Principal Nicole Snedden, along with members of the Scenic Heights staff and students from the Student Belonging Committee, presented to the School Board on how they foster a sense of belonging at their school. School Board Vice Chair Patrick Lee O'Halloran thanked the students for their great work. School Board Chair Meghan Selinger thanked the students, as well.

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## Community Comments

There were four people who spoke during community comments.

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## Review and Possible Approval of Policy #626: Secondary Grading and Reporting Pupil Achievement (Weighted Grades)

Superintendent David Law shared that the School Board had discussed some proposed changes to Policy #626 at a recent School Board Study Session and that the item was being brought to a regular meeting for the Board to further discuss and then consider approval of those changes.

Background: Minnetonka Public School District Policy #626 Secondary Grading and Reporting Pupil Achievement was created to *“establish effective grading and reporting practices that reflect a student’s academic achievement of the course standards.”* One of the topics covered in this policy is “Grade Weighting” defined in policy as *“the assignment of a greater value to the letter grade’s numeric point value to reward a student for completing the Advanced Placement (AP) and/or International Baccalaureate (IB) course(s) and taking the national/international AP and IB assessments in the spring.”* This policy was modified and adopted in June of 2016 and included the following criteria for weighted grading:

*“International Baccalaureate (IB) and Advanced Placement (AP) courses use different, weighted scales to differentiate between IB/AP and regular courses. All Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses shall be weighted +1.0 if the student earns a C- or higher, the courses have been determined to meet the standards of rigor established by the District, and the student successfully achieves a “3” or higher for Advanced Placement courses or a “4” on an International Baccalaureate assessment. For courses that are beyond the rigor of AP and IB, students must earn a C- or higher in the course and achieve a C- or higher on the end-of course exam to receive grade-weight status.”*

This criteria was selected at that time with the belief that students would be more engaged in their coursework because they were expected to perform well on the AP/IB assessment. Since the policy was implemented, most students enrolled in these courses have earned a weighted grade. Some concerns were raised recently that some students choose not to take these rigorous courses because they are required to perform well on the AP/IB assessment in addition to strong class performance to earn the weighted grade, and the belief was that perhaps more students may participate if they had the option to meet either criteria instead of both.

After a first discussion at the November Study Session, the District conducted a survey of teachers, counselors, parents and students about this policy. A summary of those survey results was presented at the Board's Study Session in January. The policy was discussed at that Study Session, and some suggested changes were brought forward for the Board at the February meeting for the Board to consider approving. The School Board had a long and robust discussion about the proposed changes at the February meeting and then voted (4-3) to table this item and to bring it back to the next Study Session for more discussion before considering approval of changes.

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## **Policy Approvals**

General Counsel and Executive Director of Human Resources Anjie Flowers presented three policy updates for approval. The first of the four policy updates was tabled for a future date and the three others were approved.

- a. #417: Chemical Use Violations (tabled)
- b. #709: Student Transportation Safety (approved)
- c. #719: Nutrition Services (approved)
- d. #613: Graduation Requirements (approved)

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## **Approval of Middle School Program Proposal**

Associate Superintendent for Instruction Dr. Amy LaDue and Middle School Principals Freya Schirmacher and Pete Dymit presented the middle school review proposal for approval by the Board. Over the past two months, the middle school principals, in collaboration with the teaching and learning department, District leaders and teacher leaders, have developed a comprehensive middle school program proposal based on the findings from the program review presented to the School Board on November 16.

This proposal integrates the information gathered, including stakeholder feedback, during the program review completed over the past ten months. The proposal focuses on the student experience, prioritizing social and emotional development, student interest and strengths, the student knowing themselves as a learner, and providing opportunities for choice and ownership. This robust review process included data from stakeholder surveys and focus groups, information about program structures from regional and national peer schools, and best practices for middle school programming. A program review committee was convened to analyze all the information gathered and develop themes and priorities. Additionally, all middle school staff had multiple opportunities throughout the process for information sharing and feedback loops.

Prior to the work this year, the last review of middle school programming was conducted in 2007. While changes following that review have served the school community well, the middle school program has continued to evolve with the addition of the Navigator program and the Spanish and Chinese Immersion programs, as well as an increase in enrollment. These changes, coupled with significant program additions at the high school level, made this an opportune time to again

evaluate the middle school program as we strive to best meet both the needs of students and achieve District goals.

The Middle School Program Proposal addresses the five priorities identified and discussed at the November, December and January School Board Study Sessions. These priorities include: 1) creating a more flexible master schedule, 2) differentiated academic support, 3) dedicated social and emotional learning time, 4) the evaluation and expansion of exploratory and elective options emphasizing student choice, and 5) opportunities for teacher professional learning and collaboration. This proposal addresses these five priorities in two phases.

#### Phase I:

- Implement a modified block master schedule to provide greater flexibility.
- Integrate all Immersion courses into the regular daily schedule, untethering them from advisory.
- Restructure Academic Support options to include integrated intervention and extension, along with flexible support.
- Create dedicated Social and Emotional Learning time for all students.

#### Phase II:

- Evaluate and expand Exploratory and Elective options that emphasize student choice.

Both phases will include essential teacher professional learning, curriculum development and enhanced opportunities for collaboration. The priorities will focus on design and development of new courses and revisions to existing curriculum. These elements will shape the implementation of the initial phase and the design of the next iteration of courses.

School Board Director Dr. Mike Remucal asked whether the expanded elective opportunities will require more staff. Principal Dymit said no and that the middle schools would offer students more world language options, PE opportunities, music, art, tech ed, FACs and health electives and that we could accomplish this without increasing staff. School Board Director Sally Browne asked whether there would be an impact to student load and class sizes. Principal Schirmacher said in the model we ran there are some inefficiencies in our current staffing model that the changes will help. She said we are not anticipating class size increases. It is a different model, but total student course load would be increased by one section. Director Browne asked what mechanisms are in place for frequent feedback loops. Principal Schirmacher said she and Principal Dymit have open office hours, meetings with specific departments, meetings with PLCs and staff meetings in place for this feedback. School Board Clerk Chris Vitale thanked Dr. LaDue and Principals Schirmacher and Dymit for their work and asked them to pass along the thanks from the Board to the teachers, staff, students and others who have been involved in the planning process in developing the proposal. School Board Chair Meghan Selinger said she appreciated the intention and thoughtful approach of the team for this proposal and that it meets the needs of students. She asked whether there would be an issue with attendance if advisory is first hour. Principal Dymit said this is an opportunity to do a check in right away, set the tone with students for the day, do triage where needed. He added that if we see high absenteeism, will move it to another time of day and that other districts who do this say it has not been an issue. School Board Vice Chair Patrick Lee O'Halloran thanked the presenters for intentionality of the work and for focusing attention on the middle school program and said that the Board is here to support them.

The School Board approved approve the middle school program proposal for further development and implementation beginning as soon as the 2024-25 school year.

Watch Presentation

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## Approval of Enrollment Cap

Superintendent David Law shared that on an annual basis, the School Board approves the target enrollment cap for each school and the District and that this year the School Board is considering an enrollment cap that reflects an increase of 150 students from 11,100 in-person K-12 students to 11,250. Superintendent Law said this will average to 10-15 students per building and that the District will prioritize placing students in classes that are at or below the District's target levels. He added that currently 86% of elementary classrooms are at or below the target levels. The School Board discussed this potential increase at the December 7 School Board meeting and again on January 19 at the School Board Study Session.

School Board Clerk Chris Vitale asked whether we will allow for higher levels than the cap to allow for fluctuation, to allow the District flexibility. He asked whether it restricts the District the way it's written, to have flexibility. Superintendent Law said his goal is to keep buildings at their targets, and it's never perfect but it'll be close and that we'll keep the Board apprised along the way. School Board Director Sally Browne acknowledged there was a community comment about enrollment and other comments received, particularly regarding cafeteria and restrooms so she wanted to reiterate the Board does not take this lightly to add to enrollment. Superintendent Law said that the District will have Facilities Task Force that will examine the District's facility needs, challenges and opportunities, and that will include looking at common spaces to help alleviate when there are crowded areas in schools. School Board Vice Chair Patrick Lee-O'Halloran asked when that task force will occur. Superintendent Law said that there will be more information about this task force at the February Study Session and the plan would be for the task force to start work in March and that it would be a blend of staff, parents and community members to do this work. More information to come. Vice Chair Lee O'Halloran echoed Director Browne's comments and said the Board would not be considering this change if the Board didn't think it was necessary financially and that if the Board does not do this, there would be a worse impact on students. Clerk Vitale and Chair Meghan Selinger echoed the same that the Board wishes there were other ways to increase funding.

The School Board approved the enrollment target of 11,250 in-person K-12 students.

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## Approval of iPad Lease Purchase

On May 31, 2018, the School Board approved a Master Lease Purchase Agreement with Apple, Inc. for the three-year lease purchase of iPads. The Master Lease Purchase Agreement was set up so that subsequent lease purchase agreements could be added to the Master Lease Purchase Agreement as a new schedule of documents. The District set up this rolling 3-year rotation so that all iPads could be replaced on a three-year rotation. This ensures that all iPads are updated at the same time from the same Apple production runs so that they all function the same internally. This process ensures that a software solution to run on one iPad will then run on all the iPads from that same production run. It also ensures that the computing power of the iPads are improved every three years so that they have the capability of running the most recent versions of the instructional software of the District.

At this time, the District will be lease purchasing 8,100 iPads and associated equipment such as covers and Apple Pencils on the same three-year lease purchase rotation, and will be purchasing 200 Apple MacBook laptops at a total cost of \$2,770,595. The cost of the iPads will be \$2,570,595, or \$317.36 per unit (lower than the 2021 cost of \$335.98 per unit), and the MacBooks will be \$1,000 per unit. Apple is offering these units to the District at 0.00% interest. The District is purchasing the units using State Contract pricing.

Next fall, after they have been collected and catalogued, the District will be selling approximately 8,000 “retiring” iPads in a reverse auction to bring in revenue to partially offset a significant amount of the purchase price of the new tranche of iPads. Past reverse auctions have brought in sales revenue of over \$125 per unit, so it is a conservative estimate to assume that these iPads could also bring in revenue of \$125 or more each. Any sale proceeds will be deposited back into the Capital Projects Fund.

Executive Director of Finance and Operations Paul Bourgeois recommended that the School Board approve the lease purchase of 8,100 iPads and support equipment in the amount of \$2,770,595, and approve the Master Lease Purchase Agreement, Exhibit 1, and Exhibits A-G and authorize Administration to execute the necessary lease-purchase contract documents to complete the acquisition in time for deployment of the equipment for the start of the Fiscal Year 2025 School Year on September 3, 2024. School Board Clerk Chris Vitale asked whether we are adding Apple Pencils for all or just the normal amount we would get. Mr. Bourgeois said it will be the normal amount. School Board Treasurer Dan Olson said he wanted to note that we are spending \$2.7M on these iPads and that may look like sticker shock to some, particularly as we are negotiating with teachers on their contract right now but that the money for the iPads comes from a separate bucket of money to be spent specifically on tech and that he wants to be clear that we are using the money intended for this purpose and the money cannot be moved to the general fund for any other purpose. Mr. Bourgeois agreed that is the case. Chair Selinger also shared that the District sells the retired iPads and money goes into same fund for future iPads. The School Board approved the purchase.

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## **Acceptance of Bid for Water Supply System Replacement at MME**

As part of the rolling Long-term Facility Maintenance 10-Year Plan, replacement of the original 1964 heat exchanger and condensate tank for hot water at Minnetonka Middle School East has been scheduled for future years. Also, the replacement of the original 2008 ultraviolet light filter system for the Aquatics Center Pool has been scheduled for future years. However, as Executive Director of Finance and Operation Paul Bourgeois explained, good bid results on other projects for summer 2024 makes it possible for these projects to be moved up and undertaken in 2024. The MME heat exchanger and condensate tank will be replaced by energy-efficient gas-fired water heaters (very large for a school) as well as a new recirculation pump, condensate tank and water softeners. In the pool area, the original 2008 ultraviolet light filters that were reaching the end of their service life will be replaced with new ultraviolet light filters with double the capacity, which will add redundancy to the system. The budget estimate for the project is \$700,000. Bids were opened at 2:00 PM on Tuesday, January 16, 2024. There were three bids for the project, and the low bid was \$612,200 from Northland Mechanical Contractors. The School Board thanked Mr. Bourgeois for his hard work. The School Board accepted the low bid.

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## Approval of Consent Agenda

(Minutes of January 4, 2024 Regular Meeting and Closed Session; and Closed Sessions of January 18, 2024; Study Session Summary of January 18, 2024; Payment of Bills; Recommended Personnel Items; Gifts and Donations; Electronic Fund Transfers; American Indian Parent Committee Resolution; Pay Equity Report; Out-of-State Student Travel)

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## Board Reports

School Board Treasurer Dan Olson attended the monthly Citizen's Finance Committee meeting where they discussed budget challenges, the CASE committee's advocacy work with the legislature, the District's health insurance plan, and they had a tour of VANTAGE MOMENTUM building.

School Board Director Kemerie Foss said she attended a recent Minnetonka Public Schools Foundation meeting and that the Foundation's annual Dream Maker fundraising event is sold out. School Board Clerk Chris Vitale added that the Foundation's Dream Maker online silent auction is up and available for people to bid on items, regardless of whether they are attending the in-person event this weekend. Here's a link to view and bid on items in the online silent auction:

[https://link.edgepilot.com/s/1ad5c266/vfSvO9Mt1UmoiZ7LZKQIIQ?  
u=https://e.givesmart.com/events/yCf/i/](https://link.edgepilot.com/s/1ad5c266/vfSvO9Mt1UmoiZ7LZKQIIQ?u=https://e.givesmart.com/events/yCf/i/)

Watch Reports

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## Superintendent's Report

Superintendent David Law shared that the District's 19th annual Celebration of Excellence Awards event, which honors dozens of teachers, staff and school volunteers is coming up in May and that nominations for all of the awards categories opened today. He encouraged everyone to nominate a teacher, para, other staff member or school volunteer for an award. Link to nominate:

[https://link.edgepilot.com/s/40fc6a9e/pU8dJK0OnUqq\\_GnW1y4Edw?  
u=https://www.minnetonkaschools.org/activities/districtwide/celebration-of-excellence](https://link.edgepilot.com/s/40fc6a9e/pU8dJK0OnUqq_GnW1y4Edw?u=https://www.minnetonkaschools.org/activities/districtwide/celebration-of-excellence)

The Superintendent shared that School Board Vice Chair Patrick Lee O'Halloran has been working hard in leading the CASE committee and that he's helping the District to make progress on finding elected officials to further the District's legislative priorities. There is a CASE meeting coming up on February 12 for anyone who would like to get involved in advocating for school funding. Those interested can reach out to Executive Assistant to the Superintendent, Carrie Voeltz at [carrie.voeltz@minnetonkaschools.org](mailto:carrie.voeltz@minnetonkaschools.org).

Watch Report

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## Announcements

School Board Vice Chair Patrick Lee O'Halloran shared that the CASE committee will be meeting on Monday, February 12 at 5PM at the District Service Center in the Community Room for anyone interested in joining and assisting with legislative advocacy.

[Watch Announcements](#)

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## Upcoming Meetings

- February 22, 2024 School Board Study Session, 6PM at District Service Center
  - March 7, 2024 School Board Meeting, 7PM at District Service Center
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## Superintendent and School Board Contacts

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