



December 1, 2023

Dear Lamoille North Families and Staff,

The first snow of the year has fallen, the sun is setting earlier, the landscape is beautiful and the air is cold. Welcome to winter!



**Please see important dates set forth below\*:**

- December 2, 2023, Winter Ball, Lamoille Union High School, 7:00-9:00 PM
- December 2, 2023, Craft Fair, Johnson Elementary School, 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM
- December 4, 2023, PreK-2 “All the World” Concert, Cambridge Elementary School, 6:00-7:30 PM
- December 5, 2023, Coffee & Conversation with Superintendent Catherine Gallagher, Belvidere Central School, 10:00 AM
- December 5, 2023, LNSU/LNMUUSD Finance & Capital Committee Meeting @ GMTCC, 6:00 PM
- December 6, 2023, Cambridge School Board Meeting, 6:00 PM
- December 7, 2023, Early Release Day, All LNSU Schools
- December 8, 2023, No School, All LNSU Schools
- December 12, 2023, Grades 3-5 “The Shortest Day” Concert, Cambridge Elementary School, 6:15-7:45 PM
- December 12, 2023, Family Holiday Meal, Waterville Elementary School, 11:00 AM
- December 13, 2023, Winter Concert, Eden Central School, 6:00 PM
- December 14, 2023, Grades 1-2 House Dinner, Hyde Park Elementary School, 5:30-7:00 PM
- December 15, 2023, School Dance, Lamoille Union Middle School, 7:00-9:00 PM
- December 18, 2023, LNSU/LNMUUSD Special Board Meeting @ GMTCC, 6:30 PM
- December 20, 2023, Cambridge School Board Meeting, 6:00 PM
- December 20, 2023, Grades K-3 Winter Concert, Hyde Park Elementary School, 6:00 PM
- December 22, 2023, Celebration of Learners, Cambridge Elementary School, 8:20 AM
- December 22, 2023, Celebration of Learners, Waterville Elementary School, 7:45 AM
- December 25, 2023 – January 1, 2024, December Break, No School, All LNSU Schools

***\*Please make sure you check for updated changes or additions to dates of events listed on your school(s) website. Your school website is updated daily.***



**WEATHER PROTOCOLS**

On Thursday, November 9<sup>th</sup>, our region experienced its first ‘moderate’ swirl of winter precipitation. This weather pattern hit our communities near the morning commute time, as they often do. This mix of snow, sleet, and rain caused some schools and districts in the tri-state area to delay or cancel their openings. This day was also followed by a day this week of power outages that impacted four of our schools and all of our communities. Our weather and its impacts are often unpredictable.

Lamoille North towns span approximately 251 square miles and weather conditions can often be quite different from one end to the other and in between. Also, we all know that in addition to being very unpredictable, weather can change drastically in a short period of time. Safety is the most important factor.

Our transportation system is centralized and all buses travel from each of our towns to the campus. If one town experiences freezing rain, and the roads are considered potentially unsafe by our road crews in that town, we will close school even if the weather conditions and roads in every other town are safe for travel. Decisions must be made based on the safety of all of our students and staff in all of our towns.

We give consideration to our students who are new drivers on winter roads and to whether the faculty, at large, commuting from all over the state, will be able to arrive safely, and if we will adequately be able to staff the school for the day. We will usually not have a delayed opening unless our road crews make that suggestion. Sometimes a little extra time to treat the roads is needed, especially if a storm hits after the roads have been sanded, but that is the crews' decision alone to make. A majority of the time, the crews are able to manage weather and road conditions to ensure that the roads designated as bus routes are ready in time for a regular opening of the school day.

We rely most heavily on the expertise of our road crews when it comes to evaluating the weather conditions because they are already out on the roads and have the best "real time" knowledge. We have our cell phones set up for alert text messages from the State of Vermont. Also, we regularly monitor the following sources for forecasts and predictions: The Weather Channel, WCAX, NOAA, and the Vermont Agency of Transportation.

We will make every attempt to make school closure decisions by 5:30 am, after talking with road crews from each town. A message will be sent to all families and staff using contact information we have for you in PowerSchool. Please make sure that your contact information is accurate and communicate any changes to your school registrars so that you receive up-to-date information. We try to send all notifications out between 5:30-5:45 am so that we can prevent staff from getting on the roads and give families enough time to make alternative plans.

We try to balance the obvious goal of keeping schools open so that students can benefit from all that we provide (classroom instruction, food service, counseling, and special education services) with the need to ensure buses can safely transport students to and from school and that our high school aged drivers can safely get themselves to the Lamoille Union Campus.

Similarly, each Lamoille North school in coordination with our bus providers can delay, cancel, or modify **individual** roads and routes based on weather impacts. If those changes need to be made, school administrators will contact parents and caregivers who live along those routes early in the morning. We have had situations where the roads are fine at the time we need to make a 5:30 am call for delay or closure, only to have unpredicted freezing rain or other situations that make travel less safe. **In situations where buses are already on the road and road conditions become worse, bus drivers pull over and call our road crews for assistance with sanding or plowing. The drivers at Lamoille Valley Transportation and all other drivers will not attempt roads that do not appear safe.**

Ultimately, we try to make the best decision we can every single day using all available information. As an important reminder – **parents/caregivers have the final determination on whether to send their child to school on inclement weather days.** If a parent/caregiver feels that the roads in their area are too hazardous, they can contact their child's school and that missed day or missed class time will be counted as excused.



## BUDGET INFORMATION AND ACT 127

Following you can find information regarding a new law titled Act 127 that could have a notable influence on next year's budget and subsequent budgets. As we begin the budget development process for 2024-25, we want to share important principles and provisions in the law so the school community is aware of significant changes in Vermont's school funding formula that could impact our district.

Act 127 was passed by the Vermont Legislature in 2022 and is defined as "An act relating to improving student equity by adjusting the school funding formula and providing education quality and funding oversight." Act 127 will take effect in July 2024 (Fiscal Year 2025). This Act overhauls education funding structures in Vermont with the goal of ensuring the equitable distribution of funding to school districts.

Part of the funding formula that is used involves something called pupil weights. Pupil weights are relevant to all school districts and homestead property taxpayers because they directly influence a school district's locally adjusted homestead property tax rate. Act 127 (2022) made noteworthy changes to pupil weights that may significantly impact local taxes rates. Specific points to note:

- Pupil weights adjust student counts according to different student needs or circumstances.
- Pupil weights are added to a school district's pupil count to account for the potentially higher costs of educating these students.
- While pupil weights only change through legislation, a school district's weighted pupil count changes each year based on the prior year's student body. Pupil weights simply adjust the tax capacity of a school district.

Act 127 made multiple changes to pupil weights in Vermont's education funding formula. With the implementation of new pupil weights in fiscal year 2025, some school districts will have increased tax capacity while others will have decreased tax capacity. Act 127 includes a transition provision to smooth significant decreases in tax capacity over the next five years.

### **Highlights of the law:**

Vermont has determined that different types of students cost different amounts to educate; therefore, the State has created categories and assigned different weights to a district's actual pupil count or "Average Daily Membership" (ADM). The categories include preschool, elementary, middle, high school, poverty, English Language Learners (ELL), sparsity (students living in low population areas) and small schools. Each category has a specific "weight". Adding weights increases the pupil count. For example, if a student is identified as having ELL needs, they would get an additional weight of 2.49 students. Weights are added to the actual PreK-12 students who attend public schools. A two-year average (current and prior year) is used to calculate a school district's total weighted pupil count. After the weights are applied, the State defines this as a district's Long-term Weighted Average Daily Membership (LTW ADM).

The school funding formula will **now** use a different pupil count to determine spending per pupil. Districts with larger percentage populations in the different weighting categories will see an advantage in their new weighted pupil counts whereas those districts with lower percentages will be disadvantaged in their new weighted pupil counts.

At this time, we do not know the exact influence of Act 127 on Lamoille North. We anticipate that we will have this information close to December 15<sup>th</sup> and will communicate what we learn to you.

## COFFEE AND CONVERSATION



Our last “Coffee and Conversation” gathering will be at Belvidere Central School on Tuesday, December 5<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 am. We have enjoyed a healthy turnout at most of these community forums and we intend to do another cycle of them in January and February. These next rounds will be largely focused on the budget development and budget drivers for our schools and what the requested resources will provide for our students and communities. All members of our school communities are welcome at any or all of our “Coffee and Conversations”!



Lastly, I am grateful every day for our community. We have so much to celebrate given the unique and many strengths of our communities. I invite you to embrace the opportunities that lie ahead, and help us continue to create a learning environment that nurtures the hearts and minds of our students and all members of our school community. In closing, we appreciate your support for our work with your children and youth. Thank you again for your collaboration, compassion and dedication to the wellbeing of our students, staff and families.

My very best to you,

Catherine Gallagher M.Ed.  
Superintendent of Schools  
Lamoille North Supervisory Union