Inspiring Excellence
LAKE STEVENS
School District

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REGULAR SESSION MINUTES
January 28, 2026

Board Members: Mari Taylor, Acting President
Paul Lund
Brian Kesler
Ryan Dickson
Mary Templeton, Superintendent/Board Secretary

Student Advisory Council Officers: Aashisri Bendalam
Ginelle Sarpong

The Lake Stevens School District Board of Directors met in a Regular Session at the Educational Service Center. A Zoom option was available for this meeting that Acting President Taylor called to order at 6:32 p.m. followed by the pledge of allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Present: Acting President Mari Taylor, Director Paul Lund, Director Brian Kesler, Director Ryan Dickson, Superintendent Dr. Mary Templeton and SACo members Aashi Bendalam and Ginelle Sarpong. Director David Iseminger was absent.

AGENDA/MINUTES

Director Kesler made a motion to approve the January 28, 2026 Agenda. The motion was seconded by Director Lund and unanimously approved. Director Lund made a motion to approve the January 14, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded by Director Kesler and unanimously approved.

RECOGNITION OF STUDENTS, STAFF, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Director Lund introduced himself, noting that he has been on the board for 16 years. He shared that he and his wife moved to Lake Stevens in 1986 and raised three children in the district, who are all grown and have children as well.

Director Dickson introduced himself, noting that he is a finance manager at Boeing and have lived in Lake Stevens for 15 years. He has two children, 12 and 14, that are in the Lake Stevens school district. He shared that he really enjoys the community and giving back and is grateful for the opportunity to be a part of the board.

Director Kesler introduced himself, noting that he is a professional grandfather. He shared that he has three children, all graduates from the Lake Stevens school district, with a special note that his son teaches social studies at Lake Stevens High School.

SACo president Aashi Bendalam introduced herself, noting she has been a part of SACo since her freshman year, being a senior now. She is excited to graduate this year and end the year in a good light.

SACo secretary Ginelle Sarpong introduced herself, noting this is her second year with SACo, and is excited to meet everyone.

Dr. Templeton introduced herself, noting that she loves Lake Stevens. She shared that her kids are older, but if they were younger, they would be in this school district. She stated it is the best school district she has worked in or been a part of.

Director Taylor introduced herself, noting that she and her family moved to Lake Stevens in 1996 because of the school district. She joined the school board in 1999 and her children all graduated from Lake Stevens High School. She now has grandkids in Lake Stevens schools and her daughter is a teacher at Lake Stevens High School. She works for the Department of Children, Youth, and Families, creating preschool opportunities for children across the state.

As gifts were presented to the board and SACo members, Dr. Templeton read a proclamation from Washington state governor, Bob Ferguson, recognizing January as school board appreciation month and giving thanks to all who serve on the school board and in SACo.

REPORTS OF SCHOOL BUILDINGS AND PROGRAMS

Principal Leslie Ivelia, accompanied by the LSHS cheer squad and players from the Unified Basketball team, welcomed everyone to Lake Stevens High School. She noted that showing up for the students is what inspires her every day and her favorite part of the day is greeting the students into the building each morning. She shared that she recently went to the Unified Basketball game and noticed that the energy was vibrant and the Viking spirit reverberated through the gym. The cheer squad showing up to support and the community in the stands made the game feel even more full. She expressed her gratitude for their students, families, staff and the community.

Jason Pearson, Associate Principal and Athletics Director, and Scott Sifferman, Student Life and Leadership Coordinator, provided updates on Fall 2025 Athletics, Activities, and Arts across Lake Stevens School District. Overall participation remains strong and consistent across schools, with continued student engagement despite enrollment fluctuations.
Athletics participation continues to be healthy at all levels. Lake Stevens Middle School and North Lake Middle School reported growth in cross country participation, reflecting strong interest in inclusive, low-barrier sports. Cavelero Mid High School reported particularly strong participation at the ninth-grade level, reinforcing its role as a key transition into high school athletics. Lake Stevens High School participation remains stable, year over year, with girls' programs demonstrating continued growth, especially in swimming.

Arts programs reported robust participation districtwide. Middle school band and choir programs served over 390 students combined, with multiple concerts, festivals, and community performances. Cavelero Mid High School reported strong engagement in band and choir, while Lake Stevens High School arts programs included numerous performances, competitive festivals, and a successful fall musical production.

Student activities and clubs continued to show strong engagement. Middle schools and Cavelero Mid High School reported growth in ASB club offerings and participation, with drama clubs among the most highly attended. At Lake Stevens High School, approximately 500 students participated in ASB clubs and an additional 460 students were involved in Career and Technical Student Organizations. The update also highlighted significant athletic achievements, including multiple league championships at the middle school and mid-high levels, as well as strong postseason success at Lake Stevens High School. Fall highlights included WESCO championships in volleyball and football, state qualifications in multiple sports, and individual recognitions for student-athletes and coaches.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS

Acting President Taylor opened the floor for community comments, hearing no comments, Acting President Taylor closed this portion of the meeting.

DECISION ITEMS

Consent Agenda:

Director Kesler made a motion to approve the "Consent Agenda" items: Approval of the January 16, 2026 vouchers and invoices have been examined, audited, and allowed by the Board of Directors; that the sum of said payroll and/or vouchers and invoices amounting to $31,232.89 is covered by warrant numbered 319744 and manual warrants listed below, drawn on the Capital Projects Fund (E:18/26). Approval of the January 21, 2026 vouchers and invoices have been examined, audited, and allowed by the Board of Directors; that the sum of said payroll and/or vouchers and invoices amounting to $4,099.80 is covered by warrant numbered 319745 and manual warrants listed below, drawn on the Capital Projects Fund (E:19/26). Approval of the sum of said January 30, 2026 vouchers and invoices have been examined, audited, and allowed by the Board of Directors; that the sum of said payroll and/or vouchers and invoices amounting to $1,949.81 covered by ACH numbers 9000014233 through 9000014254 and manual warrants listed below, drawn on the General & ASB Fund(s) (E:20/26). Approval of the January 30, 2026 vouchers and invoices have been examined, audited, and allowed by the Board of Directors; that the sum of said payroll and/or vouchers and invoices amounting to $1,947,144.76 is covered by warrants numbered 319746 to 319862 and manual warrants listed below, drawn on the General, Capital Projects & ASB Fund(s) (E:21/26). Approval of the January 30, 2026 voids have been examined, audited, and allowed by the Board of Directors; that the sum of said voids amounting to ($19,850.55) drawn on the General & Capital Fund(s) (E:22/26). Approval of the sum of said January 2026 voids have been examined, audited, and allowed by the Board of Directors; that the sum of said voids amounting to ($336.94) is drawn on the General Fund (E:23/26). Personnel Report: Certificated Employment: Patrick Dunican PE/Music Overflow-Non Cont., Lisa Foslien ELA/SS Non Cont., Megan Lawrence 3rd Grade Teacher Non Cont., Zanneta Tayag 1st Grade Teacher Non Cont., Austin Wirtz PE Teacher-Non Cont.; Classified Employment: Tammy Bowers Girls Track Head Coach, Jessica Chavez DD Para, Adele Gordon Registered Nurse, Geoff Kittle 9th Boys Soccer Head Coach, Jalon Lumar 8th Wrestling Asst., Jace Murkerson Specialized Program Para, Nick Page Boys Track Head Coach, Crystal Young DD Para; Resignations: Braydon Hay 1/14/2026, Kelly Kjarstad 1/8/2026, Jamie Smith 12/19/2025, Chase Winkler 1/12/2026, Brent Barnes 1/23/2026; (E:24/26); Approval of the Co-Curricular Report (E:25/26). Approval of a donation of a grant from Stevens Creek PTA to Stevens Creek Elementary in the amount of $2,000.00. These funds will be used for the purchase of white boards for 5 "Thinking Classrooms". (E:26/26). Approval of a donation of a grant from Fidelity Charitable to Lake Stevens High School in the amount of $250.00. These funds will be used in French teacher Suzanne Bailey's classroom. (E:27/26). The motion was seconded by Director Lund and unanimously approved.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

There were no Discussion Items at this time.

INFORMATION ITEMS

Dr. John Balmer, Assistant Superintendent of HR and School Improvement, shared the monthly update on regarding the implementation of PLC's in the district. An update was provided on the district's continued efforts to build and sustain a strong culture of collaboration. It was noted that this work is ongoing and essential to supporting both adult learning and student success. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are being used as a key structure for developing the skills of teachers and administrators, with the understanding that when adults learn and grow, student achievement improves. Collaboration within PLCs is also grounded in a student-centered purpose, emphasizing support for individual learners and the development of confidence alongside academic mastery.

The Board also received an update on the district's PLC coaching model, which was discussed during executive session. Administrators have participated in professional development focused on leveraging team-based coaching to strengthen collaborative practices. This coaching approach utilizes a cyclical process aligned to instructional goals and student learning, allowing teams to assess current PLC practices, identify focused improvement areas, and reflect on outcomes. The model supports teams at varying stages of implementation, promotes shared ownership of growth, and is intended to further strengthen the district's collaborative culture while positively impacting student learning.

Dr. Gina Anderson, Schools Chief of Innovation, Compliance and School Support Operations, shared a construction update. The Board received an update on the Secondary Innovative Learning Center (SILC) and the district's vision for innovative learning pathways. The purpose of the center is to expand alternative learning options, bring Crossroads students back into the district,

support students in transition programs, and deepen a shared vision centered on inclusivity, innovative practices, and community engagement. The SILC is designed to serve multiple pathways within one learning community, providing flexible, student-centered programming aligned to project-based learning, career and technical education, and social-emotional support.

An overview was provided on how this vision is translating into facility design, including draft concepts for instructional spaces that support personalized learning and flexible scheduling. Updates were also shared on related bond projects, including Elementary #8, secure reception upgrades, and ongoing design and construction efforts across multiple district sites. Next steps include continued development of the SILC building design, staff interviews and site visits to other innovative learning models.

SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

Dr. Templeton highlighted appreciation for the Lake Stevens School District community and Board. A recent community event was noted for strong public support, with community members responding positively and visibly demonstrating engagement. The Board was recognized for its leadership and continued commitment to the district and broader community.

Dr. Templeton also provided a brief midpoint check-in on the year's mission and ongoing work. Classroom visits have begun, with second-grade classroom visits starting today, where students were participating in persuasive writing activities. One example shared highlighted students enthusiastically advocating for French fries every day, illustrating both student creativity and engagement in early academic skill development.

SACo COMMENTS

SACo president Aashi Bendalam and SACo secretary Ginelle Sarpong shared that the council remains strongly focused on elevating student voice. This year, SACo is piloting a new approach through the creation of a Student Voice Fair. The event is scheduled for Tuesday, March 24, from 5:00–7:00 p.m. at North Lake Middle School, and board members were encouraged to save the date and provide questions or input.

The fair is designed to allow students to share their perspectives while also receiving guidance from older peers. Planned components include advisory booths staffed by junior and senior student-athletes to support freshman and sophomore athletes, as well as booths representing clubs, Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs), and other student activities.

BOARD COMMENTS

Director Lund recognized the creativity and innovation shared during the meeting, noting that SACo students consistently bring forward thoughtful and impactful ideas. Appreciation was expressed to SACo leadership for providing the culture that supports open and innovative thinking. Director Lund also thanked principals for presenting their School Improvement Plans, acknowledging the challenging and sometimes vulnerable nature of sharing goals, progress, and areas still in development, and noted continued improvement in this work. Director Lund expressed gratitude for School Board Appreciation gifts, emphasizing that board service is a privilege grounded in community trust. Appreciation was extended to fellow board members for their collaborative approach and shared commitment to thoughtful, collective decision-making. Thanks were also given to Principal Ivelia for hosting students.

Director Dickson shared that he is continually inspired by the work of the district and community, noting that board meetings and board service consistently reinforce that inspiration. He expressed appreciation for administrators, teachers, students, and community members, as well as gratitude for the recognition and donations received. Director Dickson highlighted moments that reflect a collective commitment to saying "yes" to students, including student activities and programs such as athletics, the arts, robotics, sewing, and the mini cheer camp, as well as the organic ideas and leadership emerging from students. He also noted the district's growing recognition beyond the community through athletic accomplishments and expressed appreciation for the instructional progress supported by the PLC process and innovations shared at the Secondary Learning Center, thanking everyone for their continued work and commitment.

Director Kesler reflected on the breadth of work, dedication, and passion demonstrated across the district, noting that the scope of accomplishments shared during the meeting was both impressive and inspiring. Drawing on his 40-year career as a secondary

educator, he highlighted the Four A's presentation and emphasized the value of student participation in activities, athletics, and the arts as a powerful avenue for mentorship, engagement, and connection. He shared that involvement in extracurricular activities allows educators to work with students who choose to be there and fosters meaningful relationships that support leadership and growth. Director Kesler noted a clear correlation between student participation and academic improvement and expressed appreciation for the opportunity to serve on the board.

Director Taylor thanked staff and community members for an impactful evening and echoed appreciation for the time, dedication, and trust placed in the board. She expressed gratitude for the opportunity to participate in meaningful work alongside district partners and highlighted the importance of collective efficacy in supporting shared success across the district.

ADJOURNMENT

With no other objections from other directors, Acting President Taylor adjourned the Regular Session at 8:19 p.m.

President

Secretary