Inspiring Excellence
LAKE STEVENS
School District

Lake Stevens School District | 12309 22nd St. NE | Lake Stevens, WA 98258-9500
425-335-1500 (office) | 425-335-1549 (fax)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REGULAR SESSION MINUTES
March 25, 2026

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

Student Advisory Council Officers: Aashi Bendalam, president

The Lake Stevens School District Board of Directors met in an Executive Session at Stevens Creek Elementary School that President Iseminger called to order at 5:00 p.m. and concluded at 6:05 p.m. The Executive Session was to discuss the Superintendent mid-point Evaluation. There were no decisions made during the Executive Session.

The Lake Stevens School District Board of Directors met in a Regular Session at Stevens Creek Elementary School. A Zoom option was available for this meeting that President Iseminger called to order at 6:30 p.m. followed by the pledge of allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Present: President David Iseminger, Director Mari Taylor, Director Paul Lund, Director Brian Kesler, Director Ryan Dickson, Superintendent Dr. Mary Templeton and SACo member Aashi Bendalam.

AGENDA/MINUTES

Director Kesler made a motion to approve the March 25, 2026 Agenda. The motion was seconded by Director Dickson and unanimously approved. Director Lund made a motion to approve the March 11, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded by Director Kesler and unanimously approved.

RECOGNITION OF STUDENTS, STAFF, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

There was no recognition of students, staff, and community members at this time.

REPORTS OF SCHOOL BUILDINGS AND PROGRAMS

Stevens Creek Elementary Principal Matt Pewitt welcomed everyone to Stevens Creek and expressed his excitement to be hosting the School Board Meeting.

President Iseminger noted that when Board meetings are held at school sites, Board members typically introduce themselves.

Director Lund shared that he has served on the Board for approximately 16 years. He and his wife moved to Lake Stevens in 1986 and raised three children who attended Lake Stevens schools from kindergarten through high school. He recently retired after 34 years with Boeing and expressed his appreciation for opportunities to visit school buildings and experience the learning environments. He thanked the school for hosting the meeting.

Director Taylor introduced herself and shared that she has served on the Board for 27 years. All of her children graduated from Lake Stevens High School, and she now has grandchildren attending Lake Stevens schools. She also shared that she works for DCF.

Director Dickson stated that he has lived in Lake Stevens for 15 years and has served on the Board for three months. He works in finance at Boeing and has two children currently attending Lake Stevens School District schools.

Director Kesler shared that he is new to the Board and has lived in Lake Stevens for 41 years. His children were born, raised, and educated in the district, and one is now teaching in Lake Stevens schools. He is a retired teacher, having taught for 40 years in the Marysville School District. He also verbalized appreciation for Stevens Creek's focus on community building through a "house system" that supports connections and responsibility. He was happy to be able to participate and become an "honorary member" of one of the school teams before the meeting started.

President Iseminger introduced himself and noted that he has served on the Board for 19 years and has lived in Lake Stevens for 25 years. He recalled attending the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the building and expressed his appreciation for the facility and its role in the community. He shared that he has four children, two of whom are currently in high school, and that he works in the software field. He thanked the school for the warm welcome.

Superintendent Dr. Mary Templeton introduced herself and shared that she is proud to serve the Lake Stevens School District. She noted that she has more than 30 years of experience in education and expressed appreciation for the opportunity to work with the district and community.

Executive Director Jeff Jorgensen provided an update on Special Services programming, building on priorities shared in September, and introduced Director Keri Joseph and the Special Education leadership team. He noted continued growth in students receiving services—a 14.4% increase over five years—and highlighted rising needs, particularly in autism, with potential staffing implications. He also reviewed progress in providing services in the least restrictive environment (LRE), now at approximately 63%, emphasizing the balance between LRE goals and student outcomes through staff training, co-teaching, and targeted interventions.

Special Services Coordinator Julie Sewald described collaborative efforts to support meaningful inclusion, including a Unified Physical Education model at Cavalero integrating students with and without IEPs. She emphasized intentional planning and cross-disciplinary collaboration to ensure equitable participation.

Director Keri Joseph reported significant growth in one-to-one support, from seven students in 2018 to 102 this school year, and described efforts to increase student independence, reducing supports to 93. Shannon Kittle, Special Education TOSA, highlighted strategies such as the "prompting ladder" and gradual fading of paraeducator support. Mr. Jorgensen noted the positive impact on student independence and shared examples of success.

Ms. Joseph also outlined the financial and strategic benefits of reducing one-to-one support, allowing reinvestment in professional development and curriculum. Mr. Jorgensen emphasized collective teacher efficacy through PLCs and collaborative teams, while Alexa Chervets, Special Education TOSA, discussed structured learning centers and the use of specially designed instruction, behavior supports, and trauma-informed practices to support inclusion and independence.

Ms. Joseph shared the "standing ovation" recognition program to build staff morale, with 67% of staff recognized. Mr. Jorgensen highlighted the importance of staff investment and professional development in driving outcomes.

Looking ahead to 2028, the district plans to transition to a response-to-intervention (RTI) model for identifying learning disabilities, aligning with multi-tiered supports to better serve students. Mr. Jorgensen concluded by reaffirming the department's commitment to inclusion, independence, and ensuring all students are supported to succeed.

Director Kesler noted that the "esprit de corps" recognition model reflects the same positive reinforcement used with students, helping sustain staff in a demanding field. Executive Director Jeff Jorgensen agreed, emphasizing the importance of recognizing adults' contributions.

Director Kesler asked about the growth in one-to-one supports, including how decisions are made, the impact of incoming students with existing supports, and whether future assessment changes may reduce reliance on paraeducators. Mr. Jorgensen explained that supports often stem from behavioral, communication, or learning needs, with a sharp increase during COVID-19 due to funding and service demands. Many incoming students arrive with supports already in place. While growth was expected to stabilize, the district has begun reducing numbers, and future system changes may continue that trend.

Director Dickson appreciated the balanced approach and asked whether past practices should be revisited and if additional training could address needs earlier. Mr. Jorgensen described the shift back toward inclusive practices, noting that one-to-one support may temporarily increase as staff build skills, but should decrease over time with continued training and collaboration.

Dr. Templeton highlighted broader drivers, including increased focus on equity and the rise of student voice, emphasizing that collective efficacy and collaboration are key to meeting student needs.

SACo President Aashi asked about student feedback. Mr. Jorgensen shared that many students desire greater independence and may see one-to-one support as limiting, underscoring the importance of student voice and agency. In a follow-up, Aashi asked how support is reduced; Shannon Kittle explained that teams make gradual, data-informed adjustments and monitor student response over time.

Director Lund praised the presentation as thoughtful, data-driven, and inspiring, particularly its focus on both student outcomes and staff morale. Director Taylor noted that the "fading support" model also applies to system growth, emphasizing continued progress while monitoring impacts.

President Iseminger affirmed board support and appreciation for the balanced, student-centered approach.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS

President Iseminger opened the floor for community comments. Community member Kymm Shippman shared her gratitude for the special education presentation.

Hearing no further comments, President Iseminger closed this portion of the meeting.

DECISION ITEMS

Consent Agenda:

Director Kesler made a motion to approve the "Consent Agenda" items: Approval of the March 18, 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 $1,901.81 covered by warrant numbered 320358 and manual warrants listed below, drawn on the Capital Fund. Approval of the March 27, 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 $3,198.78 is covered by ACH numbers 9000017543 to 9000017587 and manual warrants listed below, drawn on the General Fund. Approval of the March 27, 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 $3,927,362.00 covered by warrants numbered 320359 to 320493 and manual warrants listed below, drawn on the General, Capital Projects, & ASB

Fund(s). Personnel Report: Classified Employment: Sarah Eichelberger Temp Gen Support Para, Emelia Frodsham Temp Gen Support Para, Charlotte Hendry 1:1 SLC Para; Volunteers: Ken Akiha Volunteer Coach – Basketball LSHS, Jared Gibson Volunteer Coach – Track LSHS, Aric Wagner Volunteer Coach – Track LSHS; Resignations: Jennifer Brown 3/6/26, Charles Darlington Jr 3/31/26, Brendon Hood 3/13/26, Robert Thueringer 3/31/26. Approval of the Co-Curricular Report. Approval of a donation of a grant from Glenwood PTA to Glenwood ASB in the amount of $9,000. These funds will be used for student engagement and field trips. Approval of a donation of a grant from Stevens Creek PTA to Stevens Creek ASB in the amount of $400. These funds will be used to support a 1st grade field trip to the Seattle Aquarium. Approval of a donation of a grant from Stevens Creek PTA to Stevens Creek Elementary in the amount of $779.01. These funds will be used to purchase rocket supplies for a 4th grade STEM project. Approval of a donation of a grant from Stevens Creek PTA to Stevens Creek ASB in the amount of $400. These funds will be used to support a 3rd grade field trip to the Pacific Science Center. The motion was seconded by Director Dickson and unanimously approved.

Director Lund made a motion for approval for LSHS Boys Basketball Athletes to attend Team Camp at the University of California San Diego from June 26-29 2026. The motion was seconded by Director Kesler. Director Kesler commented that, as a new board member, reviewing the materials highlighted the extensive documentation and approvals required for student out-of-state travel. President Iseminger commented on the district's strong legacy in athletics and activities, emphasizing the value of students competing on larger stages such as robotics and FCCLA. He expressed appreciation for the organization required and support for continuing these opportunities. The motion was unanimously approved.

Director Dickson made a motion for approval for LSHS Boys Football to attend Team Camp at Western Oregon University from June 20-23, 2026. The motion was seconded by Director Kesler. The motion was unanimously approved.

Director Kesler made a motion for approval for FCCLA and CTSO to National Leadership Conference in Washington DC from July 5-11, 2026. The motion was seconded by Director Dickson. SACo President Aashi Bendalam made a comment that she will be attending this event. The motion was unanimously approved.

Director Dickson made a motion for approval for LSHS students and staff to attend VEX Robotics World Championship in St Louis, MO from April 20-25, 2026. The motion was seconded by Director Taylor. The motion was unanimously approved.

Director Taylor made a motion for approval for LSHS HOSA students to attend the international leadership conference in Indianapolis, IN from June 16-21, 2026. The motion was seconded by Director Lund. The motion was unanimously approved.

Director Taylor made a motion for approval of Resolution No 5-26: Approval of GMP amendment one to the GC/CM contract for the Safety and Program Improvements Project. The motion was seconded by Director Lund. The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote.

Director Lund made a motion for approval of the final acceptance of public works projects. The motion was seconded by Director Kesler. The motion was unanimously approved.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

There were no Discussion Items at this time.

INFORMATION

Dr. Gina Anderson, Schools Chief of Innovation, Compliance and School Support Operations, presented a monthly bond construction update using the rolling three-month "hot sheet." Dr. Anderson reported two items completed ahead of schedule and noted upcoming visible construction activity, including a groundbreaking. She shared that Lake Stevens Middle School is in schematic design, with stakeholder input informing educational specifications, and noted over 900 survey responses. The central kitchen location was finalized at the high school, with plans to address impacts to existing spaces. She also provided a Hillcrest Elementary gym update, noting community feedback confirmed use for practices rather than games, with increased overall access and capacity.

Director Lund commented on the clarity and accessibility of the communication tools. Dr. Anderson credited Jonathan Sulzback, Graphic Design Coordinator, for the creation of the "hot sheet".

Director Dickson asked about the survey responses received and whether they were all reviewed. Dr. Anderson confirmed all responses are both analyzed for themes and individually reviewed, with input categorized by stakeholder group.

Dr. John Balmer, Assistant Superintendent of HR and School Improvement, shared a seven-month update on PLC implementation. Staff have shifted from a teaching-focused to a learning-focused approach, emphasizing how students learn best and adjusting instruction accordingly. Collaboration and shared goals have built trust, teamwork, and stronger student-adult connections. Early outcomes show strong growth: first-grade CKLA mastery rose from 43 to 80 students, and third-grade math green-level performance grew from 32 to 54 students, with 36 mastering content at 80%+. Assessments are standardized, rigorous, and support flexible student grouping, while second-grade writing expectations were increased to prepare students for third-grade standards. Staff continue to embrace professional growth, celebrate successes, and maintain momentum, reflecting Lake Stevens' commitment to a culture of learning and rigor.

Director Lund noted the update was excellent and acknowledged the challenges of the stages of acceptance. He asked whether the team now has momentum and cannot go back. Dr. Balmer confirmed momentum is strong and that leadership has a two-year plan to sustain growth.

Director Dickson praised the update, noting the transparency in sharing early challenges and the progress made. He highlighted the shift from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning and observed that students are now connecting with multiple teachers rather than just one. He emphasized that these changes are supporting the desired outcomes and recognized the work as a strong update.

President Iseminger shared an observation from the SACo Student Voice Fair, noting a discussion about rigor and Lake Stevens' commitment to creating a learning environment where all students and educators are challenged and can excel. He emphasized that this approach benefits everyone in the educational ecosystem and praised the district for putting its philosophy into practice.

Assistant Superintendent Teresa Main presented the district's enrollment projections and staffing implications for the 2026–27 school year. Kindergarten uses a 10-year average, grades 1–5 a roll-up model, and grades 6–12 a five-year cohort survival method, with non-traditional programs included in FTE calculations. Headcount differs from FTE and OSPI report card counts due to preschool, running start, sports-only, and partially scheduled students. Based on projections, three elementary teachers will be added across seven schools, one building will lose a teacher, and secondary schools will gain 6.2 FTE to address a student "bubble." All elementary schools are guaranteed at least one music specialist, one PE specialist, one counselor, and one librarian/media specialist. Class sizes will target 23–24 in elementary and under 30 in secondary classrooms. Overall growth is modest (~0.7%), with secondary grades seeing the most increase. Whiskey Ridge developments may add additional students' midyear, and staffing will be adjusted in August to maintain equitable student-staff ratios. Conservative projections ensure funding aligns with actual enrollment.

Director Dickson asked whether the district coordinates enrollment assumptions with the city planner or city team. Assistant Superintendent Teresa Main responded that the district holds monthly and quarterly meetings with the city.

Assistant Superintendent Teresa Main outlined the budget process, noting that enrollment drives revenue through state (OSPI) staffing allocations. The board will review the budget in phases: April 15 (initial overview), May 13 (updated review), June (smaller funds presentation by the new Director of Business Services), July 8 (near-final budget with four-year projections), and August (final review, public hearing, and potential adoption). Revenue sources include state funding, levies, and bonds, with strong community support. The district expects approximately $23.6 million from the 2026 levy and $2.5 million annually from the technology levy. Bond funding will support capital projects, with possible refinancing to reduce costs. It was emphasized that revenue is capped at voter-approved amounts, and the district receives about $3 million annually in Levy Equalization Assistance. Enrollment has grown 15–16% over the past decade, with 83–85% of expenditures tied to staffing. Rising costs—especially insurance, fuel, and materials—are outpacing projected revenue growth of just under 2%. While the district currently receives an 18% regionalization factor, future adjustments are uncertain, alongside potential federal funding changes and upcoming labor negotiations. Overall, the district anticipates modest revenue growth amid increasing cost pressures, with continued refinements as more information becomes available.

Director Dickson expressed appreciation for the detailed presentation, noting the value in understanding both the budget modeling and the associated risks and opportunities. He acknowledged the complexity of the information and appreciated the extended timeline to review and work through the budget process.

Ms. Main emphasized the scale of the district's budget, noting projected expenditures of approximately $209–$215 million. She highlighted the importance of careful stewardship of funds and ensuring that resources are used appropriately to support students and staff. She also reminded the board of their responsibility to fully understand the budget.

Director Kesler expressed appreciation for the clarity and reliability of the financial information presented, noting trust in the accuracy of the projections and the importance of that trust in financial oversight.

Manager of Facilities & Operations Bobby Vaughn presented an overview of the district's building condition assessments and asset preservation program, including annual internal reviews and required external assessments every six years. He noted that most facilities are meeting or exceeding expected condition ratings for their age, with strong performance attributed to ongoing maintenance efforts. Mr. Vaughn highlighted a few areas needing attention, including roof repairs at Cavalero, plumbing issues at Stevens Creek, and minor deficiencies at select elementary and support facilities. He also noted structural challenges at the maintenance shop, with staff currently relocated to temporary space. He emphasized that continued maintenance, bond-funded projects, and grant-supported upgrades—such as recent energy efficiency improvements—will support facility condition improvements moving forward.

Director Lund expressed gratitude to Bobby Vaughn, highlighting his advocacy for students. He noted that his efforts to prioritize classroom funding over less critical building improvements have been deeply meaningful. Director Lund commended Bobby for consistently working around challenges with dedication and a student-centered approach, emphasizing that his commitment reflects both his character and leadership within the district. He concluded by thanking him for his ongoing service and dedication.

SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

Dr. Mary Templeton thanked the hosts for the event and shared excitement about the upcoming production of Finding Nemo: The Musical, noting it as a testament to the district's commitment to the arts and providing students with a well-rounded experience. She expressed appreciation for the staff, recognizing the significant effort involved in the work presented that evening and acknowledging the daily dedication that makes the district exceptional. Dr. Templeton gave a special shout-out to Stephanie for her organization and planning of the event as she completes her fourth month in her position, noting the district is fortunate to have her.

SACo COMMENTS

SACo President, Aashi Bendalam, thanked Mr. Jorgensen and the team, Dr. Anderson, Dr. Balmer, Ms. Main, and Mr. Vaughn, for their presentations and efforts. She noted that while the budgeting details were complex, the main points were communicated clearly and appreciated the thoughtful explanation. She expressed gratitude for the work done and commented on the positive impact of the presentation, also mentioning her enjoyment of the background music.

BOARD COMMENTS

Director Lund thanked the hosts, expressing appreciation for the opportunity to see the work being done and reconnect with the school spaces. He welcomed the new family members joining the Stevens Creek team and praised the individualized reports presented, calling it a fabulous evening.

Director Taylor echoed the sentiments, highlighting the enthusiasm and dedication of the Stevens Creek team. She referenced a quote from Julie summarizing the collective efforts, emphasizing the importance of the collaborative work showcased that evening.

Director Dickson extended gratitude to the community for their support and contributions, noting the significance of donations and other resources that allow students to participate in enriching experiences. He also thanked the hosts for the standing ovation award and playful gifts, acknowledging the positive atmosphere of the meeting.

Director Kesler highlighted a SACo session led by Aashi Bendalam, praising the conversation between students and community members. He emphasized the importance of personal connections in education, noting that while data is crucial, Stevens Creek demonstrates that this is fundamentally a "people business." He appreciated the balance of data and human impact presented during the evening.

President Iseminger expressed appreciation for the hospitality, energy, and vibe at Stevens Creek. He emphasized the value of both data and the human perspective in education, noting the importance of providing students with national and global experiences to build confidence. He thanked the presenters for their efforts and extensive budget information and congratulated Aashi Bendalam for her leadership throughout the evening.

ADJOURNMENT

With no other objections from other directors, President Iseminger adjourned the Regular Session at 9:26 p.m.

President

Secretary