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
September 23, 2026

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

Student Advisory Council Officers:

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 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, and Superintendent Dr. Mary Templeton.

AGENDA/MINUTES

Director Lund made a motion to approve the September 23, 2026 Agenda. The motion was seconded by Director Kesler and unanimously approved. Director Kesler made a motion to approve the September 9, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded by Director Lund 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

Dr. Templeton introduced the school improvement plan presentations, emphasizing the importance of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in improving student achievement. Executive Director Steve Burleigh reviewed district assessment data and highlighted the value of collaboration and learning from high-performing teams. Dr. John Balmer noted that future PLC updates will feature school-based teams and their progress.

Principal Malissa Weatherbie reviewed Mount Pilchuck's school improvement plan, addressing declining Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA) scores and differences in instructional rigor between i-Ready and SBA assessments. She explained that grade-level teams developed data-driven achievement goals and are implementing weekly Professional Learning Team (PLT) meetings to identify student needs, provide targeted interventions, and strengthen instructional practices. Staff will also participate in learning walks at other schools to observe effective teaching and collaboration. Principal Weatherbie highlighted the addition of a Structured Learning Center and the relocation of the HomeLink homeschool enrichment program, which currently serves 51 students from 35 families.

Director Kesler asked about funding for learning walks. Dr. Templeton explained that building budgets support substitute coverage, and Principal Weatherbie noted that existing professional development time is being reallocated for this purpose. Director Lund commended the staff-developed goals and asked about participation in learning walks, which Principal Weatherbie confirmed was supported by all teams. Director Dickson asked about teacher feedback and accountability, prompting discussion of collaborative practices and student achievement data. President Iseminger asked about assessment rigor, and district leaders discussed aligning instruction with SBA expectations while maintaining the value of i-Ready data. Director Taylor emphasized the importance of teacher collaboration in meeting individual student needs.

Principal Katie Rudolph presented Hillcrest Elementary's school improvement plan, highlighting positive trends in student achievement and a continued focus on growth in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics. She emphasized the importance of identifying essential standards, strengthening grade-level alignment, and using collaborative data analysis to guide instruction. Key strategies include scheduled data-release days, targeted intervention cycles, and increased collaboration among staff. A schoolwide focus on student discourse encourages students to engage in meaningful discussions and develop critical thinking skills. Principal Rudolph also shared the school's newly developed mission statement, emphasizing academic and social growth and confident, capable learners.

Director Kesler asked about the use of student discourse posters, and Principal Rudolph explained how visual prompts and sentence starters support student participation. President Iseminger commended the school's focus on developing confident, capable learners. Director Dickson discussed the district's investment in PLCs and the importance of evaluating long-term results. Principal Rudolph and Dr. Templeton emphasized that PLCs represent a sustainable investment in educator collaboration and professional growth. Director Lund praised the school's progress in building a collaborative culture and emphasized the importance of foundational skills in supporting student success.

Principal Tori Thomas presented Skyline Elementary's school improvement plan, highlighting a goal of increasing student proficiency above 70% through targeted instruction and intervention. She outlined the school's tiered intervention schedule, ongoing professional learning, and the "It Takes Two" strategy, which focuses on helping two additional students per classroom reach proficiency while strengthening instruction for all students. Principal Thomas also emphasized early intervention, including additional specialist support in kindergarten and first grade, and the development of academic and social skills. She expressed excitement about the school's progress and ongoing construction of the new Skyline Elementary.

Director Lund commended the "It Takes Two" strategy and expressed appreciation for the safety improvements along 91st Street near the school construction site.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS

President Iseminger opened the floor for community comments. Hearing no comments, President Iseminger closed this portion of the meeting.

DECISION ITEMS

Consent Agenda:

Director Taylor made a motion to approve the "Consent Agenda" items: Approval of the September 25, 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 $13,702.24 covered by ACH deposits numbered 9000027521 through 9000027567 drawn on the General & ASB Funds. Approval of the September 25, 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 $6,264,497.27 covered by warrants numbered 322165 to 322314 and manual warrants listed below, drawn on the General, Capital Projects, ASB & Transportation Vehicle Fund(s). Personnel Report: Classified Employment: Jacob Elenbass 7th Grade Asst Coach, Shaina Grow Building Nurse, Courtney Hansen 1:1 Specialized Program, Leighton Heape 7th Grade Football Head Coach, Jacqueline Resource Room Para, Katelyn Luckraft Resource Room Para, Amanda McGinness 1:1 Gen Support Para, Alison Miklos Specialized Program, Bridgette Pelt 1:1 Specialized Program, Cordell Stout 7th Grade Asst Coach, Evan Thomas 7th Grade Asst Coach; Resignations: Carol Blankenship 9/1/2026, Tasha York 9/3/2026. Approval of Co-Curricular Report. Approval of the 26/27 Non Rep Salary Schedule.

The motion was seconded by Director Kesler and unanimously approved.

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

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Dr. Templeton introduced the discussion of annual board goals, referencing the district's Foundation for Excellence strategic plan and encouraging the Board to identify three priorities for the year.

The Board discussed the importance of maintaining safe and inclusive learning environments, supporting continuous growth for students and staff, and ensuring accountability for ongoing bond-funded construction projects. Members considered prioritizing innovative and integrated approaches to learning and strengthening Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), but agreed these efforts were encompassed within the broader goal of continuous growth. The Board also emphasized the importance of maintaining public trust through responsible management of facilities projects.

Following discussion, the Board reached consensus to retain the same three goals from the previous year: Safe and Inclusive Environments, Continuous Growth for Students and Staff, and Needs-Based Facilities Improvements. Members agreed that maintaining these priorities would provide continuity for initiatives already underway.

Dr. Templeton affirmed the Board's selections, emphasizing that continuous growth includes strengthening MTSS, innovative instructional practices, and collaboration through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). She noted that these efforts support both student achievement and educators' professional growth.

INFORMATION

Director of Operations Bobby Vaughn introduced Director of Transportation Hunter Maltais, highlighting his extensive experience in school transportation leadership. Director Maltais provided an overview of the Lake Stevens–Granite Falls Transportation Cooperative, which operates 92 daily routes serving approximately 5,900 students across three facilities. He reported a 10.1% increase in ridership over the past two years and discussed challenges related to continued growth, staffing, fleet capacity, and facility limitations. He emphasized the need for long-term planning, driver recruitment and retention, and operational efficiencies to meet increasing transportation demands.

Director Taylor thanked Director Maltais for his informative presentation. Director Kesler asked whether current transportation resources adequately meet district needs. Director Maltais indicated that additional routes and resources are needed, estimating a current need for seven to eight additional general education routes and five special education routes. Directors Lund and Dickson welcomed Director Maltais and encouraged him to share resource needs, explore innovative solutions, and apply his experience to improve transportation efficiency and safety.

Dr. Templeton introduced Assistant Superintendent Teresa Main, emphasizing the importance of enrollment projections in determining state funding.

Assistant Superintendent Main presented the district's September enrollment report, comparing current enrollment with previous years and budget projections. She reported enrollment approximately 100 full-time equivalent (FTE) students below projections, primarily due to lower-than-anticipated kindergarten and eighth-grade enrollment. While Skyline, Hillcrest, and Mount Pilchuck elementary schools experienced declines, Highland and Sunnycrest showed growth. She noted that declining birth rates are beginning to affect kindergarten enrollment, while residential development continues to influence enrollment patterns throughout the district. Assistant Superintendent Main expressed confidence that additional enrollment through new housing developments and alternative learning programs would help close the gap during the school year.

Director Lund commended Assistant Superintendent Main for her accuracy in forecasting enrollment and emphasized the importance of her work in supporting the district's financial planning.

Assistant Superintendent Dr. John Balmer provided an update on the district's PLC implementation, highlighting the collaborative practices and instructional strategies shared during recent school improvement plan presentations. He discussed how schools are using essential standards, common formative assessments, data analysis, targeted interventions, and professional development to strengthen instruction and improve student achievement. Dr. Balmer emphasized that schools are adapting PLC practices to meet their individual needs while sharing successful strategies across buildings. He also announced plans for teacher teams to present their PLC work directly to the Board at future meetings.

Director Lund expressed appreciation for the opportunity to hear directly from educators and asked about the district's progress compared to typical PLC implementation timelines. Dr. Balmer shared that the district is progressing well in establishing PLC processes, according to its consultant, and emphasized that the ultimate measure of success is improved student learning. He expressed confidence that measurable academic growth would be evident during the current school year.

Schools Chief of Innovation Dr. Gina Anderson and Executive Director of School Planning and Construction Robb Stanton provided an update on bond-funded construction projects. Dr. Anderson highlighted the design principle of connecting schools with families and the community, emphasizing libraries, project rooms, shared gathering spaces, and recreational facilities designed for community use. She also announced the Skyline Elementary groundbreaking scheduled for October 12.

Mr. Stanton reviewed construction progress at Elementary School No. 8 and Skyline Elementary, including site preparation, utility installation, and infrastructure improvements. He reported significant progress at Elementary School No. 8, with reduced site-related risks, while Skyline continues to address underground conditions and utility challenges. He also highlighted improvements to secure school entrances, special education spaces, and the Hillcrest Elementary gymnasium.

Board members asked questions regarding community access, facility safety, drainage, construction contingencies, and disruptions to school operations. Director Dickson emphasized minimizing barriers to public use of school facilities. Director Lund expressed appreciation for the intentional design features and asked about construction impacts on students and staff. Dr. Anderson and Mr. Stanton emphasized their commitment to safety, minimizing disruptions, and maintaining construction progress.

Dr. Templeton introduced Executive Director of Communications and Community Services Jayme Taylor, emphasizing the importance of family feedback in identifying district strengths and opportunities for improvement.

Mrs. Taylor presented the results of the annual family survey, which received 786 responses, a decrease from the previous year. Approximately 75% of respondents rated their child's school an A or B. Families consistently identified caring staff and positive student relationships as district strengths, while opportunities for improvement included communication consistency, overcrowding, and student behavior expectations.

Mrs. Taylor reported that 85% of respondents found district communications clear and easy to understand, with email remaining the preferred communication method. Safety and security, curriculum, and school activities were identified as communication priorities. She explained that survey results have been shared with school leaders to support improvement planning and will be communicated to families and staff. The district will also review its survey format and outreach strategies to encourage greater participation in future years.

SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

Dr. Templeton expressed appreciation to the Board for its continued support, attention to detail, and commitment to advancing excellence throughout the district. She also thanked district leadership and school staff for their collaborative efforts and dedication improving outcomes for all students. Dr. Templeton concluded by highlighting recent high school athletic events, including a closely contested football game and a volleyball victory.

BOARD COMMENTS

Director Lund expressed appreciation to the elementary school leaders for their school improvement plans, enthusiasm, and commitment to ambitious student achievement goals. He commended the engagement and collaboration demonstrated by school teams and expressed optimism about their continued progress. Director Lund also welcomed Transportation Director Hunter Maltais and thanked presenters for their informative reports and the Board for its productive discussions.

Director Taylor expressed appreciation to district leaders and presenters for their reports and recognized their ongoing dedication and contributions to the district beyond the evening's meeting.

Director Dickson echoed his fellow Board members' appreciation for district staff and reflected on a recent high school football game. He highlighted a halftime interaction between the opposing cheerleading squads, who exchanged treats, greetings, and photographs in a demonstration of sportsmanship and camaraderie. Director Dickson described the interaction as an inspiring example of the district's vision in action, emphasizing the importance of developing students who demonstrate positive character and contribute meaningfully to their communities.

Director Kesler thanked school principals, staff, and district leaders for their hard work and dedication. He expressed appreciation for the administration's responsiveness to Board questions and feedback, noting the value of thoughtful follow-up and continued communication.

President Iseminger thanked district staff and presenters for their comprehensive reports, emphasizing the Board's appreciation for the time and effort involved. He also recognized recent high school athletic performances, including a closely contested football game and a volleyball victory and thanked everyone for attending.

ADJOURNMENT

With no other objections from other directors, President Iseminger adjourned the Regular Session at 9:36 p.m.

President

Secretary