



MINUTES

Kathi Stebbins-Hintz, Chairperson
John Benbow, Jr.
Troy Bier
Christopher Inda
John Krings, President
Elizabeth St.Myers
Julie Timm

November 4, 2024

LOCATION: Board of Education Office, 510 Peach Street, Wisconsin Rapids, WI
Conference Room A/B

TIME: 6:00 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: John Benbow, Jr., Christopher Inda, Troy Bier, John Krings, Kathi Stebbins-Hintz, Elizabeth St.Myers, Julie Timm

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT: Phillip Bickelhaupt, Steve Hepp, Aaron Nelson, Ronald Rasmussen, Rodrick Watson

- I. Call to Order
- II. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
- III. Public Comment – none.
- IV. Actionable Items
 - A. New Course/Curriculum Modifications and Proposals

Steve Hepp, Director of Pupil Services, presented the following curriculum course proposals and modification recommendations which have all been reviewed by the Council for Instructional Improvement (CII) Committee with advisory votes cast indicating that each proposal received a majority of members in support. A few of the requests for prerequisite changes in science generated some concerns from a few CII members.

- 1. Advanced Video, Digital and Graphic Arts

ES-1 Motion by John Krings, seconded by Julie Timm, to approve of the proposed course *Advanced Video, Digital and Graphic Arts* as a .5 elective credit available to students in grades 10-12 beginning with the 2025-26 school year. Motion carried unanimously.

- 2. Game Changers: Tracing History Through Sports

ES-2 Motion by Troy Bier, seconded by Elizabeth St.Myers, to approve of the proposed course *Game Changers: Tracing History Through Sports* as a .5 credit social studies course available to students in 11th and 12th grades beginning with the 2025-26 school year. Motion carried unanimously.

3. America's Voice

ES-3 Motion by John Benbow, seconded by Chris Inda, to approve of removing the course *America's Voice* from the Lincoln High School Program of Studies beginning with the 2025-26 school year. Motion carried unanimously.

4. America's Story

ES-4 Motion by John Benbow, seconded by Troy Bier, to approve of removing the course *America's Story* from the Lincoln High School Program of Studies beginning with the 2025-26 school year. Motion carried unanimously.

5. Earth Structure and Processes

Committee members discussed the science related course changes, and a question was raised around the prerequisite and grade requirement changes being requested. It was noted that the CII Committee raised some concerns around these recommendations and while the majority supported the changes, there were a number of committee members who registered an "unsure" vote. Science teacher Pete Larsen explained that the Science Department is attempting to work on the sequence of courses students would take at the secondary level, and as an example, *Topics of Life Science* is a very introductory course where twelve different topics are covered, one per week over the twelve-week course in a more survey than depth approach. The other biology courses are more in-depth and detailed. The proposal is to ensure that students who have already taken a course that is more in-depth with detail and received a grade of "C-" or higher, cannot take the Topics courses because they will have already sufficiently passed a higher level course.

Ms. St.Myers attended the CII meeting as the Board representative, and she shared that the concerns related to the "C-" grade being referenced as "being successful" when they consider it to be barely successful. Recognizing that students need to continue to be challenged, if a student in this position is barely successful, it doesn't seem harmful to allow them to take similar coursework again. Mr. Larsen shared some experiences he has had with older students seeking out "easy" coursework rather than challenge themselves, which is one reason for the change so that it is necessary for students to be challenged more, plus the fact that certain students may be better suited academically and socially in a course with a bit more rigor. Topics courses are geared toward students who are not ready to commit to a study in a particular area such as biology or chemistry; if they have already taken a course where they received more depth and detail, he personally doesn't see the value in going back to receive instruction on the same topics with less detail. Mr. Rasmussen clarified that as modifications to the science coursework scope and sequence come about, more is being learned about what might be best academically for upper class students in terms of coursework options. Mr. Larsen also shared that there are many ways in which a student can earn a grade of "C-" which has little to do with depth of understanding and more to do with factors such as attendance, work habits, or not taking advantage of options made available to them to help them do better.

ES-5 Motion by John Krings, seconded by Troy Bier, to approve of changing the grade levels of students eligible to take *Earth Structure and Processes* from students in grades 9-12 to students in grades 9-10 beginning with the 2025-26 school year. Motion carried unanimously.

6. Meteorology, Oceanography, Climatology

ES-6 Motion by John Benbow, seconded by Julie Timm, to approve of changing the prerequisite for the *Meteorology, Oceanography and Climatology* course beginning with the 2025-26 school year to state, "It is recommended, but not required, that sophomores who take this course have already completed Earth Structure & Processes." Motion carried unanimously.

7. Physical Geology

ES-7 Motion by Troy Bier, seconded by Chris Inda, to approve of changing the prerequisite for the *Physical Geology* course beginning with the 2025-26 school year to state, "Students will collect and evaluate data using methods that are appropriate for students in grades 10-12. It is recommended, but not required, that sophomores who take this course have already completed *Earth Structure & Processes*." Motion carried unanimously.

8. Topics in Physical Science

ES-8 Motion by Troy Bier, seconded by John Krings, to approve of changing the language in the Program of Studies course description for the course *Topics in Physical Science* effective with the 2025-26 school year to read, "This course is not open to students who have previously earned a grade of C- or higher in a course in *Chemistry, Physics, or Earth Science* at Lincoln." Motion carried on a vote of 6-1. Elizabeth St.Myers voted no.

9. Topics in Life Science

ES-9 Motion by John Krings, seconded by Troy Bier, to approve of changing the language in the Program of Studies course description for the course *Topics in Life Science* effective with the 2025-26 school year to read, "This course is not open to students who have previously earned a grade of C- or higher in a biology course at Lincoln." Motion carried on a vote of 6-1. Elizabeth St.Myers voted no.

10. Physics 101

ES-10 Motion by Troy Bier, seconded by Julie Timm, to approve of removing the course *Physics 101* from the Program of Studies beginning with the 2025-2026 school year. Motion carried unanimously.

11. AP Environmental Science

ES-11 Motion by John Benbow, seconded by Troy Bier, to approve of removing *AP Environmental Science* from the Program of Studies beginning with the 2025-2026 school year. Motion carried unanimously.

12. Outdoor Education F/S (Fall/Spring)

ES-12 Motion by John Krings, seconded by Troy Bier, to approve of allowing students to take both *Environmental Literature in the Outdoors* and *Outdoor Education F/S (Fall/Spring)* beginning with the 2025-26 school year. Motion carried unanimously.

13. Winter Outdoor Education

- ES-13 Motion by Chris Inda, seconded by John Benbow, to approve of allowing students to take both *Environmental Literature in the Outdoors* and *Winter Outdoor Education* beginning with the 2025-26 school year. Motion carried unanimously.**

14. Mental Health and Stress Management

- ES-14 Motion by John Benbow, seconded by John Krings, to approve of adding the prerequisite to the course *Mental Health and Stress Management* that states students must complete their required .5 credit health course prior to taking *Mental Health and Stress Management* as well as limiting course enrollment to students in grades 10-12 beginning with the 2025-26 school year. Motion carried unanimously.**

15. Dual Credit Course Name Changes

- ES-15 Motion by Julie Timm, seconded by Chris Inda, to approve of changing the name of the course *English 101* to *WF 100 First Year Writing*; *English 202* to *WF 105 Research and Rhetoric*; and *History 104* to *World Civilizations II* beginning with the 2025-2026 school year. Motion carried unanimously.**

B. Early College Credit Program (ECCP) and Start College Now (SCN) Applications

Mr. Hepp presented one application submitted for a student to participate in a course through the Early College Credit Program (ECCP) in Spring, 2025. He also presented thirteen applications for students to participate in coursework through the Start College Now (SCN) program in Spring, 2025. Ms. St.Myers inquired about how the application process works for ECCP and SCN, and whether certain criteria is reviewed to determine eligibility. Mr. Rasmussen explained how the process works, which includes a checklist of criteria reviewed by school counselors when making a determination of student eligibility prior to presenting them to the building principal for consideration. Once approved by the principal, the applications move on to the Board for final approval.

- ES-16 Motion by Troy Bier, seconded by John Benbow, to approve of one application to participate in one requested course through the Early College Credit Program (ECCP) in the spring of the 2024-25 school year. Motion carried unanimously.**

- ES-17 Motion by Troy Bier, seconded by Julie Timm, to approve of thirteen applications to participate in eight requested courses at Mid-State Technical College through the Start College Now (SCN) program in the spring of the 2024-25 school year. Motion carried unanimously.**

V. Updates

A. Skyward Qmlativ Migration

Phil Bickelhaupt, Director of Technology, presented information concerning the District's migration from its Skyward SMS 2.0 student database management system to the Skyward Qmlative system effective with the 2024-25 school year. Mr. Bickelhaupt shared a historical

snapshot of the District's history and experience in using the Skyward program, reasons for moving from SMS 2.0 to Qmlativ, positives experienced in the transition between programs, and challenges that presented themselves throughout the process. While the upgrade to Qmlativ is anticipated to be worth it in the end and there are many tools and enhancements yet to be explored, there have been some bumps along the way that has provided learning experiences and opportunities for reflection about what may have helped the process go more smoothly.

Mr. Bickelhaupt held a meeting recently which involved a District leadership team and Skyward representatives, and he was encouraged by the support and willingness of Skyward to listen to concerns raised and brainstorm ideas about how to continue moving forward in a positive fashion. Jake Schueller, Account Manager from Skyward, was present at the meeting to echo the company's commitment to support the District through the transition and learn from one another. Committee members expressed their appreciation to Mr. Schueller for his commentary and presence at the meeting, and for the update by Mr. Bickelhaupt and the tireless efforts of the IT Department to make the switch to Qmlativ happen.

B. JROTC Implementation

Superintendent Ronald Rasmussen provided an overview of the process involved in bringing the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) program to the District, which is slated to move ahead at the beginning of the 2025-26 school year. He reviewed background information from the point in time when the JROTC program was introduced to the Educational Services Committee in the fall of 2022 to present date, and acknowledged there have been some flaws in the process for approval. Mr. Rasmussen requested that the Committee consider information about the program and process separately as the JROTC program continues to be considered. He introduced Dr. Rod Watson, Principal of Lincoln High School (LHS), to present information about JROTC and the status of its implementation.

Dr. Watson provided an overview of the JROTC program which was developed by the U.S. Department of Defense to build character, leadership, and citizenship in young people across the country. JROTC is not a military recruitment program, nor does it provide a clear path to a career in the military. The program is a supplementary offering in high schools and led by two instructors with military experience and training in education. The program centers on four leadership classes with several extra-curricular opportunities. Geographical data was shared to reflect the number of JROTC programs operating throughout the nation. The closest programs in Wisconsin are located in Beloit and Racine, and Tomah plans to offer JROTC programming in the coming year. While there is no way to predict how many students might enroll in the WRPS JROTC program, offering this unique opportunity in Central Wisconsin may provide a niche that certain students may be interested in. Beloit Memorial High School has a student population of approximately 1,300 and maintains around 130 students in the JROTC program despite local academy system competition.

Dr. Watson explained that JROTC activities and the curriculum offer the following:

- ◆ Promotes citizenship
- ◆ Provides incentive to live drug-free
- ◆ Improves self-image and confidence
- ◆ Offers college entrance exam prep
- ◆ Develops leadership and effective communication skills
- ◆ Improves physical fitness
- ◆ Students train to work as a team member
- ◆ Inspires Cadets to graduate

The JROTC program is very effective at providing a sense of belonging for students, builds on leadership skills, improves student behavior, and builds character/citizenship. The program is not intended to service the unique needs of "at risk" students. Challenges of the program include scheduling difficulties often experienced, and quality recruitment and retention of instructors.

There are four Leadership Education Training (LET) courses offered to Cadets in grades 9-12 which Dr. Watson reviewed. Students would take one LET course per year that would run for two trimesters, and they would earn one credit per course. Students would have the opportunity to participate in Drill and Color Guard teams, and participate in a week long summer adventure camp at no cost to them. There would be an expectation for students to wear the JROTC uniform to school once per week, or as required by the program. The cost to the District is one-half the cost of each instructor, plus co-curricular pay.

The effort to implement a JROTC program at Lincoln was led by two former teachers from the high school: Nathali Jones and Randy Vinter. They performed the research, led a site visit, and helped guide the application process. The JROTC proposal was presented to the Educational Services Committee on November 7, 2022 and on November 14, 2022, the Board of Education approved of completing the JROTC application with an expectation for additional information to be brought back for final consideration and approval once details about logistics and the financial impact was known. The Department of the Army approved of the District's JROTC application in April, 2024.

Dr. Watson shared the next steps he envisions needing to happen to bring the JROTC program to LHS:

- Find two excellent teachers with military experience to build the program
- Market the program
- Conduct a site visit to JROTC schools with interested staff members this winter to learn more
- Add the 4 LET courses to the *Program of Studies* (only 1 LET would be made available to start)
- Hold listening sessions with staff, community members, and perhaps 8th grade students to explain the program and its benefits
- Offer 4 LET courses as electives only (physical education or health credit could be offered later)
- Teachers would run 1-2 sections of each class per day, plus one study hall and one prep period
- Work with teachers to design 1-2 co-curriculars to start (Color Guard)
- Develop interior conference room near the commons as the office, and use the back room for equipment storage
- Begin recruitment as soon as possible

Mr. Rasmussen stated that he had a parent contact him to express interest in the JROTC program as they live in a neighboring district; they would have their student attend under the open enrollment program if it is offered. An expectation of the Army is for the JROTC program to have 10% of the student population at LHS enrolled in the program within five years of inception. There are no guarantees that the program will draw in students, or keep students here. He also clarified that the Army will cover half the *salary only* for each instructor, not the benefits. It is plausible that the instructors hired would not enroll in the District's health insurance program as they would be receiving military health coverage. In terms of programming, marksmanship is no longer a requirement of the program, and instead archery and Color Guard are focused on along with other potential electives such as drones and robotics. The JROTC is not a military recruitment program, and approximately 6% of Cadets involved in the program ultimately enlist in the military, which aligns with the 4-6% population of students from LHS who typically pursue military service after high school.

Committee members provided a variety of commentary and questions, including:

- Noted that 40% of the current Cadet programming population includes 40% females, which is a perceived positive
- From the information presented, it appears that pellet guns are used in marksmanship activities as opposed to rifles
- Whether the instructors are required to be DPI certified, which Mr. Rasmussen confirmed, explaining that there is a JROTC DPI certification that can be pursued in order to teach in the program
- Concerns about marksmanship being a part of the program; Mr. Rasmussen explained that at this point in time only the leadership (LET) courses would be introduced, not the physical education courses

- Concerns about other leadership offerings already in existence at LHS, and duplication of services; Dr. Watson stated that the cohesion of the JROTC program and sense of belonging it can bring to a population of students that might not otherwise become involved in leadership activities is unique, the leadership component is quite comprehensive compared to other offerings, and the bond students form with the instructors through the program help contribute to student success
- Positives in offering another unique opportunity for students and the potential to entice other students from outside the District to enroll
- Concerns about the fact that the military's portion of funding comes from their recruitment budget
- Concerns about hiring two teachers at a salary schedule set by the military versus the District controlling this cost (approximately \$62,000 versus new teacher salary of \$47,500 – although the enlisted teacher would likely have numerous years of experience in the military)
- Commentary around the fact that experienced teachers with certain credentials do not necessarily get hired at the "new teacher" wage, and their experience and qualifications are often factored in when determining their starting wage
- Concerns about adding new staff when the District is facing a significant budget shortfall in the coming year, or the anticipated tough decisions coming in terms of which staff may need to be cut (i.e., classroom teacher vs. JROTC staff)
- Concerns about being obligated to continue JROTC programming, potentially at the expense of other programs, once a contract is signed
- Even if the benchmarks set by the JROTC program are not met, which is very likely in the first year of the program, the District is obligated to hire and maintain two teachers in the program – Mr. Rasmussen stated that these teachers are able to be assigned to other duties such as study hall aide and occasional single periods of substitute teaching
- Concerns around JROTC teachers being paid as a full-time, year-long teacher while potentially teaching only one class for two trimesters per year
- Ms. St. Myers stated that many concerns were raised by members of the Council for Instructional Improvement Committee about staffing the JROTC program in light of the upcoming budget deficit; Mr. Rasmussen stated that while there are no guarantees, it is possible that the cost for the instructors would be paid if enough students (7-8) were to open enroll into the program
- Mr. Rasmussen made mention that the District received strong support from the local VFW when developing the JROTC application for submission
- A question was raised about where the gun range facility is located that was referred to on the JROTC application. Mr. Rasmussen clarified that the program would have access to a local facility through the Sheriff's Department; however, there are no plans for the program to have rifles involved
- Mr. Rasmussen also clarified that the District wouldn't fund the week-long camp or uniforms as this would be covered by the Army; the only obligation of the District is staff member salary/benefit costs and the co-curricular and archery activities
- Consideration for how the program could appeal to and positively impact a certain segment of the student population due to its uniqueness
- Clarification that the program is open to all students, which it is
- A question was raised around whether there is a similar JROTC co-curricular only opportunity available that might appeal to students, rather than committing to the full-blown JROTC program; the administration is unaware of such an offering
- Questions were raised around how marketing for JROTC will look in comparison to other programs; Mr. Rasmussen explained that there are marketing expectations involved in the JROTC contract
- Questions were raised around who will be attending the planned tour of Beloit; Mr. Rasmussen stated that he encouraged Dr. Watson to invite staff members who have raised concerns along with school counselors and other pertinent personnel
- Clarification that the LET coursework can qualify for Phy Ed credit due to the curriculum involved, along with other potential areas such as civics/government, health, etc.
- A question was raised around how long Beloit programming has been in existence; they are one of the original programs established in the state, so one of the longest-running programs
- Concerns around being obligated to the 5-year commitment if only a handful of students enroll in the program; Mr. Rasmussen intends to get additional clarification on this, but knows that initially the District will be obligated to hire two instructors and share the cost as described
- Concerns about JROTC competing with other District-offered coursework being taught
- A question was raised about whether there is an actual contract or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that has been signed by a District representative; Mr. Rasmussen clarified that he was instructed to accept the Army's offer via email that was extended in April, 2024, which he did – no other contract or MOU exists to his knowledge

The Board discussed the process involved in bringing the JROTC programming to WRPS, and the expectation that there would be Board involvement in the final decision as to whether or not the program would be approved for implementation. Mr. Rasmussen explained that while serving as the LHS Principal, he received verification from the prior Superintendent that the program is moving forward and had no reason to question whether any additional steps were needed. His understanding is that Roxanne Filtz, Director of Curriculum & Instruction, questioned the Superintendent about whether the item needed to come back through for a vote by the Board when she learned about the application being approved by the Army. She was told "no." The administration's intention in bringing the JROTC topic forward as an update item on the Educational Services agenda is to provide details about where the application process stands, and find out if the Board has issues with the administration continuing to pursue implementing the program, or if they prefer to have the item added to a future agenda to potentially vote on the matter either on November 11, 2024, or perhaps in December at the Educational Services Committee meeting after the group has had a chance to tour the Beloit program. If the Board votes to not approve of the program, it would be pulled from any student schedule sheets as they begin to enroll for the 2025-26 school year.

A question was raised around whether the community could be surveyed to gauge their interest or support for the program. Mr. Rasmussen stated this is possible; however, it could delay the process and have the District's application placed back into the mix with other school districts with no guarantee that the opportunity would become available again in the foreseeable future. Some on the Committee expressed that while the process leading up to the current point may have been a bit messy, it doesn't necessarily mean that the JROTC program shouldn't still be pursued if it has great potential.

Some on the Committee expressed an interest in bringing the program back for a vote, and there were no concerns raised for this to occur. They would prefer to have this happen after the contingency of staff members take a tour of the Beloit program. Mr. Rasmussen stated that he will plan to have the JROTC courses added to the LHS Program of Studies and adjust the offering at a later date if the Board decides not to approve of the program in December. Committee members requested to review a copy of all expectations outlined by the Army for the program to operate in the District; Mr. Rasmussen will work on obtaining this information. Ms. Stebbins-Hintz requested that a couple of articles she has received from members of the community be shared with all Board members for their consideration, along with prior documentation included in Committee background materials when the JROTC program was initially introduced. Mr. Rasmussen will ensure that these materials are provided to all Board members.

C. District Strategic Plan

Mr. Rasmussen reviewed all areas of the District Strategic Plan, requesting input from Committee members on areas they feel should be changed, updated, or added. The following items were discussed:

- **Objective #1** – Keep and continue to refine
- **Objective #2** – Keep, but potentially pull apart and refine; consider how EMLSS components should be incorporated in light of having a new administrator hired with focused oversight in this area; also consider adding specific tasks, action steps, and four or five goals around closing student achievement gaps, including gaps affiliated with marginalized populations – look at specific items such as discipline, expulsions/suspensions, low test scores, etc.
- **Objective #3** – Much of this is complete and has become the culture of what we do; perhaps combine pieces of this with Objective #10
- **Objective #4** – Certain aspects of this objective are the normal course of operations now; perhaps keep it for another year with only those items that are relevant

- **Objective #5** – A great deal under this objective has been completed or is on-going; consider what might be able to be eliminated, or perhaps remove the objective
- **Objective #6** – Unsure of how much is being done in these areas; the Wellness Committee is on-going and the start date for most of these began long ago
- **Objective #7** – Final funding for the 2021 referendum ends next year, so this objective has essentially been accomplished
- **Objective #8** – Innovation Grants continue on an annual basis, and individuals bringing ideas forward to try are never turned away, as long as it is plausible to implement – this objective can be removed or perhaps be seeded into other areas
- **Objective #9** – ESSER III funding is complete
- **Objective #10** – this is an extremely important objective to maintain and pursue

Committee members requested that an additional 4-5 concrete goals around the areas of curriculum, literacy, closing achievement gaps, and discipline be considered for inclusion and additional focus. A suggestion was also made to consider an additional item being added around building and program needs into the future and how they will be funded, particularly now that the 2021 referendum is nearing its conclusion.

Mr. Rasmussen requested that Board members contact him if any other ideas come up between now and February, 2025 when the Strategic Plan will undergo review by the Board. He will keep all Board members informed if additional ideas are sent his way.

VI. Consent Agenda Items

- ES-1 Advanced Video, Digital and Graphic Arts**
- ES-2 Game Changers: Tracing History Through Sports**
- ES-3 America's Voice**
- ES-4 America's Story**
- ES-5 Earth Structure and Processes**
- ES-6 Meteorology, Oceanography, and Climatology**
- ES-7 Physical Geology**
- ES-8 Topics in Physical Science**
- ES-9 Topics in Life Science**
- ES-10 Physics 101**
- ES-11 AP Environmental Science**
- ES-12 Outdoor Education**
- ES-13 Winter Outdoor Education**
- ES-14 Mental Health and Stress Management**
- ES-15 Dual Credit Course Name Changes**
- ES-16 Early College Credit Application**
- ES-17 Start College Now Applications**

VII. Future Agenda Items/Information Requests

The Committee reviewed the following future agenda items:

- Innovation Mini Grant Recipients (December)
- School and District Report Cards (December's Board Meeting)
- Early Literacy Remediation Plan (December)
- Open Enrollment Space Determination Limits for the 2024-2025 School Year (January)
- AGR Mid-Year Report (February)
- District Strategic Plan (February)

Ms. Stebbins-Hintz adjourned the meeting at 8:15 p.m.