

MINNETONKA INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT #276
District Service Center
5621 County Road 101
Minnetonka, Minnesota

Summary of February 22, 2024 Study Session

The School Board of Minnetonka Independent School District #276 met in study session at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, February 22, 2024 in the Community Room at the District Service Center, 5621 County Road 101, Minnetonka, Minnesota. Chairperson Meghan Selinger presided. Other Board members present were Sally Browne, Kemerie Foss, Patrick Lee-O'Halloran, Dan Olson, Michael Remucal, Chris Vitale and Superintendent David Law, ex officio.

Prior to the study session, the Board met in closed session to conduct the superintendent's mid-year performance review.

REVIEW OF FY24 AMENDED BUDGET

Executive Director of Finance and Operations Paul Bourgeois led the discussion. He explained, by way of background, that the District continually monitors actual revenue and expenditures against budgeted amounts through the year, and typically makes mid-year budget adjustments to reflect any changes in revenue and expenditure projections that have materialized in the first 6-7 months of the year.

Mr. Bourgeois noted that the information presented this evening is for FY24 only. The FY25 budget is in the process of development during the months of February through May for final approval in June prior to the start of FY25 on July 1, 2024. Initial projections are included for informational purposes, but as part of the FY25 budget process, updated projections including any changes by the 2024 Legislature for FY25 and subsequent years will be presented at that time.

Also, as of the date of this Study Session, the FY24-FY25 Minnetonka Teachers Association contract is still being negotiated. Any differences in the final negotiated settlement from the compensation assumptions included in this FY24 Amended Budget and projection for FY25-FY29 will result in changes to both the FY24 Amended Budget and the FY25-FY29 projection.

The FY24 Amended Budget projection includes all the known changes in revenues and expenditures that have occurred since the FY24 Budget was adopted on June 15, 2023. The General Operating Fund Amended Budget currently estimates a surplus of \$1,252,283, which is down (\$812,842) from the Adopted Budget amount of \$2,065,125.

It is important to note that the General Operating Fund is supported in both FY24 and FY25 by significant one-time or transitory revenue as follows:

- FY24 revenue is supported by \$2,184,946 in one-time Operating Referendum Revenue from a prior-year adjustment for actual inflation that ran higher than the inflation level estimated by the Minnesota Department of Education
- FY24 revenue is also supported by \$2,602,583 in transitory interest earnings on cash due to increased interest rates by the Federal Reserve to combat inflation – as the Federal Reserve lowers interest rates in the future this level of interest earnings will not be available, but the District is taking maximum advantage of the rates while they still exist by locking in future earnings
- Absent the one-time Operating Referendum revenue and the transitory higher-than-normal interest earnings, the FY24 Adopted Budget and Amended Budget would not be showing an estimated surplus
- FY25 revenue is supported by \$1,746,428 in one-time Operating Referendum revenue, \$320,967 in one-time Reemployment revenue, and \$112,111 in one-time Local Optional revenue, totaling \$2,179,506 in one-time revenue from prior-year adjustments due to MDE estimates being lower than actual
- FY25 revenue is also supported by \$2,000,000 in transitory interest earnings on cash due to increase interest rates by the Federal Reserve compared to normal rate levels, but estimated to decline approximately 25% during FY25 from FY24 levels
- Absent the one-time Operating Referendum revenue, one-time Reemployment revenue, and one-time Local Optional revenue, and the transitory higher-than-normal interest earnings, the FY25 Adopted Budget estimate would show significantly larger deficit of revenue to expenditures
- The absence of one-time revenues in FY26 is one of the primary reasons that the estimated deficit of revenues to expenditures is larger by over \$4,000,000, at (\$6,082,468) in FY26 compared to (\$1,981,675) in FY25

The FY24 Amended Budget projects the following amounts for the General Operating Fund:

General Operating Fund Revenues	\$162,407,686
General Operating Fund Expenditures	\$161,155,403
Projected Revenues Over (Under) Expenditures	\$ 1,252,283
Net Change in Ending Fund Balance	\$ 1,252,283
Projected Ending Unassigned Fund Balance	\$ 23,329,504
Unassigned Fund Balance as Percent of Expenditures	14.5%
Net Change in Unassigned Fund Balance From FY23	\$ 1,509,349

Mr. Bourgeois then went over amended budgets for the Nutrition Services Fund, Community Service Fund, Capital Expenditures Fund, Debt Service Fund, Fiduciary Funds-Donations, Athletic Equipment Fund, Self-Insurance Health & Dental Fund, Other Post-Employment Benefits Fund, Arts Center Fund, Dome Operations Fund, Aquatics

Fund, Pagel Center Operations Fund, Long Term Facilities Maintenance Fund, Building Construction Fund, OPEB Bonds Debt Service Fund, and Capital Projects Technology Fund.

In the discussion that followed, Board member Vitale offered his thanks to Mr. Bourgeois and Coordinator of Budget and Financial Systems Ashwin Muni for their hard work on the budget over the years. He noted that for many years, the District had been growing by approximately 200 students per year, and that is no longer happening, which makes a big difference in the bottom line. Board member Olson noted that the budget had been discussed at the last Finance Advisory Committee meeting, and the big takeaway at that meeting was that we have work to do at the legislature regarding school funding needs.

CITIZEN INPUT

Chairperson Selinger extended an invitation to members of the audience who wished to address the Board on any topic. She also read the guidelines for Citizen Input, for the benefit of those who wished to speak.

The following individuals then addressed the Board:

- District resident Betsy Lindgren addressed the Board regarding the ongoing negotiations with the MTA and expressed her support for the District's wonderful teachers.
- District employee Dan Chies read the following prepared statement:

Madame Chair, Superintendent Law, and members of the School Board.

My name is Dan Chies, and this is my 13th year teaching, and 7th at MMW, teaching STEM and technology courses. While reading about possible budget cuts and staffing reductions scares me, I'm here to talk about another facet of all this - health care. Last year our healthcare premiums went up 8%. This year we hear they could go up close to 20%. These increases could only compound year after year. And sounds like deductibles are going up also. Sure, I could debate going in when I'm sick. We all do that. We always question if we're actually sick enough to see a doctor and pay. But - I don't have the luxury of debating whether to go in... I'm required. Exactly 5 years and 56 days ago, I didn't wake up for work - I woke up in the hospital. At 1am I'd had a massive seizure - and by 1pm the next day it was determined I had a 24 cubic centimeter brain tumor - I was in surgery the next day. We later learned I'd been having micro-seizures for YEARS. But. I hadn't gone to the doctor.

What did it cost? A 6-hour surgery, 2 days in the ICU, 8 MRI's the first year. How about a cancer biopsy? Luckily mine was negative. Physical therapy, mental health therapy, medications, and 19 staples. Do you know what the 5-year survival rate of any brain tumor is? It's not 100%. Yet here I am.

Do you know who had my back? My partner. My family. My friends. My coworkers who jumped into my classes and THEN started a MEAL TRAIN to my house- I was told "we got your back."

Do you know who else had my back? This district. An underestimate of my medical cost of that first year is \$50,000, I paid just the deductible. And for all of that support and coverage, I am grateful.

However, brain tumor survivors require ongoing care. Due to the rarity of my tumor type, I require monitoring MRI's and visits to my neuro-oncologist every 6 months. My doctor has told me that these MRIs and the meds I take to control seizures and neuropathic pain, will both continue indefinitely.

Each of these visits cost - pre-coverage out of pocket, \$3,500. Sure, there's insurance - but the amount I pay - the real bills - never ever get lower.

I brought my family here tonight to show you that we aren't just a few people holding signs or honking horns. We aren't numbers on a spreadsheet somewhere. We are real people. With families. With needs.

You say budget reductions are needed. Please increase the funding to settle our teacher contract and help reduce the expenses we will endure with these new increases in healthcare. One time money on the salary schedule doesn't help with anyone's healthcare costs. We need ongoing money to help offset inflation and healthcare costs.

For the past 7 years, this district has had my back - Why don't you have it now?

- District parent Maria Helena Moreno addressed the Board regarding the ongoing negotiations with the MTA and expressed her support for the District's teachers and staff.
- District parent Tara Lee Stone addressed the Board regarding her concerns about weighted grade requirements in Policy 626, specifically the requirement that students must pass the AP Test to receive a weighted grade. She asked the Board to remove the requirement. She noted that neighboring districts weight their grades in these courses, but they do not require that students take the test or pass the test to receive the weighted grade.
- District parent Felicia Homberger addressed the Board regarding her concerns with Policy 626. She asked that the Board remove the requirement that students must pass the AP Test to receive a weighted grade, saying it causes students undue duress. She noted that her colleagues at the College Board do not support the requirement. She also expressed support for the district's teachers during the ongoing contract negotiations.

Chairperson Selinger thanked the individuals for their comments.

SELF INSURANCE FUND UPDATE

Mr. Bourgeois led the discussion. By way of background, he explained that the district has been self-insured for employee health and dental insurance since July 1, 2002. Self-Insurance for health and dental benefits means the District has its own plan for health and dental benefits, and then contracts out third-party administration for the adjudication of claims. Premiums are contributed by employees out of the bi-weekly paychecks and by matching amounts from their fringe benefits compensation.

The School Board are the Trustees of the Self-Insurance Fund. There is a self-insurance advisory committee made up of representatives of all the employee groups of the District. This body makes recommendations to the School Board on annual premium levels and plan benefit levels for the School Board to consider when they are setting the annual premium rates and any plan design changes.

The Self-Insurance Fund has been very beneficial to both the District and employees. Since its inception, annual premium increases have averaged 3.39% over the first 22 years of the Self-Insurance Fund.

In FY23, the Self-Insurance Fund finished the year with a cash balance of \$10,979,565 and a fund balance after liability accruals of \$8,801,165. Expenditures exceeded revenues by (\$1,842,302) as there was a spike in large claims, and claim expenses increased overall due to usage after the pandemic and inflationary pressures.

Over Fiscal Years 2020 through 2022, because of the COVID-19 Pandemic muting medical activity, the Self-Insurance Fund ended up with higher-than-normal year end-surpluses. In normal years, premium levels are set at an amount that would generate a break-even to slightly above break-even level of surplus. During those three fiscal years, surpluses totaled a cumulative \$5,437,771. As a result, premium levels for FY23 were left at the same level as the prior year for the second year in a row. In FY24, the Self-Insurance Fund is projected to utilize (\$2,907,627) of those additional surplus funds to cover all expense of the Fund, in effect “giving back” a portion of the larger-than-normal surplus from Fiscal Years 2020 through 2022. Looking forward to FY25, medical claims trend (CPI) is projected to increase at 6.8% and pharmacy claims trend is projected to increase by 9.9% according to the Segal Health Plan Cost Trend Survey.

There is also the backdrop of the overall inflation rates for the country which is impacting health care provider costs. Per the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Calendar Year 2021 inflation rate was 7.0%, the Calendar Year 2022 inflation rate was 6.5%, and the Calendar Year 2023 inflation rate was 3.4% which compounds to 17.8% over three years. Inflation is projected to be “sticky” for calendar 2024 and into calendar 2025, so it will impact the FY25 Self-Insurance Plan Year.

In FY24, premiums were increased 8% for health coverage and 4% for dental coverage. Despite these increases, the Self-Insurance Fund is currently projected to again have a shortfall of revenues to expenses of approximately \$2.9 million. In addition to continuing

inflationary pressures, the Self-Insurance plan is experiencing a higher-than-normal level of high claim costs. Several areas of coverage are running at large percentages more than the average cost of Health Partners' book of business.

In light of these inflationary pressures, coupled with the fact that health insurance usage has returned to pre-Pandemic levels, the initial CBIZ Actuaries recommendation for health insurance premium increases for FY25 was for a 22.23% increase to break even for the year.

At the meeting of February 5, 2024, The Self-Insurance Advisory Committee looked at an option to increase pharmacy copays to \$50 and deductibles by \$300 across the board, with Maximum Out Of Pocket limits increased by like amounts. This combination would reduce the premium increase to a projected 18.47% per CBIZ Actuaries. The Self-Insurance Advisory Committee asked administration and the District advisory CBIZ to look at an option that would lower the copay increase and bring the premium increase to under 20%, in the 19.5% +/- range. Several options related to that will be looked at during the next Self-Insurance Advisory Committee Meeting on February 26, 2024.

For the Dental Plan, the proposed premium increase is 7% strictly because of inflationary pressures of the past several years driving rising costs.

The Self-Insurance Advisory Committee will have to vote on a recommendation to the School Board at the committee's February 26, 2024 meeting, as to comply with requirements of the Affordable Care Act to have premiums communicated to members of a plan at least 90 days before the premium takes effect. The School Board must set premium rates for Health and Dental Insurance for FY25 at the March 7, 2024 School Board Meeting.

In the discussion that followed, Mr. Bourgeois noted that healthcare costs will be a part of negotiations with all the district's bargaining groups going forward. Superintendent Law said that zero percent increases are really not a good idea going forward. Board member Olson noted that one of his family members is a district employee, and his family receives health insurance through the district. He said he has compared MN Care plans, and their plans do not offer nearly the same amount of benefits as the district plan, while at the same time being much more expensive. Chairperson Selinger thanked the members of the Self Insurance Advisory Committee for their hard work on preparing a recommendation to the Board. She noted that the recommendation would be voted on at the March 7 regular Board meeting.

MTSS UPDATE

Associate Superintendent Dr. Amy LaDue and Executive Director of Special Education Dr. Christine Breen led the discussion. They began by giving a review of MTSS:

MTSS is a framework focused on delivering high-quality instruction in the area of academics, as well as social and emotional learning. This continuous-improvement process relies on data-based decision-making and problem-solving across all levels of the educational system to support students. The framework supports alignment and integration of various District operations and systems to facilitate efficiency and effectiveness in order to maximize student success.

A critical aspect of an MTSS framework is an aligned system that ensures high-quality core instruction for all students, which encompasses academics along with social and emotional development. Core instruction in these areas includes the learning all students engage in through district curriculum and programs to achieve Minnetonka essential learnings, State standards and District goals. In addition, the framework provides a system for consistent Tier 2 and Tier 3 instruction in academics, social and emotional learning, and behavioral supports.

Utilizing the findings from Phase 1 and 2 of the MTSS evaluation, conducted over two school years, and the priorities identified for the District as a result, a 3-year implementation plan was developed. The District is in Year 2 of implementation of the 3-year action plan.

The District continues to partner with the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI) for guidance and technical assistance for the ongoing development and implementation of the District MTSS Framework.

Action Plan - Key Components

The District Action Plan is organized by three key elements: Infrastructure and Support, Assessment and Decision-Making, and Multi-level Instruction. Each year the action plan is designed to further build the capacity of staff to implement a systemic MTSS framework. In this update, progress in development of the Infrastructure and Support is a significant focus area. This includes the progress with teams, centering on professional learning communities (PLCs) and school-based student support teams (SST). Additionally, progress with the development and deployment of the process guide, designed to be both aspirational and informative, will be shared. In the area of Assessment and Decision-Making the focus is an update regarding the onboarding and initial implementation of the newly adopted data warehouse, eduCLIMBER. The Multi-level Instruction component update will focus on the intervention inventory that CAREI completed to guide and inform District decisions in Tier 2 and Tier 3 instruction.

Significant progress is being made with all action steps outlined in the District MTSS plan and a comprehensive update on all aspects of the Year 2 action plan will be provided in a year-end report.

Teams

In the strategic development and implementation of a Multi-tiered System of Supports framework there are four levels of collaborative teams: District, Building, Grade-level/PLC, and Student Support (Figure 1). Much of the professional learning work in 2023-24 has been concentrated on furthering the understanding of the purpose and practices for both PLC and SST teams.

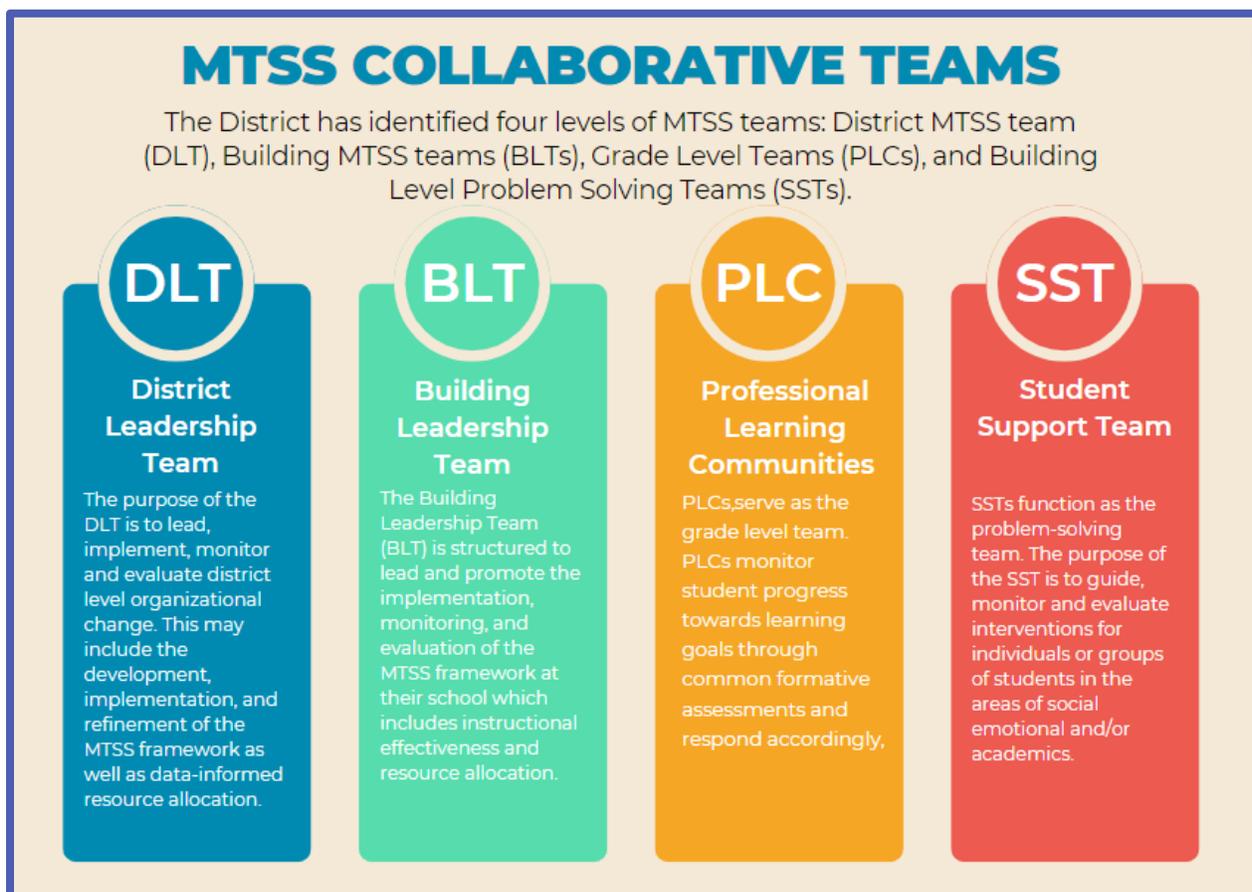


Figure 1: MTSS Collaborative Teams

Refining and Realigning Professional Learning Community Practices

The Professional Learning Community (PLC) functions as one of the four MTSS collaborative teams. While PLCs have been supporting teachers in meeting the needs of their students for over fifteen years, it was determined in the 2022-23 school year that common understandings of PLC practices and structures would be necessary for teams to fulfill the expectations of the MTSS Grade Level Team. To that end, site and district administrators and teachers from around the District committed to deepening their understandings of PLCs.

To ensure that administrators and teacher leaders had common understandings of PLC practices, a team attended the nationally renowned PLC at Work Institute in Minneapolis in the summer of 2023. At the end of each day, the team convened to discuss key

takeaways and next steps. At the conclusion of the conference, each attendee reflected on their learning through a survey. Several themes emerged from the data.

- Collaboration and feedback are integral to successful PLCs. Educators are encouraged to work together, share ideas, and provide constructive feedback to one another. Teams should focus their collaboration on tasks that improve student learning such as identifying essential learnings, analyzing student work, and engaging in professional dialogue rather than using the collaboration time to complete logistical tasks such as planning field trips. By working collectively, teachers can refine their instructional practices and enhance student learning outcomes.
- Data-driven practices are central to effective PLCs. Educators are encouraged to use data to inform their instructional decisions, identify areas of strength and growth, and monitor student progress. This includes administering common assessments, analyzing data collaboratively, and using evidence-based strategies to address student needs. By utilizing data effectively, teachers can make informed decisions that lead to improved teaching and learning outcomes.
- Differentiated instruction and the identification of essential standards are essential components of PLCs. Educators are encouraged to identify the most critical knowledge and skills students need to master and focus their instruction on those essential standards. Differentiating instruction to meet individual student needs and providing targeted interventions and enrichment opportunities are key strategies within PLCs.
- The integration of social-emotional learning (SEL) alongside academic learning was emphasized as critical for student success. Teachers were encouraged to develop clear expectations for behavior intervention plans and foster a compassionate culture within their classrooms and schools. Building strong relationships and classroom culture, setting norms collaboratively, and individual goal-setting with students were highlighted as key strategies for effective teaching and learning.
- The conference also addressed the need for effective intervention systems to support student learning. It was suggested to create a schoolwide intervention plan that involves all staff members, dividing and reorganizing human resources to create intervention and extension groups. The importance of identifying essential learning targets and basing interventions on student needs rather than grade-level expectations was emphasized.

The identified themes align directly with the expectations of PLCs as the grade level team in MTSS. The team attending the conference acknowledged that these were aspirational and could become reality with intentional professional learning for both teachers and administrators as well as adjusting PLC systems and structures.

Specific steps were taken to address these aspirational goals. During the first quarter of the 2023-24 school year, PLC teams at each school met collectively and centrally. Each meeting started with either an in-person mini-lesson or a short video focused on one core PLC concept and was followed by supported reflection and application of the concept. The topics addressed in the professional learning series included:

- What Are Essential Learnings?
- Collective Commitments
- Collaborative Common Formative Assessments
- SMARTer Goals

Elementary content specialists (art, media, music, and physical education) and secondary teachers had deeper learning on PLC concepts and practices while their elementary colleagues were engaged in deep literacy learning. Members of the Teaching and Learning team led this work on the three professional learning days this year.

To increase the levels of support, each PLC was assigned to both an administrator and an instructional coach. The administrator is responsible to review each of their assigned PLCs' One-Stop-Shop at the end of quarters one and three and focus their feedback to the team on the essential learnings the teams identified. Principals collaborated at a principal meeting to ensure consistent feedback on essential learnings. At the mid-year, the Alternative Pay Oversight Committee provided feedback on SMART goals. Monthly, teacher instructional coaches review PLC notes and provide guidance. Coaches and site administrators meet monthly as well to discuss trends in PLCs.

The one-stop-shop also evolved to better reflect the PLC focus. Teams were asked to reflect on how the meeting *improved student learning* and to *include the interventions and extensions* they were providing to their students. On the Essential Learning and CFAs tab, teams were asked to draw a line from the essential learning to the collaborative common formative assessment connected to it and to use both of these as the foundation for their SMART goals.

PLC Meeting Notes			
The purpose of a PLC is to ensure EVERY student is learning at high levels.			
Guiding Questions: (1) What do we want students to learn? (Essential Learning) (3) How will we respond when students don't learn? (Intervention) (2) How will we know if students have learned? (Assessment) (4) How will we respond if students already know it? (Extension)			
Mtg # / Meeting Date	Members Absent	Notes on how this meeting has improved student learning. Include interventions and extensions.	SMART Goals (Student Learning)
Example Entry		EXAMPLE: We discussed ____ (essential learning). The team agreed to give ____ common formative assessment on ____, and to analyze student data. Looked at student data from ____; discussed common errors and how to support students' learning. <i>Students that did not meet standard will receive ____ intervention, and students that met standard will receive ____ extension.</i>	EXAMPLE SMART Goal: By __ (date), every learner will demonstrate understanding/mastery of __ (specific learning) at __ (desired proficiency level) with ____ assessment as evidence.
Mtg 1			No SMART Goal yet
Mtg 2			No SMART Goal yet
Mtg 3			No SMART Goal yet

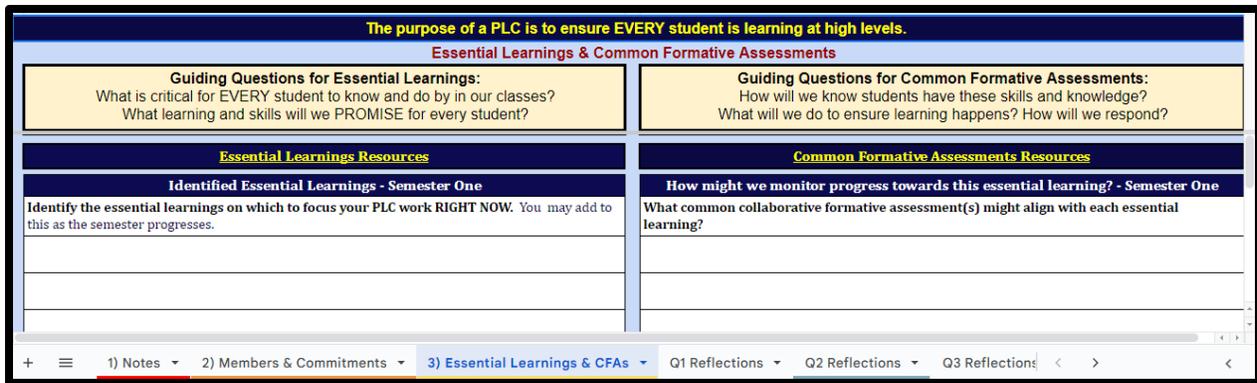


Figure 2: Excerpts from PLC One-Stop-Shop 2023-24

Student Support Team Decision-Making Framework and Standard Treatment Protocol

During the 2023-2024 school year, an intentional focus has been on training staff who participate on our Student Support Teams (SSTs), specifically school psychologists, special education facilitators, principals and assistant principals. These trainings, facilitated by Dr. Ellina Xiong, have centered around the use of a Decision-Making Framework and Standard Treatment Protocol. Adopting a formal or standard decision-making process to facilitate effective decision-making was a first step in the training process. Using a formal decision-making process ensures a structured and standard data review process, promotes collaboration and effective teamwork, and ensures a systematic process of identifying effective interventions that lead to improved outcomes. Minnetonka chose the Problem-Solving Model, which is a structured process to facilitate decision-making and consists of five stages that are cyclical. These stages include problem identification, problem analysis, plan development, plan implementation, and plan evaluation. Each stage is driven by core questions and specific tasks and the model can be used to develop instruction and interventions across tiers to address remedial and advanced learning needs.



Figure 3: Problem-Solving Model

Once the decision-making framework is solidified, teams can begin applying a Standard Treatment Protocol at the SST meetings. This model provides standard interventions chosen to address the most common student areas of need within the school, with interventions readily available for students as soon as needs are identified. The District continues to partner with CAREI in order to narrow down and identify which evidence-based interventions the District elects to continue to use and additionally, which interventions the District wants to add to our system in the areas of reading, math and social and emotional learning.

The training of SSTs is pertinent to the growth of MTSS in the District, as the District previously utilized SSTs in a different manner. Prior to year 2 of our action plan, SSTs were utilized to problem-solve students requiring differentiation at Tier 1 and Tier 2, creating a backlog of students needing to be discussed. As the District has implemented this new decision-making framework, as well as worked with PLC teams to ensure teachers understand and feel equipped in their role of supporting students in Tier 1 and into Tier 2 in their classrooms, SSTs are functioning much more effectively in applying a Standard Treatment Protocol to students not making progress at Tier 2 and requiring Tier 3 interventions.

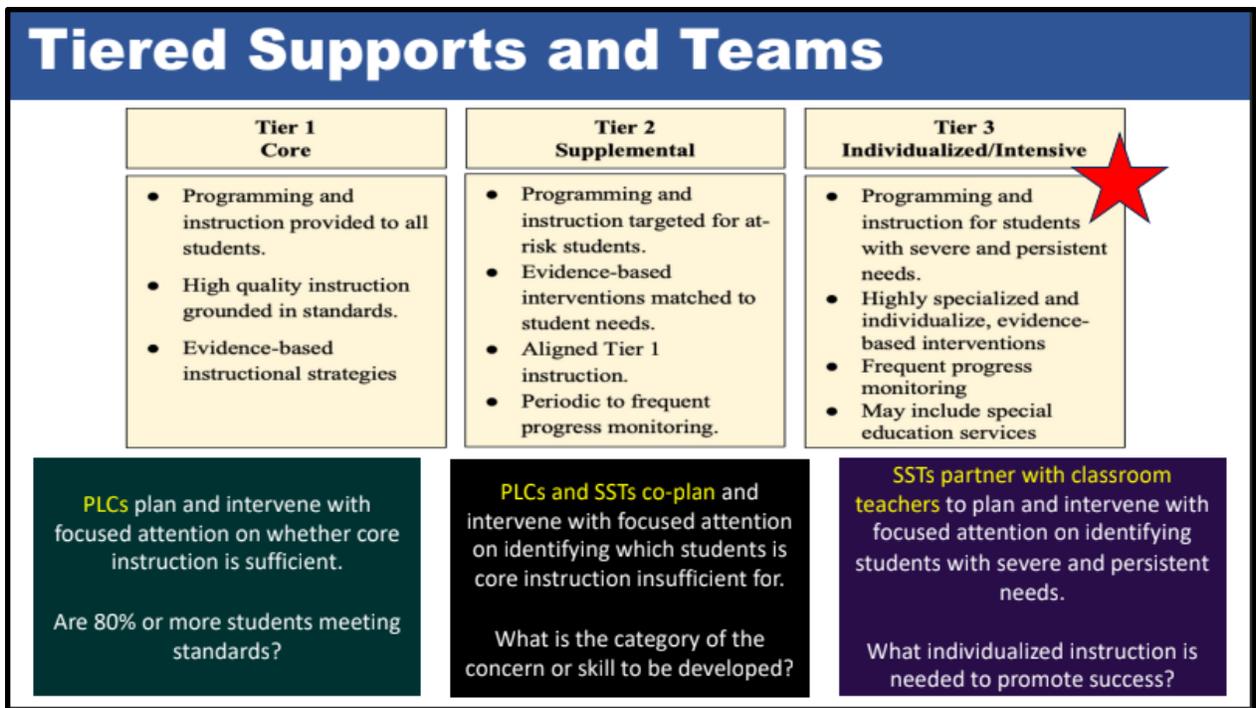


Figure 4: Tiered Supports and Teams

Intervention Inventory

As a part of the District partnership with CAREI, a comprehensive evaluation of existing Tier 2 and Tier 3 resources was completed during the spring and summer of 2023. The goal of this inventory was to understand the resources, tools and programs being used across the District and to understand the gaps that exist. In the 2022-23 school year, building leadership teams including interventionists and administrators, used tools and methods co-designed with CAREI to collect information regarding reading, mathematics, social, emotional and behavioral interventions available and/or being utilized at each site, districtwide.

This inventory resulted in identification of the evidence-based interventions currently being used at schools within the district. The District Leadership Team is using this information to guide decisions about which interventions should be expanded districtwide, which areas may need new intervention resources, which interventions are promising and should be further studied, and which interventions are not evidence-based that should be discontinued.

Next steps are identifying alternative interventions as necessary. Further, it is expected that as a result of the READ Act, the MDE will be providing a list of evidence-based resources in the area of literacy. Efforts will be made to ensure Tier 2 interventions are standardized, delivered by staff trained in the intervention, and group size and dosage are optimized for the age and needs of students being served.

Process Guide

To support the implementation of MTSS districtwide, CAREI recommended the District develop an MTSS Process Guide to provide a common foundation and deepen the understanding of core components and subcomponents of Minnetonka's MTSS Framework. Based on this recommendation, a process guide sub-committee was created during the 2021-22 school year. Members of the process guide committee include the Director of Assessment and Evaluation, Director of Curriculum, an elementary principal, an academic strategist, and a CAREI team member.

Throughout the development of the Process Guide, with input from many staff outside of the committee, there have been new insights and updates. The Guide is not only designed to represent and provide clarity around the current District MTSS practices, but it is also designed to be aspirational. Because of the aspirational nature of the process guide, it will inform staff with their current MTSS work and provide guidance for future steps.

At this time, final revisions are being made to the first version of the Process Guide; this version of the Process Guide will be housed in a Google site located on Single Sign-On for all District staff to access. Minnetonka's Process Guide will influence site and district professional learning teams as they identify needs and develop their plans for upcoming school years.



Figure 5: MTSS Process Guide Google Site Excerpt

The Process Guide website will contain the following sections:

- How to use the Guide and rationale
- Infrastructure and support mechanisms
- Assessment
- Data-based decision-making
- Appendix

Building the Process Guide into a website format will allow the Guide to effectively support professional learning and will enable the Guide to be updated in an ongoing manner. Additionally, the appendix included at the end of the Process Guide will house accessible templates and resources that can more easily be used in a practical manner by the various MTSS teams. Teams will be able to make copies of the appendix resources and tailor them to their needs. Additionally, there are many links embedded throughout the Guide, which makes the document and supporting resources more readily available in an electronic format. For those who wish to print the Process Guide, a pdf version will be made accessible through the website.

Principals and building leadership teams will be oriented to this version of the Process Guide through the website which is expected to be available through single sign-on by the spring of the current school year.

Data Warehouse

The District identified and evaluated several data warehouse systems last spring and selected Renaissance Learning's eduCLIMBER software as the tool to best meet the goals and needs of the District, particularly as it relates to implementation of the MTSS Framework. One of the key features influencing the selection of this tool is its capability to build out a customizable early warning system.

During the 2023-24 school year, several staff have undergone basic navigation training on Renaissance Learning's eduCLIMBER software. E-12 staff will continue to participate in professional learning on the various components and capabilities of the eduCLIMBER software. To help with the on-going learning, identified staff participated in a "Train the Trainer" two-day session with a Renaissance Learning trainer on February 20 and 21. The selected staff will serve as trainers district wide and will provide sessions and support for the continued implementation of eduCLIMBER. In addition to in-person training, virtual training videos are being created and posted in the Schoology learning management system for teachers to review and will also be a resource available to provide initial support for new staff members in future years.

The District's data warehouse, eduCLIMBER, will serve as an early warning system for all staff to identify students who are not on track in multiple areas including but not limited to the following areas:

- Attendance
- Discipline instances
- Final grades and daily progress grades
- Standardized test scores
- Social, Emotional, and Behavioral data

An early warning system allows staff to identify students in a timely manner who are in need of support, whether interventions or extensions. The eduCLIMBER system allows

staff to track student progress with academic, social, emotional, and behavior interventions as well as academic extensions. Additionally, teachers can create customized data views to review, analyze or monitor student data and progress on a regular basis with their grade level teams. Furthermore, this tool can be used to access data and results by all MTSS teams which includes the District Leadership Team (DLT), Building Leadership Teams (BLTs), Student Support Teams (SSTs), and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). This tool can be used to access data and results by all MTSS teams.

Another important feature of the eduCLIMBER system is the ability for staff to measure program effectiveness. Program effectiveness can be monitored at the classroom, building, and district level. This tool will allow Minnetonka staff to efficiently use the data protocol initially outlined by CAREI to identify students who have maintained, improved, or decreased in their performances from fall to winter to spring. According to the CAREI MTSS recommendations, the goal is for at least 95 percent of students to maintain or improve their performance levels from fall to spring. Staff are able to identify specific student's growth in an efficient manner due to the unique nature of the software. By measuring student performance over time, this tool provides an effective means to monitor the effectiveness of academic, social, emotional, and behavioral programming.

Lastly, due to the robust nature of the eduCLIMBER system, full implementation of all the components of the software will take place over the next couple of years, with features that best support the implementation of the District MTSS framework prioritized during the first phases of the rollout.

Next Steps

The District Leadership team continues to meet regularly to collaborate on action steps outlined under the three key components of the framework: Infrastructure and Support, Assessment and Decision-Making, and Multi-level Instruction. Through ongoing monitoring of key actions and collaboration with the team from CAREI, strong progress is being made.

In the discussion that followed, Board member Foss asked if the data warehouse would be able to identify achievement gaps across the district and was told yes. Board member Browne asked how data actually is input into eduCLIMBER. Dr. Rega responded that some of our current data assessment vendors are able to send information directly to eduCLIMBER, which is beneficial in that the teachers do not have to spend time inputting the data. Dr. Breen noted that eduCLIMBER is the root of MTSS, and we will be able to set our own parameters regarding the data – how many discipline referrals are too much, how many absences, etc.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING UPDATE

Dr. LaDue and Director of Teacher Development Sara White led the discussion. They updated the Board on the professional learning that has taken place during the current school year:

Table 1: Modifications to the 2023-24 School Calendar for Professional Learning Days

Student Calendar Changes	Staff Calendar Changes
	Aug 22 or 28 for professional learning
October 23: elearning practice K-5; elearning 6-12 <i>October 23 is the Monday after MEA.</i>	October 23: Professional learning with time embedded to support student e-learning
November 22: no school K-12 <i>November 22 is the Wednesday before Thanksgiving.</i>	November 22: no school if teachers participated in professional learning August day; teachers who did not participate in August attended professional learning this day
January 2: no school K-12 <i>January 2 is the Tuesday after winter break.</i>	January 2: full day of professional learning
March 4: no school for K-5; elearning 6-12 <i>March 4 is the Monday after spring parent-teacher conferences.</i>	March 4: full day of professional learning K-5; professional learning with time embedded to support student e-learning 6-12.

The revised calendar provided approximately one day of professional learning each quarter. To meet statutory requirements, secondary students had asynchronous learning for two of the four identified days. Statute also requires that on elearning days, teachers must be available to connect with students at least periodically throughout the day. As outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding with the Minnetonka Teachers Association, on elearning days, teachers were provided with scheduled time during the start, middle and end of the day for this purpose.

On Monday, March 4, secondary special education teachers and support staff as well as all K-12 facilitators and itinerant services will again work with special education administration, focusing on refining the department’s re-evaluation and dismissal procedures, conducting in-depth file reviews to ensure exemplary identification, evaluation, and service of all students, as well as dig deeper into the capabilities of eduCLIMBER and developing data collection and analysis practices to ensure effective progress monitoring.

IDENTIFIED NEEDS for 2024-25

Based on the preliminary School Board’s goals, the evolving needs of students, and state legislative requirements, dedicated time for required adult learning continues to be a priority. Should the Board support continuation of full-day professional learning by

approving a modification to the 2024-25 school calendar to create job-embedded professional learning days, the focus of the learning will be aligned across sites and will continue to focus on key District goals and priorities, including:

- READ Act literacy requirements, including any state identified literacy learning requirements for Phase 2 teachers
- English Language Arts standards, curriculum, and strategies
- MTSS processes and responses, including and not limited to
 - Designing and responding to formative assessments
 - Data literacy
 - Tier 1 evidence-based instructional practices
 - Tier 1 intervention and extension
- Assessment practices and design
- Instructional practices to support a new middle school program model

These learning needs are universal within the teaching role. Additionally, targeted professional learning for non-instructional educators such as school counselors, school psychologists, social workers, therapeutic specialists, and nurses will align to the District goals and priorities.

Professional Learning Proposal for 2024-25 School Year

In the current Board-approved District calendar for the 2024-25 school year, four early release and late starts are identified:

- September 27 Early Release
- November 1 Late Start
- February 14 Early Release
- April 28 Late Start

The calendar committee recommended these dates to evenly distribute disruptions to the school day to each quarter and to make the early releases and late starts family friendly.

Given the intensity of adult learning needs for 2024-25, it is recommended that the Board consider dedicating three days for professional learning. Similar criteria will be used for selecting these days including identifying days that are friendly to families, conducive to adult professional learning, and are conducive to digital learning for secondary students, if necessary. Additionally, frontloading professional learning prior to the start of the year and during the first half of the year creates the potential to have the greatest impact on student learning.

The District is continuing to gather stakeholder feedback on dates that meet these criteria and should be considered as options for full-day job-embedded professional learning. Additionally, should digital learning be used for one or more of these days for secondary students, stakeholders are also providing feedback on which days are best suited for this purpose.

In the discussion that followed, Board members indicated that they were supportive of this plan for professional learning days in 2024-25.

DISCUSSION ON FACILITIES STUDY

Mr. Bourgeois and Cari Lindberg led the discussion. By way of background, they explained that as the District has grown from 7,737 K-12 in-person students in FY07 to approximately 11,120 K-12 in-person students in FY24, the District has made significant investments in facilities capacity to house the growth in students, provide for programmatic offerings to add students with such spaces as Minnetonka Research, VANTAGE space, MOMENTUM space, additional music rooms at the elementary level, add parking lots and add auto queue stacking facilities for parent drop off and pick up.

Through 2023, these improvements have been paid for utilizing \$89,055,000 in bond issues paid for out of approximately \$2,000,000 in annual Operating Referendum revenue bond payment capacity and approximately \$2,500,000 in annual Lease Levy revenue bond payment capacity, plus \$9,850,000 in excess investment earnings on the OPEB Trust Fund used to help pay for the 100-year-asset VANTAGE MOMENTUM new building. These investments in facilities will all serve the Minnetonka School District students and community for many decades into the future. At the same time, because of the rise in interest rates and construction inflation, the District is currently at full utilization of these alternate revenue sources for facilities improvements. Some capacity will be regained at the time that interest rates start dropping and returning to more historically steady levels, but that additional bonding capacity, while helpful, will be incremental.

There are also likely to be further instructional program needs as educational delivery systems continue to evolve over time. At this point in time, it may be prudent for the School Board to undertake a facilities study to ascertain any areas where needs are materializing, any gaps where facilities may lack spaces that are common features in new school construction, such as auditoriums, large spaces for full-school assemblies, small group instruction, and other such features.

This study would consist of a taskforce of approximately 25 members representing staff and the local community. The taskforce would review each building through a series of meetings that would include reviewing information on the history of each facility, the current status of each facility, a discussion of any potential items that would allow the facility to better support instruction into the future, and site tours.

With that knowledge base gathered, the taskforce would develop a series of recommendations for the School Board to review to determine if any future action is warranted to ensure our facilities can support the evolution of instructional programs for our students for the next 40-50 years.

In the discussion that followed, Board members were enthusiastic about the proposal. Superintendent Law explained that the process is still in the initial stages, but that the

taskforce would be a great vehicle for gathering information and bringing it back to the Board for consideration. There would not be any conversations about costing or possible future tax impacts until the taskforce completes its work. This timeframe would allow for all of these things to happen without rushing the Board to make decisions.

UPDATE ON DEEPHAVEN AUTO QUEUE

Mr. Bourgeois led the discussion. He explained that in the spring of 2023, Mayor Kent Carlson, Councilmember Tony Jewett, and Police Chief Cory Johnson of the City of Deephaven convened a meeting with Superintendent Law and Paul Bourgeois of the Business Office to discuss options for clearing traffic off Vine Hill Road. At that time, we reviewed a possible north side auto loop, and it was received positively. However, funding was not identified for the proposed project because of commitments of Operating Capital resources to summer 2023 projects already in progress.

At this time, after working through the FY24 Amended Budget and projecting out the FY25-FY29 Operating Capital budgets, there are resources available to fund the payments on a bond issue that would allow for the construction of this project in summer 2024.

The proposed design consists of a loop on to the northwest part of the parcel that would allow for a second line of cars to form, consisting of between 56 and 65 cars depending on the size of the vehicles. These cars would drop off and pick up students at the entrance on the north side of the building. The current auto queue with cars looping through the front parking lot from the south, which holds 45-50 cars, would also continue to function, dropping off and picking up students at the main entrance. Both auto queues would still exit out the northeast driveway, as all autos do now. This “dual auto queue” would emulate the existing dual auto queue at Excelsior Elementary School, which has been functioning very successfully for over a decade since the District purchased the Lyman Lumber Company site to create the second auto queue off of George Street. School staff assigns students to their drop off and pick up door, and it works very, very well. There is every reason to think that the Deephaven Elementary School administrator staff will be able to operate these dual auto queues as successfully as is done at Excelsior Elementary School.

Approximately 110 autos drop off and pick up students each morning at Deephaven Elementary School. Adding the second auto queue should eliminate the safety hazard of autos blocking the Vine Hill Road bridge over the LTR Bike Trail to emergency, fire and police vehicles and other traffic. The risk of a rear-end collision will be reduced.

The design of the auto queue includes a box culvert under the auto queue to allow students to continue to bike to school in the fall and the spring using the LTR Bike Trail and the connection to the school as they do now. The design also includes a ramp down to the lower-level fields which will enhance emergency vehicle access to those fields compared to the current limited access. The ramp is designed to fit the turning radius of the South Lake Fire District fire trucks. It will also serve as a resource for construction access if the

District ever decides to add a gymnasium large enough for an all-school assembly to Deephaven Elementary School, as all five other elementary schools have received.

The funding for this project is proposed to be a Certificate of Participation Bond of \$1,525,000 par value, with an estimated interest rate of 4.43% and with payments out of Operating Capital averaging \$130,970 annually.

In the discussion that followed, Board members expressed enthusiasm for the project. Board member Vitale wondered at the tight timeline, but Mr. Bourgeois assured him that it wouldn't be a problem.

FURTHER REVIEW OF POLICY #626: SECONDARY GRADING AND REPORTING PUPIL ACHIEVEMENT

Minnetonka District Policy 626: Secondary Grading and Reporting Pupil Achievement, was created to *“establish effective grading and reporting practices that reflect a student’s academic achievement of the course standards.”* One of the topics covered in this policy is “Grade Weighting” defined in policy as: *“the assignment of a greater value to the letter grade’s numeric point value to reward a student for completing the Advanced Placement (AP) and/or International Baccalaureate (IB) course(s) and taking the national/international AP and IB assessments in the spring.”* This policy was modified and adopted in June of 2016 and included the following criteria for weighted grading:

“International Baccalaureate (IB) and Advanced Placement (AP) courses use different, weighted scales to differentiate between IB/AP and regular courses. All Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses shall be weighted +1.0 if the student earns a C- or higher, the courses have been determined to meet the standards of rigor established by the District, and the student successfully achieves a “3” or higher for Advanced Placement courses or a “4” on an International Baccalaureate assessment. For courses that are beyond the rigor of AP and IB, students must earn a C- or higher in the course and achieve a C- or higher on the end-of course exam to receive grade-weight status.”

At the time this policy was created, this criteria was selected with the belief that students would be more engaged in their coursework because they were expected to perform well on the AP or IB assessment. Since the policy was implemented, the majority of students enrolled in these courses have earned a weighted grade. There are concerns that some students choose not to take these rigorous courses because they are required to perform well on the AP or IB assessment in addition to strong class performance in order to earn the weighted grade, and more students might participate if they had the option to meet either criteria instead of both.

After a first discussion at the November study session, the district conducted a survey of teachers, counselors, parents and students about this policy. A summary of those survey results was presented at the Board’s Study Session in January. The changes included in

tonight's packet were presented at the February Board meeting along with some informal input from our teachers. The Board tabled the approval of this item with the intent to gather additional information for a discussion at tonight's study session.

Superintendent Law went over the data collected in January from students, parents and teachers and noted that there is not much clarity to it. He said he would recommend that the Board approve the changes to the policy that are noted in tonight's materials, that administration then implement those changes, and the Board revisit this in 18 months when data will be available. Board member Foss wondered if enough additional students would enroll in these courses to necessitate the hiring of additional teachers. Superintendent Law said he didn't think that would be the case. Board member Lee-O'Halloran noted the importance of encouraging students to take these courses, and he believes that the policy changes will accomplish that. Board member Vitale said that he was not in favor of the changes and believes they would be detrimental. He asserted that the Board is not listening to MHS administration or the teachers who are teaching these classes. He also noted that these changes were not brought forth by administration, but the community. Board member Olson countered that it is the job of the Board to listen to the community and bring their ideas forward for consideration. Board member Lee-O'Halloran said he supports the recommended changes, and we will be able to gather data relatively quickly once the changes are implemented that will enable the Board to see the outcome of the changes. He also noted that data from a comparable neighboring district shows that these parameters are working well in that district. He said that he believes that colleges do indeed take weighted grades into consideration regarding admission decisions. Board member Browne said that she found the comments during Citizen Input this evening to be very compelling, particularly Ms. Homberger's comments. Board Chairperson Selinger said that for her, the bottom line is that the District will raise its level of excellence if we encourage more students to take these courses. Our current policy makes us an outlier in the metro. Board member Foss pointed to the survey data that shows that students believe the assessment requirement increases their focus. Board member Browne countered that she believes that there was a lack of understanding regarding the survey, and the communication was not as clear as it could have been. She would put more weight on the actual students who have come to meetings and addressed the Board, asking them to drop the testing requirement. Board member Lee-O'Halloran pointed to the importance of removing testing anxiety for students. Superintendent Law noted that the proposal is best for students, because they will benefit from the proposed changes. He also stressed that every member of the Board will still be on the Board in the Fall of 2025, when we will be able to look at data that will show whether the changes, should they be implemented, have achieved the desired outcomes.

Chairperson Selinger thanked the members of the Board, and Superintendent Law, for the thoughtful, robust and respectful discussion. She said these changes would be brought back to the March 7 board meeting for approval.

ADJOURNMENT

The Board adjourned the study session at 9:10 p.m.