

..... heard Board secretary Doug Weaver recite the Elkhart Promise.

..... heard from Dustin Newcomer, KidsCare Area Director, speak about KidsCare, a division of Boy and Girls Club of Elkhart County, and how they have partnered with Elkhart Community Schools (ECS) for many years providing before and after school care for students across the district. They currently have four (4) hub locations at Eastwood, Pinewood, Riverview and Beardsley which service all thirteen (13) elementary schools in the district. They open at 5:30 a.m. and close at 5:30 p.m. providing affordable before and after school care for students, \$55/week for morning or afternoon and \$75/week for both morning and afternoon. KidsCare has aligned its mission with the Elkhart Promise in an effort to build relations with children, parents, teachers, and administrators. They work hard to support teachers by providing homework time and academic enrichment opportunities for students, helping students to establish successful habits and make good choices. They have added a Mental Health Specialist position in an effort to correct behavior problems at an earlier age, prior to middle and high school. Along with the academic help, the program also includes time outside; arts and crafts; and games and activities. They hope to continue to partner with ECS, providing even more support to teachers and students by having their program mirror ECS's curriculum maps in language arts and math; even having some of their employees taking part in some of the school training. Mr. Newcomer thanked the Board, administration, and teachers of ECS for their continued support.

..... approved the following items under a consent approval:

Minutes – January 24, 2023 – Public Work Session  
Minutes – January 24, 2023 – Regular Board Meeting  
Minutes – January 30, 2023 – Special Public Board Work Session

Claims in the amount of \$13,212,208.34.

Proposed school fundraisers in accordance with Board policy.

Accepted the following extra-curricular purchase requests: Elkhart High School (EHS) Athletics to purchase a safe totaling \$1,494.99 and West Side Middle School Orchestra to purchase a Ludwig 5-piece drum set with covers totaling \$920.13.

Gift Acceptance:

Accepted with appreciation the following donations made to Elkhart Community Schools (ECS): \$500 to Elkhart Community Schools (ECS) from an anonymous donor to be used to pay negative balances for students at Mary Daly, Riverview, Mary Beck, Bristol, Monger, Pierre Moran, and Eastwood; \$200 to ECS from an anonymous donor to be used to pay negative balances for students at Osolo; \$100 to ECS from an anonymous donor to be used to pay negative balances for students at Osolo; \$500 from ARC American, Inc. to EHS National Honors Society (NHS) to be used to purchase supplies, decorations, snacks, and awards for the students and their upcoming events; gift box of bath products, with a value of \$52, from Buff City Soaps to ECS to be used as a door prize giveaway for participants attending the Two-Day Job Fair; four coolers with a speaker, two desk chairs, a gaming chair and a paper shredder donated from Feed the Children to ECS to be used as door prize giveaways for participants attending the Two-Day Job Fair; \$500 from First State Bank to EHS Theatre department to be used to purchase supplies, decorations, and students snacks

for the upcoming musical production of "Mean Girls"; \$1,000 from INOVA Federal Credit Union to EHS Theatre department to be used to purchase supplies, snacks, and equipment for program students and production; television and theater seat from Lippert Components, Inc. to ECS to be used as door prize giveaways for participants attending the Two-Day Job Fair; \$250 from Mary Hubbard at First State Bank to EHS Theatre department to be used to purchase supplies, decorations, student snacks for the upcoming musical production of "Mean Girls"; gift bags filled with miscellaneous goods, valued at \$100, from Meridian Title Corporation to ECS to be used as door prize giveaways for the participants attending the Two-Day Job Fair; \$3,000 from Michael and Jennifer Nolan to EHS Athletics to assist with the purchase of the Sideline Scout System for Diving; \$1,500 from David Yoder of the Michiana Mustangs Club to the Elkhart Area Career Center (EACC) to be used to award one student in each of the five Automotive classes with a toolbox; materials and labor to fabricate robot parts, with an estimated value of \$500, from MORryde to EHS ElkLogics Robotics Team to be used on their 2023 robot; \$1,000 from the Community Foundation of Elkhart County for the Brian & Amanda Jamison Charitable NE to be used to purchase supplies, set construction, decorations, and student snacks for the upcoming musical production of "Mean Girls"; \$500 from MSC Direct to EHS ElkLogics Robotics Club to be used to purchase supplies, parts, and equipment for competing robots; \$750 from PE Robbins 2 to EHS ElkLogics Robotics Club to be used to purchase supplies, equipment, and competition entry fees; \$400 from Natural Health Family Chiropractic to EHS Theatre department to be used to purchase supplies, set construction, decorations, and student snacks for the upcoming musical production of "Mean Girls"; and \$37,500 from Thor Industries, Inc. to ECS for the ETI Building Fund.

#### Conference Leave Requests

Approved overnight trip requests for EHS Air Force Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (AFJROTC) Drill/Color Guard Teams to travel to Dayton, OH on March 10 – 12, 2023 for the Regional Drill and Color Guard Competition and Air Force Museum visit and EHS Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) to travel to Indianapolis, IN on March 16 – 17, 2023 for the Career Development Conference State Competition for JAG.

Submission of the following grant: 2023 Education Readiness Grant hosted by the Indiana Office of Career and Technical Education (OCTE) in partnership with Conexus Indiana and TechPoint in an amount to be determined to be used to implement high school Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs in high demand fields, specifically advanced manufacturing and information technology; AEP FIRST Robotics Grant hosted by AEP for \$6,000 to be used for travel costs, robot parts, raw materials, and competition entry fees for EHS ElkLogics Robotics Team; Comprehensive Support and School Improvement Grant to be hosted by the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) for \$186,267.98 to be used to support Beardsley's efforts to improve student academic performance; Comprehensive Support & School Improvement Grant hosted by the IDOE for \$213,576.41 to be used to support Roosevelt STEAM Academy's efforts to improve student academic performance; and One School at a Time Grant hosted by Martin's Supermarket for \$1,000 to be used to purchase an AED for Eastwood near the playground area.

#### Personnel Report:

Certified agreement regarding unprofessional behavior.

Certified agreement regarding compensation.

Certified agreement regarding employment.

Employment of the following three (3) certified staff: Margaret Dippell, grade 4 at Beardsley; Steven Starzyk, social studies at ETI; and Clarence Thomas, social studies at Pierre Moran.

Retirement of the following three (3) certified staff: Stephanie Lee, grade 4 at Osolo; Theodore Miller, art at Eastwood; and April Schneider, world languages at EHS.

Resignation of the following four (4) certified staff: Chelsea Atchison, grade 4 at Eastwood; Alexis Davis, language arts at Elkhart Academy; Lorie Hite, language arts at EHS; and Nakara Murray, cosmetology at EACC.

Extension of maternity leave for the following one (1) certified staff: Michelle Huff, intervention at St. Vincent.

Leave for the following two (2) certified staff: Brett Cramer, special education at Elkhart Academy and Theodore Miller, art at Eastwood.

Employment of the following nine (9) classified employees: Nikita Belt, bus helper at Transportation; Jerrod Canfield, custodian at West Side; Ashley Charles, food service at Bristol; Brooke Grenier, registered behavior technician at Cleveland; Ty Robinson, paraprofessional at Woodland; Jennifer Smeltzer, secretary at Daly; Isaac Stewart, custodian at Pierre Moran; Drew Weiler, custodian at North Side; and Ruth Weldy, paraprofessional at Woodland.

Leave for the following three (3) classified employees: Callie Alford, paraprofessional at Woodland; Jan Roscoe, paraprofessional at Elkhart High; and Kelly Vollstedt, food service at Beardsley.

Retirement of the following three (3) classified employees: Roxanne Niemzyk, secretary at Riverview; Renee Strieby, custodian at Pierre Moran; and Mikel Weaver, custodian at Elkhart High.

Resignation of the following three (3) classified employees: Richard Choler, bus driver at Transportation; Kenyetta Mitchell, food service at Elkhart High; and Melody Riley, food service at Feeser.

..... heard Mindy Higginson, director of elementary education, provide an overview of the Attract, Prepare, and Retain Grant with a total grant award of \$631,278.60. The four areas of focus are expansion of the current Mentor/Mentee Program; in partnership with local colleges/universities, the creation of a Bridge into Teaching Program encouraging non-certified employees, who are already employed with the district, to seek out teaching licensure; expansion of the Employee Health/Wellness Program for current teachers, providing support in the areas of mental health, stress, and burnout; and the creation of opportunities for high school students to explore the field of education. The first area of focus is the Mentor/Mentees Program and ECS currently has sixty mentors, sixty mentees, as well

as three student teachers who are participating with their supervising teacher. It begins with three days of orientation for new teachers in the fall, then monthly mentor/mentee meetings to check in and provide relevant/meaningful support based on feedback from the mentors and mentees, and finally a new teacher support site. The APR Grant will support this program by doubling the mentor stipend, paying teachers for attending the monthly meeting due to poor attendance, and having Goshen College work closely with ECS on developing our mentor/mentee professional development. Next year's goals include increasing training for mentors on how to best support their mentee as well as expanding the program from one year to three years. The total estimated cost of the Mentor/Mentee Program is \$146,000. In response to Board inquiry, Dr. Higginson attributed the poor attendance to teachers being overwhelmed, having other obligations, coaching sports teams after school, and child care issues.

The second area of focus is the Bridge to Teaching Program, which involves ECS partnering with local colleges/universities to offer a pathway for current support staff who may want to get a teaching degree. ECS has done this in other specialty areas such as high ability licensure, ENL licensure, etc. As a part of this effort, it would be necessary to add a new position, Grant Coordinator, who would oversee the APR Grant, specifically focusing on the Bridge to Teaching Program and overall teacher recruitment for the district. The district hopes to identify ten (10) candidates for this program and the coordinator would support and follow this cohort as they advance through the program. The Grant Coordinator would report to Dr. Higginson and Ms. Lozano. If the coordinator position proves to be successful, they would realign other positions in Human Resources so as not to create an additional position. In response to Board inquiry, the grant would pay for participants in the Bridge to Teaching Program in return for serving as a teacher for a specified number of years. The program is also in search of ECS students who may be interested in pursuing a career in education. In response to Board inquiry, Lindsey Brander, assistant superintendent of student services, assured the Board there is sufficient time within the constraints of the grant, as ECS has been practicing similar programs within other specialty areas. These programs have been beneficial to ECS as Tony England, assistant superintendent of exceptional learners, shared the retention rate for these programs is approximately 4 out of 5 teachers have stayed with ECS after graduation. To put it in perspective, ECS would not have enough special education teachers to service our students right now without such a program. The estimated cost of the Bridge to Teaching Program is \$167,991.

Next, Ms. Brander spoke about the third area of focus, the expansion of Employee Health/Wellness Programs for teachers. School Care Team utilizes Wellness Recover Action Plan (WRAP), which is a structured support group which builds hope, personal responsibility, education, and self-advocacy for teachers. They meet once per month in person and once per week virtually. ECS currently has twenty (20) teachers participating in the program. They also plan to offer three 2-day workshops over the summer and Teacher Cafes next school year. The Calm app was written into the grant, but they have decided it would be better to reallocate those dollars to direct counseling for teachers; this would be in addition to the current EAP with the option to extend services. Total estimated cost of this program would be \$101,287.

Dr. Higginson reviewed the fourth and final area of focus, Passion, Practice, and Pathways, a three-part introduction to teaching for ECS high school students across three days. This program is currently in practice for the seventy-one (71) students enrolled in Early Childhood

Education and Education Professions. They have expanded the program to other students, nominated by teachers, who were considered to be strong candidates for the teaching profession. Dr. Higginson worked with Cary Anderson, executive principal of EHS, and presented a student video to the group of nominees and so far, they have collected twenty-one (21) permission slips from students wanting to participate in the program. The first day, planned for February 28, 2023, students will spend at Saint Mary's College and engage in the first part of the workshop, "Passion". Students will attend presentations led by Saint Mary's College Professors about the teaching profession; then they will attend a class and partner with Junior teacher candidates to learn about strategies for teaching elementary students. The second day, scheduled for March 10, will focus on "Practice" where students will engage in an all-day session at Woodland Elementary School and actually implement the teaching strategies they learned at Saint Mary's; basically, a student teaching experience as a high school student. Day three will be for students who participated in the program and still have an interest in pursuing a career in education. This day will consist of a half-day session on the "Pathway" to becoming a teacher. This day will be in a college fair format where students can learn about the specific next steps they must take to become a teacher. ECS is working with Goshen College to offer an introduction to teaching for students interested in secondary education next school year. The estimated cost of this part of the grant is \$3,400.

- ..... unanimously approved and waived second reading to Board Policy 3422.12S – Employees in Miscellaneous Positions Compensation Plan which included the additional position of Grant Coordinator/Talent Recruiter, to be funded by the Attract, Prepare, and Retain Grant.
- ..... heard Mr. Thorne present proposed changes to Board Policy 5460 – Graduation Requirements for initial consideration. The State is considering further changes to the graduation requirements for special education students; therefore, there may be further changes made prior to presenting this policy for final consideration during the February 28, 2023 Board meeting.
- ..... heard Mr. Thorne present the proposed elimination of both Administrative Regulation IKF-(1) Evidence-Based Waiver – Core-40 Diploma and Administrative Regulation IKF-(2) – Evidence-Based Waiver – Alternate Documentation or Special Education for General Diploma for initial considerations. The administration is recommending both eliminated forms to be replaced with one new Administrative Regulation IKF-(1) – Graduation Pathways Postsecondary-Readiness Competency Waiver Form which aligns with the new graduation requirements set forth in Board Policy 5460.
- ..... unanimously approved and waived second reading of proposed revision to the Maintenance Agreement. Maintenance Employees are currently authorized to carry over accrued vacation for one hundred twenty (120) days and the proposed revision allows for six (6) months.
- ..... Dr. Thalheimer shared that, after careful consideration, he has asked the Board to consider his resignation due to personal and family wellness reasons effective June 30. The main factor that has sustained him in this work at ECS, making the decision to leave so difficult, is the people who have made his time here so meaningful and a time he will always treasure. He recognized some accomplishments and recognitions during his time at ECS including Dr. Jenner's visit from the IDOE, his invitation to serve on the Governor's Workforce Cabinet, receiving competitive grants to support student programs and teacher retention, and the Excellence in Education award to name a few. All of this demonstrates the work being done across the district has been good and

right. He spoke of how we took care of each other throughout the pandemic, we merged back to one high school focusing on our unique Schools of Study, and we continued to build out student pathways, most recently the initiatives to increase student opportunities in areas of STEM, computer science, and advanced manufacturing. Because of his faith in people at all levels, because there is a solid plan in place for teaching and learning to carry forward, and because the feasibility study is in progress to help determine the best future direction for ECS, he feels it is a good time for him to move on to whatever lies ahead. He thanked the Board of School Trustees, ECS families and Elkhart community; but most of all, he thanked the dedicated and hardworking staff who have appreciated and respected the steady hand he has tried to demonstrate for their benefit. As the district makes the transition over the next four and a-half months, Dr. Thalheimer assured everyone he would continue to actively promote and contribute to the feasibility process; work on academics, the anti-bullying program, and support of all students; and assist in the transition to the next superintendent as requested. He assured everyone he would sprint across the finish line as he has been dedicated to Elkhart since his arrival and will continue to work and give his best until his final day in June.

- ..... heard audience member thank Dr. Thalheimer for his dedication and service to ECS.
- ..... unanimously approved Superintendent Thalheimer's resignation effective June 30, 2023. On behalf of the Board, Ms. Davis thanked Dr. Thalheimer for his hard work and dedication to the students, families, staff and district and wished him the best. The Board looks forward to working with Dr. Thalheimer throughout the next four and a half months as there is still a lot of good work that can be done. Ms. Davis then informed the community they would begin the search process for a Superintendent this week. She expressed confidence the Board will be able to find someone with the skills necessary to serve the needs of Elkhart Community Schools and continue on our journey to a brighter future.
- ..... heard audience member thank Dr. Thalheimer for his service and encouraged the Board to take the time to figure out who we are, what our "thing" is that makes us great, and then do it well.
- ..... heard audience member express frustration about ECS's financial losses due to enrollment decline and lack of support for academics and teachers.
- ..... heard Mr. Weaver encourage the community to sponsor a cadet and their guest to attend the AFJROTC Military Ball.
- ..... heard Mr. Weaver speak about an article in the Wall Street Journal naming Elkhart the third best place to live in the United States.