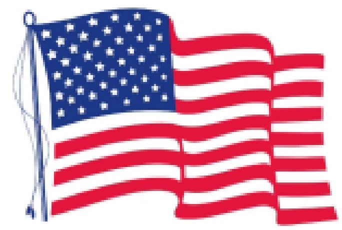
Lehighton Area School District
Administration Building - Board Room
1000 Union Street, Lehighton, PA 18235
August 10, 2026 Workshop Meeting - after Special Board Meeting

1. Opening Exercises

1.1. Call to Order
Board President, A. Matika called the Board Meeting to order at 7:18 PM.



1.2. Opening Exercises
Opening Exercises included the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence.

1.3. Roll Call
PR/AB

PR	**Ms. Joy Beers**	**PR**	**Mr. Jeremy Glaush**	**PR**	**Dr. Alex Matika**
PR	**Mr. David Bradley**	**PR**	**Ms. Denise Hartley**	**PR**	**Ms. Heather Neff**
PR	**Mrs. Lory Frey**	**PR**	**Dr. William Howland**	**PR**	**Mr. Timothy Tkach**

Also Present:
Mr. Jason Moser, Superintendent
Ms. Janine Partenio, Recording Secretary

Kay Barry, Roy James, Noah Glaush, Autumn Abelovsky, Fred Kemmerer, Jordan Cook, Gretchen Laviolette, Sandra Michalik and Atty. Jeffrey Sultanik via Google Meet.

1.4. Public Comment
None at the time.

2. Academic Affairs Committee

2.1. 2026-2027 School Calendar
Recommendation to approve the revisions to the 2026-2027 School Calendar.

Detail revisions affected by the additional Professional Development Day on August 17, 2026.

2.2. 2026-2027 Intergovernmental Agreement for Title I Equitable Services with CLIU#21
Recommendation to approve the 2026-2027 Intergovernmental Agreement for Title I Equitable Services with CLIU#21 for Title I services provided to eligible LASD students who attend non-public schools.

J. Moser clarified that Title I federal funds require calculations per student within the district's catchment area attending non-public schools, with G. Laviolette noting that Titles II and IV follow boundary lines for allowable non-public entity expenditures.

2.3. PA Beef and Veal in the Classroom Grant
Recommendation to accept the PA Beef and Veal in the Classroom Grant for the High School and the Middle School, should it be granted.

For 2026-2027 the Lehighton Area School District was approved for 2 grants from the Pennsylvania Beef Council for the Middle School Family Consumer Science class and the High School Family Consumer Science class for cooking lessons. We are awaiting final details.

J. Moser and the Board commended the recurring opportunity. J. Partenio noted the grant—received for at least three consecutive years—previously provided $150 per school or grocery gift cards for hands-on culinary lessons.

2.4. Community Based Instruction
Recommendation to approve Special Education Community Based Instruction (CBI) Trips for the 2026-2027 School Year.

In response to inquiry from A. Matika regarding the schedule, D. Hartley recalled that trip approvals previously occurred mid-year. S. Michalik explained the goal to streamline approvals in August, and J. Moser noted that administrators would collect the comprehensive activity list from returning teachers.

2.5. High School Enrichment Journeys– Academic, Cultural, Performance, and Career Exploration Visits and Volunteer Opportunities
Recommendation to approve 2026-2027 off-campus High School learning trips for invited classes, clubs, and student groups visiting local educational, civic, and industry sites, such as the Carbon County Courthouse, local history walks, Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN) campuses, St. Luke's University Health Network, and regional agricultural sites including local orchards and farms.

These experiential learning visits provide students with direct exposure to career pathways, civic processes, regional history, and hands-on scientific concepts that extend classroom instruction into real-world settings. Students will be transported either by walking, school vans, or buses funded through LAHS budget projections, and all outings will be fully chaperoned by district faculty and staff with required permissions and safety protocols maintained prior to each trip.

Purpose:
To support student engagement in community service, artistic performance, and academic enrichment through meaningful, real-world experiences that promote leadership, civic responsibility, and intellectual growth and to provide meaningful experiential learning opportunities that promote physical wellness, mental health awareness, student leadership development, and career exploration in the health and wellness fields.

J. Moser noted that establishing early blanket approvals prevents scheduling delays previously experienced by the district.

2.6. Settlement Agreement
Recommendation to approve the Settlement Agreement and corresponding attorney fees for a student.

In response to J. Beers inquiring why the item was not on the special meeting agenda, J. Moser indicated the agreement was not yet ready at that time. D. Bradley inquired about the underlying district actions leading to the settlement, expressing concern regarding potential educational deficits, legal costs, and the importance of using dispute resolution procedures to prevent repeated mistakes.

S. Michalik explained that settlements do not inherently denote district error, noting that parents sometimes retain legal counsel or mediators despite the district fulfilling its duties, and affirmed that the Office of Dispute Resolution (ODR) remains a valuable, routinely utilized resource. D. Hartley and J. Moser countered D. Bradley's characterization of district "mistakes," emphasizing that settlements reflect a mutual resolution of differing viewpoints regarding the provision of a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) under complex, subjective standards.

Atty. J. Sultanik detailed the legal framework of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), clarifying that prevailing party status allows plaintiff attorneys to recover full fees even if the district prevails on the vast majority of claims, making fee liability a primary factor in settlement evaluations. J. Beers suggested that administration review settlement data over the past two years to identify potential systemic trends, which S. Michalik accepted. J. Glaush noted that the district experiences very few special education settlements compared to neighboring entities, commending administrative oversight.

D. Bradley advocated for earlier Board involvement in parent complaints prior to legal escalation, using a hypothetical example of providing “deaf students” a braille book instead of audiobooks attempting to illustrate how the Board could objectively accommodate student needs before positions harden. J. Moser assured the Board that the administration already begins from a collaborative stance focused on student needs, while J. Glaush and D. Hartley added brief closing remarks on the example.

Atty. J. Sultanik suggested that legal counsel provide a one-page summary highlighting the pros, cons, and facts of each settlement for Board review in executive session to assist with decision-making and trend identification, noting the firm Sweet, Stevens, Katz & Williams LLP provides similar analyses in other districts. He added that district insurance carriers often participate in evaluating claims before recommendations are made. D. Bradley argued that the Board should be notified when initial complaints arise rather than after a settlement is reached, asserting that early Board oversight prevents learning loss for students, avoids prolonged disputes, and directs legal strategy.

D. Hartley commended the administration and staff for actively listening to parent concerns, asserting that low settlement numbers demonstrate effective early resolution before legal representation limits dialogue. J. Moser noted that while most parent concerns are resolved directly, some matters involve legal counsel upon initial receipt. He agreed that conducting a post-mortem review to audit the timeline of complaints and district offers is a useful exercise. In response to L. Frey questioning if the discussion implied staff negligence, D. Bradley clarified that his concern centered on strengthening administrative support through earlier Board oversight of unresolved complaints. J. Glaush expressed support for reaching an amicable process to keep the Board informed.

D. Hartley and J. Glaush expressed support for implementing a two-part approach: providing the Board with a general initial notification or synopsis when legal involvement occurs, followed by a one-page summary upon reaching a settlement. S. Michalik noted that initial notifications would account for instances where parents retain legal counsel unexpectedly prior to informal district dialogue. D. Bradley reiterated that the Board must receive prompt notice of initial parent complaints and emphasized that directors must review full settlement agreements, rather than relying solely on synopses, prior to voting.

A. Matika summarized the consensus, noting Board interest in receiving one-page settlement synopses, tracking historical data, and potentially exploring earlier complaint notifications in future discussions. J. Moser clarified that a legal synopsis provides contextual background often absent from formal agreement text. He further reported that Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit (CSIU 16) is currently conducting an external compliance audit of district Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) to identify potential procedural errors—a frequent source of district liability. J. Moser reaffirmed that the administration’s foundational practice prioritizes collaborative problem-solving with families rather than rigid resistance, while D. Bradley noted the value of Board oversight in maintaining that standard.

J. Glaush questioned whether administrative initiatives were already proactively addressing the settlement concerns. D. Bradley clarified his request, stating that the Board should receive written reporting and oversight whenever a formal IEP complaint is initiated by a parent, tracking its progress over subsequent months to ensure timely administrative resolution and prevent prolonged disputes or costly settlements.

D. Hartley stated that requiring notification for every initial parent inquiry regarding services constitutes overstepping the Board's governance role, emphasizing that the Board hires administrative staff to handle daily operations and must trust them to manage parent communications appropriately without micro-management. D. Bradley countered that regular progress reporting represents routine accountability rather than overbearing oversight, citing past operational lapses as justification. J. Glaush noted that significant or unprecedented special education issues could be reported, and suggested concluding the discussion to allow administration time to develop a viable reporting framework for future Board review.

2.7. Public Comment
R. James inquired about the frequency of special education litigation, district financial losses from settlements, and any resulting increases in insurance premiums. J. Moser reported that approximately four special education settlement agreements had occurred since December 2024, with one agreement encompassing multiple siblings. J. Glaush noted that S. Michalik had only been with the district for two years, pointing out that some cases originated prior to her tenure.

Regarding financial impacts, J. Moser explained that settlements and compensatory education costs are typically covered through insurance rather than direct district funds, though the district remains responsible for legal retainer fees up to specific thresholds. He added that insurance premiums have remained stable, indicating an absence of the systemic, large-scale violations that drive up rates. J. Moser further detailed that settlement values reflect compensatory time, noting that lower settlement amounts demonstrate rapid administrative resolution of minor or minor procedural timeline issues—such as missing an IEP draft deadline by a single day—rather than egregious service denials. He highlighted the necessity of external compliance auditing to navigate complex regulatory requirements, particularly for outplaced students.

D. Bradley advised R. James that taxpayers can review special education legal expenditures and long-term financial trends through the Annual Financial Report (AFR) and year-end audits. J. Moser agreed that reviewing the AFR provides the most accurate reflection of actual expenditures.

3. Policy Committee

3.1. Public Comment
None at the time

4. Finance Committee

4.1. 403(B) Plan Resolution
Recommendation to approve the attached 403(b)-retirement plan documents as provided by OMNI & TSACG Compliance Services, the District's third-party administrator. In order to maintain the qualified status of Lehighton's 403(b)-retirement plan, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) periodically requires employers that use pre-approved plan documents to formally restate their plans. These required restatements consolidate legislative, regulatory, and administrative changes that may have accumulated since the prior restatement and ensure the plan document remains fully compliant with current IRS and Department of Labor requirements.

A. Matika noted that the formal restatement consolidates accumulated legislative, regulatory, and administrative updates to maintain IRS-qualified status and comply with Department of Labor standards. J. Moser clarified that the restatement aligns the plan documents with IRS regulations without altering actual plan operations.

4.2. Donations/Local Grants
Camera & Photography equipment to the High School Photography Department including 2 Nikon DSLR cameras with lenses, flash, batteries and chargers, a few camera bags, and some smaller accessories such as filters, gels etc.

J. Glaush expressed appreciation for the contribution.

4.3. Public Comment
D. Bradley stated for the Board to spend less and give the excess back.

D. Bradley left at 8:07 PM.

5. Athletics Committee

5.1. Candidates for Athletic Coaching/Manager

Recommendation to approve the following requests for Athletic Coaching/Manager Candidates, as per contracted rates, pending any necessary paperwork:

Megan Kusse - Assistant Competition Cheerleading Coach
Zachary Zehner - Volunteer Middle School Football Coach

5.2. Spring Head Coaches

Description: Spring Head Coaches for 2026-2027 School Year
JC Dietz - Head Baseball Coach
Ed Ziegenfuss - Head Softball Coach
Erica Pagotto - Head Track and Field Coach
Andrew Hozza - Head Tennis Coach

In response to D. Hartley inquiring about head coaching coverage for the spring season, J. Moser indicated that tennis and track head coach positions were set, filling most of the roster. A. Matika and J. Moser noted that soccer is no longer a spring sport, as it takes place during the fall season. A. Matika requested that spring sports continue the fall practice of sharing coaching updates and scores, which J. Moser affirmed would continue.

5.3. Fall Game Managers

Recommendation to approve the following individuals as Fall Game Managers for the 2026-2027 school year per the Game Workers Pay Scale:

Theresa Kokinda
Diane Brownmiller
Ronald Rabenold
Timothy Sharrow
Jordan Cook

5.4. Cross Country Workers

Recommendation to approve the following individuals to serve as event staff for the home Cross Country Meet on October 6th at a $35.00 stipend for working the event.

Brenda Buffington
Grace Kern
Skye Hawk

Cross Country Event Workers are needed due to the large number of athletes participating for a multi-district meet.

J. Moser noted that this was listed as a standalone item because cross-country events require dedicated safety and event workers due to the large volume of participating schools and athletes.

5.5. Public Comment

None at the time.

6. Buildings & Grounds Committee

6.1. ESCO Agreement

J. Moser addressed the un-tabled ESCO agreement, explaining that no other responses were received for the Request for Qualifications (RFQ). He clarified that the agreement commits no capital expenditure but allows SiteLogic to evaluate facilities for energy savings. J. Moser highlighted that partnering with SiteLogic waives a 4% grant-writing fee on potential awards under the Public School Facility Improvement Grant—where the district applied for up to $2.2 million—and allows a prior $20,000 facility study fee to be credited toward future projects.

6.2. MOU with Panther Valley School District
Recommendation to approve the MOU with Panther Valley School District to share equipment to improve operational efficiency, reduce costs, and support educational and facility operations while maintaining accountability for District-owned assets.

This will prevent duplication of services and keep costs down.

6.3. UTV
Recommendation to purchase a Kubota V Series RTVX2C SKLH 1

This UTV is going to replace the current 2014 Kawasaki Mule side by side that has front end damage and starting issues.

In response to inquiries regarding pricing differences among three quotes (Kubota, Kawasaki, and Polaris), J. Moser confirmed that C. Lionetti and J. Bowman reviewed the quotes and recommended the Kubota model because it best met operational specifications, particularly for snow removal and heavy hauling. J. Moser and J. Partenio noted that the existing unit reached the end of its useful life and that the district plans to auction it on Municibid.

6.4. Public Comment
None at the time.

7. Personnel Committee

7.1. Candidates for Employment
Recommendation to approve the following candidates for employment in accordance with the respective contracts, pending any necessary paperwork:

After-School Lobby Supervisor at a contracted rate of $37.00 per hour:
Nicholas Costantino
June Potts
Timothy O'Connor
Angela Harris

Saturday AM Detention Monitors at a contracted rate of $37.00 per hour:
Melissa Solt
Carrie Kenny
Timothy Sharrow

Noah Hottenstein - Part-Time Cleaner effective August 25, 2026.

J. Moser explained that the After-School Lobby supervisors monitor students remaining on campus for late-starting extracurricular activities in order to address safety concerns and prevent unsupervised hall lingering.

7.2. Candidates For The Substitute List
Recommendation to approve the following list of requested candidates for the 2026-2027 Substitute List, pending any necessary paperwork:
Kristine Betz - Substitute Teacher
Kathleen Silvonek - Substitute Teacher
Morgan Nothstein - Substitute Teacher
William Kunkle - Substitute Teacher
Devin Dunwoodie - Substitute Teacher
Glen Whiteman - Substitute Teacher
Shirley Rodgers - Substitute Teacher
Emily Sangiuliano - Substitute Teacher
Joseph Lynn - Substitute Teacher
Ashley Russo - Substitute Teacher
Amber Miller - Substitute Teacher
Madelyn Kessler - Substitute Teacher
Martha Cox - Substitute Teacher
Atasha Hunter - Substitute Nurse
Susan Eremus - Substitute Secretary/Paraprofessional
Kyle Smith - Substitute Secretary
Doris Sheckler - Substitute Lunch Aide
Susan McHale - Substitute Cleaner/Custodian
Stacey Hoffman - Substitute Cleaner/Custodian
Asher Andrew - Substitute Cleaner

J. Moser and A. Matika noted the strength of the incoming substitute candidate pool. J. Glaush inquired about the composition of the substitute candidate list. J. Moser clarified that the annual re-approval list includes a mix of returning substitutes, recent district retirees, and new candidates. Addressing ongoing substitute shortages, J. Moser outlined a new administrative initiative directing building principals to offer orientation tours to newly approved substitutes. He noted that providing this early personal connection aims to encourage substitutes to accept assignments within the district more frequently, leveraging the district's competitive pay rates against broader regional supply shortages.

7.3. Candidates for Extracurricular Activity Advisor
Recommendation to approve the following requests for Extracurricular Activity Advisor Candidates, as per contracted rates, pending any necessary paperwork:

Terry Haberman - Fall Weight Training Advisor at a stipend of $1,052.30.

7.4. Resignations for Retirement
Recommendation to accept the resignation for retirement of the following employees with appreciation:

Lori German - Middle School Licensed School Nurse effective October 19, 2026 after 23.98 years of service to the District.

Donna Lilly - Elementary Center Paraprofessional effective November 2, 2026 after 24.12 years of service to the District.

J. Glaush, J. Moser, and A. Matika expressed appreciation for their long-standing dedication to district students, with J. Glaush specifically commending L. German's proactive communication with families.

7.5. Resignations
Vikki Johnson - High School Part-Time Cleaner effective August 3, 2026.

A. Matika commented on the length of time Vikky Johnson worked for the District.

7.6. Public Comment
None at the time.

8. Technology Committee

8.1. Public Comment
None at the time.

9. Safety & Wellness Committee

9.1. School Meals and A La Carte Items
Recommendation to approve the 2026-2027 School Meal prices as well as a la carte prices, as per the attachments.

All students at the Lehighton Area High School, Lehighton Area Middle School and Lehighton Area Elementary Center will have access to free breakfast and free lunch through the Community Eligibility Program (CEP) for the 2026-2027 school year.

A. Matika confirmed that all elementary, middle, and high school students will continue to receive free breakfast and lunch through the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) program for the 2026-2027 school year, a milestone commended by J. Glaush.

9.2. 2026-2027 Bus Stops
Recommendation to approve the 2026-2027 Bus Stops.

George's currently has the elementary routes finalized and should be done with the secondary routes in the next few days. They are working on finalizing Special Education Transportation.

9.3. Public Comment
None at the time.

10. Miscellaneous

10.1. Library Agreement
J. Moser discussed an upcoming annual public library agreement outlining district-supported services in exchange for a budgeted $10,000 allocation, structured similarly to operational agreements with local municipal entities.

10.2. Policy 010 Procedure
A. Matika reviewed administrative procedures following prior discussions regarding Policy 010. To ensure procedural compliance and prevent unexpected legal costs, board member inquiries intended for the solicitor or external vendors must be routed directly through J. Moser and A. Matika without copying external parties. A. Matika noted that relevant legal guidance resulting from such inquiries will be archived in the district's central repository. J. Glaush acknowledged a prior unintentional procedural oversight regarding direct solicitor correspondence and offered a public statement of clarification, which A. Matika accepted, affirming the spirit of shared adherence to board governance rules.

11. Communications

11.1. Public Comment
None at the time.

11.2. Adjournment
MOTION by J. Glaush, SECONDED by T. Tkach, to adjourn the Meeting.

YES - 8 NO - 0 ABSENT - 1 ABSTENTIONS - 0

The August 10, 2026 Workshop Meeting was adjourned at 8:29 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rebecca Karpowicz, Board Secretary
By Janine Partenio, Recording Secretary