



Lehigh Area School District  
Administration Building - Board Room  
1000 Union Street, Lehigh, PA 18235  
**October 13, 2026 at 7:00 PM**  
**Workshop Meeting Minutes**

## **1. Opening Exercises**

### **1.1. Call to Order**

Board President, A. Matika called the Board Meeting to order at 7:15 PM.

### **1.2. Opening Exercises**

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

### **1.3. Roll Call**

**PR/AB**



|            |                          |           |                            |           |                          |
|------------|--------------------------|-----------|----------------------------|-----------|--------------------------|
| <b>PR</b>  | <b>Ms. Joy Beers</b>     | <b>PR</b> | <b>Mr. Jeremy Glaush</b>   | <b>PR</b> | <b>Dr. Alex Matika</b>   |
| <b>AB*</b> | <b>Mr. David Bradley</b> | <b>PR</b> | <b>Ms. Denise Hartley</b>  | <b>PR</b> | <b>Ms. Heather Neff</b>  |
| <b>PR</b>  | <b>Mrs. Lory Frey</b>    | <b>PR</b> | <b>Dr. William Howland</b> | <b>PR</b> | <b>Mr. Timothy Tkach</b> |

*\*D. Bradley joined via Google Meet at 7:34 PM - issues with connection.*

*A. Matika announced Atty. J. Miravich was joining the meeting via Google Meet.*

*Also Present:*

Mr. Jason Moser, Superintendent

Ms. Janine Partenio, Recording Secretary

Brad & Christina Haupt, Nicole Collier, 2 additional members of the community, 2 BRCTV Newscasters, John Orsulak, Sandra Michalik, Gretchen Laviolette, Atty. John Miravich.

### **1.4. Public Comment**

C. Haupt addressed the Board regarding the therapy dog program, advocating against its potential discontinuation following an isolated incident involving one animal. Drawing parallels to school sports, playground activities, and field trips, she noted that school activities naturally carry inherent risks mitigated by parental consent forms and insurance coverage. C. Haupt outlined the emotional support and comfort Angelo provides to students and staff facing hardship and grief, emphasizing that his absence had already been noted by students. She urged the Board to consider revising current policy to include stricter guidelines rather than canceling the program, reminding the Board that parents retain the option to place students on a no-contact list. Additionally, C. Haupt submitted research on policies from other Pennsylvania school districts to assist the Board in mitigating safety concerns, along with written statements from absent community members, which she provided to Board Recording Secretary J. Partenio.

Following C. Haupt's presentation, A. Matika thanked her for her remarks and preparation.

MOTION by D. Hartley, SECONDED by J. Glaush, to enter into an Executive Session for personnel discussions.

A. Matika subsequently adjourned the public portion of the meeting into Executive Session at 7:21 PM.

The meeting reconvened at 7:29 PM following the Executive Session regarding personnel matters. D. Bradley experienced technical difficulties attempting to connect virtually via Google Meet.

A. Matika reopened the floor for public comment, introducing N. Collier. N. Collier spoke in support of the therapy dog program, specifically highlighting therapy dog Angelo. She shared a personal account of how Angelo provided critical emotional support and comfort to her eighth-grade daughter, following a traumatic family event, in coordination with middle school social worker Carrie Kenny. N. Collier emphasized that the benefits of the therapy dog program far outweigh any potential risks and urged the Board to maintain the program.

A. Matika thanked N. Collier for her remarks, and J. Moser confirmed that no further public comments were submitted at that time.

## **2. Academic Affairs Committee**

### **2.1. School Enrichment Journeys**

Recommendation to request retroactive approval of the following School Enrichment Journey requests:

**1. LAMS Gifted/WSCM (Anna Leigh Conway)** - October 21, 2026 - 8:00 AM-2:00 PM - Manufacturer Location TBD - To film and conduct interviews for What's So Cool About Manufacturing? Competition.

**2. LAMS FBLA (Kevin Kotch)** - October 21, 2026 - 7:30 AM-2:30 PM - ESU Innovation Center - Regional Leadership Workshop.

### **2.2. SkyCiv Structural Analysis and Simulation**

Recommendation to approve the purchase of SkyCiv Structural Analysis and Simulation Software for use by LAHS Science Olympiad students participating in structural design and engineering competitions at a cost of \$50 paid out of the LAHS Science Olympiad Budget.

Sky Civ is a simulation software package that allows students to test structural designs before actually building them for competition. This will allow them to design and test several models and fine tune before construction. This is a valuable tool to eliminate hours of trial and error.

<https://skyciv.com/olympiad/#content>

J. Glaush noted the affordability and suggested potential future classroom applications in subjects like industrial technology. J. Beers commented on the software's comprehensive capabilities.

### **2.3. Public Comment**

None at the time.

## **3. Policy Committee**

### **3.1. Public Comment**

A. Matika noted that no formal policies were up for action during the cycle. J. Moser provided an update regarding upcoming policy revisions, noting that minor definition updates regarding bullying and cyberbullying policies would be presented the following month to align with state guidelines. J. Moser and A. Matika also anticipated a new state-mandated truancy policy to be presented in late fall or early winter to meet a March compliance deadline.

No public comment was offered.

J. Glaush inquired about D. Bradley's connection status. G. Laviolette confirmed that D. Bradley had successfully joined the Google Meet and clarified that virtual board members were kept muted by default unless they raise their hand to speak, with A. Matika notified accordingly. G. Laviolette noted that D. Bradley did not have his hand raised at that time.

## **4. Finance Committee**

### **4.1. Donation**

Recommendation to accept the following donations:

1. \$989.28 from the Carbon County Commissioners to cover the remaining expenses from the 2026 BRAVE Camp. The camp was fully covered by the Carbon County Opioid Settlement Funds.
2. Various Hula Hoops from Giant Food Stores to the Elementary Center to be used for Health/Wellness/Physical Education.

J. Glaush commented on the comeback of hula hoops in fitness. J. Moser commended the Carbon County Commissioners for their support, emphasizing that the Brave Camp provides an essential, positive outlet for students focused on preventing at-risk behaviors.

### **4.2. Bluewave Technology Group**

Recommendation to approve a Non-Disclosure Agreement with Bluewave Technology Group, enabling the District to provide Accounts Payable and vendor invoice data for a no-cost Rapid Technology Assessment to identify potential operating expense savings across the District's IT and telecommunications infrastructure.

Bluewave Technology Group serves as an independent technology advisor and sourcing partner that helps school districts optimize their IT, cybersecurity, cloud, and telecommunications operations focusing on potential operating expenses reductions. Depending on the size of the school district, Bluewave projects annual expense savings in the 3 to 10 percent range by informing the school district of potential billing errors, eliminating redundant services, and perhaps renegotiating vendor contracts across connectivity, voice systems, cloud, and wireless plans.

Bluewave provides a no-cost, risk-free Rapid Technology Assessment through the evaluation of 12 months of expense data within 7 to 10 business days following the financial data collection. There is minimal time commitment from district staff. The district retains 100% of all identified savings; Bluewave does not take a contingency fee or percentage of cost reductions.

To execute the rapid assessment, the Board of School Directors is requested to approve a non-disclosure and authorization agreement. Once approved, the school district provides the following simple steps to initiate the review: 12 months of Accounts Payable (AP) data for IT and telecom expenditures, one month of recent vendor IT/telecom invoices and a brief discovery conversation with the district's IT Director. Upon completion, Bluewave delivers a detailed Summary of Findings, and potential actionable recommendations to reduce total cost.

J. Moser detailed this item regarding a cost-assessment initiative with Blue Wave Technology Group. He explained that the company conducts comprehensive audits of district technology expenditures—including telecommunications, internet services, and cybersecurity—to identify market savings and opportunities to renegotiate vendor contracts. J. Moser highlighted that the assessment utilizes publicly accessible contract data without gathering student information, carries no upfront cost or financial risk to the district, and operates on vendor-funded finder's fees if new contracts are established. In response to inquiries from J. Glaush regarding contract quality and cybersecurity safeguards, J. Moser and A. Matika clarified that Blue Wave would deliver a list of potential savings and actionable recommendations within one to two weeks, leaving all final implementation decisions strictly to the Board. J. Moser added that the consulting firm EDM has reported successful outcomes using Blue Wave's services in other school districts.

During the Finance discussion, virtual meeting attendee D. Bradley was unmuted by G. Laviolette and voiced concerns regarding virtual meeting administration, the muting of remote board members, and executive session scheduling compliance under the Sunshine Act. He also advocated for adding security cameras to district classrooms. A. Matika repeatedly requested that comments remain focused on the Workshop Agenda items.

### **4.3. Public Comment**

None at the time.

## **5. Athletics Committee**

### **5.1. Candidates for Athletic Coaching/Manager**

Recommendation to approve the following Candidates for Athletic Coaching/Manager positions:

#### **2026-2027 Fall Season**

**Anthony Thomas** - Volleyball Announcer

#### **2026-2027 Spring Season**

**Gwen Remaley** - Assistant Track and Field Coach

L. Frey requested that compensation rates for these positions be specified on the upcoming legislative meeting agenda.

D. Bradley raised a final procedural question regarding virtual meeting muting controls before A. Matika concluded the item.

### **5.2. Public Comment**

None at the time.

## **6. Buildings & Grounds Committee**

### **6.1. 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:

**Melena Koutch** - long-term substitute for speech and language therapist at a Step I Master's Degree and a salary of \$58,700, prorated for the 2026-2027 school year, effective October 6, 2026, pending any necessary documentation.

J. Moser noted that M. Kouch had already commenced duties under board policy authorizing administrative action to maintain uninterrupted operations and meet student speech therapy requirements.

### **7.2. Candidates for Extracurricular Advisor Positions**

Recommendation to approve the following Candidates for Extracurricular Positions:

**Lydia Weller** - Extracurricular Stage Manager at a stipend of \$1,700.00.

### **7.3. Candidates for the Substitute List**

Recommendation to approve the following Candidates for Substitute Positions:

**Lori German** - Substitute Nurse

**Julia Spencer** - Substitute Lunch Aide

### **7.4. Resignations for Retirement**

Recommendation to approve the following resignations for retirement with appreciation:

**Bernard Nalesnik** - Middle School Social Studies Teacher effective at the end of the 2026-2027 school year after 31.93 years of service to the District.

**Rhonda Zerbe** - Elementary Center Teacher effective at the end of the 2026-2027 school year after 32.89 years of service to the District.

**Rebecca Tite** - Middle School Librarian effective at the end of the 2026-2027 school year after 14.88 years of service to the District.

**Diane Brownmiller** - Elementary Center Librarian effective at the end of the 2026- 2027 school year after 19.81 years of service to the District.

**Ann Shoenberger** - Elementary Center Paraprofessional effective at the end of the day on January 4, 2027 after 26.84 years of service to the District.

**Julie Willet** - Elementary Center Paraprofessional effective at the end of the day on January 4, 2027 after 26.84 years of service to the District.

The Board acknowledged these six upcoming employee retirements, thanking each for their dedicated service to the district.

### **7.5. Professional Development**

Recommendation to approve the following Professional Development Opportunities:

**Employees #532, #1852, and #1928** to attend the 2026 SAS Institute in Hershey, PA, December 7-9, 2026, at total cost not to exceed \$3,000 to be paid out of the 2026/2027 professional development budget.

### **7.6. Requests for FMLA Leave**

Recommendation to acknowledge the following employee requests for FMLA, not to exceed 12 weeks:

**Employee # 927** - FMLA beginning September 7, 2026.

### **7.7. Public Comment**

None at the time.

## **8. Technology Committee**

### **8.1. Public Comment**

Public comment is now open for Technology.

## **9. Safety & Wellness Committee**

### **9.1. Public Comment**

Public comment is now open for Safety & Wellness.

## **10. Miscellaneous**

### **10.1. Therapy Dog Discussion**

The Board engaged in a discussion regarding the district's therapy dog program following a recent incident at the Elementary Center where a student was bitten by one of the animals.

J. Moser provided an overview of the administrative response, confirming that Policy 151 was followed and that the therapy dog program is currently paused while the district gathers information, reviews required certifications, and evaluates handler and animal training protocols. He emphasized the importance of taking a cautious, well-considered approach to mitigate risks before deciding whether to resume, modify, or discontinue the program. In response to an inquiry from J. Beers, J. Moser reiterated that pausing the program allows the Board to gather full input without making rash decisions.

During the discussion, virtual participant D. Bradley raised concerns regarding board meeting governance and virtual connection access. A. Matika redirected the floor to the agenda topic. J. Glaush expressed support for pausing the program out of an abundance of caution while gathering more information, noting that no board member intended to abolish the program without proper review.

The Board requested additional documentation to assist in their review:

- D. Hartley requested a copy of the official report submitted to the dog warden.
- J. Beers and H. Neff requested district-level data and documentation regarding the measurable benefits and tracked successes of the program.

(J. Beers noted that the upcoming Wellness Committee meeting was not listed on the district calendar, and G. Laviolette stated that it would be added.)

Board members and public attendees discussed the scope of student support services. D. Bradley suggested the district focus strictly on core academic instruction and state standardized test performance (PSSAs and Keystone Exams) rather than non-academic programs, questioning whether emotional support falls under district responsibility. A. Matika and community member, N. Collier noted that reducing stress and anxiety creates the necessary environment for academic learning. J. Moser clarified that Pennsylvania Department of Education guidelines legally require school districts to submit and execute comprehensive student services plans beyond basic classroom instruction. L. Frey requested that the administrative review move efficiently so the matter does not drag out unnecessarily. A. Matika confirmed that additional information will be gathered and brought back to the Board for further consideration, with no formal action taken to terminate the program.

## **11. Communications**

### **11.1. Public Comment**

C. Haupt clarified that due to strict bite regulations enforced by the Alliance of Therapy Dogs (ATD), the specific therapy dog involved in the recent elementary center incident will not return to the district under ATD certification. In response to J. Glaush and A. Matika, C. Haupt agreed to re-send information regarding handler and animal certifications to the Board.

D. Bradley reiterated his stance that the Board should prioritize basic academic instruction, test scores, and student safety over non-academic programs, questioning whether emotional support falls under district responsibility. J. Glaush and D. Hartley responded by emphasizing that addressing students' overall well-being and basic needs—including mental health, nutrition, and emotional readiness—is essential for effective learning. D. Bradley suggested that students requiring therapy dogs could obtain them through Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). N. Collier spoke again, countering that trauma and mental health needs often arise outside the scope of an IEP and that acquiring a personal therapy dog is financially prohibitive for most families, stressing that mental health support must take priority for student safety.

### **11.2. Adjournment**

MOTION by W. Howland, SECONDED by H. Neff, to adjourn the Meeting.

YES -   9        NO -   0        ABSENT -   0        ABSTENTIONS -   0  

The October 13, 2026 Workshop Meeting was adjourned at 8:15 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rebecca Karpowicz, Board Secretary  
By Janine Partenio, Recording Secretary