



## BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING

April 14, 2025 | Norwich Elementary School

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# MEETING NOTES

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*Meeting Notes are not official until voted on by the Board of Education at its following Regular Meeting.*

- A1 President called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.
- A2 Members present: Ms. Arnold, Mrs. Crowley, Mrs. Murdoch, Mr. Perry, and Mr. Vorst.
- A3 Pledge of Allegiance

**NOTE:** *Portions of the meeting's audio recording were difficult to decipher, so this document may include several incomplete sentences or inaccuracies. Some of the participants' names may be misspelled.*

### B. PROGRAMS / PRESENTATIONS

- B1 Math Club Magic: Crunching Numbers, Building Confidence. Hear from Mrs. Kalb's math intervention students at Norwich about how the math club helps them solve more than just math problems.

*Due to technical difficulties and background noise, the recording did not capture enough of the presentation for a comprehensive transcription. The students shared how the math club has helped them and some of their activities. They presented the Board of Education with a math problem, and the Treasurer was the first to give the correct answer.*

*Mrs. Crowley:* You guys did such a great job. Are any of you interested in a career in math? One student responded, Yes.

*Mrs. Murdoch:* You said you liked math games. What kind of math games do you like? *(Response was unintelligible)*

- B2 Embrace, Empower, Inspire Award Winners: Shannon Johnston and Ingrid Riddle

*Mr. Stewart:* Okay, next up, we have two Embrace, Empower, and Inspire Award winners tonight. And since I see Mark Dudgeon right here before me, we'll start with Shannon Johnston.

*Mr. Dudgeon:* Good evening, Board. I have the privilege of introducing one of our outstanding transportation employees, Shannon Johnston. So, among several outstanding nominations we got, the one I chose to share this evening is from Megan Schilling, a parent in the district.

*"Ms. Shannon is amazing. She keeps our kids safe, transports them to and from school in a timely manner, and communicates with parents. Most of all, she actually gets to know the kids for who they are. She is so loved at our bus stop...(unintelligible due to background noise)... She leaves our kids with a great start and to their day. We appreciate her for all she does each and every day."*

*Mrs. Canale:* Hi. I am honored to present Ingrid Riddle with the Embrace, Empower, and Inspire Award. This is her first year as a secretary at Alton Darby. I'm not sure she knew exactly what she was getting into, especially at a K-2 building, but she is just rocking it, and everybody loves her, and she has just been a

really important part of our school. I will read one of the nominations she was given that I feel summarizes Ingrid. This nomination is from a teacher.

“I gave Ingrid the nickname Angel Ingrid within the first month of meeting her. And it's no surprise to anyone in our building when they hear positive words being spoken about her. Ingrid is a true gift to our building. I'm not sure I'll be able to name all the ways she positively impacts our students, staff, and community, but I will name the ones that have stood out to me the most.

As a kindergarten teacher, I have seen my fair share of nervous kiddos, especially the first few days of school. We had a student in K this year who struggled to adjust. Ingrid became his person. He starts his morning in the office, picking out matching stickers to wear on his hand that match one on Ingrid's hand, just to be a constant reminder throughout the day for each other to be brave. Big hugs come after holding hands, walking down the hallway to this child's classroom. Angel Ingrid.

Another example of her remarkable work is when we as teachers feel the pressure and challenges of the job, she will be there, listen to us cry, get angry, and always offer a hug, smile, word, and encouragement. And even candy. She is always stocked with the best candy.

I have had numerous parents in my classroom comment on the sweet secretary up front. She greets them with a smile and a friendly tone. Even when having to be the one to call them to let them know something happened with their child, she's always calm, reassuring, respectful, and so loving. Angel Ingrid.

I could continue to ramble about the amazing woman that Ingrid is, but I hope this shows you a glimpse of the amazing human we get to call family at ADE. We are so lucky to have her with us. She is changing the world, and I hope she always remembers that.”

*Mr. Stewart:* Congratulations and thank you to both of our award winners.

B3 Presentation of the Auditor of State Award with Distinction - Scott Brown, Ohio Auditor of State Regional Liaison

*Mr. Stewart:* Also with us tonight is Joe Braden from the Auditor of State's office to share some information.

*Mr. Braden:* It is my honor to be here tonight on behalf of the Ohio Auditor of State, Keith Faber, to present the Auditor of State Award with Distinction to the Hilliard City School District. Each year, this office is responsible for conducting more than 4,200 audits of our 6,000 clients statewide. This award places your organization in a very select group, as just 4% of the clients across the state are even eligible for this award.

The Auditor of State Award is presented to local governments and school districts that complete the following criteria to meet a clean financial audit. I'm going to share the criteria it took, so all your constituents here know what it took to make this happen. So bear with me real quick.

First, the entity must file a financial report with the Auditor of State's office by a statutory due date without extension on a GAP county basis, and prepare a comprehensive annual financial report.

The audit report must not contain any findings for recovery, any material citations or material weaknesses, any significant deficiencies, uniform guidance findings, or any question costs. The entity management letter must contain no comments related to any type of ethics referrals, any question costs, lack of timely report submission, any bank reconciliation issues, failure to obtain a timely single audit, any findings for recovery, any public meetings or public records issues, and the entities shall have no financial or any other concerns.

This award represents the hard work of all your staff here at Hilliard City School District, and all the employees who make an effort each day to obtain accounting excellence. I'd like to recognize the Board of Education, superintendent, and the finance department, who have done an outstanding job watching over every dollar in the school district. But specifically, Melissa, if you'd like to step up here, we would like to recognize Melissa Swearingen for her leadership, professionalism, and exceptional commitment to fiscal integrity. On behalf of Ohio Auditor of State Keith Faber, I would like to present the Hilliard City School District with the Auditor of State Award with Distinction. Congratulations.

#### B4 Special Education Audit

*Mr. Stewart:* Our last presentation this evening, as called out in the strategic plan, was an audit of our special education services and special education department. That audit has been completed. Jamie Lennox is here to share the findings of that audit.

*Mrs. Lennox:* Thank you so much for allowing me to speak tonight about our special education audit results. I was given some feedback that maybe my graphics will be too small on this television screen. Christina was kind enough to put the full report into your campus course, so feel free to pull that up.

First, I want to thank our incredible audit committee. Their names are tiny because there are so many of them. We had representatives from all our buildings and across many disciplines, including intervention specialists, intervention assistants, related services staff (adaptive PE, occupational therapy, speech pathology, and school psychology), principals, and central office staff. Without their time and insight, we would not have been able to pull this off.

As Dave mentioned, we conducted this special education audit in response to the strategic plan, specifically looking at goal one of student learning and unlocking potential. With this recommendation, we needed to analyze our student support system and take a look to ensure that our motto meets the needs of our students with disabilities. So while this audit kicked off with that specific recommendation, you'll see throughout that it also pulls from goal two, which is looking at our staff development, and also ties into goal three, which is family engagement.

Okay. So, here is a little bit about our audit process. It started in September, when we formed our committee, carefully selecting the individuals. You heard from Molly, so we're really careful not to have overlap within those committees. We also had a family survey and a staff survey. Then, in October, we started meeting. We had two full committee meetings in October, on October 1st and October 29th. During those meetings, we reviewed the data, stakeholder feedback, and high-leverage practices in special education. It was really neat that two members of the committee were able to visit our special ed classrooms for grade levels they don't normally teach. So our elementary folks went to secondary, and secondary folks went to elementary, which helped provide a cohesive understanding what special education looks like in Hilliard.

At that point, we broke into subcommittees to dig deeper and develop those recommendations. We formed five subcommittees. We had elementary, secondary, related services, intervention assistance, and behavior. They met at various times from December through February. Then, what came out of those subcommittee meetings were some actionable recommendations we formulated into a report I'm sharing with you now. That's how we got here today.

Some important considerations as we go through this are that we will talk about the surveys and our student focus groups, high-leverage practices, and the data and evidence used. We relied a lot on our special education profiles that come out in different phases of the state releases. So, some of the data is from last year's profile because not all of it has been released yet this year. And then we'll have some graduation data, which also lags a year behind. We will also pull from the commitment plan, go through some guiding questions, and see how all this pulls together for the recommendations.

So, starting here, I am looking at our stakeholder engagement. The family survey that went out had two questions. So, regarding your child's special education program, what is important to you? As well as what suggestions they might have for the audit committee regarding programming.

Some themes came to light. One was about consistency and implementing IEPs across all subject areas, and the other was about communication. Communication was another big theme, and some transparent communication about assessment data and frequent communication about how their student is progressing in school was desired. Parents also wanted to ensure that there is meaningful inclusion in both academic and extracurricular settings.

The staff survey questions were very similar. What's important to you, and what suggestions do you have? Again, a couple of themes emerged right from the top. One was targeted professional development for our intervention specialists, intervention assistants, and our general education staff. So, we are ensuring that we provide enough professional development for targeted groups. Also, again, communication. Another big thing that came out was the expectations of how program decisions are made. And really, this came through because we wanted to ensure we have alignment across our buildings. And so just ensuring that everyone's getting the same communication.

Finally, we have our student focus groups. They had slightly different questions: What do you find most helpful to support your learning? Are there supports you feel are missing or could be improved? And do you feel comfortable communicating your needs and concerns to your teachers? Overall, students expressed that they wanted to ensure staff had more mental health training, so that they have the tools to help support student wellbeing. Another thing that came out was communication between families and teachers. And that was twofold. One was helping students reduce their stress. They felt they got rushed sometimes. And then also making sure we were increasing their independence. So students said, sometimes there might be a strategy I could use, but staff don't seem very helpful or maybe a little too helpful...(*unintelligible*)...the student would like to do independently.

We looked at high-leverage practices for students with disabilities. This was where we wanted to ensure that all our recommendations aligned with the research. So this book was just updated in 2024. It's developed by the Council for Exceptional Children alongside the Cedar Center, which is out of the University of Florida. There are 22 high-leverage practices, and they're arranged into four domains: collaboration, data-driven planning, instruction in behavior and academics, and then intensify and intervene as needed.

The main pieces to look at here are those six pillars. And so this again comes back to much of the feedback we've received. So we want to make sure we have collaboration among staff. We want to make sure we have collaboration with our families. We want to be sure that we're using assessment data and making necessary adjustments based on that information. We want to make sure we have explicit instruction, a responsive learning environment, and also provide some intensive intervention support. And then the rest of the high-leverage practices are embedded practices that fall into that. So those are things like facilitating effective meetings and ensuring that we're identifying and prioritizing student learning goals. Now we're teaching metacognitive strategies, which are a part of executive functioning, so that we can support student learning and independence, providing feedback to students as well as creating individual student behavior support plans as necessary.

To help organize our information, we had a set of guiding questions, and the first four came right from our special education profile and dealt more with the students. The four guiding questions are:

1. Are students with disabilities achieving at high levels?
2. To what extent do students with disabilities have access to the general education environment?
3. Are students with disabilities prepared for life, work, and postsecondary education?
4. Are students with disabilities receiving equitable services and supports?

The next two are kinda what I mentioned earlier, around aligning to the strategic plan. These are more staff-related, so this is looking at staff development through customized professional development, as well as a collaborative and inclusive work environment. That final question aligns with goal three of the strategic plan, looking at the meaningful collaboration between families and schools.

Okay, this again is where you might need to open up that PDF to dig a bit into that data. So, the first one here is to improve the achievement of students with disabilities. The first table there looks at our proficiency in state assessments. You can't see it very well, but I can tell you we're meeting the target for most areas for what the state wants to see from us. It is not near our plan goal of a hundred percent within the next two years.

Level	Subject	2021-22	2022-23	Target
Grade 4	Reading/Language Arts	33.18%	34.31%	≥24.86%
	Math	39.07%	38.73%	≥29.83%
Grade 8	Reading/Language Arts	23.03%	20.56%	≥13.97%
	Math	30.09%	25.84%	≥16.94%
High School	Reading/Language Arts	26.60%	24.07%	≥20.84%
	Math	14.97%	19.18%	≥9.77%

We also looked at our achievement gaps. What we can see from that bottom part is that for grade four reading language arts, we are closing that gap. Same with high school math. But it is not at a rate that will sustain us long term to continue to meet our state guidelines.

Level	Subject	2021-22 Gap	2022-23 Gap	Target Gap
Grade 4	Reading/Language Arts	37.93%	30.35%	≤32.34%
	Math	32.98%	33.21%	≤31.01%
Grade 8	Reading/Language Arts	36.19%	44.57%	≤39.87%
	Math	36.74%	41.57%	≤37.28%
High School	Reading/Language Arts	42.57%	46.79%	≤42.65%
	Math	37.09%	34.90%	≤29.91%

This first guiding question is all about alignment. The recommendations are all about alignment. So we want to ensure that we have an aligned curriculum with our specially designed instruction and the

progress monitoring tools we're using. How that will happen is just making sure that we have clear learning progressions that we are using as we're writing IEPs and the goals for students. We want to ensure we have identified universal progress monitoring tools that can be used across all schools and grades. We can compare students' scores over time. Then, we also need to make sure we have a clear scope and sequence of our intervention resources.

The second guiding question looks at student access to the general education environment. For the most part, our students have good access to the general education setting as well as their non-disabled peers. What we're

finding, though, is that the first line is looking at the percentage of students with disabilities who serve 80% or more of the day

Setting	2021-22	2022-23	Target
Percentage of students with disabilities served 80% or more of the day in general education	67.14%	64.59%	≥66.00%
Percentage of students with disabilities served less than 40% of the day in general education	8.39%	8.77%	≤11.77%
Percentage of students with disabilities served in separate settings	2.50%	1.99%	≥3.56%

in a general education setting. The state target is more than 66% of our students who fall into that category. We are currently under that threshold. That tells us that our kids are in a more restrictive environment than what the state would suggest.

When we had Wit & Wisdom and Illustrative Math come out, we transformed how we were providing education at the elementary level. We hadn't looked at it so much at the secondary level. So this is one area that we are looking at solely going into for next school year, six through 12, is really looking at how inclusive environments for English language arts, and starting there with seeing if we can make some changes there. And so it'll be a letter to parents that will go out tomorrow. There'll be some professional development for our staff this May after Hilliard U., so we can ensure that we have good professional development for our teachers with those co-teaching parents that will exist for next school year. And so that's where those recommendations lie.

Okay. Looking to prepare our students for life, work, and post-secondary education. Our graduation rate, is a target. It's just an emphasis that we have. The same is true for our students with disabilities who want to continue to increase their graduation rates. We are doing well in reducing our dropout rates, so we're retaining our students much better than previously.

Graduation Rate: The data reveals this as an area of concern, as the target has not been met in the last two years. New methodology for the 2022-23 data makes data not comparable to prior years.

2022-23	Target
56.49%	≥66.61%

Dropout Rate: The dropout rate is within the target range, showing improvement in retention efforts.

2021-22	2022-23	Target
19.62%	17.53%	≤18.36%

Post-secondary engagement is one of those areas that lags behind, but it is also a new indicator this year with the special education profile. This data shows that our students with disabilities

Setting	2022-23 Exiters	Target
Higher education enrollment	8.11%	≥9.30%
Higher education or Competitive	25.68%	≥27.50%
Higher education, Competitive employment, or other	74.32%	≥49.33%

are engaged in some form of education or employment at a high rate. However, it is not of a competitive employment nature for higher education, which the state is also looking for. So we're not meeting the indicators there, but our students are involved in some activities after high school. We are looking to increase the next steps for our students. So some of the recommendations are ensuring we are enhancing our community learning opportunities. Again, we want to ensure a clear scope and sequence for our transition assessments once our students turn 14. Section five is the IEP about creating goals around employment, post-secondary education, and independent living. So again, just making sure that we're using good assessments to create individualized plans.

And then we're looking to expand our transition programming from middle school through our 18 to 22-year-old age group. Happy to report we're all already starting this work in this area for next year, so we will have some new programming for our 18 to 22-year-old students who may have met their graduation requirements but haven't yet met what the state would consider qualifications for a regular diploma. So, we will be working on some employment skills and pieces of that nature. So that's still in the infancy of development. But we're excited to get that program started.

Looking at our students with disabilities receiving equitable services and support. So that top piece there is just looking at disproportionality. We have self-corrected in that area, so I feel like that's something to be proud of and recognized. But all of these recommendations come...(unintelligible due to background noise)...supports, and again, this comes around some alignment across the district. So, really, being sure to take a look at what the supports and services are that we're providing at each of the different grade levels to ensure that we have a fluid skills progression. Just like we want academic learning progression. So, looking at a skills progression toward behavior and social emotions. And also looking at the data tracking tools that we're using, coming alignment across the district.

And then making sure that we're being mindful about transition. So, strategies that might happen at preschool might not translate to elementary. Similarly, elementary might not translate to secondary. And so we ensure we have a good pull-through for our students who are changing schools. Know that something may have worked at one level and may be replicated or at least know what strategy we use in which level.

Professional Development for Staff. The top part is pulling from our commitment plan and ensuring that our staff use the board-adopted curricula and that we use good instructional practices. This is where we want to look at the ongoing professional development we have for staff during the induction process. In the past few years, we've heard that the staff entering our school needs more information about IEP development. So that's something we're looking to implement, and have an onboarding plan for staff continuously after induction. We're also looking at providing targeted training and an onboarding program for intervention assistants. We're looking at using different opportunities to provide communication, such as newsletters, to provide consistency.

When we look to cultivate a collaborative and inclusive work environment, some of the pieces, and I do want to call out this little picture. I know it's hard to see, but there's a group of our kiddos at Kitchen for Life, which we just introduced this year. If you don't know anything about it, it's like developing resiliency through culinary arts. This was a community outing that some of our students attended multiple times this year. It helps build resiliency for our at-risk students. But some of these pieces that I would talk about are ensuring that we're always looking at our cases and workload. So, just making sure that we have a good consistent process for that. Really looking at how to streamline and reduce redundancies and enable work. Everyone says time is a factor. And so, really looking at how we can build back time? How can we get rid of some of the extra paperwork duties? Also, looking at how we use contracted services. And so really thinking about our way of services to prevent and find alternatives to some contracted services coming into the universal progress monitoring system, and just some universal tracking systems for managing cases.

Finally, we will look at the meaningful collaboration between families and schools. I can't see it here, but I want to thank our technology team who worked with us to update and refresh our special education page. The information there was great, but now it's in a much more parent-friendly version. We have some videos about evaluations and IEPs that the state provided. We have documents in multiple languages to give parents more access. And so that is the first step.

One of the big long-term goals here is creating that multi-tiered family engagement plan. And so, really, the website is designed for all. There are many parent resources, including but not limited to information about dyslexia and autism. We're going to be creating some specific resources for parents. So that's what we have in the works.

So, before we get into any questions, I want to remind everyone that this is a lot of information. There's even more within that document. So this is a multi-year process for getting things rolled out. We're very early in the infancy of seeing the timeline for some pieces. And again, these are just recommendations. Any questions?

*Mrs. Crowley:* I have a question. You mentioned the least restrictive environment at the secondary level, trying to make that happen a little bit more, to meet the numbers of the state. My question is about the intervention specialist being able to meet their minutes. If you go higher, the grade levels and the schools get bigger. Do their caseloads get bigger? How are they going to do inclusion and also meet those minutes? And has the committee thought about maybe the embarrassment the older kids might feel needing support in front of their peers? Not that they should feel embarrassed, but sometimes. I'm at the elementary level, and my kids love to be pulled by absolutely anybody who comes into the room. But the older kids don't feel that way necessarily. So have they considered maybe how to smooth that transition?

*Mrs. Lennox:* Yeah, the past year, when we rolled out the study scene, the curriculum guides are more restrictive than what our resource teachers have been using, which are very much aligned with what is happening in the classroom. So it's almost like a baby step into this. The other piece is that the professional development that will be provided will look at how to ensure that all of our kids have access, because to your point, we don't want somebody to feel that it's not meaningful to be in that space. We know that professional development needs to occur. Still, it's really about what the supports are that are being provided, not the location of the instruction that's going to be important.

*Mrs. Crowley:* Thank you. And thank you to everybody who served on that committee.



*Mr. Vorst:* You may have said it, but what percentage of our kids qualify for special ed services?

*Mrs. Lennox:* About 17%.

*Mr. Vorst:* Okay. And of those kids, what disabilities are the toughest nut to crack, the hardest ones to teach, and what are the keys to ensuring we meet the needs of those kids?

*Mrs. Lennox:* We serve students from all categories. It's really very individualized. You'll hear if you one student with autism, you've met one student with autism. And so it is very dependent on that individual...*(unintelligible)*...Everything's on a continuum. So, it depends on that individual student.

*Mr. Stewart:* I think it's important for you to constantly be reminded that the strategic plan is not a document that sits on a shelf. All of these things are definitely part of that.

### **C. ROUTINES**

- C1 The agenda is correct, as presented.
- C2 The Board of Education adopted the agenda as presented.
- C3 The Board of Education approved the March 2025 Treasurer's Report.

*Mrs. Swearingen:* Nothing to get into details tonight, but I will provide an update at our next meeting. So we can discuss the forecast assumptions and compare them to where we thought we might be in November.

- C4 The Board of Education approved the minutes from the following meetings:
  - a. March 10, 2025, Regular Meeting
  - b. March 10, 2025, Regular Notes
  - c. March 24, 2025, Work Session Meeting
  - d. March 24, 2025, Work Session Notes

### **D. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The Board of Education appreciates citizen interest in meetings of the board. This place on the agenda is set aside to hear comments from visitors. When called, please go to the microphone so that remarks may be clearly heard and recorded. You must give your name and limit comments to three minutes. Comments must be respectful and professional in nature. Board members may or may not ask questions or make comments. No board member has the power or authority to act for the board; therefore, no response from an individual board member should be interpreted as an official action of the board. Portions of this meeting are being recorded.

Maxine Irvin

Good evening, and thank you for letting me speak today before the Hilliard City School Board. My name is Maxine Irvin, and I'm a parent of two Hilliard Davidson High School graduates and the grandmother of a kindergartner in the Westerville City Schools.

Ohio Public schools are under attack by most of our elected officials, both in Ohio and the federal government. They are decimating public education, and it's to the detriment of all of us. There are ways to fight back against this overreach by both the state and the federal government. Two ways are, one, to support the Vouchers Hurt Ohio lawsuit, and two, to support the Senate Bill 1 state referendum. And yes, the referendum has been started.

Right now, there are approximately 300 school districts in Ohio that have signed onto the Vouchers Hurt Ohio lawsuit, and it disgusts me that Hilliard is not one of them. Hilliard should be a leader. Because of the refusal to spend \$2 per student per year, the Hilliard City School Board is betraying all current and future students in Ohio. It appears that the Hilliard City School Board is telling voters and taxpayers that they do not care that public education is being decimated, and they are happy to comply with the destruction of education in Ohio. The private education and the support of rich parents in Ohio takes precedence over education of our children. This suggests the quote, penny-wise and pound-foolish. \$2 per student is minimal compared to the total budget of the Hilliard City Schools.

Governor DeWine signed Senate Bill 1 into law, and it is the destruction of higher education in Ohio. Parents will now choose to send their children to colleges outside of Ohio so that their children can get an education they deserve because it will not be available here. Why does Senate Bill 1 apply to Hilliard City Schools? Our legislature is not stopping with the destruction of higher education. Senate Bill 1 ends all initiatives in DEI in K through 12. They have taken the best of diversity, equity, inclusion and made it an enemy of the state.

Now they are claiming that getting help in public schools for disability is a privilege instead of what they all deserve. They have already ignored this fair school funding plan and are sending public school money to private schools. A number of bills the legislature has introduced that happened to destroy public education as we know it is mind boggling. Senate Bill 1 referendum was initiated by professors at Youngstown State University last week. There was overwhelming opposition to Senate Bill 1 by the public.

#### Erin Riley Sanders

Hi, my name Erin Riley Sanders. I am a parent of a student at Station. I'm also one of the founders of the Hilliard Parents and Families for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. I guess we're becoming enemies of the state too. I guess we'll join the happy club. But I'm concerned about the state budget and the way that's going to affect our public education.

I do have a math associated degree and career. But I'm not an accountant, but it looks like they are offering \$500 million to private schools and \$226 million to public schools. So we have twice as much money going to private schools except that money, public money. I don't understand why any of it is going to fund private education.

One way that we can push back against this is that we can have our school district join the Vouchers Hurt Ohio lawsuit and try to get that resolved. Also, I noticed that there are a lot of teachers here tonight. I'm not aware of what brings them all out, but I also want to thank them for their hard work and excellent service to our students, because they are awesome, and I love education.

#### Linna Jordan

My name's Linna Jordan, and I'm lucky enough to be president of the Hilliard Education Association and represent more than 1,230 HEA members—some of whom are here tonight. I forgot my phone again. And

as past practice has shown us, when I forget my speech on my phone, I go off the rails a little bit. So I'm going to try to bring it in.

I feel like tonight's agenda and speeches were tailor-made for what I want to talk about tonight. Yes, I think we should sign on to the voucher lawsuit. Public dollars need to go to public schools, not private schools. I think that we're past the point of saying that politics and education are not tied together. They are. So, I'm asking every single one of you, every community member, every administrator, every member of OAPSE and HEA to write, call, email, picket rallies, or send emojis. I don't care what you do, but our legislators need to know the impact of what they're doing to us.

SB 1 is at the collegiate level. It'll come to K-12 next. There's no way around it. What the budget is doing to us right now, we had a great presentation from the special ed audit. That can't happen at the rate that our money is being cut. We have a ton of educators here tonight from preschool, high school, and from our college credit plus. Everybody who wants to do what's best for every single student in this district, who wants to give them the resources, who wants to give them the individual time, who wants to give them what they need, and they're not going to be able to do any of that. That plan, that audit, is going to be a dream at the rate things are going with the budget right now at the state level.

And that doesn't even get me started with the federal level. I'm also going to tell you that as a Mexican woman, as an immigrant, I am falling apart inside a little bit when I start getting texts from teachers, counselors, or any educator, saying what am I allowed to say? What should I not be saying? Why don't we have these materials? Is somebody going to turn me into the DEI portal for Federal Department of Ed? I have Title teachers asking me if they're going to lose their jobs next year because we don't know what's happening with the Federal Department of Education.

I'm an EL teacher with more than 20 years of experience as an EL teacher, so much of our EL staff is paid for with federal money. So, what are we going to do with class size? What are we going to do with interventions for those needy kids, for those families, if these things are gone?

We are past the point of being able to say that politics isn't part of education. I'm begging every single one of you to write, to call, or to email, and if you're available, May 1st to go to the rally.

Debbie Cochran

Thank you for listening to me today. It is more important than ever that you, as superintendent, treasurer, and our elected school board members, stand up and support all of our students regardless of race, gender, or socioeconomic status. You're appreciated, and I do thank you for your service today.

I'd like to remind you of the five counts of the Vouchers Hurt Ohio lawsuit, and why they are important and relevant to Hillard schools. Number one, Funding. The EdChoice private school voucher program comes from the same line item in the two-year state budget that funds public schools. Every public tax dollar that goes to a private school is a dollar less for public schools. That's unconstitutional.

Our Hillard community supports our schools, but property taxes are breaking us. Private school vouchers force local school districts to raise local taxes through levies to make up for the reduction in state dollars. That's unconstitutional.

Number three, private school vouchers make segregation and public schools worse. Private schools can pick and choose their students based on academics, athletics, disciplinary records, financial status, race, and religion. That's unconstitutional.

Number four, the Ohio Constitution reads, "No religious or other sects shall ever have exclusive right to, or control of, any part of state school funds." More than 90% of private schools in Ohio are parochial, with hundreds of millions of dollars going to sectarian schools. That's unconstitutional.

Number five, Ohio citizens hold all power under the Ohio Constitution. When we are successful, state lawmakers will not be permitted to fund the private school voucher program or any other separate but unequal system of schools. The ED Choice Private School voucher program is unconstitutional.

Hilliard Schools is losing over four and a half million dollars this year to Hilliard students using vouchers. Joining the lawsuit will cost Hilliard Schools only 0.00009% of your annual budget. Please consider joining the lawsuit along with the other 300 Ohio School districts, including Upper Arlington, Worthington, Westerville, Columbus, and Lakota, our closest state cohort.

Our Hilliard community, who has supported you, who loves our schools, as I know you do, deserves your action on Vouchers Hurt Ohio. Thank you.

Sarah Myers

Superintendent Stewart. President Crowley, everyone. Thank you for letting me speak tonight. I have come to ask you to support the Vouchers Hurt Ohio lawsuit.

Earlier today, I sent you a link to the dispatch article that came out overnight about the EdChoice expansion voucher. These particular vouchers, as we have heard, are funded by state tax dollars that are taken directly from the public education budget, so directly from Hilliard's budget. To get a ballpark idea of what this might mean for us, I put some numbers together, and I think I need the math club to help me double check up on this.

In 2024, the EdChoice expansion voucher cost the state taxpayers \$406.7 million. Okay? Let's assume this amount was divided equally between the 611 school districts across the state. It wasn't, but let's just make this assumption. \$406,700,000 divided by 611 equals \$665,630 from Hilliard taxpayers, Hilliard Schools.

From the article, statewide, the number of EdChoice recipients grew by more than 240% in the last school year, 2024. Yet, private enrollment in Ohio increased by just more than 2%, which suggests that the vast majority of vouchers went to students already enrolled in private school. These vouchers may be advertised as a boon to parent choice, but that's not what's happening. It's just private school families getting a price cut. But that shouldn't happen at the cost of my fourth grader and all the other students.

The Vouchers Hurt Ohio lawsuit was initially filed in 2022 and has gained the support coming up on half the districts in the state. Since the filing, our gerrymandered State General Assembly went ahead and expanded the EdChoice voucher program, and they're still trying to do that. To join the lawsuit, costs \$2 a student.

So again, in 2024, taking these ballpark numbers, there were 16,082 students times two, which is \$32,164 for that year. So again, by comparison, 32 grand a year to stop the state from taking more than 666,000 a

year. Yeah, the Vouchers Hurt Ohio lawsuit is working to stop this from happening, and I believe the support of the eighth-largest school district in the state will be meaningful. Thank you.

#### **E. CONSENT AGENDA**

The Board of Education approved the consent agenda, items E1 through E3. Action by the Board of Education in “Adoption of the Consent Agenda” means that all E items are adopted by one single motion unless a member of the board or the Superintendent requests that any such item be removed from the consent agenda and voted upon separately. Employments, where applicable, are contingent upon 1) Verification of education, 2) Proof of proper certification, and 3) Positive results from a criminal records check.

- E1 Approved the following Certified Personnel actions – See attachment to the Minutes.
- E2 Approved the following Classified Personnel actions – See attachment to the Minutes.
- E3 Approved contracts for certificated staff – See attachment to the Minutes.
- E4 Approved contracts for certificated tutors – See attachment to the Minutes.
- E5 Approved the following trip requests:
  - a. Bradley Marching Band, Orlando, FL – February 13, 2026
  - b. Bradley Boys Basketball, Sandusky, OH – June 27, 2025

Mr. Perry congratulated and thanked the following retirees for their service:

##### Certified Personnel Retirements:

- Amy Beale has been with Hilliard City Schools since 08/25/2003.
- Donna Bradley has been with Hilliard City Schools since 08/27/1999.
- Joyce Brandt has been with Hilliard City Schools since 08/27/1999.
- Barbara Eversole has been with Hilliard City Schools since 08/25/1995.
- Jennifer Kieffer-Gerckens has been with Hilliard City Schools since 08/31/1990.
- Beth Miragliotta has been with Hilliard City Schools since 08/26/2002.
- Cynthia Sayers has been with Hilliard City Schools since 08/27/1999.
- Beth Scherer has been with Hilliard City Schools since 08/31/2001.
- Trevor Torrence has been with Hilliard City Schools since 08/25/2000.

##### Classified Personnel Retirements:

- Mary Allee has been with Hilliard City Schools since 06/05/2015.
- Rhonda Beauchamp has been with Hilliard City Schools since 08/31/1994.
- James Grim has been with Hilliard City Schools since 10/11/2005.
- Thomas McGinnis has been with Hilliard City Schools since 07/22/1996.
- Rita Righter has been with Hilliard City Schools since 12/12/1994.

#### **F. ACTION AGENDA**

- F1 The Board of Education approved the Preschool Curriculum Resource.

*Ms. Arnold:* I got a chance to look at it. I am no curriculum expert or anything like that, but it looked like it was fun.

F2 The Board of Education approved the following resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Education of the Hilliard City School District, Franklin County, Ohio, that to provide for the current expenses and other expenditures of said Board of Education, during the fiscal year, ending June 30, 2025 the following sums be and the same are hereby set aside and appropriated for the several purposes for which expenditures are to be made and during said fiscal year, as follows

002	-	BOND RETIREMENT	\$31,939,788
004	-	BUILDING FUND	\$55,344,530
516	-	IDEA PART B	\$4,448,473
551	-	TITLE III LEP	\$330,657
572	-	TITLE I	\$3,067,001
584	-	TITLE IV-A	\$239,861
590	-	TITLE II-A	\$627,390

F3 The Board of Education approved the following resolution:

AWARDING CONTRACT FOR THE DARBY HIGH SCHOOL WEIGHT ROOM PROJECT TO FERGUSON CONSTRUCTION – COLUMBUS LLC

The Chief Operating Officer (“COO”) recommends the Board of Education award a contract to Ferguson Construction – Columbus LLC (“Ferguson”) for the Darby High School Weight Room Project (the “Project”).

Background:

1. The Board has identified a need for the Project.
2. In compliance with applicable law, the COO and Treasurer solicited bids for the Project based upon design documents prepared by Schorr Architects, Inc. (“Architect”).
3. Three bids were received for the Project. Bids were opened and read aloud on March 26, 2025 at 1:00 p.m. with the apparent low bid submitted by Ferguson in the amount of \$814,906 (the “Low Bid”), which consisted of a base bid of \$813,791 and a bid for Alternate #1 in the amount of \$1,115.
4. Ohio Revised Code 153.12 allows the total amount of a bid to exceed the published estimate by no more than 20%. The published estimate for the Project is \$1,150,000. Accordingly, the Low Bid is below the published estimate and compliant with Ohio Revised Code 153.12.
5. After review of Ferguson’s bid submission and a scope review meeting with Ferguson, the Architect recommends the contract for the Project be awarded to Ferguson as the lowest responsible bidder. The COO and Treasurer concur with the recommendation and request authority to negotiate and sign an agreement with Ferguson in an amount not-to-exceed the Low Bid.
6. Additionally, to avoid Project delays, the COO and Treasurer request the Board authorize contingency funds for the Project in the amount of \$81,500 (the “Contingency Funds”), and authorize the COO and/or Treasurer to sign change orders for the Project, to be billed against the Contingency Funds, in a total amount not-to-exceed the Contingency Funds. Change orders in excess of the Contingency Funds, individually or in the aggregate, will be brought to the Board for its approval.

The Board resolves as follows:

1. Based on the information provided, the Board selects Ferguson as the lowest responsible bidder.
2. The Board authorizes the COO and Treasurer to negotiate and sign an agreement for the Project with Ferguson in an amount not-to-exceed the Low Bid, and to sign any associated documents consistent with the intent of this resolution.
3. The Board also authorizes the Contingency Funds and authorizes the COO and/or Treasurer to sign change orders for the Project, to be billed against the Contingency Funds, in a total amount not-to-exceed the Contingency Funds. Change orders in excess of the Contingency Funds, individually or in the aggregate, will be brought to the Board for its approval.
4. No property interest in the Project will be created until all required documents have been submitted by Ferguson and the agreement is executed by the designated Board representatives.

*Mrs. Crowley:* Any discussion about this project?

*Ms. Arnold:* Just glad to see it getting moving.

*Mr. Vorst:* What do you have, guys?

*Mr. Dudgeon:* The project estimate was \$1.15 million. Bids came in at \$814,000, approximately 30% under the advertised estimate. While the district doesn't have a history with Ferguson Construction, the architect who designed the project on behalf of the district, has a history with them, and they come to us highly recommended.

## **G. REPORTS / INFORMATION / EXHIBIT ITEM**

### **G1 Committee Reports**

*Ms. Arnold:* I have facilities here. Appreciate the time and efforts of our facilities team to provide some in-depth updates on not just our master facilities plan, which I'm sure we'll hear more about at the next meeting. So I'm not gonna spoil some of that. But also the main projects that happen on a regular schedule within our district. We reviewed the various capital projects that fall within our permanent improvement budget, which includes paving, roofing, signage upgrades, and cooling towers. I know people get excited about cooling towers, wash basins, and so much more. So I encourage folks to visit the facilities committee page for more information on the items currently in progress or in the planning stages. You'll get a quite in-depth review of what's there.

We also discussed the upcoming impacts of an anticipated, at the time we discussed it, 25% increase in electric energy costs. It's looking more like 30%. The response to that includes an application for an advanced energy reduction grant from the state of Ohio, a lights down and out campaign that was just initiated at central office, and more effort to utilize demand response shedding load at appropriate times to realize financial incentives. All of these are aimed at reducing that expense as much as possible.

I will note this is just one more example for our state legislature to understand the changes in costs involved in educating our students and why it's imperative to appropriately allocate funds to public schools.

*Mrs. Crowley:* For ISPTO last month, we went on a tour of Tolles and just had a short meeting. I always love the opportunity to go out to Tolles. I've been out there a number of times, and it's always interesting. I always see something new. I've never seen the cosmetology department out there. Ladies, if you want to

get your hair or nails done cheaply, they are looking for hours for students. So they discussed hosting some girls' and moms' nights out. It'd be a great opportunity for that.

The superintendent's advisory and curriculum committees have been on hold with negotiations.

I sent you an email with information about our communications committee. So check your emails, get that up and rolling this year.

We're going on a bus tour tomorrow. I can't wait for ISPTO. I'm so ready. I love the bus tour.

#### **H. EXECUTIVE SESSION / ADJOURNMENT**

- H1 At 7:36 p.m., the Board of Education went into executive session to prepare for, conduct, or review negotiations or bargaining sessions with public employees concerning their compensation or other terms and conditions of employment.