



MEETING NOTES

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

1. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.
2. Members present: Ms. Arnold, Mrs. Crowley, Mrs. Murdoch, Mr. Perry, and Mr. Vorst
3. The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag
4. The Board of Education adopted the agenda.
5. Presentation of the Auditor of State Award with Distinction – Scott Brown, Ohio Auditor of State Regional Liaison

Mr. Stewart said we have a number of presentations this evening. First, Scott Brown from the Ohio Auditor of State's office has some good news to share with us.

Mr. Brown said thank you for your time this evening and for allowing me to speak. My name is Scott Brown, and I serve as State Auditor Keith Faber's Central Ohio Liaison. I am also a Hilliard resident and proud father of two graduates of the Hilliard school system and now two college graduates.

It's my honor to be here this evening on behalf of Auditor Faber and present the Hilliard City School District with the Auditor of State Award with Distinction. This award puts the district in a very select group of approximately six thousand entities that we audit every year, just 4 percent are eligible for this award.

The Auditor of State Award with Distinction is presented to local governments, school districts, and other entities upon the completion of a financial audit that meets these criteria to be considered a clean audit report. Or, as Melissa and everyone else knows, a very short audit letter from our office. The entity must file financial reports with the auditor's office by a statutory due date without extension on a gap accounting basis and prepare a comprehensive annual financial report, which I know you're talking about this evening. The audit report does not contain any findings for recovery, material citations, material weaknesses, significant deficiency, uniform guidance findings, or other questioned costs.

This award represents the hard work of all Hilliard City School District staff and employees who make every effort to attain accounting excellence every day. We'd like to recognize the board and the finance office for doing an outstanding job watching over every dollar.

What this truly means is that across the entire organization, you have the people and processes in place that understand fiscal accountability. Specifically, we want to recognize Melissa Swearingen for her leadership, professionalism, and exceptional commitment to fiscal integrity. So, on behalf of Auditor Faber, I'd like to present the Hilliard City School District with the Auditor of State Award with Distinction.

6. 5-Year Forecast Assumptions – Melissa Swearingen

Mr. Stewart said that segues perfectly into the five-year forecast.

Mrs. Swearingen said, as you're aware, the Ohio Revised Code requires that a five-year forecast be completed each year by November 30th and then a revision be completed by May 31st.

Tonight, I'm going to go through some of the key components of the May forecast and highlight some of our key indicators. We'll review the changes from our November forecast, and then the forecast will be on the agenda to be approved at our May 13th meeting.

We continue to operate in a deficit spending situation. Our beginning cash balance on July 1st was \$93.7 million. We expect to end fiscal year 24 on June 30th with a cash balance of approximately \$84.7 million. That's an \$8.9 million difference where we're spending more than we are generating in revenue. Our projected general fund revenue is just under \$230 million, and our projected expenditures are just over \$238 million. Fortunately, we have been conservative with our spending and built a reserve that's helped us get to this point, and to be able to continue to operate with a positive cash balance overall. This reserve will continue to decline over time as our expenses increase faster than our revenues.

We discussed board policy DBDA on cash balance reserve at great lengths a couple of meetings ago, but I would like to highlight here that the board does believe that maintaining a cash reserve balance of 20 percent of operating expenses is necessary in the interest of sound fiscal management, and that is the trigger point to discuss future options.

As this slide demonstrates, we will not meet the 20 percent cash reserve beginning in fiscal year 2026. By proactively identifying this, we can have discussions like we did last month and begin to generate potential levy scenarios prior to reaching an eventual negative cash balance and any fiscal emergency.

Now, we'll examine our revenue and expenditure projections for the current fiscal year. As the pie chart indicates, local tax revenue represents roughly 64 percent of our general fund revenue, with 30 percent coming from the state. These percentages do not vary significantly throughout our forecast. We have other miscellaneous revenues making up the remaining 6%, and as we mentioned, our total general fund revenues for fiscal year 24 are projected to be just under \$230 million.

When we look at the expenditure side, you can see that salaries, and benefits account for a combined 84 percent of our general fund expenditures. This isn't surprising, being that we're a labor-intensive organization. Our next largest category is purchase services at 9%, and then other expenditures, which include supplies and materials, representing 7%. The total general fund expenditures for fiscal year 24 are projected to be just over \$238 million.

These graphs will hopefully help to demonstrate further that our expenditures are growing at a faster rate than our revenues. In the graph on the left, you'll see our projected revenues are in the teal shade here, and then our expenditures are in the darker blue. In fiscal year 23, our expenditures began to outpace our revenues. Our cash balance is depicted in the graph on the right. In fiscal year 24, we have a cash reserve, as we mentioned, of \$93.7 million. It will continue to decline over time as our expenses increase faster than our revenues. Our cash balance at the end of fiscal year 27 is projected to be just under \$3 million and will be negative in fiscal year 2028. We previously discussed that our payroll, our salary, and benefits are just under \$17 million per month.

Our historical annual change in revenue has been about 2.37%, growing from \$208 million in fiscal year 20 to \$226 million in fiscal year 23. Our projected growth from fiscal year 24 of \$230 million to \$233 million, in the fiscal year 2028 represents an average annual change of just 0.63%. Due to House Bill 20, our voted property tax revenues do not increase with inflation. We saw some state revenue increases in prior years due to the implementation of the new fair school funding formula. But our state revenue for fiscal year 25 is actually projected to decrease as there's no year-over-year guarantee in place. The historical annual change in our expenditures has been 3.47 percent, and we project those increases to be 3.77 percent annually moving forward just to keep up with inflation.

As of the May 2024 forecast, our projected cash balance on hand is presented here in terms of days. As we have discussed, in any given year, the timeline for receiving our property tax settlements can result in a 30 to 45-day swing into when we receive those payments. This year's collections were not received, until April, so this demonstrates the importance of having enough cash on hand to make payroll and to cover our other operating expenses when we cannot control the timing of our revenue sources.

Now, I'll discuss a couple of demographic pieces that help drive the forecast as well. This graph represents our funded enrollment through the state's fair school funding plan. Enrollment is expected to stay consistent throughout the forecast. We're projecting less than a half-percent increase in enrollment over the life of this forecast. And as a reminder, we engage with Cooperative Strategies to assist with these projections.

This chart highlights our general fund per pupil expenditures. Hilliard is consistently lower than the statewide average and in the middle when compared to other Central Ohio districts. This graph includes our general fund expenditures only. When we factor in our additional operating expenses, such as food service and those from our grant funding, we were at \$15,248 for fiscal year 23, while the statewide average was \$15,428. So, just under that statewide average.

This slide compares our May forecast to the November forecast. The revenue projection changes are in the chart on the left and are \$1.1 million less due to some timing differences in our real estate collections and reduced payments in lieu of taxes. Our state revenue increased due to some high-quality instruction material funding that we just received to support our science of reading curriculum.

The green on the right represents expenditure projection changes. Our salary and benefit projections decreased slightly, with some year-end reviews showing a change of less than 1%. Our department budget adjusted some funds from supplies and materials to purchase services, which makes up for the decrease in other expenditures and the increase in the purchase service budget. This results in an overall cash balance increase at the end of fiscal year 24 of \$631,000. We also have positive changes in outlying years as a result of increased retirements in the current fiscal year. Those currently sit at 37 and will result in lower salary and benefits in later years than what we had projected back in November.

Finally, this slide provides another summary of changes from the November forecast. As you can see, for fiscal year 24, we had an overall revenue change of just under -0.5 percent and an overall expenditure change of -0.72 percent. So, although our revenue projections decreased slightly, our expenditure projections decreased slightly as well, resulting in an overall projected cash balance increase of \$631,000, which is a positive 0.26 percent change.

Now, I'd be happy to answer any questions that you might have.

Mr. Vorst said a great job as always, Melissa. Congratulations again on your recognition from the state auditor. Just so everybody else knows, this is Melissa's first full year as our treasurer, and she picked up where Brian left off and obviously has done a tremendous job. So, we commend you for carrying the torch and keeping the bar high the way that he did.

When I saw that number, 0.63 percent annual increase in our revenue, I guarantee you, everybody like me, when they got their property assessment last year, during the summer, and saw how much higher their property was assessed at, they did not anticipate that's going to be less than 1 percent increase in revenue for the schools. Obviously, we have a big challenge getting the public to understand that, something we've talked about a couple of times.

The sources of revenue that we get that are not from personal residence property taxes, whether it be from businesses or from the state funding formula. Do you have a high degree of confidence, given your experience, that those numbers are going to stay consistent? If you could look into your crystal ball and see how you think that plays out over the next five to ten years. Do you feel good about it or bad about it? What are your thoughts?

Mrs. Swearingen asked if you were referring to the other revenue categories that make up the. Let me pull this chart up so I can make sure we're talking about the same thing. Are you talking about this 6 percent here? Is that what you're referring to? Mr. Vorst said that and the state funding.

Mrs. Swearingen said we are in year 3 of the new state funding formula, so we're guaranteed to have it. It will be in place again next year, and we're fairly confident it will continue for the state budget cycle after that. We have yet to see whether there will be increases in how they calculate our base cost. We're hopeful that since they increased that in the last round, they'll do that again this time. Those are projected to be very conservative, with small increases, if any, moving forward. It's relatively flat when you actually see the forecast and what that will look like.

And then, those other revenue sources—that's our interest income, other fees, and different things. So that's not changing significantly over the life of the forecast either. Actually, as our cash balance goes down, the amount of interest income that we're able to generate off of those funds goes down as well. So, there are some decreases in that, but otherwise, those are pretty stable sources.

7. Commitment Plan – Jill Abraham

Mr. Stewart said Jill Abraham will give our annual spring update on the commitment plan.

Good evening. As Dave shared, he's asked me just to give you a year-end review of our progress on the commitment plan. Not only are we going to talk about the end of this year and where we're at, but this is actually the end of a three-year cycle on the commitment plan that we've been working on. We're going to focus primarily this evening on our three-year goals. And, hopefully, much of the information that I share with you this evening is going to feel like information that's redundant to you that you've heard through your board reports or through a number of presentations that have happened throughout the year. And we've got one coming from Jake here at the next board meeting to talk about graduation. So, hopefully, a lot of this is very familiar.

The other thing that I would add is, in doing the commitment plan work, when we are able to integrate our goals and our work across different departments, it helps teachers make sense of the work, and it brings us different efficiency. So when you get to a slide, and you might see some of the same language, I'm not going to explain the portrait every time we get to it. But if you have questions, please do ask them.

Before I get into the actual goals, I think it's important to begin at this point in the year, and especially at the end of a three-year plan, by saying thank you to our teachers and staff. With each iteration of this plan, we ask them to make adjustments based on the data that we get in the summer, based on the tendencies that we're seeing in our kids, and so we appreciate that partnership and that willingness to be resilient themselves and continue to refine their practices.

We're also really thankful for our principals and their leadership. I couldn't be more grateful for the academic team. Many of them are here this evening and work so closely with teacher leaders, coordinators within buildings, and our staff. So this is really a collective effort. If you remember last year, I think I had about 42 people lined up here for you; tonight, it is just me.

All right, so the first goal that we enlisted was students will be physically, intellectually, and socially safe. And so when we look at the work that we have done, especially this year, in support of this work, the Portrait of a Learner steps forward first. Certainly, the work of our community has helped us because the right competencies were identified that allow us to make sure our kids are developing as empathetic citizens, that they're also resilient, and that they're learning how to be self-advocates for themselves. So we've leaned heavily into what these competencies offer our students and even our youngest are learning what it means to be each of those competencies and to bring it into their daily interactions within Hilliard schools.

As you've heard, our wellness team, including Alex Beekman and Mike Abraham, committed this year to training our teachers in grades 6 through 12 in restorative practices. Again, this work is certainly not a replacement for accountability, but it equips teachers to help kids acclimate back into the classroom after challenges.

This year, we also implemented the new health curriculum, specifically regarding House Bill 288, the Child Sexual Abuse Prevention work. Our teachers were all trained at the March PD Day, and our students have been receiving instruction on this really important content.

When we talk about design and consider whether our kids are physically, intellectually, and socially safe, we include everything from the way we arrange the environment of our classroom so that our kids have opportunities to interact with peers they're comfortable with to the very intentional selection of curriculum resources that are designed to allow our kids to grow, make mistakes, and learn in a safe space.

Culturally responsive practices have been largely led by Hilary Sloat, and our focus is really on making sure that all of our kids feel that they're seen, valued, and heard within our classrooms and that they see themselves within the curriculum and that, similarly, they all have access to a rigorous learning experience.

And then finally, you heard from Molly last week that we've had a great focus on attendance. We have seen great responses from our students and our community, so we believe holistically that these actions have contributed positively to this goal.

You might remember seeing our report card data. One challenge in public education is that we take our test now, and we get test results in the summer. But we don't get our local report card until around September or October of the next school year. This is the report card that we shared early on. Molly talked to you in the fall, but we were working primarily on these two goal areas because our goal has been to achieve at least four stars or higher on this report card. So, we knew that our focus areas were on graduation rate and early literacy.

As I mentioned earlier, Jake is going to present to you at the next board meeting, so I'm not going to go into depth on all the things that we've done around the graduation rate. But I think it's important to know some of the actions, so for example, as we've been implementing freshman teams, we continue to look at that structure and identify ways that could be more responsive to our kids. It's a huge transition going from 8th to 9th grade, so we're always looking at, how we're looking at the data, how they're acclimating into school, and the freshman teams really create the structure for us to do that.

We've also begun to look for early warning indicators where kids are going to have difficulty getting to graduation. We don't want to wait until their junior or senior year and then try to problem-solve at that point. Last week, Molly even said attendance in 8th grade is a significant predictor of whether kids are going to make it to graduation. We continue to examine things like attendance and student success in literacy and math as they progress through the schools.

We are also exploring some of the other options available to kids to meet the state's graduation requirements. There's a competency requirement, which is literacy and math, and they have to pass the state test in high school. But there are also alternative pathways that allow us to stack credentials. Again, Jake will discuss this in depth when he presents at your next meeting. We thought a lot about it this year: What do we do when kids can't meet the graduation requirements? Or when a student struggles in the class and has to take a course for credit recovery? What might that look like so that they can be successful the next time?

Then, in terms of early literacy, we were very excited this year to implement Wit & Wisdom. And so we are hopeful that in connecting both Wit and Wisdom and Core 95 we will better be able to address the early literacy needs of our students. We've been very intentional in our data team collaborative structures, and again, I really credit both Herb and Molly in this work with our youngest grade levels. Often, Herb sits in, listens in, and supports our building-level leaders and teachers as they look at our students' data.

And then finally, thanks to Cori and the curriculum team, they were very intentional about providing time for our teachers who were implementing the new curriculums to collaborate together, to plan thoughtfully, to talk about kids' responses to the learning, and that has been, I think really beneficial for our teachers. We even, as Cori shared with you, I believe at one time, we've had implementation specialists from Wit & Wisdom here, and our teachers opened their classrooms and allowed their colleagues to observe them and again all of those attempts at really refining our literacy instruction to be responsive to our kids.

The portrait competencies are very important for being a critical thinker, a purposeful communicator, and a resilient person. We continue to focus on the mindsets and skills that kids need to have beyond the content to be successful in these areas.

Finally, student success plans. Those are plans that we create for students who need a more significant level of support or intervention. They're not finding success in the classroom, and they might be working with a specialist, not in special ed, but with someone who can provide intervention. And so we've been very thoughtful and intentional as we've introduced the new curriculum, making sure that we're writing the plans that help support kids and help us monitor their progress moving forward. I'll show you a little data on that in a minute.

So, here's the big numbers. I don't have a lot of data because we don't get it until the summer. But this is exciting data for us, and our goal was to make sure that our kids could access experiences and opportunities aligned with their strengths and interests during and beyond their time in Hilliard schools. This is a reflection of Mark Tremayne's work. It also reflects what Mark Polman and Rich Bettner do within our Innovation Design Center.

So, I just want to run through some of these numbers for you. And when you think about kids' interests and even think about their future careers and whatnot, I think these are something we should be really proud of in Hilliard. Let's start with the career exploration. We had the opportunity this year with six of our elementaries to send about 450 girls to COSI Girls in STEM. At the same time, the boys in the same schools were able to go to Tolles and the Hub for career exploration. That was a really exciting day. We look forward to next year when we can pick up the other six and share that opportunity with them as well.

When you look down at the Think Big in the IDC and the Hub, I know we don't have that many students in the district, so that seems like a really big number for a semester. But if you remember, I think Big Spaces were designed in collaboration with Amazon World Services. And so each year, Mark collects data to see how many kids actually are getting a touch in these spaces. So at the Hub daily, we have two classes of kids who get into that space that is their course. The remaining numbers actually reflect our elementary kids who are getting in there, so that's the daily attendance of how many kids are coming into the space. That's a first-semester number, but our kids love those spaces. And again, I really applaud the Marks and Rich for really making sure our kids have great experiences that connect to not only kids' interests but also the curriculum.

We have 380 students who participate in Tolles programming, some of which are at Tolles and some of which are here within the district. We've also had students who have earned almost 6,500 college credits. And for those of you who have paid for college credits for kids, you know that's a great offering for our community.

We also have 1,381 students who have participated in the innovative programming at the Hub and Innovative Learning Campus. When we look at our internships and our work-based learning, which includes everything from career mentorship and CBI, pre-apprenticeships, and some of the work that our students are even doing in the summer, we have 352 students who participated in those experiences.

And then, finally, the last number that I wanted to share this evening was just in terms of the number of students who've earned industry-recognized credentials. Again, Jake will talk more about this next week,

but these are credentials that kids can earn that can actually be stacked up and then lead to a pathway to graduation. So, if kids are having trouble meeting competency, there's a second way that they can earn credentials. We've had 1,620 plus students who have earned credentials this year. Specifically, 1,300 of those students earned it through CPR. CPR was available to our students through a partnership with the Hilliard Education Foundation and the Norwich Township Fire Department. That's a lot of kids getting access to a lot of opportunities. And this is not nearly comprehensive of what Mark has going for students. This is something to be really proud of.

Our next goal is focused on just creating connections from student to student to adult and within the curriculum. We've talked a great deal about the portrait competencies, but as an academic team, our work with principals and, subsequently, teachers was really in design. I've talked about the environment and the way that it's set to promote a community of learners. So if you think about it, when desks are put together so they're more like a table, it just naturally nudges people to talk or interact together. Some of our teachers have used spaces within their room that are set up for our kids to move to; we often talk about vertical spaces, but we've talked about the importance of connection only comes through talking and interacting together and having a really well-developed task. And, you can see that we spent some time just talking about the design of the lessons. When we considered the new curriculum that we pulled, whether it was Illustrative Math, Study Sync, or Wit and Wisdom, we elected to use those curriculums because they are very much designed to promote the connection and deep thinking that we're hoping for.

And then, finally, we talk about the design of relevant experiences. You'll hear us talk a lot about relevance next year because that was a big theme in the new strategic plan. Relevance to us means it has to be something that's of high interest or real-world application to our students.

Finally, here are just some more numbers that I think are important to look at. I mentioned to you the student success plans, the plans written for students who need more intensive support to be successful within the different content areas. This could be even with attendance, behavior, and things like that. And these are increases. Now, the one thing I want to point out is that an increase doesn't mean all of a sudden, 1,200 new students showed up with a literacy problem. That's not it. What it meant is Molly was a bulldog and said, let's really make sure we capture those kids that you're doing things differently for. Who are you doing something so differently for we need to see and monitor how this intervention is impacting them. We had 1,200 more plans for literacy, 600 more plans for math, and then 900 more plans for attendance. We found this very intentional focus has been really impactful in our classrooms.

We talked about restorative practices. We will have trained 606 staff members when we conclude this year. Again, I want to talk about the amount of time that Cori, Jake, and Herb advocated for our teachers. We took on three really great curriculums, and it was important to give them time. Our teachers requested that time, and so we used those, PD days to make sure that they could dig in deep. So that was really wonderful.

The last thing we did this year was ask our 65 PreK-12 administrators to spend a day shadowing at least one student. And we asked them not to shadow someone in their own school. The reason we did that is we felt it was really important for them to sit in the seat of a student and to understand what the experience is like for them truly. This led to a lot of great conversations and certainly reflection on how important design is. But it also prompted, in different buildings, teachers who then went out and opted to do the same experience. So it was really beneficial. We learned a lot that day and we also learned we're not very good at sitting anymore. So good stuff.

As we approach the end of the school year, these metrics will help us determine how successful we've been in working towards these goals. So, obviously, we'll get the results for the state test. We'll continue to look at the attendance data, as Molly indicated. We'll see where we fall within the stars on the local report card. We will continue to use STAR, both looking to see are kids at benchmark and whether they are growing. And then finally AIM data, which is just a tool we use within the district. Our secondary principals are currently using this. It allows them to go into a classroom to do an observation. They're looking for things like, is the classroom set up to promote connection to peers? Is it set up for community? Are kids talking? Are there topics of high interest or real-world relevance? And then they use that information as a starting point for conversations with staff or future PD.

That brings us to the end of this three-year cycle. Just as we look ahead to what the fall will bring, we'll start our next three-year commitment plan, and we've already been deeply into it. We've used the strategic plan as our guide, really. And so when you look at this statement, it's not new to you to hear that. We're focused on every student without exception, but the strategic plan has really guided us in talking about being focused on every student and making sure that they're ready for their tomorrow. We've added the word "their" because we know that our kids have many different paths that they're looking to explore. I won't give much more than that away because I want you to wait all summer to hear about the next great plan.

With that, I, or the team, would be happy to answer any questions that you have. Ms. Arnold said you're too comprehensive. I think you've stunned us into silence here.

8. Dyslexia Legislation – Jamie Lennox and Herb Higginbotham

Mr. Stewart said there's much discussion about the science of reading and dyslexia. Jamie and Herb will differentiate the drivers of those conversations, where they overlap, and our work around those issues.

Mrs. Lennox said thank you so much for allowing us this opportunity to give you an update about the new laws and requirements and how we have been responding to them.

First of all, you heard last year from two wonderful people, Jackie Noland, and Nikole Abate, about the science of reading. Before going into the requirements of the laws, I want to do a brief review. Nothing as in-depth as what they did, just to make sure that we understand the same terminology. As you may recall, the science of reading is based on 50 years of research from a lot of different disciplines, including education, linguistics, special education, neuroscience, and psychology. Dr. Scarborough put all these strands together in an interconnected way to build skilled readers. Essentially, when we look at skilled reading, we are looking at reading comprehension, which is the product of language comprehension and word recognition skills. If we don't have secure language comprehension or word recognition, then we don't have skilled reading.

What has been getting much publicity in the news lately is around dyslexia, which is that deficit in the word recognition component within those different strands. So, up top here, I have the definition for dyslexia, which really talks about difficulties with accurate reading as well as the fluency or the rate of speed with which we're reading. In the bottom chart, you'll see where when you have those weak phonological difficulties, that really is what we're talking about within kind of the whole broad, notion of the science of reading where we're seeing those deficits.

Mr. Higginbotham said we'll be reviewing a number of new requirements that all Ohio districts are now required to address, but we also hope to highlight some of the ways that we've been ahead of these new mandates. One example was that beginning in 2018, our district began the work of our Dyslexia Commitment Plan, which was the result of a collaboration between parents, students, teachers, and administrators who sought ways to improve the identification and instructional practices that impacted at-risk readers, including students who have characteristics of dyslexia.

This three-year plan established our commitment to our families and students to improve our communication with families when data shows their child is at risk for reading difficulties, improve our professional development on research-based interventions connected to the science of reading, implement targeted interventions, and increase the number of staff in each building who had an Orton Gillingham certification, which falls under the umbrella of structured literacy certification, which Jamie will touch on here in just a little bit.

In April 2021, as our commitment plan was nearing an end, the Ohio legislature passed new laws for dyslexia screening and support. These new laws instructed districts to address practices to support at-risk readers, which include expectations for screening and progress monitoring, parent notification, teacher professional development on dyslexia characteristics, and a structured literacy certification process. We want to highlight a few details about how we implemented the dyslexia screening and monitoring process that took place this year and address the new mandates as well as share our plan moving forward.

First, we have been using Acadience Reading to screen students three times per year for instructional planning and progress monitoring purposes prior to the passage of the dyslexia support laws. We were happy to see that this assessment became a state-approved dyslexia screener in the spring of 2023, which meant our teachers would be using a familiar assessment to meet the new screening requirements. So this year, we administered Acadience Reading as a dyslexia screener to all K-3 students and students in grades 4 through 6 if parents requested it. Students we identified as at-risk were progress monitored for up to six weeks.

Next school year, the law requires that we screen all kindergarten students and any students in grades 1st through 6th if requested by a parent. However, our commitment is to continue using Acadience Reading to screen and progress monitor students in grades K through 5. This will continue our practice of using Acadience Reading for both screening and instructional planning purposes. The student data we receive from this assessment helps us provide targeted interventions for students. Furthermore, administering this assessment three times throughout the school year will help us continue to monitor and support students with appropriate interventions until they are on benchmark.

Mrs. Crowley asked if Hilliard has a way to thread out some of our ELL students. I know in Southwestern, we did not. We just gave them the same test as everyone else. I had three kids who qualified for intervention, and two of them were non-English-speaking students. Was there any guidance about how to treat students who just have a language barrier?

Mrs. Lennox said the state seems to continually update its guidance. There's not a whole lot of specific guidance for EL students, but we continue to look and wait for those updates. They just put out a new version of their guidebook in March. So, I know that they are continuing to look at all of those different pieces. But right now, we are using Acadience with all of our students. Mr. Higginbotham said the only thing he would add is that our teachers know our students very well just as you do. And as we are

having conversations about how to communicate this information to parents, knowing the challenges that lay before them (EL and other special education students), we are telling them we know your child and here is our plan to support your child. And here's how we're going to communicate that information to you throughout the school year. It's more about another opportunity just to check in with parents and talk about how we're going to continue to support their growth.

Mr. Higginbotham said this new law also requires districts to notify parents of the results of the screener if their child is at risk for reading difficulties. We want to be clear that Acadience Reading does not diagnose dyslexia, but it does identify students who are unlikely to meet grade-level reading benchmarks unless they receive targeted interventions. This required parent notification is in line with our practice of communicating and collaborating with parents, in developing instructional support plans when needed.

You can see on the slide here the number of students whose families we contacted because their results showed that they were at risk for not meeting grade-level benchmarks. And so, let me just take a quick second to explain what this table shows. On the left-hand side, fall this year, these were the number of students that, according to Acadience Reading, showed they were at risk for not being on benchmark unless they received some sort of intervention or targeted support. You'll notice down at the bottom that kindergarten was not screened because state law said we couldn't screen kindergarten students for dyslexia until January. The second column is the same cohort of students from the fall, but when we ran the numbers again, you can see that the number of at risk dropped, except for kindergarten. So, the number of students who were at risk in the fall has decreased over time. We're proud of the work our teachers and support systems in our buildings are doing to ensure that growth continues for the rest of the school year. We can't wait to see how the rest of the year shapes up for them.

(Mrs. Lennox began speaking again.) As Herb mentioned, we've been preparing our teachers a lot over the past few years with different professional development opportunities, which was one of our prior commitments in our Hilliard plan. Jackie Noland did a fantastic job, beginning with year one implementation of our 95 core phonics, of getting our K-2 teachers a full day of the science of reading instruction and training. She also met with them later that same year, the 21-22 school year, for another half-day to ensure those best practices were being met with fidelity in the classroom with different grade-level teams.

Of course, last year, we had our big prep for our Wit and Wisdom rollout. Again, she did the same full-day science of reading professional development along with some additional language comprehension components for our teachers in grades three to five. When we launched Wit and Wisdom, our K-5 teachers had another full day of professional development and learned how it aligns with the science of reading. We've been preparing for this for a very long time.

While all of that was happening last year, we also had our kindergarten and first-grade teachers and support staff, such as reading support teachers and intervention specialists, who needed to complete the dyslexia training. The dyslexia training produced by the state has many different modules. It covers science and reading, examines the characteristics of dyslexia, and outlines different tier-one strategies. They produce a comprehensive 18-hour course. So, this year, we need to have our grade 2 and 3 teachers and support staff trained by September 15th. And then, looking beyond that, the state has released its course for grades 4 and up for intervention specialists to complete for the following year.

The good news is that the state realizes that we will have new teachers that we need to onboard. Anyone hired has two years from their hire date unless they've completed it previously, to complete it. We will work with those new staff to ensure that they have adequate time to fully get the training that they need to be supportive of that.

As Herb alluded to before, for those teachers who want some additional training, the state, with that dyslexia guidance, requires districts to develop a process for structured literacy certification. When we think about structured literacy, what we're really talking about is systematic and explicit instruction that is aligned with the science of reading.

The state has said there are four different ways that you can accomplish this. So one is actually going to be in the hiring process by seeking out applicants that already have certification. And we definitely do that through our screening processes. Another is for current staff to elect to gain some additional training in this area. We have 61 staff members who, by the end of this school year, will have that structured literacy certification. That is a large number when we think about the requirement just went into effect. We have been preparing for this for a while, and it includes a lot of different types of teachers. We've got general education teachers, English language teachers, and intervention specialists, and one of our elementary principals has this certification. A lot of different individuals have participated in this training to further their skill development. Also, we have nine staff that have signed up to do the training this coming school year.

One reason we are able to offer this certification training is that we have a great partnership with the Children's Dyslexia Center and currently have two in-house supervisors. They've gone through the training program through the Dublin Dyslexia Center. Jackie Noland is one of them, and Nikole Abate is finishing her experience this year. So she will be another. We're always looking to add trainers. Just to give you an idea of the work it takes, staff participate in a full week of training in the summer. This year, it starts on July 29th; it's five days, nine to four, that they are receiving science of reading instruction. They've got a materials list that seems to be a mile long, and then they also meet on six other Saturdays throughout the school year. And then, also a part of that is going to be the practicum. So that's where it ranges you up a notch from just your typical training to having a supervisor that is ensuring that you are implementing the intervention with fidelity. The requirement for that is two hours a week. The staff will go to the dyslexia center after school hours on Mondays and Wednesdays to provide tutoring that is supervised.

We talked a lot about dyslexia and structured literacy. So House Bill 33 really is looking at the science of reading and was passed in July. It requires that all teachers and administrators have knowledge of the science of reading and engage in professional development by June 30, 2025. There are multiple pathways available to meet this requirement. And so I just wanted to wrap my own head around it. I thought it'd be best to present this as a chart to compare the two different trainings.

When we look at those dyslexia support laws, we are targeting our K-3 teachers and support staff to complete those training modules. This is an ongoing requirement, and again, there are several options. So, the state has released its courses. If teachers have that structured literacy certification, they have met the training requirements. The online course is about 18 hours of professional development.

On the flip side of that, we have the science of reading. And so this has an end goal. What the state is really trying to say is that they want everyone to have the foundation for the science of reading by June 30, 2025. And then there are about seven different pathways that they have come up with. So teachers

that also have to do the dyslexia training have a little bit of a shorter piece because they already had some of that science of reading as part of that dyslexia PD. So, the time commitment varies between seven and 22 hours.

(Mr. Higginbotham began speaking again.) In addition to the new dyslexia support laws, there are a few changes to the third-grade reading guarantee laws that we wanted to include in this update. First, what has remained the same is that a reading improvement and monitoring plan, or RIMP, must be created for any student in grades K-3 who scores below the 25th percentile and starts reading or early literacy assessment. The district must involve students' parents or guardians and the classroom teacher in developing this plan. One change for this year that schools are required to make is to provide high-dosage tutoring for all students with a RIMP. High-dosage tutoring must occur for at least three days per week or fifty hours over thirty-six weeks. A RIMP and high-dosage tutoring must continue beyond fourth grade if the student still is not reading at grade level, which means they must score proficient on the Ohio State test for English Language Arts. So, you can see that the stakes have been raised for teachers and students to meet that proficiency mark. This is going to play a big role in our work next year with our commitment plan. Finally, beginning with this school year, parents and caregivers can now request that their third-grade child be promoted to fourth grade regardless of whether or not they meet one of the promotion criteria.

One last thing that we wanted to touch on is that beginning next school year, the state now requires districts to use instructional materials for grades pre-K through five in English language arts that are aligned with the science of reading and strategies for literacy instruction. Fortunately, the instructional resources that we have already adopted meet the requirements of the new state law. We have area districts that are still trying to determine how to move forward, and they've been visiting and asking us lots of questions. We hope that through this presentation and update, you have picked up on just how forward-thinking we have been trying to be. We've seen it coming, and we've seen it in our kids. We knew back in 2018 that we needed to respond better to students who are at risk for developing reading difficulties. I'm proud of the work that I've been a part of with Jamie and the work of our academic team, our principals, and our teachers for wanting to dig in and figure out how to get better in our instructional practices to support our students better.

(Mrs. Lennox began speaking again.) As far as our next steps, one of the things that we have been intentional about is whether our work aligns with our strategic plan objectives. First, we will take a deep dive into our preschool curriculum to ensure alignment not only with the early learning standards but also with a comprehensive language and literacy instructional component that also aligns with the science of reading. We are meeting later this week to talk about the pathways released by the state for the science of reading professional development. How are we going to communicate that to our staff? Who is going to fall into the different pathways that I have been outlining?

Finally, it is through our work with our high-quality instructional materials and the PD we are providing to staff that we will determine whether we are improving the early literacy component of the state report card. Right now, the news is very promising, as Herb talked through. We had our dyslexia letters sent out in the fall and are already seeing growth in our students in January.

Do you have any questions?

Ms. Arnold said I've got one just for my personal edification. Herb, you said the screener doesn't actually diagnose dyslexia. We see that it's identifying children, and we're reevaluating. Is that then the trigger if they're still not improving, that then there's further screening actually to diagnose?

Mr. Higginbotham said yeah, there's actually a tier 2 screener that we can use to get even more information about what a child needs. In many cases, it's phonics-based, and we have something called a phonics screener inventory that allows us to dig deeper and pinpoint exactly what area of phonics a child needs. We also have a resource that's connected to our general classroom phonics instruction called Phonics Lesson Library, and the great thing about that is it says this child needs this area in this lesson. So start here. It's very scripted, supported, with scope and sequence, and all connected to the science of reading.

Mrs. Crowley said I want to commend you because we have three school districts represented in our house, and Hilliard is one of them. It's light years ahead of some of the other districts in Central Ohio. My daughter was recently qualified under the umbrella of specific reading disability. So, we've lived this as parents as well as educators and school board members. So, I had a couple of questions. I noticed the number on your screener for the kindergarten was super low at 12%. I know typically, dyslexia affects one in four or one in five kids. Are you worried that there's something happening with the screener that's possibly missing some of those kids? It just seems strange compared to the other numbers that are there.

Mrs. Lennox said we also have to understand that at kindergarten age, all the students are learning to read. The screener is initially going to be picking up on what we would expect a typical kindergartner to know halfway through their first year of schooling. Mrs. Crowley said that maybe it takes more time to see the deficit. Mrs. Lennox said it does, and that's why we also are utilizing phonological awareness and how those students are manipulating sounds as well to give us a better indicator for any missteps along the way.

Mrs. Crowley asked can you tell me a little bit about that partnership with the Columbus Dyslexic? I know that type of certification is incredibly expensive for teachers to seek out on their own. How did you guys develop that partnership and who's paying for that? Do they cut us a deal, or are teachers expected to pay for that kind of expense?

Mrs. Lennox replied no. We get a very substantial discount, and part of that is because we have our in-house trainer. So Jackie Noland, with her work as a trainer and going through that, which she did independently, as far as I'm aware, really saves us a bunch of money. Mrs. Crowley said we're so lucky to have that partnership. Mrs. Lennox said very much so.

The Dublin Dyslexia Center is a really high-quality training ground. When our teachers are coming out of there with the knowledge and skills that they have, it really is a robust lesson plan that they're putting together, incorporating all of the science and reading components. But, yeah, it's through Jackie's partnership. The way that it works is that instead of if you were doing private pay to do your own training there, you would have two students that you would tutor at the center. Through this partnership, our staff have one student at the center, and then their other practicum student is through the district.

Mrs. Crowley said that's such a wonderful partnership. I commend you on that as well as for the students. When I sent in my application, I discovered their waitlist is 24 to 36 months long. So, for your

students to receive that type of support in Hilliard is wonderful. And then, the last question I have, you mentioned something about high-dosage tutoring. Who provides that? Is that the classroom teacher? Mr. Higginbotham said it's dependent on who can provide that support. The way I look at it is that we've asked for another slice of the pie, and the pie is still the same size. So, we have to figure out the schedule. The schedule is tight every single day, from the minute the kid walks through the door to the minute they leave. We're squeezing every minute out of that day to provide them with a rich experience so that they can go down to an IDC and give them music, gym, recess, and lunch. And so finding that time is probably one of the biggest challenges that we're going through right now. We're trying to be more forward-thinking and making sure that we're focused on ensuring that is a part of our master schedule moving into next year. We have highly traded specialists. We've worked with them. Oftentimes, kids who need that extra support can fit in with another group of students with similar needs. That's been the way we've approached it so far.

Mrs. Lennon added that one of the things most of our elementary schools did this year was have an intervention block. We have really found that time has been useful to provide that high-dosage tutoring as well.

Mrs. Crowley said thank you, and again, you're very lucky. I know it was a lot of hard work to get to a place where you're implementing these curriculums. But in Southwestern, we piloted three curriculums that did not make that list. So we're starting back at step zero, and your teachers have such a leg up that you picked a curriculum that was so closely aligned, that works so well. I know it's been a really difficult ask of them this year, but going into next year, they're starting year two, and some of us are starting year zero again. I know that's been a lot of work on the academic team, but I think that your forward thinking and knowing what you knew was coming down, I think that you guys are doing a phenomenal job to stay ahead of this and kind of work with the plane as it's being built. Everything keeps changing. So thank you for all the work that you're doing.

9. Special Ed Update – Jamie Lennox

Mr. Stewart said he asked Jamie to provide a quick update about special education, especially as it relates to enrollment numbers.

Mrs. Lennox said that in November, I gave a very thorough presentation on our programming. So, this time, I just want to highlight where we are as far as our growth trends and what I'm looking forward to this summer and next year.

This chart is the same chart you saw back in November showing our enrollment trends last year. One thing we noticed is that if you look at that first column, it says withdraw, but really, that looks at our students who move out and summer and winter graduates. So, it's a mixed category of students who have exited the district.

We have always found, at least in the past few years, that we have more students moving out than moving in. You will see that continue this year as well. We also have students who exit (*special education*) services, meaning they have met and mastered their individualized education plan goals and objectives and no longer require special education services. It's always good to see students graduate and move out of special education.

Another known piece for us is the new students that we identify for special education. So, the number at the bottom, 473, is pretty typical of where we end up, year to year. It's a pretty steady rate that we have had. You will notice most of this is going to come from preschool, as well as our elementary, and so that is not anything that we would expect to change. That is where we find our students with disabilities as required by a child find. So, you'll see at the very bottom right corner we had a growth of 253 students for the 2022-23 school year.

So here are the same charts for this school year and where we currently stand as of Friday. Again, we continue to see the same trends. We have had more students move out than move in. We've had a fair number of winter grads this year, which was lovely to see. And then the students that have moved in, as well as we've already had 92, students exit services. I anticipate that number will go up a little bit further. Our newly eligible students right now are sitting at 321. As I said, that's been a fairly stable number that kind of 473, and I again anticipate by year-end, we will end up there. You might be thinking oh my gosh, 150, what is going on? But please remember that this is a 90-day process. When we get consent from parents, there is a 60-day process for that evaluation component, and then teams have 30 days to put together a service plan. So, we have a lot of students in a lot of different places within that evaluation process. So, as the year is coming to a close, those will continue to wrap up.

As far as our overall change, we had an increase of 145 students for this year. I wanted to give a little bit of a snapshot of our five-year trend because one of the things that I feel we have heard a lot in various presentations is how our overall student enrollment is pretty flat. There are little subtle variations, but we're not growing considerably, and that is that kind of negative 0.68. So that's looking at the enrollment from the 18-19 school year through the last school year. Again, it's a pretty flat number. But when we look at kind of the needs of our students and the changes that we've seen there, during those same five years, our special education enrollment within the district has grown by 2.5%. So our special education students, when we think about the roughly 16,000, students in the district, is about 16.6 percent at this point. And then when I take a look even drilling down into that specific group, so if I just look at the number of special education students we had within that five-year span, that is a growth of 16.7 percent, just within that cohort. So we're now sitting at 3,026 students that we are serving with disabilities. 310 of those are our preschool students with disabilities.

That leads to the fact that we've had to make some adjustments to our programming over the past few years. One of the things that we did last year that I'm very proud of is that we really grew our specialized life skills program, which is aimed at our students with the most significant disabilities. In working with the operations department, we were able to add a classroom in every elementary school to support those students. As much as we can, we'd like to be able to support our kids in their home-building. This year, we are finding we need to add four additional classrooms at the elementary level to support those students with those most significant needs.

Some of that is coming from, when we just looked, we have 147 rising preschoolers to kindergarten, right? And so part of this is planning for 30 of those students who have been identified as needing that more intensive programming. We also have some students coming who utilize the autism scholarship during preschool and have registered for kindergarten. So, we're always communicating with those families utilizing scholarships, and we always have a fair number that comes back to us the following school year.

We are able to open a classroom for our specialized behavior program. This will be new to Horizon Elementary, leaving us with two elementary schools that still lack behavior programming. But again, we

always look at the numbers and support that we need at the different buildings. This year, it just happened that Horizon was a building that needed it. We're also adding some morning programs to Alton Darby, Horizon, and Ridgewood and a preschool classroom as well. Having the Alton Darby preschool location is great, but we are bussing students from all over. So, I was really pleased to see from that Master of Facilities Plan a recommendation to add preschool classrooms at Beacon.

And then, finally, we are very excited about offering our extended school year services again this summer. This is being offered for four different weeks, two weeks in June and two weeks in July, at our Britton Norwich Learning Campus from 8:30-11:30 a.m. We are currently in the process of enrolling families. We're going to have about 150 students participating. Again, that just prevents significant regression of skills so that when students come back in the fall, they don't have to spend a large amount of time recouping those skills that they have lost.

Any questions?

Mr. Stewart said one of the reasons I wanted Jamie to show you this is that when you talk about flat enrollment over an extended period of time, and then you look at an increase in your FTEs, it's the numbers within the numbers that explain that. Again, these students deserve that support, and we're thrilled to give it to them, but it warrants an explanation. The growth of populations like special education and EL necessitates some of that growth in FTEs.

Mrs. Lennox said one thing I did gloss over that I can go back to is that our different programs have different student-to-teacher ratios. For students with more significant needs, the teacher has about 8 students in that classroom. For students with significant behavior needs, there are 12 students per classroom. They're obviously helping other students within that school, but when we're trying to focus on the intensive interventions that students need, we really make sure to keep those numbers in line with the state requirements.

Mrs. Crowley asked if they also have aides in the classroom. Mrs. Lennox said they do. Our life skills classrooms have two aides, and behavior has one. We add learning program aides as needed.

10. The Board of Education approved the 6-12 Imagine Learning Illustrative Math.

Ms. Arnold said I looked at the materials last week. When we're talking about the commitment plan and the design of relevant experiences, one of the things I noticed while looking through the math materials was that the story problems were real. One of my chief complaints about everyday math, when we had it, was that it was not real. So, really, the things that kids can dive into, like if you're cooking or building something, I really appreciate that. Mr. Stewart thanked Cori and her team for all the work and research that went into making this selection.

11. The Board of Education approved the following handbooks for the 2024-2025 school year:
 - a. Preschool/Elementary Student Handbook
 - b. Sixth Grade & Middle School Student Handbook
 - c. High School Student Handbook
 - d. Athletic Manual for Parents-Athletes-Coaches
 - e. Performing Arts Handbook

Mr. Vorst said it looks like a lot of language cleanup. Mr. Stewart said yes, and we've started doing this every year just to formalize that process more. But yes, you've got mostly language cleanup. Mr. Vorst asked if there was anything specific that you have concerns about or that is a significant change? Mr. Stewart replied no.

Ms. Arnold thanked Mr. McDonough. She sent him a couple of notes on information within the handbooks, and he gave me some great feedback. I appreciate that.

12. Policies submitted for a second reading
 - a. IGBEA-R – Reading Skills Assessments and Intervention (Third Grade Reading Guarantee)
 - b. IGD – Cocurricular and Extracurricular Activities
 - c. IGDJ – Interscholastic Athletics
 - d. KGB – Public Conduct on District Property
 - e. KMA – Parent/Citizen Organizations

Mr. Stewart said as we've discussed, the changes are largely legislative requirements.

Mr. Perry said I just have one quick thing. This came up in my other job while I was looking through some ORC policies. One came up that I thought would be a good reference to use for KGB, which was 2917.12. We currently have 2917.11. ORC 2917.12 is disturbing a lawful meeting. I thought, you know what, that's a good one to add and it just passed last year. I would like to add it as another reference.

13. The meeting adjourned at 7:47 p.m.