

REGULAR MEETING

A Regular meeting of the Benzie County Central Board of Education was held Monday, March 17, 2025 in the Board of Education Conference Room.

President Childs called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Members Present: Mrs. Gillison, Mr. Barnard, Mr. Smith, Mrs. Campana, Mr. Kempton, Mr. Childs, Sophie McLaren (non-voting member)

Members Absent: Mr. Noffsinger

24-25-081 It was moved by Mr. Smith and supported by Mrs. Gillison to approve the agenda as presented.

Ayes: 6

Nays: 0

Motion Carried

Opening Statement:

We are a team. We leave our personal opinions at the door and we are bound by Policy 2302 to faithfully discharge the office of a board member and keep in mind our primary concern is the educational welfare of students focusing on governance and fiduciary obligations of the district including duties of loyalty and care, placing the District's interests above the Board member's personal interests.

24-25-082 It was moved by Mrs. Gillison and supported by Mr. Smith to approve Consent Grouping items as presented.

A. Minutes: February 10, 2025 – Regular

B. Business: General Fund Bills – 909,047.55

C. Support Staff Appointments:

- Manon Lutzke – Assistant Track Coach – High School
- Chloe Dunning – Assistant GSRP Teacher – Lake Ann Elementary
- Brandon Blair – Head Middle School Softball Coach
- Shayna Conger – Early Childhood Assistant Teacher – Lake Ann Elementary - Willsbub

D. Staff Assignment Changes:

- NONE

E. Leave of Absence:

- Madelyn Reppucci - Military Activation - New York National Guard – February 19, 2025 through TBD
- Brian Parent – Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) – April 1-4, 2025

F. Recommendation for Tenure:

- NONE

G. Recommendation for Termination following Probationary Period

- NONE

H. Recommendation for Termination:

- NONE

I. Contract Updates:

- **NONE**

Ayes: 6

Nays: 0

Motion Carried

J. Approval to enter into Closed Session for purposes of Superintendent Evaluation

District Impact Team Update: Board of Education Trustee, Matt Smith shared the following:

The DIT examined the PD plan for teachers for the 2024-25 school year, including tools like iReady, Reading League, Restorative Practices, and RCD. We identified what has been completed, what is in progress, and what still needs to be done. The team discussed ways to improve training for next year and determine the most critical training sessions that must be included while ensuring flexibility for additional learning opportunities.

PD Data Review analyzed survey responses from teachers regarding PD offerings and teacher's confidence in implementing the programs.

NWEA Data Review examined 9-11 grade Math and ELA data, categorizing students into performance percentiles. The team discussed strategies to help struggling students, including regular teacher check-ins, adjusting student schedules for more targeted support, involving parents to encourage after-school tutoring, and developing new high school intervention programs for Math and ELA.

iReady Data Review showed significant growth in K-5 Math and ELA from Fall to Winter, with many students making more progress than expected.

Computer Science Course Planning discussed the state requirement that by 2027, Michigan schools must offer a high school Computer Science (CS) credit. Benzie might be able to offer one by Fall 2025. The team is exploring different course options, including potential partnerships with Ferris State University or Northwest Ed. We also discussed whether the current Digital Literacy course could be adjusted to meet state requirements.

Middle School Tuning Protocol reviewed iReady data and literacy support strategies for the second semester. Reading scores have improved, with students reaching 82% of their expected annual growth by midyear (compared to the 50% typically expected). The team discussed ways to close any remaining learning gaps.

High School Tuning Protocol addressed increasing student participation in surveys, the connection between social-emotional learning (SEL) lessons and survey responses, and tailoring SEL instruction to better support students.

The group looked at Special Education Trends and Enrollment. Benzie has a higher percentage of students in special education compared to neighboring districts. We contributed this to many general education students have left for school-of-choice options elsewhere.

Testing Protocols presented best practices for improving student ownership of testing outcomes. Discussed strategies for communicating results with parents to improve their involvement.

Homestead Hills tuning protocol discussed plans to reinstate their “Husky Den” after Spring Break to provide student support. The three intended purposes for the Husky Den are: 1) provide a Regulation Break, allowing students time and space to regain focus; 2) when there is an RCD Breakdown creating re-entry plans for students requiring additional support; and 3) Conflict Resolution, assisting students in restoring relationships.

BV Tuning Protocol analyzed iReady platform usage data, focusing on maximizing "Time on Task" based on grade-level recommendations.

We reviewed our General Supervision Model, which helps track progress for special education students. Plans include sharing accommodations with staff, improving progress monitoring, and holding monthly special education meetings to ensure best practices are followed.

We also examined special education graduation and dropout trends and discussed ways to support at-risk students. Plans include weekly SEL lessons, expanded behavioral and therapeutic services, and transition planning for students moving to Benzie Academy.

Student Council Report: Student Council Board of Education Representative, Sophie McLaren – Sophie shared that the Glowcoming Dance was well attended and the energy was high. The Student Council is now focusing on Teacher Appreciation Week.

Administration Report:

A. High School Robotics World Championship – Dallas, TX – VEX Robotics Coach, Marc Alderman – Marc shared the following:

2024-2025 Season Highlights

- 4 Middle School VEX IQ Robotics Competition Teams (VIQRC) - 13 team members
- 2 High School VEX V5 Robotics Competition Teams (V5RC) - 6 team members
- 4 regular-season VIQRC Tournaments and River Raisin Signature Event
- 4 regular-season V5RC Tournaments
- Event Partner for both VIQRC and V5RC Tournaments at Benzie Central
 - One of our main sources of income
- Season VIQRC Awards: Teamwork 2nd Place Award, 2x Design Award, Innovate Award, Judges Award
- Season VRC Awards: Create Award, Robot Skills Champion*, Design Award*
- One VIQRC team qualified for the Michigan State Championship
 - 74484D The Mad Scientists
- One V5RC team qualified for the Michigan State Championship
 - 74485B Perpetual
- One V5RC team qualified for the VEX World Championship 5/6-5/8 Dallas, TX
 - 74485B Perpetual Wyatt Jaquish and Kian Fay
- Volunteered at Peak2Peak Mountain Bike Race at Crystal Mountain

MDE 99h Grant Partnership with:

- Northwestern Michigan College (Educational)
- Rhoades Engineering (Business) 20% grant match

Financial Support from:

- Endoman Productions
- Mrs. Mullen's Closet
 - Hotel cost for family at State Championship
- Anonymous Donation through a work volunteer program

Material Support from:

- Honor Building Supply
- Rains Grains and Sweets
- Team 7567 Grand Traverse Academy, Coach Annie Callahan
- Shawl Family and Bellaire Robotics, AV System for VRC Tournament
- Sleeping Bear Farms
 - Honey sticks for State Championship giveaways

Fundraising for Worlds

- Ask for private donations from Benzie Sunrise Rotarians
- Husky Robotics family contributions
- Husky Robotics clothing sale through KelGraphics (store is now open!)
 - <https://benzie-husky-robotics-store.spiritsale.com/>
- Ask of local businesses
- Campaign on Social Media
- Unused 99h Grant Funds
 - 45% award this season

VEX Worlds Estimated Cost

- Registration: \$1800
- Hotel Accommodations: \$233 per room per night at Hilton Garden Inn, Dallas
 - \$1057.05 total with fees and taxes
- Airline Tickets: about \$385 out of TVC
- Meals

B. NMSLA – Superintendent Erfourth – Superintendent Erfourth shared that Governor Whitmer has proposed a removal of the sales tax on fuel with a replacement of a flat tax "based on historical average" of what the 6% sales tax generated. This was not well received by the group, since the plan to hold the School Aid Fund harmless would involve backfilling from the General Fund with a set dollar amount. It was noted that this would make School Aid dollars more competitive for K-12, since there would be no prohibition of those dollars going to Higher Education. Additionally, this does not offer room for growth like sales tax, since it's a set amount, not a percentage of sales. Backfilling from the GF would also make School Aid dollars easier to cut in years when the State budget is lean, since that amount would not be protected.

C. Betsie Valley Fiber Run Bids Update - Doug Olson has reviewed the three bids we received and shared the following:

- Verita \$1,198,021.58 for constructed fiber low bidder
- ACD.net \$816,435.00 for a 60-month lease of fiber
- Turnkey \$1,908,453.61 for constructed fiber

After researching the low bidder yesterday, I am comfortable recommending them to receive the bid. The recommendation is to have the board enter into a contract with Verità Telecommunications for an amount not to exceed \$1,198,021.58 for the construction of a new fiber connection between Benzie Central High School and Betsie Valley Elementary School contingent on obtaining commitments for 100% of that funding from the federal E-rate program and a state matching grant.

I had never heard of Verita before this bid. It turns out they are a very well-established operation that simply had not previously bid on projects this small and/or projects this

far north. Bay-Arenac ISD is currently using them for a set of fiber runs totaling about 100 miles. They are happy with their experience and shared details of the vetting process they went through before awarding that bid. I also found that Verita has handled very large projects for Charter and AT&T, among others.

Verita confirmed that they are good with getting 95% of the project payment directly from E-rate at the end of the project. This would mean that Benzie would need to do a purchase order for the other 5% and be ready to pay that at the end of the project and then wait for reimbursement from the state for that amount. The project would take place with an end date of 6/30/2026, which corresponds with the end of Betsie Valley's contract with Acentek.

People might wonder why the \$816,435 from ACD.net is not considered the low bid. The reason is that it is for a leased line and only covers 5 years. A constructed line will last a bare minimum of 20 -- probably a lot longer -- and so the total cost of ownership is much higher with the leased line. Plus, that line would not be eligible for the state matching grant or the elevated E-rate reimbursement, meaning 10% of its cost would be unreimbursed.

D. Betsie Valley Elementary Update – Principal, Kyle Taylor – Principal Taylor presented on the various activities and celebrations taking place at Betsie Valley Elementary. Mr. Taylor is implementing a computer club to begin after we return from spring break.

E. iReady Update Principal Kyle Taylor – Mr. Taylor shared the following iReady data: [iReady](#)

F. Resignations:

- Stefanie Colling Peterson – Early Childhood Lead Teacher – Lake Ann Elementary
- Chris Noffsinger – Board of Education, Trustee – Effective April 11, 2025
- Jason Katt – MS|HS ELA/Body Mechanics Teacher – Effective February 28, 2025
- Jason Katt – Varsity Football Coach – Effective February 28, 2025
- Blair Moss – Designated Building Substitute Teacher – Middle/High School – Effective March 12, 2025
- Rachel Anderson – Benzie Academy Principal – Effective June 30, 2025

G. Retirements:

- Wendy Kalush – Middle School Math & Spanish Teacher – Effective June 30, 2025

Board of Education/Committee Reports –

A. Buildings and Grounds Committee –

- 1. Bond Project Update – President Childs shared that garage door modifications will occur over spring break. Windows at Transportation Dept have been installed. Still a few minor punch list items left.**

2. **Construction Updates – Superintendent Erfourth shared that she and Director of Operations, Mike Zielinski met to review summer 2025 projects. They are tackling smaller projects and putting out a request for bids from prior contractors that have worked with us on other projects. Ball field parking lot and concrete work are going out first. We are working on BV bathrooms and kitchen remodel drawings next. We are also working with Nealis on mechanical drawings for LA and MS for recommissioning.**
3. **Building and Grounds Modification Requests - NONE**

B. Policy Committee – Superintendent Erfourth - NONE

C. Finance Committee –Board of Education Treasurer, Matt Smith– Matt shared the following:

Linq Refund Negotiations

The discussions with Linq regarding a refund are ongoing. We initially received an offer of \$13,200, but after providing additional information to our attorney, she pushed for a higher amount. Linq's attorney is reviewing the request, and we hope to have a revised offer soon, though the final amount remains uncertain.

Financial Status and Audit Compliance

- The District is current on all bank reconciliations.
- Efforts continue to resolve audit concerns regarding non-current books, with February's records scheduled for review by the 18th.

To maximize interest earnings, two new MILAF accounts have been opened to transfer Sinking Fund and Debt Fund dollars into higher-yield accounts. General Fund reserves will also be utilized to improve financial returns, particularly for the summer period when State Aid payments are not received.

D. Parent Advisory Council – Board of Education Trustee, Sue Campana - Purpose of Council:

- share what is happening in each building
- collaborate on ways to improve the school community
- provide input on the district's strategic plan
- serve as a voice for parents

During this council meeting Amiee shared the following bond project updates

- Bus garage windows are installed
- Bus garage door modification should be completed soon
- Bids for summer work will be sent out in early April
- Betsie Valley- kitchen, bathrooms, sidewalks, front canopy
- Lake Ann-mechanical/ temperature controls, sidewalk
- Middle School/ High School-flooring, temperature controls

- **We're also bidding out locker replacement**

The members of the council also discussed the parent input surveys and what questions need to be included in the next parent surveys. Additional discussion items were academic offerings, PD-half days, early release days and other options. A survey question has been added to solicit input on the best way to handle PD days.

During the round table portion of our meeting each building shared celebrations/concerns:

- **Betsie Valley - Healthy Hero and Scholar of the Month have returned!**
- **Homestead Hills is hosting a Boys Speedway Showdown on March 14th, a Hollywood Glamour Girl's Night on April 25th. Character Cafe is going well. Parents and students are really enjoying it!**
- **Lake Ann- a lot of excitement around Character Cafe!! A few parents raised about the safety of their children at school at drop off in the mornings. Parents are seeing students be violent to other students.**
- **Early Childhood-the group is so excited the direction that early childhood is headed. Lake Ann in the past has not had consistency but the new group this year is amazing and are excited to see the changes that are happening.**
- **Middle School/High School-newsletter is great! Communication overall has been wonderful the only caveat is the parents wish to have communication when a sub is going to be out for an extended period.**

E. Liaison Committee–Board of Education President, Brian Childs– Brian was unable to attend the last meeting but shared an update from Superintendent Erfourth that they discussed union reps having regularly scheduled meetings with administrators and that administration evaluations would be shared by union reps in the coming weeks. The next Liaison meeting is March 18.

F. Negotiations – Superintendent Erfourth – Superintendent Erfourth shared that custodial negotiations are set to take place next week with Board of Education members, Matt Smith and Gregory Kempton.

Audience Participation (Agenda Items Only) – NONE

Discussion Topics:

A. Current District Enrollment Summary Review – Exit Out v. Transfer In – Executive Assistant to the Superintendent/Pupil Accounting Specialist, Catina Crossman – Mrs. Crossman shared the district wide enrollment summary broken down by school and grade level as of March 13, 2025. The district currently rests at 1238. This number includes our Early Childhood Population of 91, as well as our 23 Infant-Toddler slots. Overall, enrollment is down. If you subtract early childhood, infant toddlers, standalones, mid-year graduates, and homeschool CTC students, our current enrollment is 1,116; much lower than she had hoped. In addition, Catina shared an exit-out v. transfer-in report, which tracks students both withdrawing and enrolling.

Action Topics:

24-25-083 It was moved by Mr. Smith and supported by Mrs. Gillison to approve the High School Robotics – World Championship -Dallas, TX trip/travel.

Ayes: 6

Nays: 0

Motion Carried

Audience Participation (Open Topics): NONE

Enter into Closed Session for Purposes of Superintendent Evaluation 8:26 PM

24-25-084 It was moved by Mr. Smith and supported by Mrs. Campana to enter back into open session at 10:16 PM.

Ayes: 6

Nays: 0

Motion Carried

Board Communication:

- Thank you to Chris Noffsinger for his dedication to the Board of Education for an overall eight-year term.

Announcements:

1. Early Release – March 21, 2025
2. Spring Break – March 24 – April 1, 2025
3. End of 3rd Marking Period – April 4, 2025
4. Regular Board of Education Meeting – April 14, 2025

24-25-085` It was moved by Mr. Smith and supported by Mr. Barnard to adjourn the regular meeting 10:18 pm.

Ayes: 6

Nays: 0

Motion Carried

Secretary, Board of Education

Please note that March 17, 2025 Regular Board Minutes are subject for approval on April 14, 2025.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Catina M. Crossman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Catina M. Crossman

Executive Assistant to the Superintendent

Board of Education Administrative Assistant

Schools of Choice Coordinator

Pupil Accounting Specialist

Director of Communications

Benzie County Central Schools

Go Huskies!