



## Mountain Lakes Board of Education meeting, 1-20-22

### Student body update, Thomas Rankin, SGA President

The Key Club is running a shoe drive, 1/18-2/2. There are practice AC scheduled for 2/5 and 2/12. On 3/9, Pete VanBuskirk will present on the college process for the Freshman through Junior classes. In 4/7, the school will host a college fair.

MLHS was recognized by College Board for promoting and enrolling more female students in AP Computer Science. This recognition was given to only 760 schools nationwide.

### Performing Arts Recognition, Paul Henry

Band, Choir, and Theater departments saw commendable achievements this fall. Members of the MLHS Band made North Jersey Area Band, all North Jersey Region Band, and a few students are competing for All-State recognition this coming weekend.

Members of the MLHS Choir were named to the Morris Area Honor choir and the North Jersey Region Honor Choir.

The Drama department delivered "Festival of One Acts" this fall. After each presentation, a senior member of the cast acted as Head Dramaturge and hosted a talk-back event in which the history and background of the play was explained, and audience questions were answered.

### HIB Self-Assessment, Ray Searles, Assistant Principal and Acting Director of Guidance

This mandated assessment reflects activity in the prior school year, during which students were not in the buildings very much because of Covid-19. Thus, the number of incidents is very low. There are 26 categories in the assessment. Each category is scored 1-3. 1 = does not meet requirements, 2 = meets requirements, 3 = exceeds requirements. Wildwood's total score was 70, BC scored 68, MLHS scored 68, and Lake Drive scored 74.

In furtherance of HIB prevention, there are 14 staff registered for anti-bullying specialist certification. There is a Cultural Responsiveness program planned at Wildwood, a Digital Citizenship program at Briarcliff, and a focus on "Safe Spaces" at MLHS. Also MLHS is implementing the Wingman program, sponsored by MLH&SA, which fosters peer to peer student leadership and a "cultural transformation" in how students and staff in the district interact with each other.

A community member commented that the Laker Republican Club is targeting HS students with Instagram posts that state that hate speech is protected, and asking them to report any teacher who discusses white privilege etc. The community member asserted that this bullying has to be addressed and kept out of the school, in the same way student HIB is being tracked and



prevented. The Board asked to respond to this at another time, as it was outside the scope of the presentation.

A community member asked how the aforementioned staff HIB training is spread to other staff members, and whether the staff as a whole feel both trained and supported to combat racism and bullying. Mr. Searles said he will look into this very good question.

### Start Strong Assessment, Dr Sumit Bangia, Assistant Superintendent

This assessment is meant to measure students grasp on material taught in the prior academic year to inform instruction this year. Results are available in the Start Strong portal. Note one anomaly to our results is that the students who took Geometry in 8<sup>th</sup> grade were tested on 8<sup>th</sup> grade math, which is a curriculum those students skipped.

### Referendum Phase 2 Update, Alex Ferreira, Business Administrator

Wildwood School's main floor bathrooms are complete. Briarcliff has new lighting, sound, projectors, screen in the gym/auditorium, and new locker rooms. MLHS has new lighting, curtains in the auditorium. New flooring and seating will be next phase, along with kitchen, cafeteria, and the lower-level bathrooms in Wildwood School.

### Comments from the MLEA president

Rose Dunne, co-president, recognized and commended the hard work that the teachers, nurses, and administrative assistants have been doing to cover during extended periods of short staffing because of the Covid pandemic. They are working extremely hard, giving up lunchtime and prep periods and coming in early to keep the schools open for in-person instruction. The MLEA are looking forward to beginning negotiations, and to rescheduling their initial meet and greet with the administration.

### BA Update

Committees and committee chairs have been set, training of new board members is underway.

### Public Comment

A community member asked the board to please address the Laker Republican Club Instagram posts that ask kids to report teachers to the LRC, and requested that the Board give a statement on this as well as hate speech in the schools. Separately, a child brought a knife to school at Briarcliff and parents were notified the next day. It should have been addressed with the students immediately as a teachable moment and parents should have been notified sooner. Board replied they will get back at another time.

A community member welcomed the new BT representative to the Board. Regarding hiring the interim assistant principal, in light of the two prior years' budget deficits, where does the money



come from for this hire? Superintendent said that it is very dire need and they are able to fund it because of their thoughtful accounting practices. Thanks to the BA.

A community member asked how many staff are out with Covid, referring to the prior meeting in which the superintendent said that if one or two more staff go out, instruction would have to be virtual. Mr. Fetherman replied that they have enough staff now and hope that the number of cases will continue to drop.

A community member spoke in support of the first commentor, stating that mental health issues and bullying incidents are rising across the state.

### Committee Updates

The Facilities Committee reported that the Wildwood playground is 20 years old and the slides need to be replaced. A property line survey is pending for the Briarcliff grounds.

The Finance Committee reported that the 2021 audit returned no findings. Next year the district will lose the last Biotech Academy class, which means the loss of that revenue stream.

Enrollment from BT is also going to drop, so the committee needs to plan for this double loss of revenue in the 2022-23 budget.

### Motions of note

- Reconditioning and updating of baseball and softball fields was approved at a cost of \$39,660
- Committees and liaison assignments were approved
- Douglas Bolton was approved as interim Assistant Principal at MLHS
- The academic year calendar for 2022-23 was approved

LWV note taker left the meeting at 10:00 pm

### Presentations Link

The slide presentations for Performing Arts Recognition, HIB Self-Assessment, Start Strong Assessment, Phase II Referendum can be found here:

[https://www.mlschools.org/board\\_of\\_education/board\\_meeting\\_presentations](https://www.mlschools.org/board_of_education/board_meeting_presentations)