

The 2025-26 staffing plan and technology leases were approved by the Neenah Joint School District Board of Education at its March 18 meeting. The Board also held a discussion about the change in titles to the District's Educational Access positions and Board member communications.

The staffing plan reduces the overall staffing by 4.45 full-time equivalents (FTE), resulting in a savings of \$455,000. The total reduction is a change from the initial proposal presented on March 4. There are two elementary teaching positions with retirements that will not be filled due to decreased enrollment. Another reason for the reduction is primarily due to scheduling changes at the middle school. No staff members will be cut or laid off as reductions will be made through retirements and attrition. Additionally, there will be an increase of three special education teachers and the district will contract out occupational therapy and physical therapy positions that have been difficult to fill.

The Board approved a four-year Chromebook lease with IT Savvy for \$874,325. The bid includes free cases for all 2,050 Chromebooks and 20 extra Chromebooks. Students will keep the same Chromebook for a four-year period, so students in first, fifth and ninth grade will receive the new devices. Kindergarten students will be on their own four-year lease cycle.

The change in terminology from DEI to Educational Access is to more clearly describe the work done everyday to support students and is consistent with changes made by many school districts across our local area and the country. The change aims to eliminate any potential confusion or unintended association with DEI practices that courts have ruled unlawful. The intent is to eliminate any confusion between what is done in the Neenah Joint School District and illegal DEI practices.

Superintendent Steve Harrison noted the district's focus has always been—and continues to be— to ensure that all students have access to a high-quality education. He added that this commitment has never been defined by DEI but rather by the responsibility to support student success, create a welcoming learning environment, and remove barriers to achievement.

The Board discussed how the information about this change was shared with the public prematurely, without proper context or explanation, leading to public misinterpretation. The intent of the original communication from the superintendent to the Board was to provide advance notice of upcoming changes and to allow for further discussion of any questions or concerns. The Board spoke about how important it is for them to have information about upcoming changes before the public and the trust that goes with having that information.

In other action, Laura Westfall was hired as a third grade teacher at Lakeview and Elizabeth Gevelinger was hired as an educational assistant at Spring Road. End-of-school year resignations were approved for elementary art teacher Tamara Erickson, psychologist Cara Wege, Coolidge teacher Adrienne Kennedy and counselor Katherine Hintz, Spring Road speech and language pathologist Nicole Giordana and middle school teacher Sarah Jakusz-Kelch.

The Board also honored state champion wrestler Jacob Herm as well as runners-up Declan Koch and Kylee Kurszewski and state placewinner Landen Sheppard.

Sarah Moore-Nokes was recognized and thanked for her three-year service to the Board. Her term will end in April, but she will be unable to attend the next meeting on April 15.