



**BELLEVUE COMETS**  
COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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**Comet Highlights from the November 8, 2021 Board of Education Meeting**  
**From Superintendent Tom Meyer**

November 18	Iowa Association of School Boards (IASB) Convention (Additionally, November 17 is the Delegate Convention and some workshops)
November 24-26	No School - Thanksgiving Vacation
December 14	Elementary Winter Concert
December 15	Two-Hour Early Dismissal - Teacher Professional Learning
December 16	MS Music Winter Concert - 6:30
December 20	HS Music Winter Concert - 6:30
December 22	End of 1st Semester
December 23-Jan. 3	No School Winter Break for Students (school resumes for students on January 4, and teachers return on January 3)

To have a calendar of events see the following link:

<https://www.rivervalleyconference.org/public/genie/628/school/1/>

**Board Meeting**

*While we had School Board elections on Tuesday, November 2 the official recognition of the new board will not take place until after the canvas and abstract of the election by the auditors office. That will not take place until November 9, and our November 8 Board meeting was a normal meeting. Therefore, at the December board meeting we will elect officers, set a regularly scheduled date and time for meetings, and other similar things as needed.*

**Consent Agenda**

**Approve any Resignations**

- Assistant HS Softball Coach - Alyssa Klawitter - She is resigning based on circumstances with graduating from college and work.

**Approve Recommendations to Hire**

- Chase Junk - Assistant HS Girls Basketball Coach - Chase has assisted with football this school year, and also serves as a substitute teacher. He has a background in basketball and will be a good addition to the program.

### **Recognize any Visitors**

- Tim Roth (Facilities Agenda Item)
- Tracy Weber (Work-Based Learning instructor)
- Jackson Capesius (Work-Based Learning)
- Adrian Humphrey (Work-Based Learning)
- Ryan Ring (Work-Based Learning)
- Jamie Capesius (Parent)

### **Comet Curriculum Presentation**

Some Work-Based Learning (WBL) students were in attendance to share their experiences this semester working outside of school, and gaining school credit. Mrs. Weber is the leader of this group and works with the students and their work sites. WBL is an important part for students, and the group is relatively small (8 students this semester, but raising some for next semester) this year as the first year, but is expected to increase in the future as it is more recognized as an option for students, along with students recognizing its benefits.

Ryan Ring works at K9 Comfort with dogs in a variety of ways in providing care and training for them.

Adrian Humphrey - Works at three vet clinics, mainly with small animals but also some larger animals. She works at clinics in Bellevue, Preston, and LaMotte

Jackson Capesius - Works at Delaney Ag Service outside of Bellevue on the Bellevue-Cascade Road and does soil sampling, and other ag-related duties.

Students work at the sites each day and gain a variety of job skills and knowledge about the career and potential related careers.

### **Enrollment Review & Comet Budget Discussion**

Enrollment - As you know the enrollment is strong at this point. I would not be surprised to see some decrease in enrollment next school year based on the graduating class size (and some students who are in their 5th year based on special qualifications) and potential estimates for kindergarten in the 22-23 school year. But...time will tell. Looking at averages for 4-year old preschool and TK enrollments going into K the following year based on this year's enrollment in these areas an estimate is somewhere between 43 and 51 students (which is a large range, but somewhat unpredictable as a whole).

As a result, the discussion on next year and sections must be on our radar. Are we going to need three sections of grades K-4 next year? The kindergarten is going to be approximately 43-51 students based on estimations and averages through the last several years when looking at 4-year old preschool numbers and TK numbers from the prior year. I know this is a big range, but...that is where we are at when we look at this number estimate. It is dependent on how many students in 4-year old will go to TK, and students in our district not in 4-year old preschool, and any potential new students.

As a result, I am working on information for portables/modulars to share again and have spoken with engineers and Duane Van Hermert.

Budget - As I mentioned at our last meeting we are in good shape right now, but have to be careful about over-extending our staffing (that is the largest expenditure from the budget - 82%). Our Unspent Budget Authority is 25%, and our solvency ratio is 29%...these are strong numbers but are directly impacted by our expenditures. At the same time we must provide what is needed for our students and their learning (what will make it the best), and also be open to "reconfiguring" and "restructuring" what we do with staff.

### Facilities Updates

#### Two Things:

- Assessment - The group doing the assessment of the elementary came again last Monday to review the building. I am expecting a report sometime in December or early January. I anticipate information being shared at our January Board meeting.

One way or another, I see this likely leading to recommendations for improvements of some type that may lead to a bond referendum at some point.

- Outdoor Education Area - Tim Roth was in attendance to share thoughts on an "Outdoor Learning Center" for the Bellevue CSD and its community. See some information following on the land we are discussing, etc. Tim, and others - including Blair Gerlach (Ag), Matt Cook (Science), Craig Reuter (Science), Jeff Recker and Brett Ernst shared some ideas, thoughts, and discussions recently again.

Some ideas include the following:

1. The pond would be approximately in the area inside the black line on the map.
2. It would serve as an Outdoor Education Area for Ag, Science, and youth (and adults) of all ages, including being a part of a school curricular aspect.
3. Some potential uses (to name a few) may include the following:
  - a. Fishing (safe area) stocked by the DNR
  - b. Curriculum Connections to Science and Agriculture (plus other areas likely), along with potential after-school programming for CAPS and
  - c. Walking trail around it (utilized by the community, and PE classes) - Also, making it ADA compliant for further use by people.
  - d. Ice fishing learning area and and other outdoor activities (kayaking training as an example), and other recreational activities.

These are only beginning ideas, but the DNR is working on some plans if the Board is okay with us exploring this more...including grant money and

in-kind donations of money and equipment to make this area a possibility for the school and the community as a whole.

The Board was in favor of looking further at this idea, and investigating funding sources from grants and similar sources.

Meyer and the Board emphasized that they do not want to put much money toward this (if any) as a district either as we work toward other building projects and renovations.



**Modified Allowable Growth - School Budget Review Committee**

Each year which we are eligible we apply to the School Budget Review Committee (SBRC) for "spending authority" for new students into our district who continue school in their previous district or choose to go to another public school district. I am not sure currently how many students this will include, but it gives us spending authority as needed. The spending authority allows us the authority to "spend", as we must pay the other district for the student this year even though we do not get the funding until next school year. This also gives us authority for an increase in enrollment and for any ELL needs (English Language Learners). This does not give us us more money now, but the increase in authority that each student brings our district financially is important. I hoped to have specific numbers by the board meeting from the state, as these

are needed for official action, but the numbers are not available from the state at this time.

## Comet Reading and Reflection - Survey

The survey closed on October 29. I am providing an overview of "numbers" in an attachment, and shared some overall comments at the meeting. A full-review of the comments will also be available on the website in the upcoming days.

### Information Items

#### IASB Convention

- Meyer told member to let him know if they plan on attending the conference on November 18 in Des Moines. Mike Reed and Meyer will be attending on November 17 for the Delegate Assembly (Reed) and some school finance sessions (Meyer), along with November 18.

#### Legislative Update

- The following is some information in regard to contacting legislators (and most importantly, why?). This is from the Rural School Advocates of Iowa (it is lead by Margaret Buckton from ISFIS - Iowa School Finance and Information Services).





rsaia.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Rural School Advocates Set 2022 Legislative Agenda**

*FFA Enrichment Center, DMACC Campus, Ankeny, Iowa October 26, 2021*

Representatives from member school districts of the Rural School Advocates of Iowa convened their Annual Meeting on Wed., Oct 26, at 4:30 PM at the FFA Enrichment Center in Ankeny. RSAI advocates on behalf of the students, parents and communities in rural Iowa, to ensure that all students have access to a great Iowa education, regardless of where they live. RSAI members include over 140 Iowa school districts but several are among the largest geographic school districts in the state. As Dennis McClain, Chair of RSAI and superintendent of the Adair-Casey and Guthrie-Center school districts reminded the members, “this is an organization of rural schools with a common mission of equality, not an organization of small schools.”

School Funding, known as State Supplemental Assistance, or SSA, was a clear priority for RSAI members. Superintendent Dan Peterson, Central DeWitt Community School Districts, said this funding is not just a priority, but supports the very survival of rural schools. “We have 47 fewer school districts than we did just 20 years ago,” he stated. School funding primarily pays for people. The teachers, counselors, librarians, administrators, nurses, secretaries, coaches and custodians, many in critical short supply today in rural schools. According to Dr. Peterson, “Low funding inhibits our ability to attract and retain staff and to remain competitive with the private sector in Iowa’s growing economy.” Joel Pedersen, Superintendent at Cardinal Community School District, advocated for RSAI to insist on a specific increase of at least 3.75% per pupil. “In 11 of the last 12 years, the increase per pupil has not been enough to cover our schools’ cost of doing business. We appreciate the legislature and Governor committing to funding for formula equity and transportation assistance, but with today’s wage inflation, we simply can’t continue with 2% increases and keep up with Iowa’s private sector employers.” The group discussed the record FY 2021 surplus carried forward in the state budget, with over \$800 million available to the state for funding Iowa’s priorities, including public education.

Innovation during the pandemic will improve instruction and student engagement in the future, if students and staff have access to good internet connections. Closing the technology divide is a clear priority for RSAI members. Superintendent Brian Johnson, shared superintendent for Prairie Valley and Southeast Webster Grant and Community School Districts, thanked Governor Reynolds for her push on expanded Internet in Iowa last Session and encouraged her and Iowa’s Legislators to keep at it. “Iowa’s rural students and staff need reliable and affordable broadband Internet connections to continue our progress in STEM and computer science classes, as well as connecting us to resources throughout the world. This is no longer just a homework gap for our students.”

Barb Schwamman, shared superintendent for Riceville and Osage Community School Districts, advocated for flexibility and supports for rural schools to recruit and retain great teachers, bus drivers and staff. “Those of us on a state border see teachers drive a short commute for thousands more in salary. State licensure, accreditation and retirement requirements are



barriers to recruiting local community members and retired teachers to fill vacant positions right away. Although the pandemic has made it harder to fill vacant position, we've seen this coming in rural Iowa for years. Educators must be a critical component of Iowa's Future Ready Workforce focus."

RSAI members also included the following issues as additional priorities for the 2021 Legislative Session:

- Local School Board flexibility and authority, including a commitment to implementing home rule and interpreting Iowa's laws (liberally construe the statute and court rulings) to effectuate the purposes of local control.
- Quality Preschool, including funding for 3- and 4-year old preschool at a 1.0 weighting, to help provide full day service and cover transportation costs in rural schools
- Student mental health, including resources to assess and address student's social, emotional and behavioral needs, especially for Iowa's rural students living in communities without mental health providers.
- Formula and Transportation Equity: formula equity, closing the state and district per pupil gap within ten years and continued transportation equity support without burdensome reporting requirements.
- Sharing Incentives/Efficiencies: extension of Whole Grade Sharing, Reorganization and Operational Sharing Incentives. The 21-student cap should expand to allow access to any new flexibility.
- Opportunity equity for students from low-income families, with funding to help cover mandated fee waivers and to provide services to support these students to success.

Resources:

Position papers on key issues and a Digest of the 2021 Legislative Session are available on the RSAI legislative web page, <http://www.rsaia.org/legislative.html> or by contacting Margaret Buckton, Professional Advocate, RSAI [Margaret.buckton@rsaia.org](mailto:Margaret.buckton@rsaia.org) 515.201.3755

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## Board Policy Updates

- While we normally do all of our Board Policy Reviews (on a rotation) and other updates in the Summer, I am going to start moving some of them to regular meetings during the school year based on the amount of changes that have been happening in the last few years. This stops us from not adding a policy until the Summer that is needed by our district "now". There have been several things, and I am planning on having them up for review on an individual or small group of them about 2-3 times/year starting next month. The process would be for me to introduce them to the Board one month, and then approve the following month.

## Whole-Grade Sharing Update

- While we currently whole-grade share grades 9-12 with Andrew (Andrew sends students to Bellevue or Maquoketa at the high school level - parental choice/option), Mr. Recker and I attended a public hearing at the Andrew CSD on October 26 (Maquoketa's superintendent and Curriculum Director also attended). The meeting was in regard to the potential action by the Andrew Schools to extend their Whole-Grade Sharing agreement to the middle school (6-8 or 7 & 8 only). It was a relatively short meeting with two speakers from the public expressing concerns or questions after Chris Fee explained the reasoning for looking at this option. Some information shared at the meeting from Andrew is the following, along with a flyer that Mrs. Weber created for us after being given information from Mr. Recker and myself on Monday.
  - The reason for this is looking to do the best for the students at Andrew.
  - The deadline to make a decision for the 22-23 school year is February 1, 2022.
  - Surveys were sent to all parents of students, with a return rate of close to 50% with 33 surveys completed.
  - Positives with sharing presented (from Andrew's perspective)
    - More course offerings
    - Larger social networks and experiences
    - Extracurricular activities expanded
    - Prepared for the transition to high school
  - Negatives with sharing presented (Andrew's perspectives)
    - Larger class sizes (see grade/class sizes below)
    - Less individual attention
    - Leaving the Andrew family
    - Less time to develop socially with maturity before changing schools
  - Costs =
    - MS classroom costs/teacher = \$7790
    - Elementary classroom costs/teacher = \$3635
  - Public concerns focused on two areas: Travel time on buses, amount of surveys completed, and larger class sizes at Bellevue or Maquoketa.

- Enrollment Trends

Year	Grade	6	7	8
○ 2000-01		30	21	31
○ 2010-11		16	19	16
○ Current		5	10	7

Andrew also has 21 students in MS open-enrolled "out" of Andrew at this time (10 students are in Bellevue); We also have a total of 48 students PK-12 open-enrolled to our district from Andrew. This does impact their enrollment numbers obviously, and is likely part of the reason for the conversation.



# DID YOU KNOW



## BELLEVUE MIDDLE SCHOOL....

.....is located in the same building as the high school & shares some of the same teachers.

...students are provided a school-issued Chromebook for their personal use at school and at home.

...has approximately 160 students in grades 6-8, with approximately 365 students in the building overall.

...students are encouraged to participate in many activities, both co-curricular and extracurricular. Some of these vast offerings include the following at the middle school level:

....students eat separately from Bellevue HS students, and in most cases are not in the same courses as any high school students.

The recent remodeling in 2011 created an area for student work to be displayed, and for a "Commons" area in the school where students gather before, during, and after school, along with a second regulation size gym for middle school practices and games.

- Athletics:**
- Baseball (6-12)
  - Basketball (7-12; Girls and Boys)
  - Bowling (9-12; Girls and Boys)
  - Cheerleading (9-12)
  - Cross Country (7-12; Girls and Boys)
  - Dance (9-12)
  - Football (7-12)
  - Golf (9-12; Girls and Boys)
  - Softball (6-12)
  - Track (7-12; Girls and Boys)
  - Volleyball (7-12)
  - Wrestling (7-12)



MS Wrestling with Mr. Ripperger



MS Girls Basketball with Mr. Casel



MS Chorus with Mr. Huntley



MS Agriculture Judging Teams

- Other Activities:**
- Band - including Marching Band Choir
  - FFA - Future Farmers of America
  - Ag-Related Judging
  - Student Council
  - Archery (local partnership)
  - Dance Team
  - FBLA - Future Business Leaders of America (9-12)
  - Speech

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# TYPICAL

# SCHEDULES



### 6th Grade

- ★ 1 6th Literacy (English Language Arts)
- 2 6th Math
- 3 6th Science
- 4 6th Reading
- 5 7th Social Studies
- 6 Exploratory - Computer Apps, Academic 101, Critical Thinking, and Research/Thinking
- 7 6th Music - Band and/or Vocal Music; Study hall/Academic Services
- 8 6th PE/Art

### 7th Grade

- ★ 1 7th Literacy (English Language Arts)
- 2 7th Math
- 3 7th Science
- 4 7th Reading
- 5 7th Social Studies
- 6 Exploratory (Quarterly) - Agriculture; CSI; Nutrition/Health, STEM
- 7 Music - Band and/or Vocal Music; Study hall/Academic Services
- 8 7th PE/Art

### 8th Grade

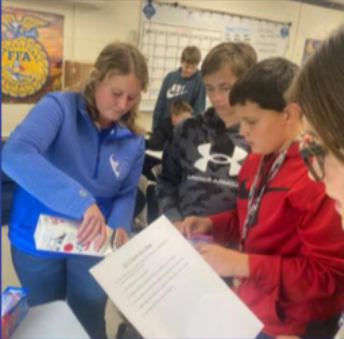
- ★ 1 8th Literacy
- 2 Algebra (High School Credit) or Pre-Algebra
- 3 8th Science
- 4 8th Social Studies
- 5 Exploratory - Creative Thinking; Family Consumer Science
- 6 Exploratory - Agriculture, Careers, Documentary (technology)
- 7 Music - Band and/or Vocal Music; Study hall/Academic Services
- 8 8th PE/Art



★ Hands on learning in Science with Mr. Reuter



★ Community Involvement with Mr. Keil from the DNR



★ MS Agriculture class with Mrs. Gerlach



★ MS Creative Thinking class (making and floating cardboard boats)



★ Building Construction class

## COVID-19 Update

See the information below in regard to COVID-19 in our district and county

- District

Staff will have the COVID Booster shot available to them via Hartig Drug in Bellevue, or other other locations if desired. Groups are not able to come into give a "clinic" as they did with the initial COVID vaccine when all staff was able to get it on sight.

Bellevue CSD data from this week (Friday) at our two buildings:

Week of...	Elem.	MS/HS
• Nov. 4	<6	<6
• Oct. 29	0	0
• Oct. 22	<6	<6
• Oct. 15	<6	<6
• Oct. 7	<6	<6
• Oct. 1	<6	<6
• Sept. 24	0	<6
• Sept. 17	<6	<6
• Total School Year	<6	8
◦ District Total = 14 (as of 11.4.21)		

\*The district cannot report a specific number of cases that is below 6, and this process still provides confidentiality to students and their families.

- County (From the Jackson County Health Department)

**Jackson County: 73** new cases in last 14 days, **47** new cases in the last 7 days, **13** new cases in the last 3 days.

**Hospitalizations:** Regional 5 -**42** hospitalized, Regional 6- **64** Hospitalized Genesis **18**, Mercy Clinton **10**.

**Positivity rate:** 14-day rate-**9.4%**, 7-day rate is **12.8%**

**Vaccine update** **49.54%** of Jackson Co residents have started or completed their vaccine series.

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Date	JC#	Hospitalized -Jackson CO	Hospitalized -Region 5	State hospital not vaccine -%
8/30/21	5916	10	127	79%
9/8/21	6057	7	132	79%
09/22/21	2,536	1	132	76%
09/30/21	2,726	2	138	79%
10/13/21	1646	1	115	
10/26/21	2214	1	86	70%
11/2/21	2809	0	42	72%

#### Mid-Term Superintendent Review

As we have done the last several years, it is a good idea to have an informal review of my performance at the January Board meeting. The formal evaluation and Performance Review is at the June meeting typically.

#### **Comments from Building Principals, Superintendent, Board Members**

#### **Adjourn**

Next meeting is on Monday, December 13

#### **Other Information**

#### **Extracurricular**

There was some question this week I had from a staff member on why dance is not a school activity. First of all, that is incorrect. It is a school activity, sponsored by the school, with a paid sponsor/coach. Second, we do support them as a district through both the general fund and the activity fund. They also fundraise for their group, as other groups do as well, and below is some information in regard to this. Contact me if you have any questions.

1. *Dance is a recognized activity with a paid sponsor/coach, based on the district's master contract (Extracurricular Salary Schedule).*
2. *Dance is funded by the district in the following ways:*
  - a. *The room for the contractual coach is paid for by the district.*

- i. Participants of the Dance Team pay for their own rooms at their "state" competition. This is similar to other groups that travel and require lodging, as based on legal requirements, the General Fund at the district cannot pay for rooms for all participants as this is not an allowable expenditure.
  1. The exceptions for lodging to this are teams that qualify for "state competition" through a "Qualifying Meet" (Track/Cross Country) or through a "District Tournament" established by the state (basketball, football, volleyball, etc.). If through "District Qualifying" a team would qualify for state, the district is reimbursed to a certain point by the state organizations for meals, travel, etc.
- b. School vehicles and gas are paid for by the district for the dance team.
- c. Meal money is provided to the participants from the Activities Account. The meal for the coach is paid for by the district.
3. The Athletic Boosters pay for a school uniform/jersey on a rotational basis, but not clothing for the various routines the dance team performs throughout the year. The last purchase was in 2019, with the next purchase scheduled for 2023.
4. The Dance team fundraisers for a variety of costs, as do other groups. For example, if the Cross Country travels to a meet they wish to spend the night at before their return they use funds in their account to pay for this or make it an option for students to stay and pay.

### Athletic Boosters

I believe the transition of leadership for the Athletic Boosters is going well. They had another meeting, electing officers (below), on Wednesday. I was not able to attend (which I mentioned at the last meeting of the group) due to attending a conference with some other AEA superintendents. From my knowledge and notes, the following people were elected as officers:

- President - Jessica Hingtgen
- Vice-President - Shawn Flickinger
- Secretary - Heather Merrick
- Treasurer - Tami Schuckert
- Fundraising Chair - Tara Eichorn

### Prom and After-Prom

A quick reminder for everyone on the Board and others in regard to Prom and After-Prom.

1. Prom is operated and planned by the school - Its students and two class sponsors for the Junior class. They have funds they have raised, and will also add to this through some other fundraisers. Also, there is a cost for the meal and prom for each junior student and their date (if not in the senior class). Costs are somewhat limited when the price to attend Prom is added into the scenario.
2. After-Prom is operated and planned by parents - The parents make decisions on what they want to do for students. The school encourages this to be

done in an equitable manner for anyone attending "after-prom" - typically from approximately 11:00-2:00 (or similar times such as 11:30-3:00, etc.). Junior parents, and other parents, are in charge of fundraising for this to be done during the Junior year. There is not a need to fundraise prior to that time with the many other fundraisers occurring in the district. Additionally, how much money is needed? In my opinion, there is not a need to raise \$20,000 or similar amounts for this. It is a nice event for our students for one night...hopefully we are also encouraging students to do the right thing on the 51 other weekends throughout the year. Raising money to have prizes for students is greatly appreciated by the students and parents, but it also has to be fair and realistic. Finally, the night of After-Prom is a fun night for parents as well as they watch their kids and the classmates of their own kids.

3. Some approximate fund updates for these areas at this time:
  - a. Junior Class - \$2400
  - b. Senior Class - \$1400 (used for graduation...caps, gowns, flowers, etc.)
  - c. After-Prom - \$1000

### Snow Removal

The time for snow removal is getting closer likely (although I hope it holds off for a few more months before it warms up again!). Regardless, the district typically rents a skid loader from Roeder's in Bellevue. In the last two years we have spent \$1156 and \$2272 (2019-2020 & 2020-2021). A typical day of snow removal means utilizing the skid loader (with a "push/blade" we own), along with our flatbed pickup and tractor with a blower or "broom" for light dusting. The skid loader is the predominant use at both buildings for both efficiencies in getting things cleared before school starts and for a more thorough job.

We have checked with Roeder's, as I mentioned last week, and the rental price this year is \$1000/month. This is more than the past, but cheaper than some other rental agreements by far. While there is a used skid loader available, the prices now are high based on demand and I made the decision that we will rent it for one more year and evaluate later this Spring. We also investigated some other options (dealers and private sales).