

ATHENS AREA SCHOOLS

Board of Education

East Leroy, Michigan 49051

October 20, 2025

REGULAR MEETING  
High School Media Center  
7:00 P.M.

Athens High School  
300 E. Holcomb Street, Athens  
Telephone: (269) 729-5427

1. Call to order, President Knowles presiding at 7:00 pm.  
Members Present: Harvey: ✓ Hunt: ✓ Knowles: ✓ Loew: ✓ McClure: ✓ Penick: ✓ Setlak: ✓  
A quorum is present. There were 11 guests in attendance.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

2. Approval of Agenda:  
MOTION: Move that the Board of Education approve the agenda as amended. (move 4D and 4C to the beginning of the presentations)  
Motion by McClure, Second: Penick; Ayes: 7, Nays: 0; Motion Passed.
3. Public Comments: none
4. Presentations / Discussions:
  - A. MASB – BoE requested Strategic Planning – reported by CISD guest Kacie Kefgen, an attorney and consultant who specializes in K-12 education law, policy and governance. Superintendent Beaudoin has been working with Kacie to bring together enrollment data, scores, the community survey and other items.  
Kacie provided a ‘Data-Driven Strategic Planning’ hardcopy packet to each BoE member and reviewed the 16-slide presentation on the smart board. She reviewed making sure we all have connections, understanding we have Vision, Oversight and we set policy and the budget, the 5 key things we can do and prioritize over 3 – 5 years, a timeline, benefits of hiring a 3<sup>rd</sup> party such as MASB to work with us. She discussed the different phases of Pre-Planning, Analysis/Needs/Assessment, Planning Team Retreat, Implementation Planning, and Documentation. The survey goal is 10% of enrollment. The estimated cost for these services would be \$8,090. Kacie concluded her presentation at 7:43 pm.
  - B. Audit – presented by Christine Kratzer  
Our annual audit completed by CPAS and Consultants Willis & Jurasek is for year ended June 30, 2025. The overall condition of all funds and instructional activities remains sound for the district. All goals related to the financial activities have been met, and if revenue and expenditure patterns can be maintained, sufficient resources for next year will be available. Christine provided a cover letter and hardcopy of the Athens Area Schools Financial Report with Supplemental Information for year ended June 30, 2025 to each board member. She further stated the records were well kept, there were no significant swings in the numbers, we have a healthy Fund Balance, and they did not do a Federal Audit as it was not required this year. Our contract with Willis & Jurasek is year-to-year. Christine concluded her presentation at 7:48 pm.
  - C. New Hires – reported by Superintendent Beaudoin  
Recommendations to hire Carol Quist as a Paraprofessional at Athens Jr/Sr High School, Jennifer Ryan as a Paraprofessional through Phaxis Education at East Leroy Elementary School, and Lauren Broker through EduStaff as a Paraprofessional at Athens Jr/Sr High School.
  - D. Community Survey School Safety – reported by Superintendent Beaudoin  
SRO Mark Mellinger continues to do walk-throughs monthly with building supervisors. There is a new local committee formed known as Athens Community Empowerment (ACE) – Superintendent Beaudoin and BoE members Eric McClure and Mike Harvey represent the school on this committee. This is not a school survey, but rather a community improvement survey. The purpose was simply to better understand community sentiment across various aspects of life in Athens. All findings from the survey have been shared with the BoE.

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A substantial 41.4% of respondents listed 'improved schools' as a top priority, placing schools among the top four areas cited for improvement. Many residents expressed serious concerns about the quality and direction of the school system. Chairman Annette Smitley was in attendance and shared some additional information – the survey was volunteer and available online, and the ACE wants to support the school. The survey gives the BoE an opportunity to pause, review and reflect. School improvement is an on-going process, and it's important that this information is brought forth. Our district wishes to be here long-term, and we don't want to miss the opportunity to grow.

E. Middle School Boilers – reported by Superintendent Beaudoin

Designer Shawn from Tower Pinkster has provided his recommendation and proposal for the boiler-room improvements/boilers at the Middle School Complex and High School. The BoE needs to review and evaluate, then consider authorization for Tower Pinkster to move forward. Any rebates will be handled by Tower Pinkster. Following the tour of the buildings during our special BoE meeting prior to our regular BoE meeting, Superintendent Beaudoin will secure costing to have a solid boiler system in place.

5. Routine Matters:

A. Presentation of minutes of prior meeting

MOTION: Move that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the September 15, 2025 Regular Meeting as presented.

Motion by Setlak, Second: Penick; Ayes: 7, Nays: 0; Motion Passed.

MOTION: Move that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the September 15, 2025 Closed Session as presented.

Motion by Harvey, Second: McClure; Ayes: 7, Nays: 0; Motion Passed.

Thanks and appreciation was expressed by President Knowles regarding these minutes.

B. Presentation of the financial reports

MOTION: Move that the Board of Education receive and place on file for audit the financial reports for the district for the period through September 30, 2025.

Motion by Hunt, Second: Setlak; Ayes: 7, Nays: 0; Motion Passed.

Several BoE members expressed appreciation to Business Manager Tonie Vorce for her great work.

6. Reports:

A. Board President – Mr. John Knowles

He has talked with Calhoun County Commissioner Matt Saxton who will attend next month's meeting.

B. Superintendent – Mr. Kipp Beaudoin

See attached report. Highlights/additional information – He is having ongoing performance discussions with D.M. Burr as we are experiencing many struggles and high turn-over in staffing. We are looking to 'Michigan Virtual' to cover all our online educational needs for students and staff, improving the quality, cost and delivery of services. He appreciates Tonia, Amy and William coming to the table to discuss these issues. He is having discussions with MTSS folks regarding student enrollment and performance; along with community relations and development with the community survey data – Walter, Tonia and Kipp attended a session today and are encouraged by the idea of streamlining the program to focus on putting all efforts into one goal at a time. Kipp continues to discuss Summer School options with Community Unlimited. And using safety grant monies the doors to the playgrounds at both ends of the Elementary building will have a keyless pass including a buzz-in device.

Tonia confirmed the State Funding came today.

C. Elementary Principal – Ms. Amy Hughes

See attached report. Highlights/additional information – encouragement for staff to take a mindful moment for relaxation every Tuesday at 2:00 pm., a Kindness challenge as implemented this week, a new opportunity for cross-connections-a county wide PD day coming up Nov. 4<sup>th</sup> where staff will select 4 sessions to attend, shared special events happening at the Elementary building, and shared the many ways communication is going out: newsletter, emails and robo calls, Friday Folders and Teacher Communication, as well as Facebook.

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D. High School Principal – Mr. William Heffner

See attached report. Highlights/additional information – he has started the Teacher Evaluation Process, our Math Dept. will be undergoing training with a focus on PLCs identifying pitfalls in grades 6-12, he is enjoying all things ‘Athens’!, and he is super excited about the transition to MI Virtual in the second semester! The BoE expressed thanks and appreciation for all the work he is doing for this transition.

E. Athletic Director – Superintendent Beaudoin reported in Mrs. Kathy Parlin’s absence.

See attached report. Highlights/additional information – one of our female golfers made it into the top 25! We have 2 coaching vacancies: Varsity girls’ basketball and Middle School Wrestling, and Thank You to Darrel for installing the ice maker in the High School.

F. Special Education, Assessment and Compliance Officer – Mr. Walter Dubbeld

See attached report. Highlights/additional information – the new district website is almost ready to go live, he is encouraged with the Michigan Integrated Continuous Improvement Process (MICIP) and strategic planning focusing now on one goal instead of six!

There was no Transportation Department report this month.

Vice President McClure read a prepared statement from the BoE in response to public concerns brought up during the September 15, 2025 BoE meeting pertaining to our district performance scores. Refer to the attached addendum for the complete statement.

7. Action Items:

A. New Hires

MOTION: Move that the Board of Education approve the hiring of Carol Quist as a Paraprofessional at Athens Jr/Sr High School.

Motion by Setlak, Second: Harvey; Ayes: 7, Nays: 0; Motion Passed.

MOTION: Move that the Board of Education approve the hiring of Jennifer Ryan as a Paraprofessional through Phaxis Education at East Leroy Elementary School.

Motion by Hunt, Second: Penick; Ayes: 7, Nays: 0; Motion Passed.

MOTION: Move that the Board of Education approve the hiring of Lauren Broker as a Paraprofessional through EduStaff at Athens Jr/Sr High School.

Motion by Harvey, Second: Loew; Ayes: 7, Nays: 0; Motion Passed.

8. Public Comment:

\* Jessie Vaughan’s daughter attends the Math & Science Center; he shared their frustration that we are the only district that has not adopted the weighted GPA grade system. He is looking to start a conversation to determine what we need to do to waive those grades? This affects scholarship opportunities, and he would ask the BoE to please consider and review the options.

9. Board Comments:

\* BoE Treasurer Harvey shared that it’s under the Superintendents threshold to sign contracts.

\* BoE Trustee Penick thanks MS/HS Principal William Heffner for bringing excitement to the building. It is a pleasure to see kids accepting both Principals so quickly. It makes a huge difference.

10. Adjournment

MOTION: Move the meeting be adjourned.

Motion by Penick, Second: Hunt; Ayes: 7, Nays: 0; Motion Passed.

Time of adjournment: 8:49 pm.

Minutes signed by: Teri S. Loew, Acting/Secretary of the Board of Education

Minutes prepared by: Teri S. Loew, Board of Education Secretary

Approved for publication by the Board: November 17, 2025.

## **Board of Education Clarification on District Performance Scores**

A concern was recently raised regarding the interpretation of the performance scores presented in the overview of our district's performance. Specifically, there appears to be a misunderstanding that these scores were a direct evaluation of individual staff members or targeted evaluations of specific classrooms or personnel.

We wish to clarify that these scores reflect evaluations issued by the State of Michigan, not individual assessments made by the district or aimed solely at classroom teachers. These evaluations apply to the entire district collectively, including leadership, instructional staff, and support personnel. We are all in this together, united in our mission to love, serve, and educate the children of this community. Each of us contributes, through our talents, time, and resources, to shape a brighter future for our students and, in turn, our society.

It's also important to understand that these scores are not standalone numbers; they are benchmarked against both the state average and our local Intermediate School District (ISD). For context, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Michigan's overall school performance ranks 44th in the nation. The Mackinac Center has further noted troubling declines in student achievement: Michigan's rank in 8th-grade math has dropped from 14th to 36th, and in reading, from 20th to 42nd.

If we aim only to exceed the state average, we are setting our sights too low. Given the state's national standing, such a goal would leave us lingering in the bottom 12% of the country. We must be more ambitious if we truly want to serve our children.

Looking specifically at 2024–2025 data, our district surpassed the state average in only two grade levels, 5th and 8th grade, and then by just about two points. In ELA, we start strong at 61% in 3rd grade, but the data shows a steady decline each year through 9th grade, where we perform just below the state average. This trend is not new; it reflects a nearly ten-year pattern of decline, as clearly indicated in the report.

We can choose to debate the numbers, or we can unite around a shared truth: we are all committed to our students. The Board acknowledges that this represents a shift in the focus of our discussions, but not in our unwavering dedication to our children.

The data around lost enrollment is especially concerning. Still, one truth remains: our core mission is to educate. The stronger our educational outcomes, the more

effective we will be at recruiting and retaining students and families. Our path forward must be built on collaboration, a shared vision, and a relentless pursuit of excellence.

Our scores belong to all of us, and improving them will require teamwork, mutual support, and a commitment to helping each other grow. Let us aim not just to meet the average but to set the standard, to be the district others look to as an example.

Let us strive for first place, together.