

LTSB explores potential cyber partnership

Brooke Williams / Published: February 6, 2019

The Lackawanna Trail School Board discussed a potential partnership with VLN Partners that could benefit both the district and its students at Monday's work session.

Superintendent Matthew Rakauskas explained that VLN is a cyber charter group that the district could use in place of the Northeast Online Learning Academy through the Northeastern Educational Intermediate Unit 19, which it currently recommends to students and families wanting to make the switch.

Partnering with VLN could not only recoup some of the costs the school district is losing from charter schools, but also provide better quality education for students who choose them over Lackawanna Trail, he said.

It's cheaper for the district and a better quality platform than others, Rakauskas added, but VLN's quality trumps that.

High school principal Mark Murphy explained that VLN allows for more synchronous learning through video instruction and has the flexibility to adapt courses to students' needs. Eventually, VLN could help Trail craft its own online coursework.

Additionally, these methods are a more viable option for elementary children whose reading skills aren't developed enough to learn solely through written text, Murphy said.

Special education director Amie Talarico said VLN is also more beneficial than NOLA because it offers additional accommodations for students with special needs.

Principal of School Management Rebekah King explained that VLN better tracks student progress through checkpoints.

Business manager Keith Glynn explained that while the difference in cost would be an increased \$3,375 per year, it's for an investment in a superior product that offers more and doesn't require the district to pay for cyber education technology.

Additionally, having a better platform through the district can also recoup costs because better marketing can bring more students back to Lackawanna Trail.

Rakauskas asked the board to consider voting on making the switch in March, but wanted to discuss it ahead of time.

Next week, the board will approve a bid from Vector Security to upgrade security in the elementary and high schools. An Act 44 grant gave the district \$25,000, which will be split between the two schools to better secure the front doors.

Formal approval is needed at each level to get the process started.

The board will also approve the budget for the NEIU 19 for the fiscal year of July 1, 2019, to June 30, 2020. Lackawanna Trail contributes \$15,106.12.

Talarico discussed forming a unified track and field team of at least 12 students in grades 9-12. It would be a mixed group of students with disabilities and students without disabilities to be "buddies."

The board will approve an Interscholastic Unified Sports Memorandum of Understanding between the Special Olympics of Pennsylvania and Lackawanna Trail.

Talarico said they hope to launch the team for March.

Next week, the board will do a first reading of revised policies, including: nondiscrimination in employment practices, discipline of students with disabilities, behavior support, screening/evaluations for students with disabilities; enrollment of students, admission of students, confidential communication of students, student records, suspension/expulsion, school wellness, food services, and acceptable use of internet/computers/network resources.

The board will approve Scot Wasilchak as a track and field assistant coach at a stipend of \$3,450, as well as Will Burnell and Lori Swanchak as volunteer track and field coaches.

The board also heard from high school seniors who gave a proposal for a class trip to Six Flags in May and will vote on the trip next week.

The Lackawanna Trail School Board is scheduled to meet on Monday, Feb. 11, at 7:30 p.m.