

The League of Women Voters of Manatee County Education Issues Action Team observes the **School Board of Manatee County** meetings for items of interest to citizens and to the League, and notes adherence, or lack of adherence, to good governance procedures and the Sunshine Law. The League also provides feedback to school board members.

Following are the major points from the **School Board Meeting on July 21, 2026**.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

The meeting was called to order by Ms. Spray at 5:30 p.m. Ms. Felton read the district vision and requested a moment of silence, remembering the families of 9 district students and several staff members who have passed recently. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Lee Middle School's Business Leadership teacher, Dawn Foster, a highly decorated eight-year US Air Force staff sergeant. Superintendent Breslin presented her with a flag that has flown over the US Capitol.

Recognitions / Student Celebrations

Jamie Carson, Director of Communications, introduced the student recognitions.

Elks' Americanism Essay Winner

Abigail Smith, Braden River Middle School, read her essay that earned her a 3rd place in the state in the Elks' contest. Her message centered on hard work and dedication encouraging volunteerism in the community and supporting the selfless work of government workers like teachers, police, and armed services, all contributing to the greater good. Mr. Burke, Exalted Ruler of the Elks, described their various programs that provide opportunities for youth.

Recognition of Student Athletes

Avery Morelli, Parrish Community High rising 9th grader, won first in the nation in weight lifting for her age and weight class, demonstrating discipline and perseverance.

Kevin Chapman, Associate Superintendent, acknowledged the support of two community partnerships that have netted the district two million dollars to improve student success.

SOAR in 4 Appreciation Presentation highlighted the fourteen years of success of the Soar in 4 program and its supporters and staff, and the new lab that opened recently. Mr. Chapman acknowledged the support of local state legislators Will Robinson and Jim Boyd for securing funds for a second lab north of the river, as well as the support from the Bishop-Parker Foundation. Steve and Carolyn Rothcamp represented the 15-20 community partners and

hundreds of volunteers who have supported this project that has led to 100% of the participating students in 112 classrooms achieving top scores on the readiness indicators. The story book trail at John Marble Park was presented by video, showcasing the children's book The Mermaid with No Tail, by Jessica Long, Paralympic Champion. Her message is, "Things that make you different is your gift."

Appreciation of the Community Foundation of Sarasota County - Strauss Literacy Initiative

Mr. Chapman described the professional development project with the University of Florida for elementary teachers coordinated by Allison Nichols that results in high quality early literacy instruction. Jessica Muroff, CEO of the Community Foundation of Sarasota, highlighted the impact on student results of this grant through the Strauss Literacy Initiative.

Public Comments – There were no public comments.

Reports and Presentations

Summer Programing & Professional Learning

Aligned with the strategic plan, Kaththea Johnson, Executive Director of Teaching and Learning, and Alison Nichols, Director of Elementary Curriculum and Instruction, described the multiple summer opportunities for extended learning and enrichment for students as well as professional development for district and school leaders, teachers, and staff. Summer programs also provide extended employment for many district staff. Of the retained third graders eligible for promotion at the end of summer, 390 attended Summer Reading Camp, and of those 169 met the criteria to move to fourth grade.

For the full presentation, go to

<https://d2kbkoa27fdvtw.cloudfront.net/manateeschools/ed64d15996a47b7e8370db3b46ad61160.pdf>

Consent Items - 38 items approved 5-0.

Public Hearing

Chair Spray closed the regular meeting and opened a public hearing on each of the next two items. There were no public comments for either and she reopened the regular meeting.

Public Hearing on the Proposed Changes to the Code of Student Conduct for the 2026- 2027 School Year

Public Hearing on the Proposed Changes to the Student Progression Plan for the 2026- 2027 School Year

New Business: (Non-Consent Items)

Approval of Amendments to the Code of Student Conduct for the 2026-2027 School Year (No Financial Impact)

Board members commented that the Code of Student Conduct revisions were thoroughly workshopped and were the result of many individuals and groups providing input. The item passed 5-0.

Mr. Kennedy introduced his desire to begin preparing for next year's revisions to include no cell phones at high school just as it is for K-8 now. Mr. Tatem expressed that high school principals would like that left up to them. Ms. Felton suggested hearing from other districts that have already implemented a no cell phone policy to learn from them. Superintendent Breslin said she appreciated having a year to fully investigate this possibility.

Approval of the 2026-2027 Student Progression Plan for Elementary School, Middle School, High School, and K-12 Virtual Education (No Financial Impact). Approved 5-0.

Approval of the Budget Amendments for May 2026 (No Financial Impact). Approved 5-0.

Approval to Publish a Notice of Public Hearing to Adopt Tentative Millage Rates and Tentative Budget for Fiscal Year 2026-2027 (General Fund) - updated 7/20/2026. Approved 5-0.

The Public Hearing will be held July 28 at 5:30 p.m. See documents here:

<https://d2kbk0a27fdvtw.cloudfront.net/manateeschools/4fdb7cd6f9f45c798b14f925ef1a661a0.pdf>

INFORMATION ONLY (No Board Action Required)

Year-to-Date Financial Statements Through May 31, 2026 (No Financial Impact)

Year-to-Date Charter School Financial Statement Summary Through May 31, 2026

Second Amendment to Lakewood Ranch Preparatory Academy Charter School Program (CSP) Grant

School Safety Requirements and Monitoring Reports - 2025-2026 Quarter 4 (No Financial Impact)

Updates

Instruction – Derek Jensen, Deputy Superintendent, thanked Ms. Johnson and Ms. Nichols for their presentation about the summer learning opportunities for students, leaders, and teachers. He highlighted the student panel of middle and high school students at the leadership conference. The students described their experiences, what makes a great principal, and that they want more of a voice in their education. He expects what was learned will be reflected in action planning at the school sites. He reminded the public that the school

and district grades were released in July and that Manatee District's results hit historically high numbers. A memo from the Department of Education last week describes the new grading criteria for this coming year, raising the threshold for all indicators. He committed to continuing to do the work, accelerating success for all students.

Operations – Willie Clark, Deputy Superintendent, shared the results from Human Resources' July 16th operations fair with 100 attending and 21 hires including food service, custodians, transportation, and nurses. The next job fair for operations is August 20th, and for teachers and paraprofessionals is September 4th. Food and Nutrition report as of last week serving 193,000 meals at 70 sites. Construction reports the percent completed at the following sites: Rangeland HS – 14.2%; Rye Ranch – 98% and on track for the August 2nd opening; Veterans – 75% with Phase I - 98% with 20 classrooms ready by August 1, Phase II – 68% with the media and cafeteria to be ready by September 15, and Phase III – second floor to be ready by end of November. He pointed out that consent item number 10 was for mini-buses that transport 15 students, which will increase efficiency.

Legal – Mr. Dye said everything is going smoothly. He has been reviewing and renewing contracts that were on the consent agenda.

Superintendent Remarks – Dr. Breslin highlighted items on the consent agenda including the Perkins/Strauss Literacy Initiative, the CERP (Comprehensive Evidence-based Reading Plan), and student services contracts. The leadership conference was expanded to four days this summer for all school and district leaders with programs to keep acceleration moving – “Manatee Momentum.” Current leaders heard words of wisdom from retired leader legends such as Lynette Edwards, Fran Padgett, Tim Kolbe, and Janet Kerley. Dr. Breslin referenced a two-sided brag sheet highlighting a Portrait of a Graduate and the positive results achieved by the district. She indicated the Manatee Board of County Commissioners will take action on July 23 to return to the school district unused fees levied by the tax collector.

Board Comments

Ms. Felton encouraged citizens to be involved in the North River initiative with community leaders and politicians.

Mr. Choate thanked everyone for a great meeting. He liked the presentation about the summer programs showing that education doesn't stop in the summer time. He wants to be sure the public understands that the graduation rate is up and there are no D or F schools. He congratulated teachers and staff for all they did last year.

Mr. Kennedy echoed Mr. Choate's comments. He added that board members are elected representatives of the people and not in the schools every day. The credit goes to the 6000 employees.

Mr. Tatem acknowledged the great summer programs. He noted the Elks' essay and the author's emphasis on taking care of the local community is the best way to be a patriot. He alluded to Voltaire and the need to “take care of our own little garden.” When confronting litter

on his running path and wondering why someone doesn't do something about it, he realized "that somebody is me."

Ms. Spray gave thanks for foster care student support. She described the World Cup as highlighting the best this country has to offer. She said the summer conference program is one of the best she has seen. She thanked Ms. Sellers for her work on the budget.

Meeting adjourned at 7:28 p.m.

GOVERNANCE AND SUNSHINE

Chair Spray ran an efficient and productive meeting.

The observers gently remind the Chair that Robert's Rules of Order states the sequence following a motion and second is for the Chair to ask for any discussion before the vote is taken.

Once again, Board Members were observed to interrupt presentations to ask questions.