

New ELHS Principal presents goals for 2023-24 school year

Newly appointed Principal of East Lansing High School Ashley Schwarzbek spoke at the East Lansing school board meeting on Oct. 23 about the goals set for this school year.

At the meeting, the board opened with the swearing-in of Estrella Torrez to her position on the school board. Only one member of the public spoke during public comment, and Principal Schwarzbek's presentation was the bulk of the meeting, lasting over 30 minutes.

Schwarzbek said they have three overarching goals for the school, and she went in-depth into each of them during her presentation to the board.

"We received a ton of feedback, as I know the board did as well," Schwarzbek said. "We also had formalized data that we collected through student surveys and also some staff surveys, so out that process we got just a ton of feedback about things that our community felt like we needed."

The first pillar of Schwarzbek's goals has to do with supporting students and staff while maintaining high structure.

"This idea of high support and high structure developed by some educational psychologists and restorative practice workers that work specifically with IIRP and schools to say what is the kind of ideal environment for students to be able to obtain their highest goals and for them to have the smoothest running school culture," Schwarzbek said. "Support can be a lot of things, encouragement, love, growth, nurturing, warmth, all of those things that we put in place to make sure students have the skills."

According to Schwarzbek, structure involves limit setting, setting expectations, and boundaries that are important to have in a school

"So when we are really high in both of those, we get to doing with students, not doing to, or doing for, but doing with," Schwarzbek explained. "How do we create a restorative

environment that's collaborative and cooperative with both staff and students to make sure that we are all moving towards the same goal."

In terms of structure, ELHS has multiple measures in place, including door and camera monitoring, an increased safety team with a new front door attendant, and a school-wide cell phone policy and pass procedures. For support, there are two social workers at the school along with four counselors, community mentoring groups, and a community in schools partnership.

The second goal for the year is to focus on how students and staff treat each other through the school's PBIS model, 'Trojan T.R.U.E.'

"It's really about engaging students so that they feel connected and safe and positively praised for doing well within our environment," Schwarzbek said. "We want to be able to praise students for doing the things that they do well every day and for all the positive things they bring to our school."

Trojan T.R.U.E. is an acronym that represents the four main values of the school in trust, respect, unity, and equity. Teachers can reward students for showing these values by filling out postcards, which are sent home for parents to see the good work their children are doing and students are entered into drawings for prizes.

The final goal is for teachers to focus on high-impact teaching strategies and creating the best learning experience for students.

"We are ultimately an educational institution that wants to provide excellent instruction to our kids," Schwarzbek explained. "So making sure that we are still leaving some dedicated time to our high-impact teaching strategies is really important."

These teaching strategies include setting clear learning goals, instructional pacing, collaborative learning, explicit teaching, multiple exposures, and formative assessment.

After Schwarzbek finished her presentation she answered questions and comments from the school board members about the goals she set. Multiple members of the board, including Board of Education Secretary Tali Faris-Hylen have children who attend ELHS and have seen these goals in action firsthand.

"I am a parent with a child that has experienced many of these supports and I see a difference," said Faris-Hylen.

Other board members like Board of Education Trustee Chris Martin have experienced other aspects of these changes like the new front door attendant and are very happy.

“Trustee Edsall and I were here for a committee meeting a week or two ago and I believe we met the front door monitor and she could not have been more professional and masterful at the way she handled these two strange adults walking into the school building,” Martin explained.

Schwarzbek answered the rest of the board’s questions and made sure to note how pleased she has been with these goals early on in the school year.

“I feel like we are having a really beautiful school year,” Schwarzbek said. “We have had a really positive school year. I feel like we have seen so much growth in many of our students individually which is just a really beautiful thing.”

Link to article:

<https://news.jrn.msu.edu/2023/11/new-elhs-principal-presents-goals-for-2023-2024-school-year/>