



Always Innovating

**South
Texas ISD**

RIO GRANDE VALLEY | GRADES 6-12

Minutes of Regular Meeting

The Board of Directors South Texas ISD

A Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors of South Texas ISD was held on October 22, 2024, beginning at 7:00 PM in the Central Office Teaching and Learning Center, 7001 E. Expressway 83, Mercedes, Texas 78570.

1. Welcome.

Mr. Henry LeVrier, Board President, welcomed guests, staff and fellow Board members.

2. Board Meeting called to order.

The meeting was called to order by Henry LeVrier, Board President at approximately 7:00 p.m., at which time he was assured by Superintendent Dr. Marco Antonio Lara, Jr., that notices of the meeting were posted properly according to the laws of Texas and that a quorum of the Board was present.

The following board members were present:

David Briones	La Feria
Douglas E. Buchanan	Raymondville
Abiel J. Cantú	Raymondville
Eduardo L. “Larry” Cantu	Los Fresnos
Sasha Crane	McAllen
Adrian Garcia	Brownsville
Margarita Garcia	San Juan
Sylvia Sánchez Garza, Ph.D.	Edinburg
Hector Gonzales	Lyford
Yolanda Kamel	McAllen
Robert J. Lerma	Brownsville
Henry LeVrier	Brownsville
Israel G. Quintanilla	Raymondville
Oscar Salinas	Edinburg
Jaime R. Solis	Edinburg
David Torres	Edinburg
Rick Villarreal, DDS	Rancho Viejo
Ruth Villarreal	Mission

The following Board members were absent:

Noel Garza, DDS	Mission
Sylvia S. Lopez	Brownsville
Sandra Garza Ochoa, Ph.D.	Weslaco
Rodolfo “Rudy” Ramirez	Edinburg
Eduardo Roberto Rodriguez	Brownsville

The following staff members were present:

Marco Antonio Lara, Jr., Ed.D.	Sandra Torres
Efrain Garza	Vanessa Rivera
Lissa Frausto	Niranda Flores
Marla Knaub	Frank Trevino
Amanda Odom	Ramon Longoria
Nereyda Trevino, Ed.D.	Carmen Noriega
Marcos Flores	
Cynthia de La Garza Gonzales	
Chief Steven Cortez	
Cynthia Chairez, Ed.D.	
Reynaldo Rodriguez, Ed.D.	
Michele Guajardo, Ph.D.	
Eric Gutierrez	
Jose Lucio	
Marco Zamora	
Maribel Valdez	

3. Pledges of Allegiance & District Call to Action.

The pledges were led by Doug Buchanan.

4. Moment of Silence.

The Board held a moment of silence.

5. Public Comments for Agenda Topics.

The Board did not receive any requests to address the Board of Directors on any agenda topics.

6. Public Audience for Non-Agenda Topics.

The Board did not receive any requests to address the Board of Directors on any non-agenda topics for this meeting.

7. Public Hearing on the 2022-2023 Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas (FIRST) Report.

Marla Knaub, Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Operations, provided an overview of the Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas report for South Texas ISD. The FIRST report included the following disclosures as per Title 19 Texas Administrative Code:

- Superintendent’s employment contract is posted on the district’s website.
- Reimbursements received by the Superintendent and Board Members for the twelve-month period ended August 31, 2023 (Page 7 of FIRST Report).
- The Superintendent had no outside compensation for Professional Consulting and/or other Personal Services in Fiscal Year 2023 (Page 9 of FIRST Report).
- Gifts received by the Executive Officer and Board Members (and First-Degree Relatives, if any) in Fiscal year 2023 (Page 9 of FIRST Report).
- Business Transactions between School District and Board Members for Fiscal Year 2023 for the twelve-month period ended August 31, 2023 (Page 10 of FIRST Report).

For the 17th year in a row, South Texas Independent School District has received a rating of “Superior Achievement” under Texas’ school finance accountability rating system.

8. Awards & Recognitions.

- A. Recognition of STISD students for excellence in academic, athletic and/or extracurricular endeavors.

On behalf of the Board, Amanda Odom recognized RSA athletics for winning the TCSAAL 2023-2024 Texas Cup for the Middle School division and the Medical Professions Culinary Art students for the second year of earning 1st Place at the Los Fresnos Rodeo Cook Off.

- B. Recognition of the district and campuses for ranking among the best in the state and nation in the Niche Best Schools Rankings for the eleventh year in a row.

On behalf of the Board, Amanda Odom recognized all campuses for ranking among the best in the state and nation in the Niche Best Schools Rankings for the eleventh year in a row. With an overall grade of A+, STISD ranked 2nd in Texas and 27th in the Nation in the Best School Districts rankings. STISD earned the top spot in the Districts with the Best Teachers in Texas category and 4th in the Best Places to Teach in Texas. STISD also ranked 9th in the Districts with the Best Teachers in the Nation.

- C. Recognition of principals in honor of Principals' Month.

On behalf of the Board, Amanda Odom recognized camous principals in honor of Principals month and presented tokens of appreciation.

9. Approval of Consent Agenda.

In order to promote efficient meetings, the Board may act upon more than one item by a single vote through the use of consent agenda. Consent items shall be items placed on the Agenda marked with an asterisk (*) for which no Board discussion is anticipated and for which the Superintendent recommends approval. Prior to the meeting, at the request of any member of the Board of Directors, any item on the consent agenda shall be

removed and given individual consideration. Requests for individual consideration are made at least a half-hour prior to Board meetings and requests must be directed to either the Board President or the Superintendent.

A motion was made by Abiel J. Cantú, seconded by Doug E. Buchanan, approving the consent agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

10. *Action: Review and act on the September 17, 2024 Board Meeting Minutes.

Approved with the consent agenda.

11. Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment Committee - David Briones and Sylvia S. Lopez, Co-Chairs

David Briones reported on the following items:

- A. Report on the Bilingual ESL Program Evaluation for 2023-2024.

Niranda Flores, Bilingual Director, reported on the Bilingual ESL Program Evaluation for 2023-2024.

- B. Action: Review and act on the 2024-2025 Gifted/Talented Manual.

A motion was made by David Torres, seconded by David Briones, approving the 2024-2025 Gifted/Talented Manual. The motion passed unanimously.

- C. Action: Review and act on the 2024-2025 Campus Course Offerings.

A motion was made by Yolanda Kamel, seconded by David Briones, approving the 2024-2025 Campus Course Offerings as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

12. Buildings and Grounds Committee - E. Larry Cantu and Margarita Garcia, Co-Chairs

E. Larry Cantu reported on the following items:

- A. Report on the following projects:
 1. Health Professions Gymnasium project
 2. Roofing project
 3. Athletic Fields project
 4. Audio Video/Intercom System
 5. Restrooms at Mercedes Athletic Fields

Nathaniel Perez, The Warren Group, was present to and provided the Board with an update on the Health Professions Gymnasium project. David Monreal and Isaac Ochoa, GMS Architects, were present and provided the Board with an update on the Roofing project, Athletic Fields project, Audio Video/Intercome System, and Restrooms at Mercedes Athletic Fields project.

- B. Action: Review and act on approving the contract with Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc. for the New Rising Scholars Academy, and authorizing the Board President to sign the contract.

A motion was made by E. Larry Cantu, seconded by Jaime Solis, approving the contract with Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc. for the New Rising Scholars Academy, and authorizing the Board President to sign the contract. The motion passed unanimously.

- C. Action: Review and act on approving Construction Manager at Risk as the procurement method for the New Rising Scholars Academy, and authorizing Administration to advertise for Request for Qualifications.

A motion was made by E. Larry Cantu, seconded by Abiel J. Cantú, approving the Construction Manager at Risk as the procurement method for the New Rising Scholars Academy, and authorizing Administration to advertise for Request for Qualifications. The motion passed unanimously.

- D. Action: Review and act on adding the two exterior restrooms to the existing Mercedes Athletic Fields with Gerlach Builders.

A motion was made by E. Larry Cantu, seconded by Doug E. Buchanan, approving the addition of two exterior restrooms to the existing Mercedes Athletic Fields with Gerlach Builders. The motion passed unanimously.

13. Finance & Operations Committee - Adrian Garcia and Oscar Salinas, Co-Chairs

Adrian Garcia reported on the following items:

- A. *Report on checks written since last report.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- B. *Report on school district investments:
 1. Investments owned by the district.
 2. Investments held by Wilmington Trust for the South Texas ISD Public Facilities Corporation.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- C. *Action: Review and act on removing assets from district inventory.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- D. *Action: Review and act on approving the following donations:
 - 1. Donation from the Texas Workforce Commission in the amount of \$1,000 to Medical Professions for Robotics.
 - 2. Donations from various donors totaling \$1,345 to Virtual Academy for clubs.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- E. *Action: Review and act on approving the campus bank signatures for the following:
 - 1. Medical Professions
 - 2. Preparatory Academy
 - 3. Science Academy
 - 4. Virtual Academy
 - 5. World Scholars
 - 6. Health Professions

Approved with the consent agenda.

- F. Action: Review and act on the following payment applications:
 - 1. Payment application #10 to The Warren Group in the amount of \$14,363.20 for the New Health Professions Gymnasium project.

A motion was made by Adrian Garcia, seconded by Israel G. Quintanilla, approving payment application #10 to The Warren Group in the amount of \$14,363.20 for the New Health Professions Gymnasium project. The motion passed unanimously.

- 2. Payment application #4 to Gerlach Builders, LLC, in the amount of \$325,469.42 for the New Health Professions Gymnasium project.

A motion was made by Adrian Garcia, seconded by Jaime Solis, approving payment application #4 to Gerlach Builders, LLC, in the amount of \$325,469.42 for the New Health Professions Gymnasium project. The motion passed unanimously.

- 3. Payment application #5 to Gerlach Builders, LLC, in the amount of \$276,411.99 for the New Health Professions Gymnasium project.

A motion was made by Adrian Garcia, seconded by Yolanda Kamel, approving payment application #5 to Gerlach Builders, LLC, in the amount of \$276,411.99 for the New Health Professions Gymnasium project. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Payment application #3 to TADCO Roofing, in the amount of \$264,831.50 for the Roofing project.

A motion was made by Adrian Garcia, seconded by Ruth Villarreal, approving payment application #3 to TADCO Roofing, in the amount of \$264,831.50 for the Roofing project. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Payment application #4 to TADCO Roofing, in the amount of \$133,722.01 for the Roofing project.

A motion was made by Adrian Garcia, seconded by Abiel J. Cantú, approving payment application #4 to TADCO Roofing, in the amount of \$133,722.01 for the Roofing project. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Payment application #1 to Gerlach Builders, LLC, in the amount of \$252,120.89 for the Athletic Fields project.

A motion was made by Adrian Garcia, seconded by Israel G. Quintanilla, approving payment application #1 to Gerlach Builders, LLC, in the amount of \$252,120.89 for the Athletic Fields project. The motion passed unanimously.

7. Payment application #3 to Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc., in the amount of \$4,400.14 for the Athletics Fields project.

A motion was made by Adrian Garcia, seconded by Doug E. Buchanan, approving payment application #3 to Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc., in the amount of \$4,400.14 for the Athletics Fields project. The motion passed unanimously.

G. Action: Review and act on the following requisitions:

1. Requisition #125599 to Thomas Bus Sales for the purchase of two activity buses.

A motion was made by Adrian Garcia, seconded by Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza, approving requisiton #125599 to Thomas Bus Sales for the purchase of two activity buses. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Action: Review and act on approving the following budget amendments:
 - a. General Fund (199)
 - b. Title I Part A (211)
 - c. Supply Food Chain Assistance Grant (240)
 - d. Perkins V CTE (244)
 - e. IDEA B (313)
 - f. JET Grant (429)
 - g. Instructional Materials Allotment (410)

A motion was made by Adrian Garcia, seconded by Yolanda Kamel, approving budget amendment for General Fund (199), Title I Part A (211), Supply Food Chain Assistance Grant (240), Perkins V CTE (244), IDEA B (313), JET Grant (429), and Instructional Materials Allotment (410). The motion passed unanimously.

- H. Action: Review and act on approving revisions to the 2024-2025 Administrative Professionals and Non-Exempt Compensation Plans.

A motion was made by Adrian Garcia, seconded by Jaime Solis, approving revisions to the 2024-2025 Administrative Professionals and Non-Exempt Compensation Plans. The motion passed unanimously.

- I. Action: Review and act on request for use of funds from MacKenzie Scott donation for technology equipment for Preparatory Academy.

A motion was made by Adrian Garcia, seconded by Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza, approving the use of funds from the MacKenzie Scott donation for technology equipment for Preparatory Academy. The motion passed unanimously.

Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza expressed her gratitude to MacKenzie Scott for her donation and how it has impacted our students.

- 14. Policy, Planning, Projects & Partnerships Committee - Abiel J. Cantú and Noel Garza, D.D.S., Co-Chairs

Hector Gonzales reported on the following items:

- A. Report on PTECH at Science Academy and Partnership with UTRGV for the 2025-2026 School Year.

Vanessa Rivera provided a report on PTECH at Science Academy and Partnership with UTRGV for the 2025-2026 School Year.

- B. Action: Review and act on partnership with South Texas College for Dual Enrollment Opportunities in Interdisciplinary Studies.

A motion was made by Hector Gonzales, seconded by Sasha Crane, approving a dual enrollment opportunity in Interdisciplinary Studies in partnership with South Texas College inclusive of new courses: Art1301, Speech 1311, Psychology 2301, Spanish 2313, Sociology 1301, English 1301/1302, History 1301/1302, Math 1414, Government 2305/2306, Biology 1406, Chemistry 1411, Biology 2401, and FOS-Field of Study courses. The motion passed unanimously.

- 15. Community & Governmental Relations Committee - Sasha Crane and Eduardo R. Rodriguez, Co-Chairs

Sasha Crane reported on the following items:

- A. Report: Update regarding the current marketing campaign and future possibilities for student recruitment.

Amanda Odom provided an update on the current marketing campaign and future possibilities for student recruitment.

- B. Report: Update regarding STISD's 60th Anniversary Celebration.

Amanda Odom provided an update on STISD's 60th Anniversary Celebration.

- C. Report: Update regarding STISD's Fine Arts Winter Production "The Grinch Who Stole Christmas."

Amanda Odom reported on plans for the STISD Fine Arts Winter Production.

16. Superintendent's Report - Marco Antonio Lara, Jr., Ed.D.

- A. *Report on progress toward Superintendent's Goals.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- B. *Action: Review and act on the Texas Association of Sports Officials (TASO) request for the extended use of Health Professions facilities.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- C. *Action: Review and act on the following out-of-district staff travel:
 - 1. Mid-South Educational Research (MSER) Foundation Annual Meeting, November 6-8, 2024, in Chatanooga, TN.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- D. *Campus Reports
 - 1. Preparatory Academy - M. Zamora
 - 2. Rising Scholars Academy - R. Rodriguez, Ed.D.
 - 3. World Scholars - C. Chairez, Ed.D.
 - 4. Medical Professions - J. Lucio
 - 5. Health Professions - M. Guajardo, Ph.D.
 - 6. Science Academy - E. Gutierrez

7. Virtual Academy - M. Valdez

Approved with the consent agenda.

E. District Reports

1. Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources

- a. *Report on local certification through the District of Innovation Plan.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- b. Report on resignations and retirements of professional staff.

Lissa Frausto gave an update on the resignations and retirements received for professional staff.

- c. Report on professional vacancies.

Lissa Frausto provided an update on professional vacancies.

2. Executive Director for Student Support

- a. Enrollment and Attendance Report.

Marcos Flores provided an update on the enrollment and attendance report.

- b. Report on Student Support Services.

Marcos Flores provided a report on student support services including Athletic Programs, Health and Wellness, Counseling Services, and Career and Technical Education.

3. Executive Director for Special Programs

- a. Report on Special Programs.

Cynthia de la Garza Gonzales reported on Special Programs, including Special Education, Section 504, Dyslexia, Mental Health, and Bilingual/ESL Programs.

- b. Report on the South Texas Tri-County Special Education Co-Op.

Cynthia de la Garza Gonzales reported on the South Texas Tri-County Special Education Co-Op.

4. Chief of Security Operations

- a. Report on status update on the South Texas ISD Police Department.

Chief Steven Cortez provided an update on the South Texas ISD Police Department.

- b. Action: Review and act on South Texas ISD's Emergency Operations Plan.

A motion was made by Yolanda Kamel, seconded by Jaime Solis, approving the South Texas ISD's Emergency Operations Plan.

F. Report on status of Continuing Education of Board Members.

Board President Henry LeVrier publicly announced the continuing education training credit status of each individual board member for the period beginning November 1, 2023 through October 22, 2024 for the following training areas: Local District Orientation (New Board Members), Open Meetings Act (New Board Members), Public Information Act (New Board Members), Orientation to the Texas Education Code (New Board Members), Post-Legislative Update to the Texas Education Code (Experienced Board Members), Team Building (annual with entire board and superintendent), Additional Continuing Education (10 hours for New Board members, 5 hours, experienced), Evaluating Student Academic Performance and Setting Goals, Identifying and Reporting Abuse and Trafficking, School Safety, and Cybersecurity.

- G. Action: Review and act on selection of Board delegates and travel to attend TASB's Texas Federal Advocacy Conference, January 27-28, 2025, in Washington, D.C.

A motion was made by Jaime Solis, seconded by Abiel J. Cantú, selecting E. Larry Cantu, Abiel J. Cantú, Henry LeVrier, and Dr. Sandra Ochoa as delegates to attend TASB's Texas Federal Advocacy Conference, January 27-28, 2025, in Washington, D.C. The motion passed unanimously.

Board members, Ruth Villarreal and Yolanda Kamel left the meeting and were not in attendance for Executive Session.

17. **EXECUTIVE SESSION: The Board of Directors met on October 22, 2024 at 8:49 p.m. in a closed or executive session as pursuant to the Texas Government Code Section, 551.071, 551.072, 551.074, 551.082, 551.084 and 551.001. The Board Secretary, Israel G. Quintanilla served to record the minutes of the closed session to discuss the following:**

- A. 551.071, 551.074 Personnel Matters and consultation with school attorney regarding Personnel Matters: Closed Meeting
 - 1. Recommendation of professional staff for the remainder of the 2024-2025 school year.
 - a. Speech Language Pathologist
 - b. Teacher(s)
- B. 551.071, 551.072 Consultation with Attorney regarding Real Property
 - 1. Consultation with Attorney regarding real estate procurement matters.
 - 2. Discussion and consideration on selecting the site for the New Rising Scholars Academy.

The Board ended the Executive Session at 9:24 p.m.

18. OPEN SESSION: Action on any Item Deliberated in Closed Meeting

A. 551.074, 551.071 Personnel Matters and consultation with school attorney regarding Personnel Matters:

1. Action: Review and act on recommendation of professional staff for the remainder of the 2024-2025 school year.
 - a. Speech Language Pathologist
 - b. Teacher(s)

Dr. Tony Lara, Superintendent of Schools, recommended the employment of Patricia Ann Marshall Avila as Speech Language Pathologist (11 months), Roberto Quintero as Teacher (10 months), Victoria Marissa Tovar as Teacher (10 months), and Edgar Cortez Alaniz as Teacher (10 months) for the remainder of the 2024-2025 school year.

A motion was made by Abiel J. Cantú, seconded by Doug Buchanan, approving the employment of professional staff as recommended. The motion passed unanimously.

B. 551.071, 551.076 Consultation with Attorney regarding Real Property

1. Discussion, consideration, and possible action on approving Real Estate Broker Services and authorizing Administration to negotiate a contract.

No action taken.

2. Discussion, consideration and possible action on the selection of the site for the New Rising Scholars Academy.

No action taken.

19. Adjournment.

A motion was made by Abiel J. Cantú, seconded by Dr. Rick Villarreal, adjourning the meeting at 9:28 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.