

EIC Meeting Minutes:
January 23, 2025

1. Welcome (4:59-5:01)

Paola Salazar and Efrain Garza

2. Approval of EIC Minutes from November 12, 2024 (5:00-5:01)

Paola Salazar and Efrain Garza

All EIC members received a copy of the EIC November 12th Meeting Minutes and reviewed them.

No change needed to November 12 minutes.

- Motion 1: Claudia Carranza
- Motion 2: Jacqueline Hinojosa

10 votes

3. Recruitment and Retention (5:05-5:32)

Efrain Garza

STISD is experiencing a decline in student retention, especially during the transition from middle school to high school. About 23% of middle school students are choosing not to attend STISD high schools, resulting in a loss of nearly 100 students.

Key points discussed:

- Many students leave after their first year, particularly before 10th grade.
- Recruitment and retention require a team effort, starting with teachers creating a positive school culture.
- Understanding why students leave is essential—data collection through surveys, exit interviews, and focus groups is needed.
- Transportation challenges may be a factor, and more focus groups should explore this issue.
- Increasing student engagement in innovative courses, fine arts, and athletics could help retain students.
- Early exposure to STISD, starting as early as 6th grade, may improve interest and commitment.

EIC Meeting Minutes:
January 23, 2025

This topic will be discussed further during principal's meeting and at the campus level. If no improvements are seen, the committee will revisit this issue with Mr. Garza in the next meeting.

4. School Day Time Schedule for the 25-26 school year (5:34-5:43)

Efrain Garza

The committee discussed the need for updates to the current bell schedule, which has not changed since the middle school model was implemented. As STISD students and programs of study have evolved, there is a need to reconsider scheduling to better support retention, recruitment, and student success.

Key points discussed:

- STISD's current bell schedule follows a Middle School Concept, which may no longer serve the needs of high school students.
- Mr. Garza emphasized that while he can suggest changes, campus leaders must take the initiative to assess and propose adjustments in consultation with stakeholders.
- Dr. Lara has approved campus-level autonomy to modify schedules, provided the school start and end times remain the same.
- High schools may need to adjust schedules to provide more flexibility, especially for comprehensive fine arts programs.
- EIC members are expected to meet with administrators to begin conversations about potential scheduling changes.

Questions & Responses:

- Janie Sanchez: Is this discussion about whether to stay on a block schedule?
 - Mr. Garza: Middle schools have found success with block schedules, but in some high schools, the current structure may be limiting student opportunities.
- Saire Moreno: Would lunch and enrichment be tied to a specific period?
 - Mr. Garza: Schools should explore innovative scheduling options. Some campuses, such as Sci-Tech and Health Professions, are already discussing cafeteria-related changes.
- Diego Leal: Are there any scheduling limitations beyond start and end times?
 - Mr. Garza: The only requirement is that schools must maintain the approved daily start and end times.

EIC Meeting Minutes:
January 23, 2025

- Breakfast in the Classroom Discussion:
 - Mr. Garza clarified that STISD receives funding for a free breakfast program, but breakfast must be served in the classroom as a requirement. Any proposed changes would need administrative approval.

In conclusion:

- Campus leaders will begin conversations with administrators regarding potential schedule adjustments.
- EIC members will gather feedback from stakeholders and discuss recommendations in future meetings.

5. School Calendar for the 2025-26 school year (5:45-5:53)

Efrain Garza

EIC members were presented with three calendar options for the 2025-2026 school year. These options were developed with feedback from multiple groups, including Curriculum & Instruction, Special Programs, and Principals.

Key considerations in calendar development:

- Aligning STISD's academic calendar with partner institutions (UTRGV, STC, TSTC)
- Balancing professional development (PD) days, teacher workdays, and instructional days
- Ensuring sufficient planning time for teachers while maintaining competitiveness with other districts
- Addressing concerns about instructional days and required reporting days for teachers

Calendar Options:

- Calendar A – Features a high number of embedded PD days, totaling 165 instructional days (a reduction of 6 days from the current calendar). Concerns were raised regarding potential conflicts with required instructional time.
- Calendar B – Similar to Calendar A but starts on August 7 instead of August 5. Includes some Saturday workdays to meet required teacher contract days.
- Calendar C – A compromise between A and B, frontloading PD while maintaining a strong instructional balance. This calendar includes 168 instructional days, only 3 fewer than the 2024-2025 calendar. Weather days would not penalize students or staff.

EIC Meeting Minutes:
January 23, 2025

Discussion Highlights:

- Semester Exam Half-Days:
 - Joshua Zamora: Do the calendars account for half-days during semester exams?
 - Mr. Garza: No, as past parent feedback highlighted concerns regarding student safety and transportation. Instead, semester exam days would be full instructional days with a more intensive focus, such as mock testing.
- Teacher Workdays & Administrative Considerations:
 - Diego Leal: May 30 is listed as a workday—is it necessary?
 - Mr. Garza: Yes, it serves as a classroom cleanup and checkout day.
 - Joshua Zamora: What is the purpose of December 10?
 - Mr. Garza: It is designated as a campus workday.
 - Saire Moreno & Janie Sanchez: Are workdays true workdays without PD?
 - Mr. Garza: PD will not be scheduled on those days. However, ARD meetings should not exceed 3 hours.
 - Joshua Zamora: Suggested moving a January workday from January 19 to January 12 to reduce strain on staff, as the current schedule has led to high absenteeism.

Voting & Next Steps:

- Option to Vote Now vs. February 4:
 - Mr. Garza: If EIC votes now, principals can begin planning the school day schedule. If not, the vote will take place in the next EIC meeting on February 4.
 - Diego Leal: Prefers to share the options with campus stakeholders before voting.
- Key Takeaways:
 - The calendar should support teacher planning needs while ensuring student instructional time is maximized.
 - Mock testing will be reduced across all calendar options.
 - Final vote scheduled for February 4, 2025.

EIC Meeting Minutes:
January 23, 2025

6. Closing of Minutes (5:53-6:09)

Paola Salazar & Efrain Garza

Paola Salazar initiated the motion to close the meeting minutes.

- Motion to adjourn: Diego Leal
- Seconded by: Claudia Carranza

The meeting was officially adjourned at 6:09 PM.