



EAST OTERO SCHOOL DISTRICT R-1
301 RATON AVENUE
LA JUNTA, COLORADO 81050

BOARD WRAP-UP

Board of Education Meeting
February 24, 2025

1. **ROLL CALL** –S. Ayala, Hines, Kolomitz and Leyba. A. Ayala was absent.
2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
3. **CELEBRATIONS**

The Board recognized the Science Fair participants/winners. The Primary School was awarded the Dr. Joel Gray Regional Science Fair Champion Award.

The Board recognized the High School Wrestling Team and congratulated the wrestlers who placed at the state competition. The women’s team was recognized for making several firsts this year in the women’s wrestling program. The boy’s team had a State Wrestling Champion.
4. **AUDIENCE**

Kristine Phillips spoke to the Board regarding school closures/delays. Ms. Phillips felt school should have been cancelled on a particular date due to the adverse weather conditions.
5. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA – AGENDA APPROVED AS PRESENTED**
7. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**
 - A. **Changed to Second/Final Reading**
6. **CONSENT AGENDA - APPROVED CONSENT AGENDA AS PRESENTED**
 - A. **Personnel Approval**
 - Anthony Romo - New Hire as a paraprofessional at the Junior/Senior High School for the remainder of the 2024-2025 school year
 - Alexis Peters - New Hire as a paraprofessional at S.E.A.L. Academy for the remainder of the 2024-2025 school year
 - Shantel Gonsales - New Hire as a paraprofessional at S.E.A.L. Academy for the remainder of the 2024-2025 school year
 - Matthew Robinson - New Hire as a paraprofessional at the Junior/Senior High School for the remainder of the 2024-2025 school year
 - Lisa Monaco - Resignation as a teacher at Tiger Trades Academy effective February 20, 2025
 - B. **Approve Spring Sports Extra Duty Assignments for the 2024-2025 Season**
 - C. **Approve an Additional Substitute Teacher for 2024-2025**
7. **MINUTES -**
 - A. Minutes of January 27, 2025. **APPROVED AS PRINTED**
8. **PRESENTATIONS –**

School Safety Update:

Richard Romero, School Safety Director, spoke to the Board about the security disbursement grant, which was used to upgrade the exterior access control system in the district. He said he will be applying for the grant again this year.

Mr. Romero shared he would like to meet with Superintendent Blincoe and Heather Nelson, Business Manager, to establish a budget line for school safety in order to maintain the cameras and access control system. He said there are several aging cameras throughout the district that will need replacing. Mr. Romero also shared the cameras are strategically placed throughout the district and it could be detrimental if one of them malfunctions.

In March, Mr. Romero, Superintendent Blincoe and Crispin Miell, Maintenance Director will complete a physical threat assessment walkthrough of the buildings to determine any safety or maintenance issues.

Mr. Romero said drills are completed on a monthly and quarterly basis and the district has received only two Safe2Tell reports this year. He said one of the reports was unfounded and the other, which didn't have anything to do with the school, was turned over to the police department.

Mr. Romero has been speaking with the police department about holding another large scale emergency exercise to include outside entities and district personnel.

Director Hines asked Mr. Romero is there is something in place for new staff to receive reunification training throughout the year. Mr. Romero explained all staff members are required to take mandatory training upon hire. He also said he will be going to each campus at the beginning of the year for reunification training.

Director S. Ayala asked if Mr. Romero would be interested in community members receiving reunification training. He said he would consider that and would also like to try and get the I Love You Guys Foundation training back to the district at some point. He said the foundation is now in a partnership with the Colorado Department of Public Safety and the training is now offered at no cost.

Director Kolomitz asked Mr. Romero where he feels the district is most vulnerable. Mr. Romero said the worry is always there, but he is a strong supporter of "If you see something, say something".

Director S. Ayala asked Mr. Romero if he would supply a findings report of the threat assessment walkthrough that will be completed next month.

Director Leyba asked if new staff receive training on the E3 app. Mr. Romero said they do. Director Leyba asked how often drills occur. Mr. Romero shared fire drills are monthly and lockdown drills are held quarterly. Director Leyba asked if the district is compliant with the NIMS training. Mr. Romero said he needs to get Superintendent Blincoe and Mr. Wilson the training.

Director Kolomitz asked if the district is in contact with other area districts in the event of an emergency for coordination efforts. Superintendent Blincoe said he is part of a group chat among the area superintendents. This chat is used for weather decisions, emergencies, etc.

9. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT -

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Blincoe shared he attended the CASE Winter Conference last week and visited with the district's new legal counsel while there. He was able to fill in the history of the district to them. They would like to come and complete a Board and Superintendent training. The attorneys also recommended Superintendent Blincoe meet with each Board member the Friday before the Board meetings. He said he likes this idea and is willing to meet in person or telephone.

Superintendent Blincoe gave each Board member the Anxious Generation book by Jonathan Haidt. This book discusses technology screen time and cell phone use by children.

Chief Academic Officer's Report

Jared Wilson, Chief Academic Officer, was unable to attend the meeting. He was out of town at an S-CAP review in Burlington.

10. DISCUSSION -

Staff Retention Bonuses

Superintendent Blincoe said he mentioned staff bonuses at the December meeting, but didn't move forward since the audit wasn't completed at the time. Ms. Nelson shared a bank balance sheet with the Board. Superintendent Blincoe said the rule of thumb is to keep three months operating expenses in reserve funds, which he said rounded up would be around \$4,000,000. He also believes state funding will increase next year. Superintendent Blincoe stated last year, staff received the normal 2% annual salary increase instead of a true raise like many other districts provided.

Director Kolomitz said his understanding is the bonus would be a bottom line withdrawal of \$250,000 from the checking account. He asked Ms. Nelson if the district has the funds to give out this bonus. She said she isn't quite comfortable with it since the audit isn't yet completed and she is leery the taxes might be withheld again if the audit doesn't get completed by the end of March. Superintendent Blincoe elaborated by saying the 2022-23 audit was completed in

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December of 2024 and the 2023-24 audit is being worked on now. The district receives around \$40,000 in monthly revenue from the county which is what would be withheld.

Director S. Ayala said the audit is a concern for her as well and also with things up in the air. She said she would like a more itemized financial statement.

Director Hines said the bank balance sheet is good information to have, but it doesn't show anything that is currently outstanding. She said the tax money that was withheld wasn't new money the district received, it was money that was already allocated in the budget. Director Hines said it doesn't make sense to approve a bonus right now, especially with the audit not complete. She said she would like to look at this at a future meeting.

Superintendent Blincoe said the bank balances have remained the same for a while now. He said the district has applied for the BEST grant for roof replacement at the Junior/Senior High School and he has filled out a waiver to reduce the district's portion to 18%. That would make the district's portion to pay around \$650,000.

Director Hines asked if the \$1,100,000 set aside in capital funds is included in the amounts on the bank balance sheet. Superintendent Blincoe said it is. Director Hines stated she is all for rewarding the teachers, however, the bank balance sheet isn't showing her what she needs to be able to make an informed decision. She shared she would rather teachers be rewarded for returning to the district next year.

Director S. Ayala also shared she supports teachers and does want to incentivize them, but feels longevity should be rewarded. Superintendent Blincoe said he hopes next year to be able to give a bigger step raise for staff.

Superintendent Blincoe said he is working on saving money. He stated he recently met with a company for property and liability insurance who feels they can save the district around \$1,000,000. He said he also wants to put together a teacher group and interview health insurance brokers to help save money. He would like to be the leader in the valley for being able to pay teachers the highest pay.

Director Kolomitz said \$250,000 isn't that much money and said he would like to pay the same amount to staff now and later. Director Hines reiterated she is all for the bonus, but needs an itemized financial report first. Superintendent Blincoe said the only money that has been allocated is the \$240,000 for the buses.

Director Leyba said the Board agrees that staff deserve the bonus but the Board also needs to see what the funds are allocated for. She did a quick recap:

- The audit is not complete yet and there is the possibility of the county holding the district's tax revenue again.
- The bank balance sheet shows a balance of \$6,577,056.48, however, there are funds that are earmarked. Director Leyba asked what the monthly overhead costs are. Ms. Nelson said an average of \$1,000,000. Director Leyba would like a categorical breakdown. Superintendent Blincoe shared the revenue received offsets the monthly expenditures.
- Director Leyba inquired about salaries paid out of Title funds. Ms. Nelson gave a brief overview of the Title funds. Superintendent Blincoe said as new positions are added, some positions are removed. He said he is working on saving the district money.

In summary, Director Leyba said she doesn't think it is wise to grant the bonuses. She feels the Board would be fiscally irresponsible to commit to the bonus payout with the audit not being complete. She said she would be more comfortable knowing the results of the audit. Director Leyba will be attending the CASB Winter Legislative Conference this week and would like to hear the state's budgeting plan.

Director Kolomitz agrees that the money is not the Board's and feels staff should be rewarded. He wants to pay staff now and when they return in August.

Superintendent Blincoe added the things the Board mentioned tonight can be said for every year. He asked at what point does the district start paying the salaries and bonuses it should. He stated the most notable thing is the audit.

Director S. Ayala said this is taxpayer's money, but also understands the teacher's point of view. She wants a little more time for the audit to be completed.

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Director Hines believes teachers should receive a bonus as well. She also wants to wait until the audit is completed.

Director Leyba said she would like to wait until the Meet and Confer when staff can address the Board.

Director Kolomitz asked when the audit will be complete. Ms. Nelson said she doesn't have an exact date, but is hoping in March. He asked if it will be completed in April and Ms. Nelson said she is hoping sooner. She added she will share any timelines she receives with the Board.

11. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a. Approve Revised Policy CBA/CBC on First/Revised Reading (Blincoe) **TABLED TO CONSULT WITH CASB FOR SERVICES**
- b. Approve Revised Policy LBD on Second/Final Reading (Blincoe) **APPROVED ON SECOND/FINAL READING**

12. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Approve Revised Policies AC, GBAA, JBB, GCE/GCF, GDE/GDF, JB, JF, GBA, JICDD, JICDE, JFBA, JFBB, JICA, JII, GBEE and JS on First/Revised Reading (Blincoe) **APPROVED ON FIRST/REVISED READING**
- b. Approve Revised Regulations AC-R-1 and AC-R-3 on First/Revised/Final Reading (Blincoe) **APPROVED ON FIRST/REVISED READING**
- c. Approve Staff Retention Bonus (Blincoe) **TABLED UNTIL A LATER DATE**
- d. Superintendent Evaluation Results (Leyba) **TABLED UNTIL A LATER DATE PRIOR TO SPRING BREAK**

13. BOARD COMMENTS

- ✓ Director S. Ayala thanked the audience for coming to the meeting and staying so long.
- ✓ Director Kolomitz gave a huge shout out to Mrs. Apodaca, her team and Superintendent Blincoe for their presentation at the State Board of Education hearing. He also gave a shout out to the Junior/Senior High School for having a student as a finalist for the Boettcher Scholarship.
- ✓ Director Hines gave a shout out for the State Board of Education hearing performance. She said the Science Fair was well attended and it is nice to see all the time and effort that was put into the projects.
- ✓ Director Leyba said she didn't realize the Intermediate School had their students watch the State Board of Education hearing. She said some of the students said their principals did a good job and they just need to get out of the red. She said she appreciates all of the hard work they do and said, "Great job everybody".
- ✓ Director Kolomitz asked if there is a way to get the hearing online and posted. He would like it to be posted.
- ✓ Director S. Ayala said she is not the Board's representative for the District Advisory Council (DAC). She said she went to the State Board of Education hearing and stated she is very proud of the team. She added the building and district accountability meetings are a great way to learn information and get involved, especially if you want to run for the board.
- ✓ Superintendent Blincoe said the Science Fair is fun and kids don't even realize they are learning.
- ✓ Director S. Ayala gave a shout out to Mrs. Remick for involving the La Junta students in the Science Fair again.
- ✓ Director Leyba encouraged the audience to look at the science fair boards before leaving.

14. ADJOURNMENT – MEETING ADJOURNED AT 8:44 p.m.

BOARD OF EDUCATION

DEE LEYBA, President **ANGELA AYALA, Vice President**
SARA HINES, Secretary/Treasurer **STACEY AYALA, Director**
GREG KOLOMITZ, Director