



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

BOARD WRAP-UP

Board of Education Meeting

May 12, 2025

1. **ROLL CALL** – A. Ayala, Hines and Kolomitz. S. Ayala and Leyba were absent.
2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
3. **RECOGNITION OF THE NATIONAL FBLA QUALIFIER** - Isabella Ortiz was recognized by the Board for her outstanding performance in FBLA. She has qualified to attend the National Conference which is in Anaheim, CA on June 29-July 2, 2025.
4. **AUDIENCE** - Carolanna Traver spoke to the Board and thanked the staff on the interim committee who have assumed extra responsibilities this year.

Diana Remick spoke to the Board regarding her concern of student's safety. She explained a house near the Junior/Senior High School has some unsavory residents that cause trouble.

5. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA – AGENDA APPROVED AS PRESENTED**
6. **CONSENT AGENDA - APPROVED CONSENT AGENDA AS PRESENTED**
 - A. **Personnel Approval**
 - Robert Peteque - New Hire as Custodian at the Intermediate School for the remainder of the 2024-2025 school year
 - Belinda Apodaca - Resignation as 6th Grade Teacher at the Intermediate School effective May 23, 2025
 - Rachel Nason - Resignation as a Paraprofessional at the Intermediate School effective May 23, 2025
 - B. **Approve Out-of-District Students for the 2025-2026 School Year**

7. **MINUTES -**
 - A. Minutes of Regular Meeting April 28, 2025. **APPROVED AS PRINTED**

8. **PRESENTATIONS –**
Tammy Ridenoure - Otero County Preservation Group:

Tammy Ridenoure, representative of the Otero County Preservation Group, spoke to the Board regarding the Otero County children's history book that will be released to 3rd grade students this fall. She handed out a consumable book to each Board member as well as the teacher addition. She explained each lesson is a page, which could be explained as an event, story, etc. followed by an activity. The teacher's manual is extensive in information and also includes a jump drive for an electronic copy. Mrs. Ridenoure reviewed some of the spots and history that are highlighted in the book from La Junta. Some key people from the community are also listed in the book. La Junta, Cheraw, Swink, Rocky Ford, Manzanola and Fowler are all towns in the book. Mrs. Ridenoure shared the books will be free to the students. The Preservation Group was able to obtain a grant, which covered the cost of the books.

Director Ayala asked if any extra books were printed. Mrs. Ridenoure said the grant was only able to pay for the student's copies, but the group will be looking at printing more for purchase later in the year.

Ken McNerney/Jennifer Foxhoven - EDynamics/Tiger Online Program

Ken McNerney, Tiger Trades Academy Principal, Jennifer Foxhoven, Junior/Senior High School Principal, and Shawna Frankmore, Junior/Senior High School Academic Sponsor spoke to the Board regarding the district having an online school. Mrs. Foxhoven said the district had the Tigers Online Program (TOP) in the past, so the infrastructure is already in place with CDE (Colorado Department of Education). Mrs. Foxhoven shared data which shows the Junior/Senior High School has had 106 students withdraw, with 52 of those students transferring to online school. Mr. McNerney said he has had 36 students withdraw from Tiger Trades Academy (TTA), with 23 of those students transferring to full-time online school versus the hybrid option offered at TTA. Director A. Ayala asked why TOP isn't being utilized in the context it was in its beginning. Mr. Romero said it was being used as a credit recovery

program. Director Kolomitz asked when the 75 students were lost to online schools, if funding was also lost. Mr. McNerney said it was, however, full-time online students receive lower state funding. Director A. Ayala inquired if the district has an exit interview for students to find out why they leave. Hallie Romero, District Social Worker, said she does visit with students who withdraw, but there is not a formal exit interview process. Mrs. Foxhoven stated some students have attendance issues and/or social-emotional issues that cause them to transfer to online education. Director A. Ayala asked if this would be a night school scenario or how it will work. Mr. McNerney said this will be a true online school and he would like an administrator, two teachers and one secretary to implement the program. He said they would be housed at TTA. Director Kolomitz asked how long it would take to implement this plan. Mr. McNerney said he can bring more information to the next Board meeting. Mr. Wilson shared he has checked into things and if the logistics of the program aren't in place, problems can arise. He said he would like to meet with other districts who have online programs to discuss the glitches that can arise. Director Hines asked how much funding online students receive. Ms. Nelson said she doesn't have that number at this time. Director A. Ayala asked how this will fall into the district's improvement plan and state assessments for online students. Mr. McNerney stated the online school would be considered an alternative education campus (AEC), and there is some leeway on state assessments for AEC's. Director A. Ayala feels this is a great idea and said it will be interesting to see how this can be tied into the accountability overhaul that is taking place. Mr. Wilson said he feels it can have a great benefit, however, he feels it could have a negative impact as well. He said the goal will be to support La Junta students and not necessarily students from large cities. Mrs. Foxhoven said in-district students would be the only students serviced the first year.

Mrs. Foxhoven introduced to the Board a new program that is being looked into. eDynamics is an online program which offers students industry certificates. This option can offer students another graduation pathway and can allow them the opportunity to explore career options. Director A. Ayala asked if these would be elective courses and they would be. eDynamics would not be replacing the current online platform. Director A. Ayala inquired about the cost of the program. Mrs. Foxhoven said it is \$27,000 for the first year for unlimited access. Director A. Ayala asked who would be recruiting the students who will be able to take these electives. Mrs. Frankmore said this is a program for all students. Director Hines asked since these are all online classes, would students be taking them at school. Mrs. Foxhoven said that will be looked at. Mr. Wilson added this could possibly be a purchase BOCES is looking into. Director A. Ayala said she appreciates the innovative thinking by administration.

Amanda Gingrich - Chartwells Food Service

Amanda Gingrich, Chartwells Food Service Director, informed the Board of new equipment for the Primary kitchen that has been purchased. She said new shelves for the freezer, carts and tables. A new warmer was purchased for Tiger Trades Academy as well.

She told the Board 650 meals were served at Reelin' in the Summer, which is an event sponsored by the Primary School. She said that is awesome to feed that many people.

Ms. Gingrich said the freezer at the Primary School was out of operation for over a month, which caused a hardship on that kitchen staff. She said staff has had to go back and forth to the freezers at the warehouse and those freezers are at capacity. She said she has been working with Crispin Miell, Maintenance Director, to get the freezer fixed. Mrs. Gingrich said the Board should consider replacing the freezer and cooler at the Primary School as they weren't replaced when the building was remodeled. Director A. Ayala asked if the freezer will last. Mrs. Gingrich said she doesn't know. Director Kolomitz asked if there is a plan to get the freezer replaced. Mr. Romero said a part has arrived to repair the freezer currently.

The summer food service program will run from June 2 through August 1 from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Intermediate School. There will be a parent pick up loop as well. Lunches will be served Monday-Thursday.

Director A. Ayala asked if the food situation at the Primary School has been addressed. Mrs. Gingrich said not as many teachers eat school lunch since they have to pay for them now. She said they are served the same meals the students receive and she hasn't received any complaints. Director A. Ayala asked if food service is turning back toward serving more hot lunches versus prepackaged items. Mrs. Gingrich said hot items are offered every day and she offers options so kids will eat lunch. Director Kolomitz asked if the food service program buys local. Mrs. Gingrich explained she buys lettuce from Swink and there is funding for local foods, but unfortunately was recently cut. She said the difficult thing with buying locally is growing is done during summer months. Mrs. Gingrich said some districts are purchasing local beef, however, it is a much higher cost.

Dawn Ortiz – Human Resources Coordinator

Dawn Ortiz, Human Resources Coordinator, gave the Board an update. She said the district is completely caught up with PERA payments and explained the student workers employed by the district delay the process. Everything is resolved, the December payment shows it was received, but has not been posted. Mrs. Ortiz is working on having PERA come to the district to talk to employees. The monthly newsletter also lists the link to the PERA website, which has valuable information and resources for staff. There are also staff members who are willing to help other staff members with PERA questions.

Mrs. Ortiz said open enrollment for health insurance is currently happening through the EASE portal. Mark Kube, the district's insurance broker, was Central Office to speak with staff who had questions. Mrs. Ortiz said two staff members met with him. Director A. Ayala asked if it would be better to have Mr. Kube come on a Friday, which may make him more accessible. Mrs. Ortiz was happy to share that there was no increase in insurance premiums this year.

Open enrollment is also happening for American Fidelity, the district's supplemental insurance. Director A. Ayala asked if this is highly utilized and Mrs. Ortiz said it is. Director Hines asked why American Fidelity has a bigger turnout than Mr. Kube. Mrs. Ortiz said the open enrollment for health insurance is online through a portal that staff can complete at their convenience and an appointment is required for American Fidelity. Mrs. Ortiz said the portal is very user friendly. Director A. Ayala asked if it could possibly be a requirement for new staff to meet directly with Mr. Kube.

Mrs. Ortiz said administrators have received their contracts and certified staff contracts are in process and should be out by the end of this week. She said there are several vacancies. Director Kolomitz asked how many openings there are and Mrs. Ortiz estimates around twenty. Director Kolomitz asked how and where does the district advertise. Mrs. Ortiz said the district website, local newspapers (also Pueblo and Lamar papers), K12JobSpot, Indeed, other online platforms and job fairs when happening. Director Hines asked if there has been an increase in applications since the district went to the online application process. Mrs. Ortiz said yes, the number has probably tripled. She added the process is easier to track, applications go where they need to go and it is worth the time it took to learn the program.

9. OPERATIONS UPDATE -

Mr. Romero elaborated on what Mrs. Remick spoke to the Board about. He said he met with Sheriff Mobley today regarding that house. He also attended the County Commissioner's meeting today to share his concerns with the Commissioners. He stated the clientele that comes and goes to that location has caused quite a bit of trouble for the Junior/Senior High School. The foot traffic behind the school has increased substantially in the last year and he believes the traffic is going to the residence. He stressed this is not a complaint on law enforcement, but believes it is time for something to be done with the residence. Director Kolomitz clarified the property is in the county and not city limits. Mr. Romero explained 22nd Street is divided in half and the half the residence sits on is in county limits and the other half of the street is city limits. Mr. Romero also explained he is planning on attending a City Council meeting as well.

Mr. Romero shared work will continue this summer at the Intermediate, with flooring and painting. Outlets and switches will be replaced at TTA. Plumbing repairs will occur at the Junior/Senior High School, as well as some concrete work at Tiger Gym. Painting touch ups will take place at the Primary School. Mr. Romero said he has met with City officials regarding the crosswalks. It was decided they would be repainted this summer so they will be fresh when school starts.

Mr. Romero shared with the Board that TTA Awards Ceremony is this Wednesday beginning at noon, Orange and Black Awards Ceremony is Thursday beginning at 2:00 p.m. The Intermediate Awards Ceremony will take place on May 21.

Mr. Romero said he and Mr. Wilson are working on a response for the Meet and Confer meeting.

Director A. Ayala said she is willing to write a letter of concern regarding the residence causing concern. She also encouraged her fellow Board members to do the same. Mr. Romero said there could be some things that fall under the health department, land management, or USDA animal control. He elaborated by stating he wants to make a big deal of this because he needs help. He said traffic at the residence bleeds over onto district property and affects student's safety. Director A. Ayala asked if there is a list or rotating building improvements. Mr. Romero said he and Mr. Miell have found the old list and was happy to report most everything on the list has been completed. He said they are working on updating the list with upcoming projects. It is in the beginning stages. Director A. Ayala asked if the sewer smell at the Intermediate School has improved. Mrs. Traver said it doesn't seem to and the bat smell is

also increasing. Mr. Romero said he believes another bat point of entry has been found and both issues are a work in progress. Director Kolomitz asked how the roof at the Junior/Senior High School held up during the recent rains. Mrs. Foxhoven said not well and more leaks have developed. Director A. Ayala asked if the district gets to move to a critical stage because she feels that has been surpassed. Mr. Wilson presents to the BEST Grant Board this Thursday and said he will elaborate that point in his presentation. Director A. Ayala asked if anyone from the health department has been contacted. She said there may be concern with water dripping from the ceiling. Mr. Wilson said they have not.

10. FINANCIAL UPDATE -

Ms. Nelson spoke to the Board regarding the audit. She said the auditor came to the office last week and discussed how the 2022-2023 single audit is going. He said he will be done fairly quickly with it and it will be able to be submitted. He also said the 2023-2024 audit will be completed in about a month. Once that is submitted, the tax dollars will be released by Otero County.

The summer food service application has been submitted. It was sent back for corrections and once those are made, it will be re-submitted.

Abacus has finished the 2025-2026 budget. Ms. Nelson said she will go into more detail with the budget when it is presented later in the meeting. Abacus has also finished cleaning up the accounts in SDS (Specialized Data Systems), the district's accounting software. Ms. Nelson said the district now has all the correct accounts that are needed and are accepted by the Colorado Department of Education. The account number cleanup reduced the size of the budget from 64-65 pages to 29, which makes reading it easier. Abacus has also balanced the general fund in SDS, which will make monthly reconciliation go smoother and more quickly.

The state funding was approved and the budget aligns with the state funding. Director Kolomitz asked how often financial statements are presented to the Board. Ms. Nelson said on a quarterly basis, but she could begin monthly reports once they are created in SDS. Director Kolomitz said he would like monthly reports.

11. CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER UPDATE -

Mr. Wilson shared the BEST Grant interview is this Thursday. He said the turnaround should be short on knowing if the district is successful in obtaining the grant. He has been doing some research to help him present the critical need for the funds.

TNTP meetings will be on May 28 and staff will be conferencing in June with them. The UVA conference will be in July. Mr. Wilson said the S-CAP summer conference is the same time in June as the TNTP conference. He said he is communicating with S-CAP and is looking at the benefits of the program. Mr. Wilson said he and the administrators will be discussing it. Director Kolomitz asked what the timeline is for making a decision on staying or leaving S-CAP. Mr. Wilson said they would like an answer by the June meeting. Director Hines asked if S-CAP is still planning on a re-do of our onsite evaluation. Mr. Wilson said he believes so. Director A. Ayala asked if S-CAP findings were relied upon for the State Board of Education meeting. Mr. Wilson said the data did contribute, but was not the sole piece of it and was not labeled in the presentation. Director A. Ayala asked if it is integral keeping it in place and Mr. Wilson said it can be. He said the weight of the cognitive tax being put on administrators and staff is being looked at and whether the data can be made meaningful.

The summer programming for staff will be to prioritize ELA and Math and identifying gaps. Mr. Wilson said he wants to be intentional with professional development this summer.

Credit recovery will be available this summer for secondary students. Director Hines asked if the Tiger Tots program will be held. Mr. Wilson would like to, but is looking at funding for the program.

Director A. Ayala asked if any data has been looked at regarding before and after the 4-day week was implemented since Turnaround status has been an issue for so long. Mr. Wilson said that is something he has not looked at but can do so.

12. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Presentation of the 2025-2026 Preliminary Budget
- b. Approve Revised Exhibit JQ-E on First/Revised/Final Reading **APPROVED ON FIRST/REVISED/FINAL READING AS PRESENTED**
- c. Approve Classified Staff Employment Renewals - Resolutions 2025-4 and 2025-5 **APPROVED AS PRESENTED**
- d. Approve 2025-2026 Chartwells Renewal **APPROVED AS PRESENTED**
- e. Approve the 2025-2026 Infinite Campus Renewal **APPROVED IN THE AMOUNT OF \$33,668.00 AS PRESENTED**

13. BOARD COMMENTS

- ✓ Director Hines thanked the staff who put together and worked the Reelin' in the Summer event. She said there were a lot of things the kids got to do and take home.
- ✓ Director Kolomitz congratulated the Seniors who will be graduating on Sunday. He also thanked Ms. Nelson, Mr. Wilson and Mr. Romero for taking on their extra duties. Director Kolomitz said in his opinion, he would like to start the superintendent search as soon as possible as well as a search for an itinerant superintendent while searching for a permanent superintendent.
- ✓ Director A. Ayala said she had someone from the community regarding music education at the lower grade levels. They noticed it is starting to have an impact on local theatre productions also. Director A. Ayala said she understands it is a rural thing with no teachers applying and she encourages people and students to get involved in theatre. She stated involvement has benefitted her children. Director A. Ayala congratulated the Class of 2025. She also thanked all three for doing a good job.

14. ADJOURNMENT – MEETING ADJOURNED AT 8:48 p.m.

BOARD OF EDUCATION

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