



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 April 22, 2025, 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
Noel Garza, DDS	Mission
Sylvia Sánchez Garza, Ph.D.	Edinburg
Andrea E. Gonzales-Loya	Raymondville
Yolanda Kamel	McAllen
Henry LeVrier	Brownsville
Eduardo Roberto Rodriguez	Brownsville
Jaime R. Solis	Edinburg
David Suarez	Weslaco
Rick Villarreal, DDS	Rancho Viejo
Ruth Villarreal	Mission

The following Board members were absent:

Robert J. Lerma	Brownsville
Sylvia S. Lopez	Brownsville
Sandra Garza Ochoa, Ph.D.	Weslaco
Rodolfo “Rudy” Ramirez	Edinburg
Oscar Salinas	Edinburg
Sue Ann Villarreal	Raymondville
Zach Zamora	Mission

The following staff members were present:

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

3. Pledges of Allegiance & District Call to Action.

The pledges and District Call to Action were led by Eduardo R. Rodriguez.

4. Moment of Silence.

The Board held a moment of silence and remembered Sue Ann Villarreal’s family.

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. Awards & Recognitions.

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

On behalf of the Board and Administration, Amanda Odom recognized the following athletic achievements:

- Preparatory Academy Girls' Golf Team for earning TCSAAL Middle School State Champions
- Rising Scholars Academy Boys' Golf Team for being TCSAAL Middle School State Champions
- Rising Scholars Girls' Golf Team for placing 3rd in State
- Medical Professions Varsity Girls' Golf Team for placing 3rd in State
- Health Professions Varsity Girls' Golf Team for earning TCSAAL State Runner Up and 2nd in State
- Health Professions Varsity Boys' Golf Team for earning TCSAAL State Champions
- Science Academy Varsity Boys' Golf Team for placing 3rd in State
- Science Academy Varsity Girls' Golf Team for earning TCSAAL State Champions

8. 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 Jaime Solis, seconded by David Briones, tabling item 15.E.1. and noting a correction on item 17.A.2.C. should be 17.A.3, and approving the consent agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

9. *Action: Review and act on the March 25, 2025 Board Meeting Minutes.

Approved with the consent agenda.

10. Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment Committee - David Briones and Sue Ann Villarreal, Co-Chairs

David Briones reported on the following items:

- A. *Action: Review and act on the 2025-2026 District and Campus Improvement Plans.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- B. Action: Review and act on the annual Certification of Provision of Instructional Materials for the 2025-2026 school year.

A motion was made by Dr. Noel Garza, seconded by Sasha Crane, approving the annual Certification of Provision of Instructional Materials for the 2025-2026 school year. The motion passed unanimously.

11. Buildings and Grounds Committee - E. Larry Cantu and Jaime Solis, Co-Chairs

E. Larry Cantu reported on the following items:

- A. Report on the following projects:
 - 1. Health Professions Gymnasium
 - 2. Athletic Fields
 - 3. Medical Professions Audio/Video Intercom System
 - 4. CTE Automotive Expansion

Nathaniel Perez, The Warren Group, was present 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 Athletic Fields projects, Medical Professions Audio/Video Intercom System, and the CTE Automotive Expansion projects.

- B. Action: Review and act on job order contracting for the CTE Automotive Expansion project, approving the contract, allowing the Board President to enter into the contract, and authorizing Administration to process the requisition for the selected contractor.

A motion was made by E. Larry Cantu, seconded by Doug Buchanan, approving job order contracting for the CTE Automotive Expansion project, approving the contract with Hercon, allowing the Board President to enter into the contract, and authorizing Administration to process the requisition for the selected contractor. The motion passed unanimously.

12. Finance & Operations Committee - Sylvia Sánchez Garza, Ph.D. and Noel Garza, D.D.S., Co-Chairs

Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza reported on the following items:

- A. *Report on District Comparison of Revenues/Expenditures.

Approved with the consent agenda.

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

Approved with the consent agenda.

- C. *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.

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

Approved with the consent agenda.

- E. *Action: Review and act on Wage Payments to District Employees Due to Weather-Related Closure.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- F. Action: Review and act on the following change orders:
 - 1. Change order #1 to the betterment fund in the amount of \$65,772.30 for the Edinburg Athletic Fields project.

A motion was made by Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza, seconded by E. Larry Cantu, approving change order #1 to the betterment fund in the amount of \$65,772.30 for the Edinburg Athletic Fields project. The motion passed unanimously.

- 2. Change order #2 to the betterment fund in the amount of \$32,964 for the Mercedes Athletic Fields project.

A motion was made by Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza, seconded by Doug Buchanan, approving change order #2 to the betterment fund in the amount of \$32,964 for the Mercedes Athletic Fields project. The motion passed unanimously.

- G. Action: Review and act on the following payment applications:
 - 1. Payment application #11 to Gerlach Builders, LLC in the amount of \$362,621.78 for the New Health Professions Gymnasium project.

A motion was made by Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza, seconded by Abiel J. Cantú, approving payment application #11 to Gerlach Builders, LLC in the amount of \$362,621.78 for the New Health Professions Gymnasium project. The motion passed unanimously.

- 2. Payment application #7 to Gerlach Builders, LLC in the amount of \$205,059.72 for the Mercedes Athletic Fields project.

A motion was made by Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza, seconded by Jaime Solis, approving payment application #7 to Gerlach Builders, LLC in the amount of \$205,059.72 for the Mercedes Athletic Fields project. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Payment application #8 to Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc. in the amount of \$22,651.98 for the Athletic Fields project.

A motion was made by Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza, seconded by E. Larry Cantu, approving payment application #8 to Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc. in the amount of \$22,651.98 for the Athletic Fields project. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Payment application #1 to Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc in the amount of \$105,000 for the CTE Automotive Expansion project.

A motion was made by Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza, seconded by Yolanda Kamel, approving payment application #1 to Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc in the amount of \$105,000 for the CTE Automotive Expansion project. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Payment application #2 to Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc in the amount of \$2,161.22 for Mercedes Restrooms project.

A motion was made by Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza, seconded by E. Larry Cantu, approving payment application #2 to Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc in the amount of \$2,161.22 for Mercedes Restrooms project. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Payment application #4 to Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc. in the amount of \$1,700.97 for the Medical Professions Audio/Video Intercom project.

A motion was made by Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza, seconded by Abiel J. Cantú, approving payment application #4 to Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc. in the amount of \$1,700.97 for the Medical Professions Audio/Video Intercom project. The motion passed unanimously.

7. Payment application #5 to Holchemont, LTD in the amount of \$528,000.50 for the Edinburg Athletic Fields project.

A motion was made by Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza, seconded by Jaime Solis, approving payment application #5 to Holchemont, LTD in the amount of \$528,000.50 for the Edinburg Athletic Fields project. The motion passed unanimously.

8. Payment application #4 to TelePro Communications in the amount of \$116,752.72 for the Medical Professions Audio/Video Intercom project.

A motion was made by Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza, seconded by David Suarez, approving payment application #4 to TelePro Communications in the amount of \$116,752.72 for the Medical Professions Audio/Video Intercom project. The motion passed unanimously.

H. Action: Review and act on the following budget amendment(s):

1. Budget amendment #5 General Fund (199)

A motion was made by Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza, seconded by Doug Buchanan, approving budget amendment #5 General Fund (199). The motion passed unanimously.

2. Budget amendment #1 Child Nutrition (101)

A motion was made by Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza, seconded by Jaime Solis, approving budget amendment #1 Child Nutrition (101). The motion passed unanimously.

3. Budget amendment #3 IDEA B (313)

A motion was made by Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza, seconded by Abiel J. Cantú, approving budget amendment #3 IDEA B (313). The motion passed unanimously.

I. Action: Review and act on the following requisition(s):

1. Requisition #131594 to Aries Building Systems in the amount of \$140,459 for the purchase of one portable for Special Programs.

A motion was made by Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza, seconded by Doug Buchanan, approving requisition #131594 to Aries Building Systems in the amount of \$140,459 for the purchase of one portable for Special Programs. The motion passed unanimously.

13. Policy, Planning, Projects & Partnerships Committee - Abiel J. Cantú and Robert J. Lerma, Co-Chairs

Abiel J. Cantú reported on the following items:

- A. Report on proposed revisions to Policy resulting from the TASB Policy Audit (First Reading).

Mr. Efrain Garza, Deputy Superintendent reported on the proposed revisions to Policy resulting from the TASB Policy Audit. This was a report only.

14. Community & Governmental Relations Committee - Sasha Crane and Zach I. Zamora, Co-Chairs

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

Approved with the consent agenda.

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

A. *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.

B. *Action: Review and act on the following out of district student/staff travel:

1. National Education Leadership Awards, April 9-12, 2025 in Washington, DC.
2. Association of Title IX Administrators (ATIXA) 2025 Summer Symposium, June 9-14, 2025, in Portland, OR.
3. Innovative Schools Summit, July 7-11, 2025, in Las Vegas, NV.
4. 2025 National Conservation Foundation Envirothon, July 20-26, 2025, in Calgary, Alberta, Canada.
5. The AI Conference, September 17-18, 2025, San Francisco, CA.

Approved with the consent agenda.

C. *Action: Review and act on the following Board travel:

1. TASB Summer Leadership Institute, June 11-14, 2025, in San Antonio, TX or June 18-21, 2025 in Fort Worth, TX.
2. NALEO Annual Conference, July 22-24, 2025, in Atlanta, GA.
3. TASA|TASB txEdCON25 Annual Convention, September 11-14, 2025, in Houston, TX.

Approved with the consent agenda.

D. *Action: Review and act on amending summer 2025 office hours.

Approved with the consent agenda.

E. District Reports

1. Report: Celebrating Six Years of Service, as requested by Board Member, Dr. Sandra Garza Ochoa.

Item was tabled and will be included in the next regularly scheduled board meeting agenda.

2. Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources
 - a. *Report on resignations and retirements of professional staff.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- b. *Report on professional vacancies.

Approved with the consent agenda.

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

Approved with the consent agenda.

- d. Action: Review and act on the program change within the Curriculum and Instruction Department and acknowledge that the program change requires a reduction in force of personnel.

A motion was made by Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza, seconded by Jaime Solis, approving the program change within the Curriculum and Instruction Department and acknowledge that the program change requires a reduction in force of personnel. The motion passed with one abstention (Yolanda Kamel).

- e. Action: Review and Act on approving the request for New Professional Position(s) for the 2025-2026 school year and the Announcement of Vacancy for the following:
 1. Dean of Instruction (2)
 2. Coordinator for Instructional Services (1)
 3. Educational Diagnostician - Co-Op (1)
 4. Speech Language Pathologist - Co-Op (1)
 5. Special Education Instructional Specialist - Co-Op (1)
 6. Teacher (1)

A motion was made by E. Larry Cantu, seconded by Abiel J. Cantú, approving the request for New Professional Position(s) for the 2025-2026 school year and the Announcement of Vacancy as presented. The motion passed with two absentions (Sasha Crane and Yolanda Kamel).

3. Executive Director for Student Support
 - a. *Enrollment and Attendance Report.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- b. Report on Student Support Services.

Marcos Flores, Executive Director for Student Support, provided an update on Student Support Services.

- 4. Executive Director for Special Programs
 - a. Report on Special Programs.

Dr. Brenda De La Garza, Executive Director for Special Programs, provided an update on Special Programs.

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

Dr. Brenda De La Garza, provided an update on the South Texas Tri-County Special Education Co-Op.

- 5. Chief of Police
 - a. Report on Safety and Security.

Chief Steven Cortez, STISD Chief of Police, provided the Board with an update on Safety and Security for the district.

- b. Report on the District Vulnerability Assessment conducted by TEA.

Chief Cortez provided a report on the District Vulnerability Assessment conducted by TEA.

- c. Action: Review and act on an agreement with Rio Grande Valley Communications Group for Radio Services for the STISD Police Department.

A motion was made by Jaime Solis, seconded by E. Larry Cantu, approving the agreement with Rio Grande Valley Communications Group for Radio Services for the STISD Police Department. The motion passed unanimously.

- F. Action: Name delegate and alternate for the TASA|TASB txEdCON25 Annual Convention, September 11-14, 2025, in Houston, TX.

A motion was made by Jaime Solis, seconded by Doug Buchanan, naming Andrea E. Gonzales Loya as the Delegate and Mr. Abiel J. Cantú as the Alternate for the TASA|TASB txEDCON25 Annual Convention, September 11-14, 2025, in Houston, TX.

- 16. **EXECUTIVE SESSION: The Board of Directors met on April 22, 2025 at 8:08 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, E. Larry Cantu served to record the minutes of the closed session to discuss the following:

- A. Section 551.074, Personnel Matters
 - 1. Recommendation of professional staff for the 2025-2026 school year.
 - a. Teacher(s)
 - 2. Review recommendations for renewal/extension/non-renewal/termination of employment contracts for Central Office Administrators, Principals, Teachers and other Professional staff.
 - a. Renewal of Chapter 21 and Non-Chapter 21 term and probationary employment contracts for Central Office Administrators, Principals, Teachers and other Professional staff for the 2025-2026 school year.
 - b. Discussion and consideration regarding the non-renewal of Chapter 21 term contract(s) due to a program change within the Curriculum and Instruction Department, subject to approval of program change. (G.L. and A.A.)
- B. Sections 551.071, 551.074 and 551.0821, Consultation with attorney
 - 1. Consultation with legal counsel regarding Cause No. C-2608-23-E; Laura Noriega v. South Texas ISD; In the 275th Judicial District Court of Hidalgo County, Texas.
 - 2. Consultation with legal counsel regarding Marcolfa M. v. South Texas ISD.
 - 3. Consultation with legal counsel regarding pending or threatened litigation.
- C. 551.072 Real Property
 - 1. Deliberation regarding the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property.

The Board ended the Executive Session at 8:52 p.m.

- 17. 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 2025-2026 school year.
 - a. Teacher(s)

Dr. Tony Lara, Superintendent of Schools, recommended the employment of Karina Bazan as Teacher (10 months), Berenice Sainz as Teacher (10 months), Dora Delia Hinck as Teacher (10 months), Jose Luis Gutierrez II as Teacher (10 months), and Juan Roel Rivera as Teacher (10 months).

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

2. Action: Review and act on renewal/extension/non-renewal/termination of employment contracts for Central Office Administrators, Principals, Teachers and other Professional staff.
 - a. Action: Review and act on renewal of Chapter 21 and Non-Chapter 21 term and probationary employment contracts for Central Office Administrators, Principals, Teachers and other Professional staff for the 2025-2026 school year.

Dr. Lara recommended the extension of employment contracts through June 30, 2027, for Efrain Garza, Marla Knaub, Lissa Frausto, Amanda Odom, Marcos Flores, Dr. Brenda De La Garza, and Chief Steven Cortez; and the extension of employment contracts through June 30, 2026, for Maribel Valdez, Dr. Reynaldo Rodriguez, Marco Zamora, Dr. Cynthia Chairez, Jose Lucio, and Dr. Michele Guajardo. In addition, the Superintendent recommended the renewal of employment contracts for teachers and other professional staff as listed on agenda pages 309-336 for the 2025-2026 school year.

A motion was made by Dr. Noel Garza, seconded by David Suarez, approving the Superintendent's recommendation to renew/extend the employment contracts for professional staff as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

- b. Discussion, consideration and possible action regarding the non-renewal of Chapter 21 term contract(s) due to a program change within the Curriculum and Instruction Department. (G.L. and A.A.)

A motion was made by Dr. Noel Garza, seconded by Dr. Rick Villarreal, approving the proposed non-renewal of Chapter 21 term contract(s) due to a program change within the Curriculum and Instruction Department. (G.L. and A.A.) The motion passed unanimously.

- c. Discussion, consideration and possible action regarding Cause No. C-2608-23-E; Laura Noriega v. South Texas ISD; In the 275th Judicial District Court of Hidalgo County, Texas

A motion was made by Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza, seconded by Yolanda Kamel, approving settlement as discussed in executive session and authorize the Superintendent to finalize any related documentation. The motion passed unanimously.

18. Adjournment.

A motion was made by Doug Buchanan, seconded by Dr. Noel Garza, adjourning the meeting at 9:02 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.