

Freeport School District 145

Board of Education Meeting Highlights *September 16, 2025 – Regular Meeting*

This report provides highlights of the Board of Education meeting. It is not intended to serve as the official meeting minutes.

Board Actions & Updates

- **Student Board Member Seated**
The Board seated **Gustavo Commarela**, a junior at Freeport High School, to serve a two-year term as Student Board Member. He joins **Quinn Kryzminski**, an FHS senior serving her second year.
 - **Public Hearing on 2025–2026 Budget**
No public comments were received. The hearing was adjourned by President Furst.
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Superintendent’s Report

- **Enrollment Update**
As of September 5, 2025, total district enrollment is **3,786 students**, including **419 English Language Learners**.
- **Alternative Learning Opportunity Program (ALOP)**
FSD has received state approval to launch the **Rising Pretzel Academy**, designed to support students who struggle in a traditional school setting, and provide the services they need.

Key Features of the Program:
 - Differentiated Instruction: ALOPs address the unique needs of high-risk students through personalized curriculum and support
 - Student Success Plan: Each student follows an individualized plan with clear goals and regular progress monitoring of the goals
 - Behavioral Framework: Dialectical behavior therapy is delivered in group and individual settings that focuses on emotional regulation, distress tolerance, mindfulness, and interpersonal skills

- **Snack-Sized Pretzel PD**
Over the summer, **39 certified staff** completed **22 professional learning projects**. Topics included curriculum planning, SEL, and co-teaching strategies.
 - **Summer Learning at Home (SLH)**
The program aimed to combat summer learning loss through a combination of literacy, math, arts, and physical education activities, encouraging family engagement and rewarding student participation. Overall, the program demonstrated strong student interest and provided a valuable summer enrichment opportunity and had a significant increase in participation based on prizes earned. This year's **Bingo Challenge** drew **179 student participants**, with **421 prizes earned** and **85 students completing all 4 weeks**. Activities included literacy, math, science, social studies, PE, and arts engagement.
 - **Google Gemini**
Gemini is Google's advanced, multimodal AI model that powers a generative AI chatbot of the same name. It is now being made available to the FSD145 staff at no additional cost as part of an existing Google agreement. A key feature of this implementation is the **robust emphasis on data privacy and security**. Since it's integrated into the Google Workspace, all staff data remains protected and is not used to train Google's AI models. Brian Krause highlighted the significant benefits for staff, particularly for teachers, this new tool offers by serving as a powerful assistant for various tasks. For now, Gemini is available only to staff to allow for a gradual rollout and to provide time for professional learning sessions, which will be led by Brian this fall, and will allow for further guidance on AI usage from the IL Task Force. We believe that giving teachers the official green light to use Gemini will be a huge help to our staff.
 - **Hispanic Heritage Month**
Celebrated Sept. 15–Oct. 15, with multiple activities highlighted districtwide.
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Information Reports

1. **Bus Rental Agreement** – Partnership with Pearl City SD 200 for fall 2025 transportation. **FSD 145 and Pearl City SD 200 intergovernmental agreement for bus rental for the fall of 2025**. The agreement formalizes the arrangement where Pearl City SD 200 agreed to rent a district van to Freeport SD 145, rent-free. Per the original Pearl City agreement, approved by the Board on January 21, 2025, FSD 145 agreed to provide transportation for regular education, extracurricular trips, and other services on a reimbursable basis.

2. **Information on the master plan community survey questions for community input.** The Master Plan Community Survey Questions, in terms of our facilities, were provided to the Board for review. Administration will finalize the survey questions for community input and board approval by the October board meeting.
3. **Monthly financial report / 2025-2026 Budget Updates.** The monthly financial report and 2025-2026 budget updates were presented to the board. The report is detailed further in the meeting minutes and will be voted on in the Action Item portion of this meeting, after having been on public display, as required at the Board Office at 501 E. South Street.
4. **2026 Taylor Park Building appraisal value:** The Freeport School District 145 collaborated with Green Associates, the City of Freeport, and the State of Illinois to discuss the option of selling the land and returning it to the state. Dr. Alvarado, District Superintendent, recommended that two market valuations be conducted to determine a fair asking price for the land and building. FSD 145 received the appraisal reports, which are being shared with the board for review.
5. **MANRRS Summer Trip 2026:** Freeport High School junior chapter of Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences(MANRRS) proposed a trip that will take students to Universities they may not have the opportunity to visit. Each university, students will visit the MANRRS Chapter. Students will make connections with the advisors and student leadership within these chapters, gaining guidance on their post-secondary journeys. In addition to visiting universities, we will visit museums, national parks, zoos, and historical sites.
6. **2026 Showtime Tour:** Freeport High School Music Staff proposed taking the Show Choir, Jazz Band, Showtime Techies on a performance and cultural tour. This trip would take place in the spring of 2026 and include stops in Bloomington, Champaign, Nashville, Cookeville, Pigeon Forge, Louisville, and Indianapolis. Students will have the opportunity to perform at multiple schools and venues, including Dollywood, while also experiencing cultural landmarks such as the Country Music Hall of Fame, the Grand Ole Opry, and the Louisville Slugger Factory. The trip is organized by Mr. Robert Winter.
7. **National Journalism Conference 2026 – National Journalism Conference:** Freeport High School proposed an overnight trip for approximately 11 students in the Media Production program to attend the national Journalism Educators Association (JEA) conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This will be the program's first overnight trip, as students have previously only attended local conferences. The trip is scheduled for April 15-18 and is being organized by Mrs. Haley Kurtz and Mrs. Jena Kleindl.
8. **Student Trips, Summer of 2027 to Peru and Summer of 2028 to Iceland:** Freeport High School proposed taking a group of students on a trip abroad. This would be the fourth and fifth trip of this nature; they went to London during the summer of '22, Greece

in 2024 and will be going to Italy this summer. These tours would be to Peru and Iceland and would take place the summers of 2027 and 2028 respectively and are organized by Mr. Robert Winter and Ms. Jordan Bartels.

9. **Memorandum of Understanding - Removal of Student Growth from Teacher Evaluations (SB28):** The district seeks Board awareness of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Freeport School District #145 and the Freeport Education Association (FEA) to remove student growth data as a mandatory component of teacher evaluations. This change is made possible by Senate Bill 28 (SB28), which was signed into law and took effect July 1, 2025.

10. **Mental Health Speaker Kaleb Joseph** Proposed speaker to bring awareness to students in 7th through 12th grades regarding issues around mental health and the factors that can lead to circumstances affecting one's mental health. The speaker will provide strategies to help students maintain positive mental health by hearing Kaleb's story and challenges he faced with his mental health and how he overcame these challenges to have a more positive outlook on life.

11. **PRESS Policy Updates** The Illinois Association of School Boards Policy Reference Education Subscription Service provides policy updates to subscribing School Districts on a quarterly basis. These updates are due to changes in legislation, administrative rules, PRESS Advisory Board feedback, quality assurance, or other factors. These policies have been reviewed by Central Office Administrators

Approved Consent Agenda

- Bills for FSD 145 and CareerTEC
- Personnel Report – September 16, 2025
- Robinson Outdoor Digital Billboard Contract
- Kami
- Discovery Ed Renewal
- Educational Life Skills
- Antwon Harris Mentoring Group

- Class Hero at Blackhawk Elementary
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Approved Board Action Items

- Approved MOU on Teacher Evaluations (SB28)
 - Approved Mental Health Speaker Kaleb Joseph
 - Approved Bus Rental Agreement with Pearl City SD 200
 - Approved 2025–2026 Budget
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Committee Reports

- **Finance Committee** – Jack Sosnowski shared comments on current and future budgets.
 - **Education Committee** – Charlene Williams and Martha Furst reported on upcoming SIP Day (9/24) and District Institute Day (10/14), and discussed the rollout of Structured Literacy for grades K–.
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Next Meeting

The next **regular meeting** of the Freeport School District Board of Education will be held:

 **October 7, 2025**

 **6:00 PM**

 FSD Administrative Office, 501 E. South Street

The public is always invited and encouraged to attend.