



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 August 26, 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
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
Henry LeVrier	Brownsville
Sandra Garza Ochoa, Ph.D.	Weslaco
Jaime R. Solis	Edinburg
Rick Villarreal, DDS	Rancho Viejo
Sue Ann Villarreal	Raymondville
Zach Zamora	Mission

The following Board members were absent:

Douglas E. Buchanan	Raymondville
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Yolanda Kamel	McAllen
Robert J. Lerma	Brownsville
Rodolfo “Rudy” Ramirez	Edinburg
Eduardo Roberto Rodriguez	Brownsville
Oscar Salinas	Edinburg
David Suarez	Weslaco
Ruth Villarreal	Mission

The following staff members were present:

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

3. Pledges of Allegiance & District Call to Action.

The pledges were led by Veteran, Eric Gutierrez, Principal for Science Academy. Board Member, Jaime Solis led the District Call to Action.

4. Moment of Silence.

- A. Remembering late Board Member, Sylvia S. Lopez and keeping the Lopez Family in our thoughts and prayers.

The Board held a moment of silence remembering the late Board Member, Sylvia S. Lopez and keeping the Lopez family in our thoughts and prayers.

5. Public Budget Hearing for the 2025-2026 fiscal year.

A public hearing was held for the 2025-2026 fiscal year. Marla Knaub, Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Operations, reviewed the projected revenues and expenditures for the proposed 2025-2026 budget. The review covered expenditures by function, object, and location.

6. Public Comments for Agenda Topics.

The Board did not receive any requests to address the Board of Directors on any agenda topics.

7. 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.

8. Awards & Recognitions.

- A. Recognition of U.S. News & World Report's Best High School rankings.
- B. Jobs and Education for Texans (JET) Grant Check Award

On behalf of the district, Amanda Odom recognized all four STISD High Schools for their rankings according to the U.S. News & World Report's Best High School rankings. She also recognized Medical Professions for being awarded the Jobs and Education for Texans (JET) Grant Check Award.

9. 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 by E. Larry Cantu. Seconded by Dr. Noel Garza, approving the consent agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

10. *Action: Review and act on the August 5, 2025, Board Meeting Minutes.

Approved with the consent agenda.

11. Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment Committee - Sandra Garza Ochoa, Ph.D. and Andrea E. Gonzales Loya, Co-Chairs

Andrea E. Gonzales Loya reported on the following item:

- A. Report on STISD Curriculum Design & Enhancement.

Efrain Garza, Deputy Superintendent provided a report on the STISD Curriculum Design and Enhancement.

12. Buildings and Grounds Committee - Rick Villarreal, D.D.S. and David Suarez, Co-Chairs

Dr. Rick Villarreal reported on the following items:

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

Approved with the consent agenda.

- B. Action: Review and act on the facilities/capital improvement projects for the 2025-2026 school year, pending approval of budget.

A motion was made by Dr. Rick Villarreal, seconded by Adrian Garcia, approving the facilities/capital improvement projects for the 2025-2026 school year, pending approval of budget. The motion passed unanimously.

- C. Action: Review and act on hiring Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc. for the 2025-2026 school year projects or go out for Request for Qualifications (RFQs) for Architectural services.

A motion was made by Dr. Rick Villarreal, seconded by E. Larry Cantu, hiring Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc. for the 2025-2026 school year projects. The motion passed unanimously.

- D. Action: Review and act on accepting the Medical Professions Audio/Video Intercom System as substantially complete.

A motion was made by Dr. Rick Villarreal, seconded by Jaime Solis, accepting the Medical Professions Audio/Video Intercom System as substantially complete. The motion passed unanimously.

- 13. Finance & Operations Committee - Adrian Garcia and Sylvia Sánchez Garza, Ph.D., Co-Chairs Co-Chairs

Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza reported on the following items:

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

Approved with the consent agenda.

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

Approved with the consent agenda.

- C. *Action: Review and act on approving a donation of a microwave valued at \$150 to Rising Scholars Academy from Ana Cristina Leandro.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- D. *Action: Review and act on Resolutions/Interlocal Agreements to participate in the following cooperatives:

1. Harris County Department of Education Purchasing Co-op (Choice Partners)
2. Houston-Galveston Area Council Buy Co-op (H-GAC)
3. Purchasing Association of Cooperative Entities (PACE)
4. Region 19 ESC Allied States Cooperative
5. Region III ESC Purchasing Cooperative of America (PCA)
6. Region VIII ESC TIPS Purchasing Cooperative
7. Texas Association of School Boards Purchasing Co-op (BUYBOARD)
8. Texas Department of Information Resources (DIR)
9. Texas SmartBuy Membership Program
10. Sourcewell Cooperative
11. 791 Purchasing Cooperative (Region 15)
12. OMNIA Partners National IPA , US Communities Government Purchasing Alliance, & Region 14 ESC National Cooperative Purchasing Alliance (NCPA)
13. Good Buy (Region 2)
14. Equalis Group (Region 10)
15. Region One ESC School System Cooperative, Finance and Purchasing Cooperative, ESC Library, PEIMS, Cafeteria & Food and Transportation Co-ops, South Texas Cooperative – Child Nutrition Program, Human Resources and Personnel Services

Approved with the consent agenda.

- E. *Action: Review and act on the following payment applications:

1. Payment application #6 to Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc., in the amount of \$2,161.23 for the Restrooms/Concessions at the Mercedes Athletic Fields project.
2. Payment application #15 to Gerlach Builders, LLC, in the amount of \$14,724.96 for the New Health Professions Gymnasium Project.
3. Payment application #12 to Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc., in the amount of \$9,892.35 for the Athletic Fields project.
4. Payment application #11 to Gerlach Builders, LLC in the amount of \$354,521.25 for the Mercedes Athletic Fields project.
5. Payment application # 9 to Holchemont, LTD in the amount of \$400,031.98 for the Edinburg Athletic Fields project.
6. Payment application #8 to TelePro Communications in the amount of \$7,233.19 for the Medical Professions Audio/Video Intercom project.

7. Payment application #8 to Gomez Mendez Saenz in the amount of \$425.24 for the Medical Professions Audio/Video Intercom project.
8. Payment application #2 to Herrcon LLC in the amount of \$28,634.91 for the CTE Automotive Expansion project.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- F. *Action: Review and act on the following budget amendment(s):
1. Mental Health Grant (289) #1
 2. SSA Special Education Coop (437) #1
 3. General Fund (199) #8
 4. MacKenzie Scott (485) #2
 5. TPS Safe Grant (486) #1
 6. IDEA B (313) #1

Approved with the consent agenda.

- G. Action: Review and act on allotting COVID leave for employees.

A motion was made by Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza, seconded by Zach Zamora, allotting COVID leave for employees. The motion passed unanimously.

- H. Action: Review and act on request for use of funds from MacKenzie Scott donation for CTE Program.

A motion was made by Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza, seconded by Abiel J. Cantú, approving the request for use of funds from MacKenzie Scott donation for CTE Program. The motion passed unanimously.

- I. Action: Review and act on extending the TASB Risk Management Unemployment Compensation program for the 2025-2026 school year.

A motion was made by Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza, seconded by Jaime Solis, extending the TASB Risk Management Unemployment Compensation program for the 2025-2026 school year. The motion passed unanimously.

- J. Action: Review and act on Resolution adopting the General Fund, Child Nutrition and Health Insurance Budgets for the 2025-2026 school year.

A motion was made by Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza, seconded by Abiel J. Cantú, approving the Resolution adopting General Fund (199), Child Nutrition (101), and Health Insurance (753) Budgets. The motion passed unanimously.

- K. Action: Review and act on approving a revision for the Administrative Professionals 2025-2026 Compensation Plan.

A motion was made by Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza, seconded by E. Larry Cantu, approving a revision for the Administrative Professionals 2025-2026 Compensation Plan. The motion passed unanimously.

- L. Action: Review and act on Resolution adopting the tax rate for the 2025-2026 fiscal year.

A motion was made by Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza, seconded by Jaime Solis, approving the Maintenance and Operations tax rate of 0.0492 and debt service debt rate of 0.00 for a total tax rate of 0.0492. This tax rate will raise more taxes for maintenance and operations than last year's tax rate. The tax rate will effectively be increase by 6.32 percent and will raise taxes for maintenance and operations on a \$100,000 home by approximately 4.96. The motion passed unanimously.

- M. Action: Review and act on the contract for legal services with O'Hanlon, Demerath, & Castillo as General Counsel.

A motion was made by Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza, seconded by E. Larry Cantu, approving the contract for legal services with O'Hanlon, Demerath, & Castillo as General Counsel. The motion passed unanimously.

- N. Action: Review and act on the contract for legal services with The Law Office of Javier Villalobos, P.C. as General Counsel (RFQ 24-012).

A motion was made by Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza, seconded by Jaime Solis, approving the contract for legal services with The Law Office of Javier Villalobos, P.C. as General Counsel (RFQ 24-012). The motion passed with one against (E. Larry Cantu).

- 14. Policy, Planning, Projects & Partnerships Committee - Eduardo Rodriguez and Oscar Salinas, Co-Chairs

No committee items were presented.

- 15. Community & Governmental Relations Committee - Yolanda Kamel and Ruth Villarreal, Co-Chairs

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

Approved with the consent agenda.

- 16. 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 - E. Gutierrez

Approved with the consent agenda.

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

1. Teaching Learning Conference 2025, October 5-7, 2025, in Phoenix, Arizona.
2. ATIXA's 2025 Annual Conference, October 13-18, 2025, in Baltimore, Maryland.

Approved with the consent agenda.

C. Report on the 2025 A-F Accountability Ratings.

Niranda Flores, Bilingual Director, reported on the 2025 A-F Accountability Ratings.

D. Report on Superintendent's Evaluation Process.

Dr. Tony Lara provided a report on the Superintendent's Evaluation Process.

E. District Reports

1. 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. 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. Marketing Specialist (1)

A motion was made by E. Larry Cantu, seconded by David Briones, approving the request for a New Professional Position for the 2025-2026 school year and the Announcement of Vacancy for a Marketing Specialist. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Executive Director for Student Support
 - a. Report on Student Support Services.

Marcos Flores provided an update on Student Support Services.

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

Dr. Brenda De La Garza 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.

- c. *Action: Review and act on the appointment of Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) Members for the 2025-2026 school year.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- d. *Action: Review and act on the administrators to hold ARDs for the 2025-2026 school year.

Approved with the consent agenda.

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

Chief Steven Cortez provided an update on Safety and Security.

17. EXECUTIVE SESSION: The Board of Directors met on August 23, 2025 at 8:11 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. 551.074, 551.071 Personnel Matters and consultation with school attorney regarding Personnel Matters: Closed Meeting
 1. Recommendation of professional staff for the remainder of the 2025-2026 school year.
 - a. Social Worker

- b. Virtual Instructional Specialist
- c. Teacher(s)

The Board ended the Executive Session at 8:19 p.m.

18. 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 remainder of the 2025-2026 school year.
 - a. Social Worker
 - b. Virtual Instructional Specialist
 - c. Teacher(s)

Dr. Tony Lara, Superintendent of Schools, recommended the retroactive employment of Dulce Maria Martinez Ybarra as Virtual Instructional Specialist (12 months) and Noelda Gonzalez as Social Worker (11 months). In addition, he recommended the employment of Rene Octavio Reyna as Teacher (10 months), Abigail Renee Fuentes as Teacher (10 months), Thelma Salinas as Teacher (10 months), and Paloma Ortega as Teacher (10 months).

A motion was made by Abiel J. Cantú, seconded by Sue Ann Villarreal, approving the recommendation of professional staff as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

19. Adjournment.

A motion was made by Dr. Rick Villarreal, seconded by Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza, adjourning the meeting at 8:21 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.