

September 10, 2025

The Board of Trustees of Willis ISD met in Regular Business Session on September 10, 2025 at the Sharon Hill Jennette Administration Building in the Willis ISD Boardroom, 612 N. Campbell Street, Willis, Texas 77378, and the business to be conducted is listed below.

### **CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

President Kyle Hoegemeyer called the Regular Business Meeting to order at 5:30 PM. and announce that a quorum was present and that notice of the meeting had been posted for the time and manner required by law.

Board Secretary, Chad Jones called the roll.

Members Present: Cliff Williams, Scott Carson, Charles Perry, Kyle Hoegemeyer, Paulett Traylor, Nikita Lagway, and Chad Jones

President Kyle Hoegemeyer turned the meeting over to Superintendent, Dr. Kim James.

### **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND INVOCATION – Cannan Elementary**

Dr. James initially introduced Principal Eric King to begin the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and an invocation. Principal King proceeded to recognize the secondary student of the month. Willis High School recognizes Lexi Graham as the Student of the Month, celebrating her as a model Wildcat. She is honored for being an outstanding leader in the classroom, on the sideline, and throughout the community. A member of the National Honor Society, Lexi demonstrated strong leadership by serving as cheer captain for two of her four years. During her cheering career, she earned All-American honors in back-to-back years. Lexi has shown extensive dedication to service, volunteering in numerous community events, including the Wildkat Resource Center. Following graduation, she plans to attend Texas State University's McCoy College of Business and hopes to join their cheer squad. The Superintendent apologized for the mix-up and acknowledging that Lexi Graham's recognition was beautiful but had to be put on hold until the meeting officially began. The Superintendent explained that her notes had conflicting information. The speaker then corrected the order, stating that the invocation and Pledge of Allegiance must happen first to formally start the meeting. Principal Brooke Paulson was then asked to proceed with the opening. Cannan Elementary students led the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation followed by the presentation of the students of the month.

Cannan Elementary proudly announces fourth grader Ranata Martinez as the Student of the Month. Her teachers describe her as an truly exceptional student who brings light and positivity to everyone around her. Ranata is known for her sweet, kind spirit and is always ready to lend a helping hand with a smile. She consistently demonstrates leadership by setting an example of patience, responsibility, and grace for her classmates. Her positive attitude and willingness to serve others creates a supportive classroom environment for everyone. Ranata truly represents the very best of what it means to be a Cannan Kat, and the school is delighted to celebrate her.

Principal Eric King returned to the podium to introduce Ms. Smith as the next presenter. The speaker introduces Kristen Eilers, a successful member of the Willis High School (WHS) Texas Association of Future Educators (TAFE) organization. Kristen is being honored for earning a coveted spot at the National Competition in Orlando over the summer. Competing in the junior varsity division of Exploring Education Administration Careers, she achieved a near-perfect score for her efforts. Her project involved shadowing Principal Mr. King for eight hours, taking extensive notes, and presenting her work at three state and

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national events. Kristen's national qualification surpassed the organization's goal in TAFE's inaugural year at WHS. Her TAFE colleagues are extremely proud, calling her the definition of a super Wildkat.

Principal King proudly recognized Adleigh Bagwell for achieving first place in the state competition for Fundamental Laboratory Skills. This prestigious HOSA (Health Occupations Students of America) award celebrates a student who demonstrates outstanding leadership, dedication, and a true passion for health science and service. Ally has not only excelled academically but also serves as an inspiring role model for her peers in the HOSA chapter. She is the first student from Willis High School to advance this far in HOSA competition. Ally Bagwell embodies HOSA's core values of learning, leadership, service, and innovation. Ken Labonski introduced a young man, Drue Walker who sets the bar for both excellence and consistency within the district's music program. This student is recognized for multiple high achievements, including placing first and second in the state ensembles for TMEA (Texas Music Educators Association). Tonight, he is specifically being honored for the second time as a Texas State Solo and Ensemble Outstanding Performer. This award, presented on behalf of the UIL (University Interscholastic League), is a true mark of musical excellence. The student was awarded a draped gold medal, identical to those given to state academic champions. This high honor reflects the hard work of his parents, school, and teachers, who are all commended for their contributions. However, the student is also reminded that his talent, dedication, and hard work ultimately made this achievement a reality.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

President Kyle Hoegemeyer read the rules as it pertains to the public comment session of the meeting and announced speaker, Jay Fondren. Veteran Jay Fondren, who lost his legs serving the country, addressed the board not for sympathy, but for accountability regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). He stressed that the ADA is a civil rights law, over 30 years old that guarantees equal access for individuals with disabilities, including children and parents. Mr. Fondren stated that Willis ISD is not fully following this law in various locations, with inaccessible classrooms, restrooms, and entrances. He emphasized that these physical barriers create exclusion, affecting the dignity, participation, and sense of belonging for families already facing challenges. Experiencing these barriers personally, he urged the district to make necessary improvements. Mr. Fondren specifically asked the district to conduct a full ADA compliance audit, develop a timeline for real improvements, and include disabled voices in the planning process. He concluded by asserting that accessibility is not charity, but justice and compassion, urging the board to make ADA compliance a top priority now.

#### **STANDING INFORMATIONAL AND AD HOC REPORTS & ITEMS**

##### Student Enrollment

The speaker presented updated enrollment numbers for the 2025-2026 school year. Our total student count is 9,614. They reported a total increase of 196 students at the secondary level and 206 students at the elementary level. Overall, the district's enrollment is up by 402 students since the September 10<sup>th</sup> board meeting. Looking at the year over year, we have a net increase of 319 students. Current district attendance is 95.09%, showing a slight decrease compared to the 95.31% recorded at this time last year. Campus administrations are actively implementing additional strategies to encourage better student and parent participation.

Financial / Bill Payment Report/Bond Summary

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CFO Garrett Matej reported that the district has successfully wrapped up another fiscal year, predicting they will end fiscal year 2025 in a slight surplus. Recent updates from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) confirmed the near-final state aid report, indicating the district will hit its state revenue budget. Matej projects that the district's total revenues will land just north of \$90 million, successfully meeting their budgeted numbers. The finance department is still in the process of reconciling the final August invoices to close the books for the previous year. The full auditing process will take place this fall, with the final report expected to be completed in January. Matej noted that the new fiscal year has started strongly, with enrollment slightly outpacing projections, which bodes well for the recently adopted budget. Next month, he plans to present the positive district financial integrity rating report along with further updates on the final figures for the previous year.

### Fine Arts Report

In recognition of National Arts and Education Week, the presenter outlined the Fine Arts program's goal: to instill career-ready skills and soft skills like leadership and teamwork. The program is structured to guide students from finding joy and learning fundamentals in elementary school to achieving elevated artistic experiences with accountability in high school. New initiatives include purchasing portable kilns for ceramics and setting a goal for ensembles to achieve state or national recognition. Quantitative data shows a rise in fine arts enrollment to 83% and demonstrates that fine arts participants maintain a higher average GPA and have fewer annual absences than non-participants. UIL music assessment results indicated strong performance, with middle school ensembles achieving high ratings, including many at the Masters level. A board member, a former Willis High School band alumni, commented that his participation was one of the most influential experiences in his life. He confirmed that the presented qualitative and quantitative data is real and that the Fine Arts experience positively impacts students long after graduation.

The Board of Trustees moved to the consent agenda, prompting a question from a board member about action item K, the Millennium Re-key project. The board member sought clarification on whether the action item represented the full and final payment for the project. The response clarified that the action item was only for Part One of the project, which involved the exterior doors of instructional facilities. This specific segment was funded using a state safety grant, requiring it to be separated from the rest of the work for easier grant processing. The final payment listed was strictly for these exterior doors, while the second piece of the project, covering the interior doors, is not yet complete. A follow-up question asked when the interior door portion was scheduled to start. The response indicated that the interior door installation was scheduled to begin toward the end of September. This clarification satisfied the board member.

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

- A. Approval of Minutes
- B. Approval of Prevailing Wage Rates – Construction
- C. 2025 – 2026 Purchasing Cooperative Membership Report
- D. Approval of Categorical Purchases over \$50,000
- E. Approval of Contract for Technology Services
- F. Approval of the MOU with Baylor College of Medicine
- G. Approval of the MOU with Cenikor
- H. Approval of the MOU with Daybreak Medical
- I. Approval of the MOU with Admore Behavioral Therapy
- J. Approval of Final Payment to Stewart Builder for the Emergency PO for Brabham MS Water Leak
- K. Approval of Final Payment to Millennium Project Solutions, Inc. for the Exterior Re-Key Project
- L. Approval of Updates to the Board Operating Procedures

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Motion by Cliff Williams and seconded by Scott Carson to approve the Consent Agenda items as presented. Motion carried unanimously, 7-0.

**CLOSED SESSION**

The Board entered into closed session at 6:03 PM. for the purpose of considering matters for which closed sessions are authorized by Title 5, Chapter 551, Texas Government Code Sections (.071 - .084): 551.074

- A. Real Estate: Pursuant to Texas Gov't Code §551.072
- B. Consultation with Attorney: Pursuant to Texas Gov't Code §551.071
- C. Personnel Matters Texas Gov't Code §551.074

**OPEN SESSION**

The Board reconvened into Open Session at 7:46 P.M. President Hoegemeyer asked if there are any motions from closed session.

Motion by Cliff Williams and seconded by Paulett Traylor to approve the personnel as listed. Motion carried unanimously, 7-0.

Motion by Cliff Williams and seconded by Scott Carson to approve the Superintendent's recommendation and authorize the Superintendent to sign a letter of intent on the property as listed. Motion carried unanimously. 7-0

Motion by Cliff Williams and seconded by Paulett Traylor to approve the Superintendent's recommendation and authorize the Superintendent to sign a letter of intent on the property as listed. Motion carried unanimously. 7-0

**DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS**

Discuss and Consider Approval of District and Campus and Improvement Plans

In her presentation, Sue Clardy detailed the district's improvement plan (DIP), emphasizing its role in meeting Texas Education Code requirements for transparency and accountability. She noted the DIP's alignment with state accountability ratings like STAR scores and CCMR, as well as the district's strategic plan and superintendent's priorities. Clardy highlighted the DIP is a dynamic document that will be updated throughout the year.

Clardy reviewed the district's demographics, noting an enrollment of over 9,600 students, with significant percentages being economically disadvantaged, special education, emergent bilingual, and CTE. She proudly shared student achievement highlights from the past two years, including an increase in the district's accountability rating from a D to a C, a rise in CCMR from 50% to 91%, and several campuses earning multiple academic designations.

The presentation also addressed challenges identified through a comprehensive needs assessment. These included improving student attendance to the 96% target, addressing the need for more staff to support special education and emergent bilingual students due to rapid enrollment growth, and implementing at-risk student interventions as required by recent legislation. Clardy outlined four key areas of focus:

1. Instruction: Implementing new curricula and research-based instructional strategies.

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2. Staffing: Using the Teacher Incentive Allotment to recruit and retain high-quality teachers.
3. Communication: Enhancing transparent and accessible communication.
4. Resources: Ensuring all staff have the necessary tools and support for success.

She also presented the district's long-term academic goals, which are trending positively and include a rigorous new target for college readiness. Clardy summarized the seven key problem statements derived from the district's needs, such as inconsistent instruction, teacher recruitment challenges, and facility strains from growth. Finally, she previewed a selection of the plan's 38 performance objectives, which use the acronym RISE (reward, implement, scrutinize, establish) to focus on strategies for increasing attendance and other key metrics. The plan will be monitored through three formative reviews and a summative review throughout the year to ensure progress.

Sarah Ballew's presentation focuses on the implementation of new instructional materials as a major district priority. The need for these materials was identified through needs assessments and diagnostics last year to increase rigor in classrooms.

The district established clear instructional priorities for the year, guided by the quote, "Clear is kind," to ensure all instructional leaders understand the focus. The three main priorities outlined are: implementation of the new curriculum, use of research-based strategies, and leveraging data to make decisions to advance students and teachers. The document detailing these priorities also specifies the actions to be taken and the evidence that will demonstrate the priorities are being met, ensuring clarity across the district.

A significant amount of work went into preparing for the new curriculum, including a beginning-of-the-year kickoff for "product activation." This involved getting every teacher trained and providing them with the necessary resources, with product vendors coming into the district to work with educators. Recognizing the rigor of the new materials, current professional development is focused on giving teachers the "gift of time" to study and dig into the lessons. Plans include half-days for grade-level team collaboration, dedicating October staff development days entirely to the materials with vendor support, and using the Strong Foundations Implementation Grant (Part 3C) money to compensate teachers for after-school time spent internalizing the content.

To monitor the success of the investment in new materials, the department set implementation goals tracked alongside campus leaders to build momentum and excitement. The short-term goals include having 100% of teachers consistently implement the materials by the October staff development dates, and having 85% of teachers and leaders report high confidence in using them. Other goals involve teachers focusing planning time on the new lessons and students engaging with grade-level content. Data on implementation is collected through an "implementation tour" using a QR code system outside classrooms, where district and campus staff (including principals and instructional coaches) fill out a Google form after visits. As of the presentation, 238 classroom visits had occurred, confirming that the initial goal of 100% material usage is already being met—a huge celebration. The data is also revealing trends, such as an area for improvement in learning objective alignment which relates to lesson internalization. The data

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collection is primarily used to inform future professional development and support for teachers, acknowledging the challenge the rigorous materials pose for both students and staff. These efforts will be reflected in the district and campus improvement plans, particularly in their performance objectives and strategies.

The improvement plans for the secondary campuses: Willis High School, Stubblefield Alternative Campus/Hope Academy, Brabham Middle School, Calfee Middle School, and Lynn Lucas Middle School.

### Willis High School (WHS)

WHS operates with the motto, "Born together: every student, every class, every day." The school is celebrating significant growth in accountability, specifically growing in seven out of ten categories for "Meets and Masters" achievement. They saw tremendous growth with their Emerging Bilingual (EB) population, growing in six out of ten categories after targeted intervention. College, Career, and Military Readiness (CCMR) also saw tremendous growth. Areas needing improvement include some academic categories, student behavior, and attendance. The action plan includes launching a Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) system with tiered consequences, restorative practices, and addressing cell phone misuse. For attendance, they established competitions and monthly rewards for students with 95% or more attendance, along with a tiered intervention plan that includes parent phone calls and home visits. Academically, the focus is on Tier 1 instructional alignment and targeted small group interventions.

### Stubblefield Alternative Campus and Hope Academy

Stubblefield and the Hope Academy (a 4-hour program for at-risk students, young mothers, and fifth-year seniors) play a vital role, as their students' success directly impacts their home campuses, particularly WHS's accountability through re-taking End-of-Course (EOC) exams. Areas for improvement include ensuring teachers are supported in fully implementing the new instructional materials and improving student attendance (up 9.7% from 86%). A key focus is reducing student recidivism. Action plans include incentives for positive behavior and attendance, offering the possibility of an early return to the home campus. They are partnering with Cenikor for weekly presentations to address behavioral challenges, including a major concern identified: 66% of student placements were related to substance use (vaping and THC). Students leaving the campus participate in a scheduled re-entry plan.

### Board Question and Response:

- **Question:** "How many students do you have right now in your Hope Academy?"
- **Response:** "The Hope Academy, probably seven. And we've continually got probably one or two each week."

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## Middle Schools

### Brabham Middle School (BMS)

BMS adopted the theme "#HuntingSeason," with a goal to "hunt success." Celebrations include a 14-point increase in Domain 2A (academic growth) and an 8-point improvement in Domain 3 (closing the gaps). They saw massive increases in Masters performance on EOCs (Biology up 23 points, Algebra I up 32 points) and major growth in 7th-grade math. The school moved from ATSI to TSI federal designation. Their ambitious academic goal for the year is for 90% of students to attain Approaches, 60% to attain Meets, and 30% to attain Masters on all state assessments. The attendance goal is 96%. Action plans involve ongoing coaching focused on high-quality instructional materials (HQIM), data meetings to address gaps, and a major focus on high-focus populations. They will also conduct weekly in-person check-ins with chronically absent students.

### Calfee Middle School (CMS)

CMS is celebrating the strength of its feeder schools, noting that many students are already meeting the 90-60-30 criteria in RLA and math. Areas for improvement include targeted support for Special Education and Emerging Bilingual (EB) students. They have 43 EB students but lack sheltered instruction, so they are using push-in support and providing professional development on the Elevation platform. The action plan includes data-driven interventions during "focus time" leveraging STAR, TELPAS, and MAP data. They will use collaborative planning (CT) twice weekly, emphasizing HQIM fidelity. Student ownership is promoted through learning goal setting using MAP data. They also plan family and community engagement learning nights to expose parents to the HQIM.

### Lynn Lucas Middle School (LLMS)

LLMS celebrated growth in 7th and 8th RLA and a significant 62% decrease in major behavior incidents, including a 67% decrease in fights last year alone. Areas of concern are dips in 6th RLA and 8th Math, Special Education student performance, and a low end-of-year 92% attendance rate. The increase in DAP placements was attributed to a strict policy on vaping, which is changing this year to use ISS instead. Goals include meeting the 90-60-30 standard. The action plan focuses on the Effective School Framework, the observation feedback cycle for staff accountability, and utilizing data-driven practices in PLCs. To address poor attendance, they have a monthly attendance review meeting, an attendance coalition, and are using incentives, such as a pickles and popcorn celebration for perfect attendance.

The elementary campus improvement plans focus on improving accountability ratings, closing achievement gaps, and ensuring fidelity with High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM).

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## Elementary Campus

Cannan Elementary moved from a D (69) to a C (78) in accountability, seeing an 18% increase in 4th-grade Math Masters; their plan centers on student and teacher data tracking, attendance competitions, and twice-weekly CT meetings focused on HQIM and modeling.

## Board Comments and Responses

Brooke Paulson, Principal of Cannan Elementary, received a direct comment: "Great job in changing the culture over there."

C.C. Elementary officially exited comprehensive status and improved its standing among peer schools; their focus areas are improving Tier 1 instruction in all subjects (especially math) and increasing teacher support through nine-week data meetings and tutoring for House Bill (HB) students.

Lagway Elementary is celebrating an overall 'A' rating and strong growth across all subjects, with a key focus on moving science proficiency closer to 90%; their action plan includes using STEM scopes, dedicated bi-weekly planning with instructional coaches, and targeted small-group instruction for HB 1416 students.

Meador Elementary achieved 90-60-90 goals in 4th-grade reading and is now "laser-focused" on reaching the Masters level across the board, including science; they departmentalized 2nd through 5th grade to ensure focused curriculum implementation and are starting HB 1416 tutoring while maintaining a strong 96.05% attendance.

Parmley Elementary has exited campus improvement status and saw a 27% increase in 5th-grade Science Meets; their plan emphasizes intentional individual student data to guide interventions, building teacher capacity through collaborative planning, and offering "PD Your Way" sessions.

Turner Elementary is celebrating a monumental shift from a 'D' to an 'A' accountability rating in three years, meeting or exceeding every state target for every student group, with 70% of their rating coming from student growth; their goals are singularly focused on achieving 30-60-90 standards while weaving in their highly successful high engagement strategies with the new HQIM.

Roark Pre-K uses the Scholastic PreK On My Way curriculum and is focusing on improving rapid vocabulary and phonological awareness; their plan includes active explorative play with teacher language support, alignment of the PreK guidelines with K-2 science, and using nursery rhymes as a strong reading skills predictor.

Motion by Chad Jones and seconded by Charles Perry to accept the Superintendent's recommendation to Approve the District and Campus and Improvement Plans. Motion carried unanimously, 7-0,

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Discuss and Consider Approval to Adopt an Order Authorizing the Issuance of WISD Unlimited Tax Refunding Bonds for the Purpose of Achieving Debt Service Savings, which Bonds may be Issued in one or more Series and in an amount not to Exceed \$64,025,000

CFO Garret Matej is requesting Board approval for a bond refunding order to take advantage of lower market rates. The district plans to refund previously issued bonds, specifically targeting the 2015 to 2017 series, to reduce future interest payments. This action does not extend or add any new debt; it simply replaces old debt with new debt at lower rates. The order sets a maximum refunding parameter of \$64.025 million. As of the presentation, about \$30 million made financial sense to refund, which would yield approximately \$1.6 million in interest savings. The district is actively watching the market, hoping for further rate cuts to allow refunding beyond the initial \$30 million. The approved order provides the flexibility to issue more refunding bonds over the next year if rates drop further, maximizing the district's interest savings and increasing its future debt capacity. The overall goal is to reduce the district's ultimate debt burden through opportune market timing.

Motion by Scott Carson and seconded by Paulett Traylor to accept the Superintendent's recommendation to Adopt an Order Authorizing the Issuance of WISD Unlimited Tax Refunding Bonds for the Purpose of Achieving Debt Service Savings, which Bonds may be Issued in one or more Series and in an amount not to Exceed \$64,025,000. Motion carried unanimously, 7-0.

**BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS:**

The board members offered unanimous thanks and appreciation to all the principals, staff, and Miss Ballew for their dedicated and hard work. They expressed excitement about the district moving in the right direction, noting that it's "fun to watch" the progress being made. The board reiterated their strong belief in the district's trajectory, stating it's "very exciting" to see where the district came from and where it's headed. Finally, on behalf of the school board, members wished Dr. James a happy birthday this Saturday and led the audience in singing "Happy Birthday."

**SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS:**

Superintendent Dr. Kim James expressed her sincere appreciation, telling the group, "I didn't realize how wonderfully talented this group was." She echoed the board's comments, praising the outstanding quality of the presentations and noting the huge difference compared to last year in how goals are communicated. Dr. James stated she is proud of what she's seen on the campuses in the last four weeks and believes the district will make "great strides" this year. She sincerely thanked the supportive school board for being "100% behind" the staff. Finally, she reminded everyone about the upcoming public meeting for the first financial rating at 5:00 PM on October 8th, followed by the regular meeting at 5:30 PM.

**ADJOURNMENT OF REGULAR MEETING**

Motion by Cliff Williams and seconded by Paulett Traylor to adjourn. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55PM