



Always Innovating

**South  
Texas ISD**

**RIO GRANDE VALLEY | GRADES 6-12**

## Minutes of Regular Meeting

### The Board of Directors South Texas ISD

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A Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors of South Texas ISD was held September 23, 2025, beginning at 7:00 PM in the Central Office Teaching and Learning Center, 7001 E. Expressway 83, Mercedes, Texas 78570.

1. Welcome.
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      |
| Noel Garza, DDS             | Mission      |
| Sylvia Sánchez Garza, Ph.D. | Edinburg     |
| Andrea E. Gonzales-Loya     | Raymondville |
| Henry LeVrier               | Brownsville  |
| Sandra Garza Ochoa, Ph.D.   | Weslaco      |
| Eduardo Roberto Rodriguez   | Brownsville  |
| Jaime R. Solis              | Edinburg     |
| David Suarez                | Weslaco      |
| Rick Villarreal, DDS        | Rancho Viejo |
| Ruth Villarreal             | Mission      |
| Sue Ann Villarreal          | Raymondville |

The following Board members were absent:

|                     |              |
|---------------------|--------------|
| Douglas E. Buchanan | Raymondville |
| Adrian Garcia       | Brownsville  |

|                        |             |
|------------------------|-------------|
| Margarita Garcia       | San Juan    |
| Yolanda Kamel          | McAllen     |
| Robert J. Lerma        | Brownsville |
| Rodolfo “Rudy” Ramirez | Edinburg    |
| Oscar Salinas          | Edinburg    |
| Zach Zamora            | Mission     |

The following staff members were present:

|                                |                |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Marco Antonio Lara, Jr., Ed.D. | Ramon Longoria |
| Efrain Garza                   | Jaclyn Buelow  |
| Amanda Odum                    | 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, Jesus Artiaga, Teacher at World Scholars. Board Member, Sasha Crane led the District Call to Action.

4. Moment of Silence.

The Board held a moment of silence.

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 South Texas ISD Preparatory Academy for being recognized as an Apple Distinguished School for the 2025–2028 program term.

- B. Recognition of Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza's re-election to the TASB Board of Directors, serving as Second Vice-President.
- C. Presentation of a proclamation in memory and honor of board member, Sylvia S. Lopez.

On behalf of the district, Amanda Odom recognized South Texas ISD Preparatory Academy for being recognized as an Apple Distinguished School for the 2025–2028 program term, Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza's re-election to the TASB Board of Directors, serving as Second Vice-President, and presented a proclamation in memory and honor of board member, Sylvia S. Lopez.

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 by E. Larry Cantu, seconded by Dr. Noel Garza, approving the consent agenda item and pulling item 12.G.2. (Requisition #134901 to Rivera's Machinery in the amount of \$58,600 for the purchase of a Skid Steer Loader Tractor for the district). The motion passed unanimously.

9. \*Action: Review and act on the August 26, 2025 Board Meeting Minutes.

Approved with the consent agenda.

10. Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment Committee - David Briones and Sandra Garza Ochoa, Ph.D., Co-Chairs

David Briones reported on the following items:

- A. \*Report on the 2025 College Entrance Scores.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- B. Action: Review and act on the approval of newly adopted TEKS based CTE courses and the addition of new CTE courses.

A motion was made by Dr. Rick Villarreal, seconded by David Briones, approving the newly adopted TEKS based CTE courses and the addition of new CTE courses, as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

11. Buildings and Grounds Committee - Margarita Garcia and Jaime Solis, Co-Chairs

Jaime Solis reported on the following items:

- A. \*Report on the following projects:
  - 1. Athletic Fields project
  - 2. CTE Expansion project

Approved with the consent agenda.

- B. Action: Review and act on approving job order contracting as the procurement method for the Edinburg Athletic Fields Concession project.

A motion was made by Jaime Solis, seconded by E. Larry Cantu, approving job order contracting as the procurement method for the Edinburg Athletic Fields Concession project. The motion passed unanimously.

12. Finance & Operations Committee - Rudy Ramirez and Sylvia Sánchez Garza, Ph.D., 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 the following donations:
  - 1. Donation of a canopy valued at \$50 from Samee Lashari to Preparatory Academy for the Security Staff at school entrance.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- D. \*Action: Review and act on approving the 2024-2025 federal funds rollover for the following funds:
  - 1. Title I Part A (211)
  - 2. Title I Part C (212)
  - 3. Title II Part A (255)

4. Title III Part A, LEP (263)
5. Title IV Part A, SSAEP (289)
6. IDEA B Formula (313)
7. Advance Placement Incentives (397)
8. TPS Safe Grant (486)

Approved with the consent agenda.

- E. \*Action: Review and act on the following budget amendment(s):
1. Perkins V CTE (244)
  2. Mental Health Grant (289)
  3. Instructional Materials & SBOE (410)

Approved with the consent agenda.

- F. \*Action: Review and act on the following payment applications:
1. Payment application #13 to Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc. in the amount of \$6,155.43 for the Athletic Fields project.
  2. Payment application #3 to Herrcon in the amount of \$33,487.50 for the CTE Expansion project.
  3. Payment application #7 to Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc. in the amount of \$5,186.93 for the Restrooms/Concessions at the Mercedes Athletic Fields project.
  4. Payment application #12 to Gerlach Builders in the amount of \$449,968.44 for the Athletic Fields project.
  5. Payment application #10 to Holchemont, LTD in the amount of \$268,945.00 for the Edinburg Athletic Fields project.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- G. \*Action: Review and act on the following requisition(s):
1. Requisition #135011 to Follett Content Solutions in the amount of \$1,653.12 for the purchase of books for the library.

Approved with the consent agenda.

2. Requisition #134901 to Rivera's Machinery in the amount of \$58,600 for the purchase of a Skid Steer Loader Tractor for the district.

Item was pulled from the consent agenda. No action was taken.

- H. \*Action: Review and act on a resolution for a new checking account for Health Insurance payments.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- 13. Policy, Planning, Projects & Partnerships Committee - Robert J. Lerma and Eduardo R. Rodriguez, Co-Chairs

- A. \*Action: Review and act on appointing School Health Advisory Council Members for the 2025-2026 school year.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- 14. Community & Governmental Relations Committee - Sasha Crane and Yolanda Kamel, 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 - E. Gutierrez

Approved with the consent agenda.

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

- 1. E-Rate Conference, September 15-17, 2025, in Washington, DC.
- 2. NCTE (National Council of Teachers of English Annual Convention), November 20-23, 2025 in Denver, CO.
- 3. Future of Education Technology Conference, January 11-15, 2026, in Orlando, FL.
- 4. Business Professionals Leadership Conference, May 6-10, 2025, in Nashville, TN.

5. HOSA International Leadership Conference, June 17-20, 2026, in Indianapolis, IN.

Approved with the consent agenda.

C. 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. \*Report on local certification through the District of Innovation Plan.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- d. 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. Police Officer, K-9 Handler (1)

A motion was made by E. Larry Cantu, seconded by Jaime Solis, approving the request for New Professional Position for the 2025-2026 school year and the Announcement of Vacancy for Police Officer, K-9 Handler. The motion passed unanimously.

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

Approved with the consent agenda.

- b. 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.

4. Chief of Police
  - a. Action: Review and act on approving members to the District's Safety and Security Committee for the 2025-2026 school year.

A motion was made by Jaime Solis, seconded by Eduardo R. Rodriguez, approving members to the District's Safety and Security Committee for the 2025-2026 school year. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Report on AI District Committee progress.

Dr. Tony Lara gave a report on the District's AI Committee and their progress to date.

- D. \*Action: Review and act on the following Board travel:
  1. 2026 Texas Federal Advocacy Conference, February 2-3, 2026, in Washington, D.C.
  2. NSBA Annual Conference, April 10-12, 2025, in San Antonio, Texas.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- E. \*Action: Review and act on approving Superintendent's Evaluation Process.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- F. Action: Review and act on resolutions for nominations of candidate(s) to the Appraisal District Board of Directors for the following:
  1. Cameron County
  2. Hidalgo County

A motion was made by Eduardo Rodriguez, seconded by E. Larry Cantu, nominating Daniela Lopez-Valdez and David Garza to the Appraisal District Board of Directors for Cameron County and nominating Richard Garza and Joe Olivarez to the Appraisal District Board of Directors for Hidalgo County. The motion passed unanimously.

Boars Members, Ruth Villarreal and Dr. Noel Garza left the meeting prior to Executive Session at 8:03 p.m.

1. **EXECUTIVE SESSION: The Board of Directors met on September 23, 2025 at 8:03 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. Executive Director for Academic Excellence
    - b. Teacher(s)
- B. 551.072 Real Property
  - 1. Discussion and consultation with attorney regarding the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property.

The Board ended the Executive Session at 8:28 p.m.

- 2. 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. Executive Director for Academic Excellence
      - b. Teacher(s)

Dr. Tony Lara, Superintendent of Schools, recommended the retro-active employment of Deandra Castro-Vela as Teacher (10 months) and George Ives Soto as Teacher (10 months). In addition, a recommendation for employment of Niranda Flores as Executive Director for Academic Excellence (12 months) and Ruben Lozano as Teacher (10 months) for the remainder of the 2025-2026 school year.

A motion was made by Abiel J. Cantú, seconded by Eduardo R. Rodriguez, approving the recommendation of professional staff as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

- B. Discussion, consideration, and possible action regarding the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property.

A motion was made by David Suarez, seconded by Jaime Solis, approving proceeding with option #2 as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

- 3. Adjournment.

A motion was made by Abiel J. Cantú, seconded by Jaime Solis, adjourning the meeting at 8:32 p.m.