November 3, 2025

The Board of Education, Community High School District 99, met in Workshop Session at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, November 3, 2025 at the Administrative Service Center.

Upon the Secretary's roll call, the following Board members answered present: Don Renner, President; Kara Casten, Vice President; and Members Ken Dawson, Christopher Espinoza, April Finan and Michael Riske. Member Katie Courtney was absent.

Also present were Hank Thiele, Superintendent; Gina Ziccardi, Associate Superintendent for Student Learning; Jeff Bergholtz, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources; Travis McGuire, Assistant Superintendent for Learning Resources; Jill Browning, Chief Communications Officer; Phil Howard, Chief Technology Officer; Courtney DeMent, North High Principal; Arwen Lyp, South High Principal; Student Board Members Ryan Enright and Romina Papavero-Gonzalez; and Juli Gniadek, Secretary.

There were three visitors. A copy of the Visitor Roster is attached.

1. STUDENT PERSPECTIVES – NORTH HIGH SCHOOL

Kathy McDonald, North High certified nurse and sponsor of Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA) Club, shared HOSA is a new student-led club, and the organization has been in the United States since 1976. Members of the Club, Kira Chaudhari, Ava Langley, Chloe Lange and Ava Joseph spoke about the mission of the Club, which includes exposing students to healthcare careers; volunteer opportunities; and participation in competitive events which can lead to scholarships.

The Board thanked the students for presenting information on their new Club.

2. STUDENT BOARD MEMBER QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

Student Board Members Ryan Enright and Romina Papavero-Gonzalez reported teachers have the tools to enforce the new cell phone policy consistently; scanning is working well; and several teams are on the road to qualifying for the State competition. Mr. Enright shared senior attendance is on the decline and the administration is working proactively to make students more accountable. Ms. Papavero-Gonzalez spoke of the support provided to students during Access and in the College and Career Center and the upcoming Snowball and Grove Express events.

3. PRESENTATION OF DISTRICT 99 EDUCATION FOUNDATION CHECKS TO GRANT RECIPIENTS

Julia Beckman, Foundation President; Donna Dawson, Foundation Grant Chair; and Steve Rufflo, Foundation Board member; presented ceremonial checks to grant recipients. North High counselors Katelyn Pantke and Ashley Gerold received a grant of $1,600. Ms. Pantke explained the grant allowed her to attend the ROX Program for girls three-day training in Ohio. Ms. Gerold shared the program is data driven and serves sophomore girls, addressing such topics as social media and body image. Diana Boukal, Alicia Butryn and PJ Dufur, South High World Language teachers, received a $2,000 grant to purchase four iPads. The teachers explained how the iPads, using the Notability app, allow them to provide personalized, instant feedback to students that the students can save and refer to later.

Ms. Beckman asked that people support the Foundation and noted 90% of funds raised go to teachers, students and families. Dr. Thiele thanked the Foundation for their support.

4. INNOVATIVE STAFF

South High teachers Marybeth Senser, Science, and Lisa Olson, Math, presented on building thinking classrooms. Ms. Olson explained thinking classrooms have students working in randomly assigned groups on whiteboards, with one marker per group, which encourages processing of problems together. Ms. Senser reported, in thinking classrooms, more content can be covered in less time; the students receive constant feedback; and there is a reduced fear of failure. An additional benefit, according to Ms. Senser, is in classes where students are beginning to learn English, items can be drawn on the whiteboard and a common language is not needed for students to work together.

Rebecca Manjarres, a physical therapist who works in all three buildings, and Kathy McDonald, North High nurse, spoke about the Institute Day training they provided to all paraprofessionals in the District. Ms. Manjarres stated the focus was on emergency procedures for students who may have special needs, use devices such as wheelchairs, or have other limitations, while keeping students and staff safe. Ms. McDonald pointed out that many times a paraprofessional is the first to notice something out of the ordinary with a student and the presentation helped make paraprofessionals better prepared to respond to student needs.

North High Fashion Merchandising teacher Kaitlyn Schaefer provided samples of shoes students in her class designed for Principal DeMent. She explained the students were provided with an opportunity to ask Dr. DeMent questions about her likes and dislikes and were required to incorporate a mystery item, this year a Lego piece, in the shoe design. Ms. Schaefer reported the activity went beyond the classroom as there is a schoolwide vote to decide which pair of shoes is best for Dr. DeMent.

The Board commended the staff and expressed their appreciation for the work they are doing.

5. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW CELL PHONE POLICY AND THE IMPACT ON THE DEANS' OFFICE

South High Dean Deangelo Gerald reported the new cell phone policy, where students place personal electronic devices in classroom storage units, has been in place since the first day of school. He stated, District wide through October, in SY25 there were 39 cell phone referrals and this year there have been 339 referrals. He explained the increase is not a bad thing as now there is a District wide policy and everyone is being consistent. He noted many of the students are first time offenders.

Alexis Knapp-Domina, South High Math teacher, shared the new policy has become habitual for the students. She noted the students talk to one another more in group work, are more engaged, and she has seen a 5-10% increase in scores. North High Special Services teacher Morgan Bianchi commented that students are more focused and ready to learn. Tim Tilton, North High Dean, contributed some of the success of the new policy to the messaging to parents and students over the summer, the amount of parent support and the support of the District.

President Renner acknowledged the work of the staff in holding students accountable, which is having a real impact in the classroom and improving teachers' ability to teach.

6. SCHOOL REPORT CARD

Gina Ziccardi stated both schools Summative Designation was Commendable, and noted the schools have received the Commendable Designation every year a designation has been assigned. Ms. Ziccardi displayed the 4, 5 and 6 year District graduation rates and noted the 2025 District 99 rate was higher than the State of Illinois rate for all 3 years. The ACT test is now the required test for graduation, according to Ms. Ziccardi, and the State has broken student performance down to two levels – Proficient and Not Proficient. She pointed out that more District 99 students scored Proficient than students in the State in both ELA and Math.

Ms. Ziccardi presented data on daily attendance and chronic absenteeism; in both areas District 99 students are performing better than the State average. She explained the federal definition of chronic absenteeism means a student has missed 10% or more of a school year, no matter what the reason, and no allowance is made for the five excused mental health days students in Illinois are permitted to take.

7. IASB RESOLUTION AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

Member Dawson reported there will be one Resolution, on School Bus Safety Funding, and ten amendments voted on by the Delegate Assembly. He shared the IASB recommends approving all the items. He then took a straw poll of the Board. The consensus of the Board was to adopt the Resolution and vote for the amendments. Member Dawson stated he will vote to adopt.

8. RECEPTION OF VISITORS – PUBLIC COMMENT

Bobbie Dzado asked if there were staff repercussions for not requiring students to put away cell phones. She also questioned the appropriateness of the girls' dress code and some books given to students. Dr. Thiele shared the process to challenge books has been shared with Ms. Dzado.

9. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business or discussion, Member Espinoza moved and Member Dawson seconded the motion that the meeting be adjourned. Upon the unanimous voice vote of the six members in attendance, the President declared the motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Don Renner, President

Juli Gniadek, Secretary

Community HIGH SCHOOL District 99

BOARD OF EDUCATION

NOVEMBER 3, 2025

VISITOR ROSTER

NAME
Morgan Bianchi
Marcos Rico
Bobbie Dyde

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