

BOARD OF EDUCATION SCHOOL DISTRICT 149  
MINUTES OF  
THE REGULAR BOARD MEETING  
October 16, 2025

The Board Meeting convened at 6:35 p.m.

**Roll Call:** Present: Mr. Tillman, Mrs. De Vasher-Williams, Mrs. Tillman, Ms. Burks, Mrs. King, and Mr. Crivens.

Absent: Mrs. Elston.

Also in attendance: Dr. Maureen White, Attorney Frazier (via Zoom), Janene Preston, Dr. Mellodie Brown, Robert Bufford, DeWayne Anderson, Nicole Taylor, Ernesta Ransom, La Toyla Jones, Martiae Jenkins-Alexander, Janice Opitz, Dr. Nakita Cloud, Christal Washington, Marian Dowling, Daryll Lacey, Jason Battle, Tammy Buckley, Crystian Chatman, LaTasha Clark, Gerald Scott, Tanyell Hannah, Karen Slate, Renee Carter, Tia Williams, Tonya Thomas, Shari Gomez, Ms. March, Ms. Pearson, and Ms. Williams.

**The Pledge of Allegiance** – Said by all

The Board's legal counsel, Attorney Felicia Frazier, made a statement reminding attendees that Board of Education members have been advised not to make any public comments regarding pending personnel matters currently under investigation. This guidance aligns with their legal and ethical responsibilities to maintain the integrity of the investigation, protect confidentiality, and ensure fairness to all parties. Counsel acknowledged public interest in these matters but emphasized that the investigation must proceed without interference or speculation. The Board will take any appropriate action in accordance with policy and law once the investigation concludes and appreciates the community's patience during this process.

**Cabinet Reports-**

Dr. White reported on the following:

- **Enrollment:** Total district-wide enrollment is 1,839 students, with 1,245 in elementary schools and 594 in middle schools.
- **Home-School Communication:** Digital monitors will be installed in all schools to highlight student achievements, provide updates on news, events, safety, and keep families engaged. Installation will begin next week under Mr. Anderson's supervision.
- **Recognition:** Dr. Kathleen Doyle of ISC4 sent a letter of thanks to Mr. Anderson, Director of Buildings and Grounds, for his leadership and contributions to the Health Life Safety Project during the 2025 school year.
- **Transportation:** Concerns remain with Safeway Bus Company. The Superintendent and Board President will meet with the company next week to address ongoing issues.
- **Environmental Initiative:** The district earned \$5,000 from BW Liquidations by recycling e-waste, including outdated Chromebooks and charging carts.
- **Events:** The Daddy and Daughter Dance is scheduled for Saturday, October 25, from 2–5 p.m., with 197 RSVPs so far.
- **Career & Technical Education (CTE):** Year three of the CTE program continues, offering students opportunities in culinary arts, agriculture, electronic game design, and filmmaking to build career readiness and creative skills.

Mr. Lamar Miller, City Strategic Partners LLC, presented on community engagement strategies and the services offered by his consulting firm to support school districts. Key points included:

- **Firm Services:** Executive searches for district leadership positions, board development (strategic planning, team building, board-superintendent relationships), administrative leadership, community engagement, communications, crisis management, branding, PR, and special education compliance. The firm includes retired superintendents, principals, teachers, and curriculum specialists.
- **Community Engagement Framework:** Engagement should be deliberate, systemic, and sustained. Families, educators, and community members share responsibility for student growth. Partnerships with community organizations should support programs and fill gaps. Teachers and school leadership actively coordinate with partners, and families should be empowered to participate and stay informed.
- **District Demographics:** Highlighted socio-economic challenges in the district, including higher poverty rates in certain towns (e.g., South Holla, Burnham) and the prevalence of single-parent households, noting areas where additional community support is needed.
- **Family Engagement Center Concept:**
  - Use unused district spaces to create centers offering parenting classes, financial literacy workshops, a clothing bank, food pantry, wellness and movement rooms, and other community resources.
  - Leveraged staff and community donations for the clothing bank. Partnered with organizations such as the Greater Chicago Food Depository for food support.
  - Programs like “Share Your Genius” allow staff and community members to contribute skills and knowledge (e.g., Zumba, martial arts, financial literacy).
  - Costs could be offset through existing Title funds and repurposing furniture and equipment from district facilities.
- **Implementation Approach:** Mr. Miller emphasized tailoring the engagement strategies to the district’s unique needs, collaborating closely with the superintendent and board, and maintaining transparency about feasibility and timelines.

Mr. Tillman expressed support for the ideas, particularly community engagement and municipal partnerships, and noted that further exploration would occur through relevant committees.

Mrs. Janice Opitz, Business Manager, presented the estimated tax levy for Dolton School District 149. Key points included:

- **Purpose of Tax Levy:** The tax levy represents the district’s largest revenue source, primarily from real estate taxes, supplemented by Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) and federal/state grants.
- **Levy Process:** Explained the difference between the requested levy (what the district asks for) and the extension (what is actually received). Funds levied include education, building/maintenance, transportation, social security/IMRF, working cash, and security. Certain funds are capped to avoid excessive taxation.
- **Assessment and CPI:** Cook County assesses property every three years; this is not an assessment year, so property values remain stable. The current Consumer Price Index (CPI) is 2.9%, and the proposed levy increase is 3.4%—slightly above CPI to ensure adequate funding.
- **Fund Balances and Policy Compliance:** Presented unaudited fund balances and explained how they inform the levy request. Highlighted the Miller Ratio (Public Act 103-0394), requiring districts to reduce excessive cash reserves.
- **Revenue Timing:** Taxes are received twice annually (November and March). The proposed levy will be adopted at the next board meeting (November 24) and filed with Cook County thereafter.
- **Rationale for Levy:** With ESSER funds no longer available, the district relies primarily on real estate taxes and EBF. The 0.5% increase above CPI is minimal and necessary to maintain operations.

Mr. Crivens confirmed the current CPI of 2.9% and that Mrs. Opitz is asking for 3.4%.

Mrs. Opitz confirmed.

Mr. Crivens addressed concerns about property tax assessments in Thorntorn Township, a minority community, and how they are particularly affecting seniors and single-family homes. and confirmed the levy is set at 3.4%, balancing district needs and taxpayer considerations.

Mrs. Opitz acknowledged the issues and confirmed the levy request balances district funding needs with taxpayer considerations and explained the 0.5% increase above CPI is minimal and necessary due to the district no longer receiving ESSER funds, leaving real estate taxes and Evidence-Based Funding as primary revenue sources.

Ms. La Toyla Jones and Mrs. Martiae Jenkins-Alexander, Director of Curriculum, Office of Teaching and Learning presented on FY25 Illinois Assessment for Readiness (IAR)

Key Points:

- **Vision & Mission:**
  - Focus on providing students with access to grade-appropriate assignments, strong instruction, deep engagement, and high expectations daily.
  - Emphasis on equity: all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, or background, receive high-quality instruction.
  - Strengthening school leadership practices and teacher development through strategic collaboration with district leadership.
- **Research Foundations:**
  - Grounded in TNTP's *Opportunity Myth*: students deserve college and career readiness, grade-appropriate assignments, strong instruction, deep engagement, and high expectations.
  - Curriculum adoption in Math (SY24) and ELA (SY25) to ensure meaningful learning experiences.
  - Instructional rounds and professional development for principals and teachers to enhance teaching quality.
  - Emphasis on high expectations as the strongest predictor of student performance.
- **Big Rocks for 2025–2026:**
  - **MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Support):** Tiered instruction with Tier 1 (general instruction), Tier 2 (small group intervention), Tier 3 (individualized support).
  - **SEL & School Culture:** Implementation of Second Step curriculum to support social-emotional learning and student engagement.
  - **Assessment for Learning:** Continuous checks for understanding to guide instructional adjustments.
  - **Authentic Feedback:** Principals provide real-time feedback to teachers, who then provide timely feedback to students.
- **IAR Overview & Purpose:**
  - Administered annually for grades 3–8 in ELA and Math.
  - Measures student performance relative to grade-level standards and statewide peers.
  - Supports instructional planning and school improvement.
- **Performance Trends:**
  - Math: SY19 proficiency at 4.8%, dropped to 1% in SY21 due to COVID, steadily increased to 10.2% in SY25 after new curriculum adoption.

- ELA: SY19 proficiency at 12.7%, COVID-related drop to 8.4% in SY21, rebounded to 24.4% in SY25.
- Growth attributed to curriculum adoption, professional development, instructional coaching, and targeted school improvement strategies.
- **District Challenges & Achievements:**
  - Significant building renovations occurred at multiple schools, yet academic progress continued.
  - Staff demonstrated resilience and adaptability during construction and transformation periods.

Mr. Tillman expressed profound appreciation for the district staff, highlighting a significant turnaround in student achievement after years of stagnant performance. He emphasized the collective effort of teachers, staff, and leadership in driving improvements, comparing the impact to a child graduating from college and acknowledging the support network behind each student. Mr. Tillman celebrated the measurable growth in student performance, noting the exceptional progress as “absolutely amazing” and encouraging a round of applause for staff efforts.

### **Board President Report:**

Mr. Tillman acknowledged ongoing legal matters in the district, emphasizing that due to their sensitive nature, the Board cannot discuss them publicly. He highlighted the Board’s commitment to student safety, noting over \$1 million invested in security measures last year, including additional cameras, personnel, police officers, and advanced technology—later updated to nearly \$2 million in total.

Mr. Tillman recognized initiatives promoting family engagement, such as the summer-long father involvement programs and upcoming events like the Daddy Daughter Dance. He highlighted academic and career readiness efforts, including Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs in agriculture, culinary arts, electronic gaming design, filmmaking, and more, to prepare students to compete locally and beyond.

Mr. Tillman mentioned community outreach programs, led by Mr. Lamar Miller, aimed at building robust support systems for the district.

Mr. Tillman introduced the district’s plan to position itself as the most technologically advanced, AI-driven school district in Illinois, led by board member Mrs. L’Tanya King.

Mr. Tullman recognized mentorship partnerships with Big Brothers Big Sisters.

Mr. Tillman reviewed facility improvements, including nearly \$5 million in renovations at the Berger-Vandenberg building, with ongoing projects at Diekman and Caroline Sibley schools.

Mr. Tillman reiterated the Board’s personal investment, noting five members have children or grandchildren in the district.

### **Public Comments –**

Ms. March, a highly involved parent, addressed the Board regarding concerns about communication and inclusivity. She expressed frustration that she had not received a letter from the district about an incident involving her son, despite the District’s statement that all parents had been contacted, and only learned of it after personally visiting the school. She emphasized the importance of accurate and timely communication with parents. Ms. March also suggested that events such as the “Daddy Daughter Dance” should be more inclusive, allowing mothers and sons to participate. Additionally, she shared past challenges with certain teachers at Caroline Sibley, noting that while some teachers are excellent, others have posed repeated issues, and she acknowledged support from a previous principal in addressing these matters. Finally, she proposed establishing

a parent advisory group that could meet with the board on a regular basis, potentially monthly, to improve communication and collaboration. The board thanked her for her comments and requested her contact information to follow up.

Ms. Pearson, grandmother of a student involved in the October 3rd incident at Dirkson Middle School, expressed deep concern and outrage over a teacher distributing four to six pieces of nicotine gum to students, which she explained is equivalent to eight to twelve cigarettes and poses a serious risk of nicotine poisoning, heart attacks, seizures, or death. She described the act as reckless, negligent, and intentional, questioning whether the teacher was properly trained to follow school policies and protect students. Ms. Pearson criticized the teacher’s behavior, citing a Class Dojo message in which he expressed frustration over classroom management and offered the gum as a solution. She raised concerns about the teacher’s ability to read and understand English and called for the district to take immediate action to ensure student safety. Additionally, she expressed frustration with Principal Lacey, describing interactions as dismissive and lacking transparency, and criticized the district for failing to offer counseling or apologies to the affected children. Ms. Pearson emphasized the lasting trauma this incident has caused and condemned the district for allowing such situations to occur, stating that families may have to relocate to ensure their children’s safety. She concluded by urging the Board to prioritize the protection of students, stressing that children’s safety must come first.

Ms. Williams, parent, described the severe physical and emotional impact her child experienced after being given six pieces of nicotine gum by a teacher at school. She recounted finding her son sweating profusely, barely able to walk, shaking, vomiting, and incoherent, requiring her to call an ambulance as medical attention was not offered. Ms. Williams criticized the handling of the situation, stating that evidence was withheld and official communications were insufficient, including the statement approved by the Board President not being posted on Class Dojo or the school website. She expressed frustration at the lack of empathy and accountability from school leadership and highlighted that this incident could have endangered multiple students. Beyond her own child, she raised broader concerns about other students at CCA who have faced physical harm or neglect from the school administration, noting the lack of responses or resources for families in need. She emphasized the lasting trauma this incident has caused, including nightmares for her child, and held the board president and Principal Lacey responsible for the failures in protecting students. Ms. Williams concluded by demanding accountability and meaningful change to ensure student safety.

Mr. Tillman tabled Agenda Item F to later in the meeting, for further discussion.

<p><b>MOTION</b> by Mrs. Tillman, seconded by Mrs. King, to approve consent agenda items G1-8:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Approval of payroll summaries for September 12, 2025, in the amount of \$1,010,410.18</li> <li>2. Approval of payroll summaries for September 26, 2025, in the amount of \$998,487.15</li> <li>3. Approval of the minutes from the public hearing held September 18, 2025</li> <li>4. Approval of the minutes from the regular board meeting held September 18, 2025</li> <li>5. Approval to host Breakfast with Santa event on Saturday, December 6, 2025 8 a.m. - 12 p.m.</li> <li>6. Approval of the renewal of the annual SCSDD dues in the amount of \$2,000.00</li> <li>7. Approval of the renewal MOU with community partner, Angela Searcy DBA Simple Solutions Educational Services</li> <li>8. Personnel Report</li> </ol> <p>Resignation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Approval of resignation of Janie Crews, Accounts Payable Administrative Assistant at the District Office, effective September 26, 2025</li> </ol>	<p>AGENDA ITEM G</p>
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- b. Approval of resignation of Mark Scott, Culture & Climate Coach, at Caroline Sibley, effective September 23, 2025
- c. Approval of resignation of Rose Henderson, Paraprofessional/Health Aide, at Carol Moseley Braun, effective September 29, 2025
- d. Approval of resignation of Samiayah Lewis, 1st Grade Permanent Guest, at Carol Moseley Braun, effective September 30, 2025

Employment:

- e. Approval of employment of Imani Cobbs, Day-to-Day Substitute Teacher, District Wide, effective date TBD
- f. Approval of employment of Shaunita Levison, Day-to-Day Substitute Teacher, District Wide, effective date TBD
- g. Approval of employment of Joshua Russell, Day-to-Day Substitute Teacher, District Wide, effective date TBD
- h. Approval of employment of Anthony Williams, Day-to-Day Substitute Teacher, District Wide, effective date TBD
- i. Approval of employment of Kiandra Reed, Day-to-Day Substitute Teacher, District Wide, effective date TBD
- j. Approval of employment of Tanya Scruggs, Day-to-Day Substitute Teacher, District Wide effective date TBD
- k. Approval of employment of Jared Evans, Day-to-Day Substitute Teacher, District Wide, effective date TBD
- l. Approval of employment of Ayannah Collins, Paraprofessional/Classroom Health Aide, at Diekman, effective date TBD
- m. Approval of employment of Brieton Nelson, Paraprofessional/Classroom Health Aide, at Carol Moseley Braun, effective date TBD
- n. Approval of employment of Lewis Jackson, Culture & Climate Coach, at Berger-Vandenberg, effective date TBD
- o. Approval of employment of Arnell Barlow, Culture & Climate Coach, at Caroline Sibley, effective date TBD
- p. Approval of employment of LaVonne Harris, Special Education Teacher, at NBLA, effective date TBD
- q. Approval of employment of Dr. LaTonya Applewhite, Director of Human Resources, effective date TBD

Leave of absence:

- r. Approval of Intermittent FMLA for Kimberly Goodman-Khan, Pre-K Teacher, at Diekman, effective September 18, 2025 through May 23, 2026
- s. Approval of Intermittent FMLA for Angela Grimes, Teacher at CCA, effective September 23, 2025 through May 23, 2025
- t. Approval of Intermittent FMLA for Jori McCowan, Paraprofessional at Diekman, effective October 7, 2025 through May 23, 2025

**ROLL CALL TO VOTE:** Aye: Mrs. Tillman, Ms. Burks, Mr. Crivens, Mrs. King, Mrs. De Vasher-Williams, and Mr. Tillman.

**MOTION CARRIED**

## Adjourn to Closed Session

<p><b>MOTION</b> by Mr. Crivens, seconded by Ms. Burks, to adjourn to a Closed session at 7:58 p.m.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Motion to convene to a closed session meeting for the purpose of discussing the following matters:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees or legal counsel of Dolton School District 149, 5ILCS 120/2(c)(1)</li><li>• Student Disciplinary Cases 5ILCS 120/2(c)(9)</li></ul></li><li>2. Motion to adjourn closed session meeting and reconvene open session meeting</li></ol> <p><b>ROLL CALL VOTE:</b> Aye: Mr. Crivens, Ms. Burks, Mrs. King, Mrs. Tillman, Mrs. King, Mrs. De Vasher-Williams, and Mr. Tillman.</p> <p><b>MOTION CARRIED</b></p>	AGENDA ITEM H
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Mrs. De Vasher-Williams left the meeting at 8:02 p.m.

Adjourn from Closed Session at 9:24 p.m.

## Final Action on Closed Session Items

<p><b>MOTION</b> by Ms. Burks, seconded by Mrs. Tillman, to approve student discipline decisions as discussed in closed session</p> <p><b>ROLL CALL VOTE:</b> Aye: Ms. Burks, Mrs. Tillman, Mrs. King, Mr. Crivens, and Mr. Tillman.</p> <p><b>MOTION CARRIED</b></p>	AGENDA ITEM I1
<p><b>MOTION</b> by Mrs. Tillman, seconded by Ms. Burks, to approve the plan for Employee A as discussed in closed session</p> <p><b>ROLL CALL VOTE:</b> Aye: Ms. Burks, Mrs. Tillman, Mrs. King, Mr. Crivens, and Mr. Tillman.</p> <p><b>MOTION CARRIED</b></p>	AGENDA ITEM I2

**Old Business** - None

## New Business

<p><b>MOTION</b> by Mrs. Tillman, seconded by Ms. Burks, to approve the first reading of Press Plus Policy 119.</p> <p><b>ROLL CALL VOTE:</b> Aye: Mrs. Tillman, Ms. Burks, Mrs. King, Mr. Crivens, and Mr. Tillman.</p> <p><b>MOTION CARRIED</b></p>	AGENDA ITEM K1
<p><b>MOTION</b> by Mrs. Tillman, seconded by Ms. Burks, to approve CTE Electronic Game Design program for semester one with Nexlore, in the amount of \$33,750.00.</p> <p><b>ROLL CALL VOTE:</b> Aye: Mrs. Tillman, Ms. Burks, Mr. Crivens, Mrs. King, and Mr. Tillman.</p> <p><b>MOTION CARRIED</b></p>	AGENDA ITEM K2
<p><b>MOTION</b> by Ms. Burks, seconded by Mrs. Tillman, to approve annual K-8 Science Curriculum subscription for all 8 schools, through Generation Genius, in the amount of \$10,044.00</p>	AGENDA ITEM K3

<b>ROLL CALL VOTE:</b> Aye: Ms. Burks, Mrs. Tillman, Mrs. King, Mr. Crivens, and Mr. Tillman. <b>MOTION CARRIED</b>	
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Mr. Crivens clarified that the price of the conference is \$700.

Dr. White added that she would not need housing for the conference.

<b>MOTION</b> by Ms. Burks, seconded by Mrs. Tillman, to approve the Superintendent to attend the NABSE Conference in Chicago, December 10-14, 2025, in the amount of \$700.00. <b>ROLL CALL VOTE:</b> Aye: Ms. Burks, Mrs. Tillman, Mrs. King, Mr. Crivens, and Mr. Tillman. <b>MOTION CARRIED</b>	AGENDA ITEM K4
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<b>MOTION</b> by Ms. Burks, seconded by Mrs. King, to approve the SY 2025-2026 Bullying Prevention Policy. <b>ROLL CALL VOTE:</b> Aye: Ms. Burks, Mrs. King, Mr. Crivens, Mrs. Tillman, and Mr. Tillman, <b>MOTION CARRIED</b>	AGENDA ITEM K5
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Mr. Tillman stated that he tabled Agenda item F for further discussion. However, since not all board members were in attendance for the discussion, they would proceed with a motion and address the discussion at the next board meeting.

<b>MOTION</b> by Mrs. Tillman, seconded by Ms. Burks, to approve authorizing Township Treasurer to pay invoices dated October 2, 2025 and October 15, 2025 consisting of 60 pages and chargeable to the following accounts:	AGENDA ITEM F														
<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">Education Fund</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$1,407,701.01</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Operations and Maintenance Fund</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$ 147,400.96</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Debt Services</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$ 5,529.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Transportation Fund</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$ 612,799.98</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Capital Projects</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$ 397,027.33</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tort Immunity Fund</td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>\$ 150,856.19</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$2,721,314.47</td> </tr> </table>	Education Fund	\$1,407,701.01	Operations and Maintenance Fund	\$ 147,400.96	Debt Services	\$ 5,529.00	Transportation Fund	\$ 612,799.98	Capital Projects	\$ 397,027.33	Tort Immunity Fund	<u>\$ 150,856.19</u>		\$2,721,314.47	
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<b>ROLL CALL TO VOTE:</b> Aye: Mrs. Tillman, Ms. Burks, Mrs. King, Mr. Crivens, and Mr. Tillman. <b>MOTION CARRIED</b>															

Mr. Crivens brought up that the Board needed a motion to approve a stipend for secretaries.

<b>MOTION</b> by Ms. Burks, seconded by Mrs. Tillman, to approve the compensation for the secretaries, as discussed in closed session. <b>ROLL CALL VOTE:</b> Aye: Ms. Burks, Mrs. Tillman, Mr. Crivens, Mrs. King, and Mr. Tillman. <b>MOTION CARRIED</b>	AGENDA ITEM I3
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**Adjournment**

<b>MOTION</b> by Ms. Burks, seconded by Mrs. Tillman, to adjourn the board meeting at 9:32 p.m. <b>ROLL CALL VOTE:</b> Aye: ALL IN FAVOR <b>MOTION CARRIED</b>	AGENDA ITEM L
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Wilbur Tillman, President

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Sheryl Tillman, Secretary