
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION, NAPERVILLE COMMUNITY
UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT 203, DUPAGE AND WILL COUNTIES, ILLINOIS, HELD AT
District Administration Center, 203 West Hillside Road, Naperville, IL 60540
December 15, 2025, AT 7:00 P.M., CLOSED SESSION 6:00 p.m.

Call to order

President Charles Cush called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Board members present: Charles Cush, Kristine Gericke, Joe Kozminski, Melissa Kelley Black, Amanda McMillen, Holly Blastic, and Marc Willensky.

Administrators present were:

Dan Bridges, Superintendent,

Meredith Haugens, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources

Mark Cohen, Deputy Superintendent/High Schools,

Also present: Attorney Joe Perkosi

Closed Session

Kristine Gericke moved, seconded by Amanda McMillen, to go into Closed Session at 6:01 p.m. for consideration of:

1. Pursuant to 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(21) Discussion of minutes lawfully closed under the Open Meetings Act, whether for purposes of school board approval of the minutes or semi-annual review of the minutes as mandated by the Act. 11/17/2025.
2. Pursuant to 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1) The appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees or legal counsel, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee or legal counsel to determine its validity.
3. Pursuant to 5 ILCS 120/2 (c)(2) Collective negotiating matters between the school board and its employees or their representatives, or deliberations concerning salary schedules for one or more classes of employees.

Those voting yes: Cush, Blastic, Gericke, Kozminski, McMillen, Willensky, and Kelley Black. Those voting no: None. The motion carried.

The Board of Education entered closed session at 6:01 p.m.

Meeting Opening

Amanda McMillen made a motion, seconded by Joe Kozminski to return to Open Session at 7:16 pm. A roll call vote was taken. Those voting yes: McMillen, Gericke, Blastic, Kelley Black, Willensky, Cush, and Kozminski. Those voting no: None. The motion carried

Welcome and Mission

Charles Cush welcomed all and read Naperville Community Unit School District 203's Mission Statement.

Roll Call

Board members present: Charles Cush, Kristine Gericke, Melissa Kelley Black, Joe Kozminski, Amanda McMillen, Holly Blastic, and Marc Willensky.

Student Ambassadors present: Brooke Welch and Shriya Kunnanath.

Administrators present: Dan Bridges, Superintendent, Mark Cohen, Deputy Superintendent/High Schools, Jayne Willard, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Patrick Nolten, Assistant Superintendent for Assessment and Accountability, and Michael Frances, Chief Finance Officer/CSBO.

Pledge of Allegiance:

Led by the Ellsworth Elementary School students.

Student Ambassador Reports

Brooke Welch-NNHS-Senior

RND Boat Races

- At the end of November, our research and design class competed in cardboard boat races where the students are able to use the boats they constructed in class from cardboard and tape to race across the pool and test their designs. Students and parents are able to watch during lunch periods. While my boat did not necessarily win the race it was nice to be able to apply the work we had done in class.

Wicked Christmas Carol

- Our play production of a wicked Christmas carol was performed to elementary schools during the day on Friday and continued to show during the weekend

Coffee House Cabaret

- Students performed all three lunch periods in the LC the Tuesday before thanksgiving break instead of our winter assembly - 9 acts performed and students were happy they got to perform 3 times to new groups of students

Winter Concert

- Choir, band, and orchestra had their winter concert

Course Selection

- Underclassmen have started the process of selecting courses for upcoming school year

Parking + prep for the new addition

- According to Principal Wachtel, students were very excited that no current seniors or next year's seniors (current juniors) will lose parking and future juniors because of bus lot

Dance team hosted a large competition on the 9th in which they placed 4th

- Not only were many students able to attend and support due to it being held at Naperville North, but even more students were able to get involved with volunteering for clubs such as national honor society and language national honor societies.

Show choir DVC

- Show choir also had DVC this past weekend hosted at Naperville North where they attended expert sessions to improve their technique

LC becomes a quiet place to study as we approach finals

- Some students who normally sit in the LC during lunch now sit in the large cafe or small cafe. Students who sit in LC may prefer small cafe because it has appealing comfortable seating similar to the LC

Signing day

- Signing day was last week and Naperville North staff, coaches, families, and students were thrilled to celebrate all of the student athletes who will be continuing their sport at the next level.

Students who park on 5th Avenue are happy to not have to walk through the grass

- Students who park on 5th avenue are happy about the new road and sidewalk that was constructed earlier this fall next to the new turf because it has saved them from having to walk through the snow from their cars into the building

WIN sessions being 2 times a week

- Students are excited about WIN (What I Need) sessions being 2 times a week as we approach finals because that means there is more built-in time for students to get help from teachers, complete makeups, or cater to their needs as a student

Coco and cram

- Last weekend Naperville North had coco and cram where students can study after school in our library and select classrooms to get help from teachers, peers, and indulge in hot chocolate

Finals week

- Finals week in the building so many students are finishing up papers and presentations

Sports season + record recap

Boys' basketball (7-2) and won our crosstown game this past weekend

Girls' basketball (7-2) girls played hard but fell short in their crosstown game

- Overall, students loved the North vs Central staff basketball game that was played at half time. Large numbers of Students have been showing up to both girls and boys basketball games, students especially love the double header Friday night games.

Hockey won their senior night game on Saturday and were excited to celebrate seniors from both North and Central

Gymnastics, Dance, Wrestling, bowling, and Color guard are also in full swing

Shriya Kunnanath -NCHS-Senior

- Winter festival concerts Friday, Dec 12 - combined concert band, orchestra, choir and adapted music.
- Cocoa and cram December 3 & 10 - the cafeteria was full both days. Students enjoyed hot cocoa and treats from student activities while they studied for exams.
- Winter sports are currently underway, and we recently had the crosstown basketball game against north
- Students are getting ready for finals and are looking forward to winter break. Busy with final projects and preparations.
- Seniors are gearing up for regular decision applications with many early decisions coming out this week
- Yearbook photos for clubs and winter teams are complete.
- HawkTV has rebranded this school year. Students and staff are enjoying the new segments.
- Many clubs at NCHS contributed to the toy drive for Giftmart as well as care packages for those undergoing cancer treatment.
- SAC sponsored a "frosty fun week" last week with daily dress up themes and fun holiday activities in the cafeteria.

- Speech team is off to a great start for their season and Central hosted the annual Tournament of Roses on Saturday, Dec. 13th.
- Science Olympiad hosted their first invitational in November and competed at Neuqua this weekend.
- HOSA had their regional testing rounds last weekend. BPA and DECA are both preparing for competition season.

Good News

On November 22, 2025, Naperville 203 hosted our fifth annual FIRST LEGO League tournament for our 41 elementary and junior high teams. We are one of the few school districts to offer this number of teams to our community, and it is all because of the generosity of the Naperville Education Foundation. Approximately 470 students participated and were evaluated based on their coding through robot games, presentation through an innovative project, and expression of core values. Each student exemplified the profile of a learner through their adaptability, communication, and critical thinking skills. The eight junior high teams then participated in the Illinois Qualifier on December 6 at Naperville North High School where five of our 203 teams advanced to the next stage of Illinois First Lego League!! Good luck in your next competition!

The L.E.A.D. (Leading for Equity Through Action and Discourse) event on December 2nd was a resounding success, bringing together students from Naperville Central and Naperville North for a day of powerful learning.

The high-energy event, held at NIU Naperville, featured dynamic sessions including keynote speakers Jewel Ifeguni and Luis Tubens, a.k.a. "Logan Lu." Students were deeply engaged in workshops focused on advocacy, identity, belonging, mental health, and resilience. Through collaborative, hands-on activities, students developed practical leadership skills, leaving the event equipped and inspired to champion equity within their schools and community.

Naperville 203 is proud to have partnered again this year with Giftmart, a local holiday tradition that supports more than 400 children in our district. Early Childhood and Elementary families were invited by their school's administration to attend a one-day event, based on need. At the event, parents selected new, donated toys for their children—offered in a caring, empowering, and dignified environment. Because of generous donations from our 203 community, there were enough toys to meet the needs of every registered child, and every family had a choice when selecting toys.

Here's the impact of those contributions:

- 760 handknit items were distributed
- 930 children received gifts (across both District 203 and District 204)
- 3 toys provided per child
- 3,100 toys collected in total
- \$4,500 in toys purchased to help meet the need
- Remaining toys were donated to local programs including three additional local Giftmarts.

There is additional support available to older students; please contact your Home & School Association for more information.

Lincoln Junior High School students lead a donation drive during November, in partnership with Loaves and Fishes, to provide non-perishable food items and household items to those in need.

NNHS Boys' Soccer Team

Coaches and players from Naperville North were recognized for their achievement as State Champions.

Public Comments

President Cush gave the parameters for public Comments.

Alicia Hernandez Grande-Ellsworth Parent-Treasurer of Home and School. Joined by Erin Aschom. Concerned about other schools and the condition of Ellsworth. See other schools and The LC has to exceed the needs and need modular walls to accommodate the changing needs of the LC. What can Ellsworth Home and School do to support the updating. We need clarity and would like to partner with the district to raise money to make these improvements. The LC teacher spends her own money to make the LC accommodate the needs. Staff give up offices to make room for what students need. Home and School has done some fundraising for the LC. We can only dedicate only \$5000 per year for capital projects. Ellsworth is an older building and is landlocked.

Holly Bontkowski Bergmann has been a teacher for over 30 years. I have a disability. I am a teacher at JJHS She alleged that the district responded to her disability with a lack of professionalism and respect for medical privacy, making her feel like a "liability". I deserve better. I hope you can do better.

President Cush reminded the Board and Community that because questions raised during Public Comment address District Operational matters board has designated our Superintendent as the spokesperson for the District. As our designate to respond to Public Comment, he will apprise the Board accordingly.

President Cush reminded the Board and Community of the board agreements. He noted that it is each Board member's responsibility to prepare for each meeting and to effectively express our concerns either to the Superintendent or the Board President in a timely manner. Board members have also agreed that avoiding surprises is paramount in displaying respect to all District Administration. The Board has tasked itself to send questions in advance of each meeting to the Superintendent to allow the provision of the best possible response for the community. It also allows for efficiency during the community's meeting. Those same questions as well as new ones may be asked in Open Session. For transparency, please note if any questions were asked earlier. Mr. Bridges, did you receive questions from Board members? Superintendent Bridges responded that he received questions from all seven Board members.

Monthly Reports

- Treasury Report- The Board received the October Treasury Report

Mike, can you explain the changes we saw in the ending balance in September in the Insurance report?

Mr. Frances clarified that the **GL balance had not changed**. He explained that the movement was a **transfer between two different bank accounts**, rather than a change in the ledger.

So this is not the GL report?

Mr. Frances further clarified that the report being reviewed was a bank balance and investment report, rather than a GL report

Thank you for the clarification.

- Investments- The Board received the October Investment Report
- Insurance-The Board received the October Insurance Report
- Budget-The Board Received the October Budget Report

Action by Consent:

1. Personnel Report

	Effective Date	Location	Position
RESIGNATION-CERTIFIED			
Katie Goldstein	1/20/2026	KJHS/ Mill St	Speech Language Pathologist
APPOINTMENT-CERTIFIED FULL-TIME			
Elizabeth Quirarte	11/20/2025	WJHS	Interim School Counselor
Sarah Keller	12/1/2025	LJHS	ML Teacher
Audrey Ruller	1/5/2026	Riverwoods & Kingsley	Learning Behavior Specialist
Kaitlyn Skowronski	1/5/2026	JJHS	PE Teacher
LEAVE OF ABSENCE-CERTIFIED			
Kimberly Craig	4/6/26 - 5/22/26	Elmwood	ML Teacher
Safa Dada	1/5/26 - 5/22/26	Scott	Learning Commons Director
RETIREMENT-CLASSIFIED			
Dawn Laubsted	2/6/2026	Connections	SPED Paraprofessional
RESIGNATION-CLASSIFIED			
John Fitzgerald	12/1/2025	NNHS	Custodian
Deborah Swartz	12/1/2025	Steeple Run	SPED Paraprofessional
Lisa Dillow	12/5/2025	Prairie	Instructional Paraprofessional
William Spatz	12/12/2025	NNHS	Custodian
Rita Woker	12/19/2025	Highlands	Instructional Paraprofessional
EMPLOYMENT-CLASSIFIED FULL-TIME			
Rebecca Paredez	11/17/2025	Meadow Glens	Special Education Paraprofessional
Robert Reed	11/20/2025	Transportation	Bus Driver
Michelle Piazza	11/25/2025	Maplebrook	Special Education Paraprofessional
Srividhya Selvaraj	12/8/2025	Washington	Special Education Paraprofessional
Courtney Haas	12/3/2025	Meadow Glens	Special Education Paraprofessional
Braydon Mudra	12/8/2025	NNHS	Technology Support Associate
Riley Thompson	12/8/2025	NCHS	Technology Support Associate
Dennis Anderson	12/5/2025	Transporation	Bus Driver
Nicholas Wissbaum	12/5/2025	Transporation	Bus Driver

Amanda McMillen made a motion to approve the Personnel Report, as presented, seconded by Kristine Gericke. Those voting yes: Kozminski, Kelley Black, McMillen, Willensky, Gericke, Blastic, and Cush. Those voting no: None. The motion carried.

2. Bills and Claims from WARRANT NO. 1072497THRU WARRANT NO. 1073013 AND WARRANT NO. 9000000139 TOTALING \$28,353,261.20 FOR THE PERIOD OF November 18, 2025, TO December 15, 2025.

I want to reiterate that when I ask questions it is not to argue or place blame. The account coding came up in several of the sessions I went to at Triple I. I was the only Board member in the sessions that does not get the codes. Our check listing only lists vendor and amount. Went to the district of every presenter and they list the vendor and description and the account codes.

If I am being taught that these are funds, we are to know. To not have this information, I don't have the benefit of knowing what the spending is. Can we use this practice. Would my fellow Board members consider doing it in this manner?

No comments by other Board members.

President Cush noted the memo from Attorney and Auditors regarding our process being adequate and a positive process. I understand your position. *They are doing a high-level audit. Don't express an opinion on the processes. The document says they did not review our internal processes.*

Marc Willensky and Charles Cush reviewed Bills and Claims with Michelle Swope The Business office was helpful. Michelle has the information right at hand and can tell us the approvals and the accounts and funds. Auditor reported it was more than what is done. This process allows us to ask questions and review spending.

Marc Willensky made a motion to approve WARRANT NO. 1072497THRU WARRANT NO. 1073013 AND WARRANT NO. 9000000139 TOTALING \$28,353,261.20 FOR THE PERIOD OF November 18, 2025, TO December 15, 2025, seconded by Amanda McMillen. Those voting yes: McMillen, Kozminski, Blastic, Cush, Gericke, and Willensky. Those voting No: Kelley Black. The motion carried.

3. Board Meeting Minutes: 11/17/2025

Amanda McMillen made a motion to approve the Open Session Minutes dated 11/17/2025 as presented, seconded by Kristine Gericke. Those voting yes: Cush, Blastic, Willensky, Kozminski, McMillen, and Gericke. Those voting No: None. Abstain: Kelley Black. The motion carried.

4. Closed Meeting Minutes: 11/17/2025

Closed door minutes, once they no longer fall under the protections of the Open Meetings Act, there is a demand that they be released however our notes are so general that they don't honor the point of the OMA.

Amanda McMillen made a motion to approve the Closed Session Minutes dated 11/17/2025, as presented, seconded by Joe Kozminski. Those voting yes: Gericke, Blastic, Kozminski, Cush, Willensky, and McMillen. Those voting No: Kelley Black. The motion carried.

Communications

Written Communications

Freedom of Information Requests:

Kelley Black Freedom of Information Act Request-Business Office Information

Judiciary Freedom of Information Act Request- Human Resources and Business Office Information

Yao Freedom of Information Act Request-Student Information

Mackinac Freedom of Information Act Request-Business Office Information

Board of Education Reports:

Board member Kozminski gave a report on his attendance at the Triple I Conference: Attended sessions on Superintendent evaluation and policy changes. He proposed that the district should present a panel on its Carbon Action Plan at next year's conference, featuring staff, board members, and student representatives.

He reported on his visits to Naperville North, Jefferson, and Washington to discuss School Improvement Plan (SIP) goals and current needs with administrators.

Attended the Citizen Finance Committee meeting and the Superintendent Community Advisory Council. He also participated in a meeting of the Superintendent Student Advisory Committee, noting his appreciation for how students analyzed and discussed district belonging data.

Board Member Blastic reported on attending the first meeting of the Superintendent Community Advisory Council, highlighting the group's diverse representation of the community.

She also visited Lincoln Junior High for a home and school meeting focused on fall activities and student belonging. She attended the "Cocoa and PJs" event at Riverwoods, praising the joyful environment.

At the Triple I Conference, she focused on sessions with General Assembly leaders to understand legislative perspectives on the future of education.

Board McMillen reported on her attendance at the Triple I Conference: Served on a panel regarding advocacy. She highlighted keynote speakers Bernice Armor and Damon West, noting their messages on overcoming obstacles and being a positive influence in a "toxic culture".

Her school visits included Scott, Meadow Glens, and Kennedy. At Kennedy, she observed an administrative meeting where staff analyzed data in real-time to adapt school goals.

Board member Kelley Black reported on her volunteering at "Cocoa and Cram" at Naperville North, where she interacted with students and parents during finals preparation.

She reported on her participation at the Delegate Assembly: Served as the district's delegate for the IASB Delegate Assembly, where she voted on constitutional amendments and a resolution regarding school bus safety funding.

At the Triple I Conference, she focused on "Dollars and Decisions" sessions, specifically the concept of Academic ROI (Return on Investment) to evaluate the effectiveness of programs. She also studied predictive AI models for closing achievement gaps for English learners and students with IEPs.

Board member Willensky reported on his attending a multicultural event at Prairie Elementary and the "Jingle Event" holiday shop. He also filled in for Joe Kosminski at Mill Street Elementary for an assembly where teachers were "slimed".

He attended the ribbon cutting for the new employee health clinic on Ogden, praising it as a high-quality primary care destination for staff.

For his attendance at the Triple I Conference, he noted that talking to other districts confirmed there are many different "right answers" depending on a district's specific resources and needs.

Vice President Gericke reported on her school visits. She attended "Cocoa and Cram" at Naperville North and thanked the Naperville Education Foundation (NEF) for their role in the event's success. Her report from the Triple I Conference emphasized the value of learning side-by-side with colleagues and noted that the Board dinner was a vital opportunity for members to build personal relationships outside of official business.

President's Report:

President Cush's report on the Triple I Conference, echoed the value of hearing how other districts handle common challenges.

He also attended a General Home and School meeting, expressing gratitude for how these groups turn buildings into actual communities.

He visited Beebe and Naperville North. He noted that through creative planning, North was able to avoid losing parking spaces during its new construction, which was a point of excitement for students.

Attended the ribbon cutting for the new clinic and noted that Naperville 203 is one of only a few districts in the state to offer such a benefit to its staff.

Superintendent's Report:

Introduced Dr. Rakeda Leaks. Worked with a lot of folks in the district to update the Comprehensive Equity Plan.

Comprehensive Equity Plan Update

The Naperville 203 Comprehensive Equity Plan is designed to ensure that demographic features—such as race, ethnicity, or disability—are no longer predictors of student success or school experience. The strategic framework of the plan is built around five "pillars of success": systemic transformation of culture, courageous equity-centered staff, equity-centered classroom practices, perpetuating systems of equity and opportunity, and family and community empowerment. Under these pillars, the district has established systematic ways to gather student voice through advisory councils, implemented restorative practices to enhance school climate, and utilized an equity-centered resource tool to ensure instructional materials reflect diverse cultures. To diversify the workforce, the district has focused on targeted recruitment, resulting in Hispanic and Latine hiring increasing to 14.56% of new staff by summer 2025, while also utilizing "Grow Your Own" initiatives like the Intro to Teaching pathway. Progress is measured through quantifiable indicators, such as a sense of belonging, which is currently rated at 71% favorable for elementary students and 67% for secondary students. While secondary belonging data showed a significant 11-point increase since spring 2025, disparities persist, as Black and Hispanic students continue to report lower belonging scores and are over-represented in exclusionary discipline, such as in-school and out-of-school suspensions. Academically, although the district ranks in the 99th percentile statewide for overall proficiency, significant gaps remain for English Learners, students with IEPs, and Black and Hispanic student populations. To address these issues, the district has implemented targeted interventions, such as adding math specialists, and has developed a state-approved action plan to reduce the over-identification of Black students with emotional disabilities. The immediate focus for 2026 includes publishing a revised iteration of the plan to maximize impact, accelerating academic growth for marginalized groups, and increasing the capacity of the district equity team to thread equity explicitly into all professional learning.

Board Questions/Comments:

Thank you. This is very comprehensive. There does seem to be an increase of the sense of belonging in secondary from Spring to Fall.

Dr. Leaks attributed the increase to long-term intentional work, including student panels, focus groups, and the introduction of principal and superintendent student advisory councils. These platforms allow the administration to learn directly from students and implement changes.

Are attendance issues, such as truancy or tardiness, were leading to exclusionary discipline (suspensions), particularly for Black and Hispanic students who are overrepresented in those statistics?

Dr. Leaks clarified that attendance issues do not lead to exclusion. While students with many behavioral referrals often have attendance issues, the district prioritizes keeping students in the building. Suspensions are reserved as a last resort for severe offenses like fighting or possession of prohibited items.

Dr. Cohen added Student Advocates try to get ahead of anything that might be an exclusionary discipline. We try to get in front of as much as we can.

Looking at when we started in 2020-2023-noticed the goals in the earlier report were more set and how they would be measured.

Dr. Leaks explained that the current report was a progress update. Because the 2020 plan was launched during a pandemic, it was extended through 2025. A second iteration of the plan with refined measurable metrics will be presented to the Board shortly.

Superintendent Bridges added that this was meant to be an update on the work.

I want the data in an update and not just the operational narrative. At what point do we keep doing this if we don't show we are having the intended impact? I don't see the root causes of all of this.

Dr. Leaks acknowledged these gaps and stated the district is shifting toward targeted, explicit work to accelerate growth. This includes the addition of math specialists to support specific student populations.

Board Member suggested the district explore more granular AI-driven software to identify root causes and asked why individual school-level data from SIPs was not included in the district-wide report.

Superintendent Bridges and Dr. Leaks noted that while this report is a high-level overview, Board members can see specific local data by visiting their adopted schools and discussing SIP progress with principals, as belonging is fostered differently at each site.

Thank you for the report. When we do look at the sense of belonging surveys, between spring and fall, we have some students who have left us and some who are new. How much weight do I put on that some were here in the spring and the new ones in the fall. How do I balance that?

Dr. Leaks explained that the survey is administered twice a year to monitor growth within a single academic year. The district also uses the Panorama platform to disaggregate data for new transfers to see if their experience differs significantly from established students.

Mrs. Willard added that we look at the summaries of the SIP and look at the sense of belonging goals. You can have those conversations when you go to the adopt a schools. Ask what is happening comprehensively.

What can we help to remove barriers from participation in extra-curricular activities?

Mrs. Willard noted that the Board added the activity buses. We call families to encourage participation. We can cover the cost at the direction of the Board. There is a lot of conversation to encourage students.

Board member inquired about specific actions being taken to improve the retention of staff of color and the identified root causes of turnover.

Dr. Leaks noted the district is collaborating with equity affinity groups and considering "stay interviews" to replicate the positive experiences of those who remain. Additionally, HR is focused on creating clearer professional growth pathways for staff groups like NESPA and NUMA.

Is there a metric around community sense of belonging? It is a leading indicator, what kind of a lag between an increase and an increase in academics.

Dr. Leaks responded that the current plan target for community belonging is 80% favorable. The district uses the "Five Essentials" survey to track this, and recent updates to that platform now allow the district to disaggregate this data by demographic groups for more specific reporting.

So we have not reported out by group.

Really relying a lot on surveys and self reporting. Maybe we should look at a product that helps us identify more than just survey data. Seeing SIP data, we should look at it and use it. Can be huge variations between schools.

Thank you for the comprehensive report. How does the district market the "Intro to Teaching" dual credit course to ensure it effectively builds a diverse pipeline of future educators?

Mrs. Willard responded that the district begins these conversations during the 8th-grade experience and career interest sessions. Administrators are specifically discussing how to target underrepresented groups for the program and are looking to partner with local institutions like North Central College and COD to bring students back to Naperville 203 as employees.

Discussion without Action:

PRESS Policy Update 120

Superintendent Bridges noted that this is a big update. There are some updates. Review these they are due the end of February. We will continue to review at the next several meetings. Send all questions to Superintendent Bridges and we will keep a running document that will be included in BoardDocs. We may put some on a Policy Consent Agenda.

Board/Comments:

None.

Discussion with Action:

2025 Tax Levy Determination

Superintendent reminded the Board and the Community of the November 17 presentation on the Tax Levy. Has to be filed by the end of Dec. Recommend you approve as presented.

Board Questions/Comments:

Board member asserted that she has been unable to get clear information on exactly how taxpayer money is spent and argued that the Board has not initiated actual reductions in spending. She questioned why the district continues to ask taxpayers for more money every year without first showing fiscal responsibility or cutting back, especially during a "turbulent time" for citizens.

Board President Charles Cush noted that the district recently received an "extremely clean audit" from an outside auditor and follows all state protocols for financial obligations.

Superintendent Bridges further clarified that between 2017 and 2024, the Board provided approximately \$36.9 million in taxpayer relief through bond abatements, levy abatements, and fee refunds.

I don't know how your money is being spent.

Superintendent Bridges noted you did receive a complete audit. The spending is available for all to see. We follow all rules.

I have no issues for how we budget and spend the taxpayers money. I am feeling conflicted about this tax levy. We continue to put the burden on our taxpayers. We need to be mindful about the burden on our taxpayers. Would rather look at ways we can create more efficiencies. I certainly understand the new taxes. The district is already looking at efficiencies. We are looking at a \$12.5 million deficit with the levy. A lot of our employees' salaries are tied to CPI. We have to raise taxes to pay the bills and pay the teachers without going in the red. It is a burden and it would be great to have a different funding mechanism at the state level. The reality is we have to do this at the highest level.

Superintendent Bridges cautioned that while the current five-year forecast shows a \$12.5 million deficit, that number would grow significantly larger if the Board chose not to extend the levy.

I look at a \$12.5 million deficit and we will have to make reductions to programs and services. This is not a great time to do this but we will be in worse shape if we don't do it, it will put more pressure on us in the future.

Even with this tax levy we will have a \$12.5 million deficit that needs to be addressed. Staff has shown us that there are ways to meet the needs of students without passing on an 20% increase to families. This is the only funding we can control. We do need to seek the funds. We can approve it and if circumstances change, we can look at it in March.

Actions do have an impact on our own homes as well. This is the way schools are funded. No one thinks this is the perfect solution. We do not have other avenues to get funding. We value our employees, and we need to have the money to pay the teachers and to fund programs. This is the only option. We do have the option to look at abatements. We do look at helping taxpayers every year.

I love education. We need to pay our employees well and provide our students with an excellent education. Did we know this was coming before last month? We owe it to the taxpayers that we are living within our budget. Asking for fiscal responsibility.

CFA met and they looked at the numbers, and they all support funding the levy.

They meet once a year for an hour. Holly went ahead on the agenda item and Joe went back Vice President Gericke Called the question.

Kristine Gericke made a motion to Call the Question, seconded by Holly Blastic. Those voting yes: Gericke, Kozminski, McMillen, Willensky, Kelley Black, Blastic, and Cush. Those voting no: None. The motion carried.

Joe Kozminski made a motion to approve the Tax Levy as presented, seconded by Kristine Gericke. Those voting yes: Cush, Kozminski, Blastic, Willensky, and Gericke. Those voting no: McMillen and Kelley Black. The motion carried.

Designate Individual(s) to Prepare the Budget

Superintendent Bridges recommended Michael Frances to begin the drafting of the budget.

Board Questions/Comments:

None.

Kristine Gericke made a motion to approve Michale Frances as the individual to prepare the budget as presented, seconded by Joe Kozminski. Those voting yes: McMillen, Blastic, Gericke, Willensky, Kelley Black, Cush, and Kozminski. Those voting None. The motion carried.

Summer School 2026 Program

Superintendent Bridges introduced Kevin Wojtkiewicz, Jayne Willard and Meliss McHenry.

The Summer School 2026 program was redesigned as a direct response to a Board directive to reduce operational costs in light of the district's five-year financial outlook, prioritizing students with the greatest academic needs while maintaining mandated services. The revised model transitions the program for early childhood through junior high to a four-week session, a change that reduces staffing costs by approximately one-third. To further streamline operations, elementary programming will be consolidated into a single building, and enrichment classes that do not meet minimum enrollment targets will be cancelled. At the high school level, course offerings will be streamlined to focus on essential credit recovery and graduation pathways, eliminating low-enrollment electives in favor of three primary offerings in communication and fine arts.

A significant shift in the 2026 program is the move of the Extended School Year (ESY) program for students with IEPs to a four-week model to align with general summer learning timelines. District administration emphasized that this duration is sufficient to meet state and federal requirements focused on preventing student regression. Additionally, the new schedule allows students to participate in both summer learning and summer music for the first time, an alignment praised for allowing remedial support without sacrificing arts participation,. While most course fees remain unchanged, a new \$50 field trip fee will be introduced for junior high courses involving off-site activities, with remaining program costs covered by grant funding and the proposed summer budget, with registration set to open on March 3, 2026,

Board Questions/Comments:

Thank you. We threw a lot at you and the way you have prioritized living in our means. Thank you for this proposal. Shows me we have creative leadership as we are moving forward.

Thank you for what you presented. You prioritized what we asked for. This does say a lot about the team can rally. This is good for students and helps us with cost containment.

Thank you for the quick turnaround. Moving all elementary to one location will there be a decrease in transportation fees?

Mr. Wojtkiewicz noted there possibly will be but we don't really have the answer for that.

We were focused on academics then have students to have opportunities for students. Looked at the Park district that can provide some of these enrichment opportunities for less than we can. We are in the business of educating. I would like to see data on how students are performing. The last time I looked at numbers, students with IEP's regressed. I would like to see us putting staff and resources in having classes for at risk students. Show me the data. We have to decide what is our priority, exploratory or academic?

Board member asked for confirmation that the district's strategy followed Board priorities by moving enrichment courses like digital art and robotics to Science Camp (which operates closer to breaking even) while the district continues to subsidize core remedial and ESY classes within the proposed budget?

Mrs. Willard confirmed this was correct; the primary focus was maintaining core needs without passing a 20% labor cost increase onto families.

Regarding the Extended School Year is a four-week timeframe fair and adequate for students who qualify for these services.

Mrs. McHenry explained that four weeks is sufficient to meet the purpose of ESY, which is to prevent student regression rather than teaching new skills or making progress on new goals. The duration is individualized by IEP teams based on data.

I appreciate the answer. I was not super excited about the proposal initially, but I now understand that this is a precursor to meeting the deficit. It is about the needs more than the wants. I appreciate the work to provide what kids need.

Mrs. Willard noted that one celebration is that the music director wanted to move music to the back end and going to a four week model, students can now do both.

In looking at how to make this work, I appreciate that our educators are looking at ways to make things better for students and they were heard.

What data did you use to support that four weeks was optimal?

Mrs. McHenry stated that she did not say this was optimal.

What data did you use?

Mrs. McHenry responded that this is aligned with general ed.

Summer is a great time for students who are behind. This is an opportunity to have smaller classes for students. Our IEP scores are dismal. Summer is a great time for focusing on their needs.

Mrs. McHenry noted she appreciates the comment. The purpose of ESY is to stop regression as much as possible.

In response to what you said, we are not required to do more than this. Why don't we do more and what is the goal?

Superintendent Bridges added this plan is responsive to what the Board wanted at the last meeting. There has to be a balance as we cannot continue to add when we need to be reducing.

Thank you to the staff for being responsive to what the Board asked. Can we try to understand the effectiveness of these changes? We will need more information to help us go forward.

Amanda McMillen made a motion to approve Summer School 2026 as presented, seconded by Kristine Gericke. Those voting yes: Cush, McMillen, Blastic, Willensky, Kozminski, and Gericke. Those voting No: Kelley Black. The motion carried.

Consideration of Board of Education Expenses

Superintendent Bridges noted that Board Policy 2.125 dictates that Board expenses be approved by roll call vote. Listed in BoardDocs are expenses related to the Triple I conference.

Boad Questions/Comments:

None.

Kristine Gericke made a motion to approve the Board of Education Expenses as presented, seconded by Amanda McMillen. Those voting yes: Kelley Black, McMillen, Kozminski, Willensky, Cush, Gericke, and Blastic. Those voting None. The motion carried.

Old Business:

None:

New Business:
None.

Upcoming Events:

Next meeting Tuesday, January 20, 2026.

Winter Vacation December 22, 2025-January 2, 2026.

January 6 we will not be meeting due to a lack of agenda items.

Adjournment

Kristine Gericke moved, seconded by Amanda McMillen to adjourn the meeting at 10:24 p.m. A roll call vote was taken. Those voting yes: McMillen, Blastic, Willensky, Gericke, Cush, Kozminski, and Kelley Black. Those voting no: None. The motion carried.

Approved: January 20,2026

Charles Cush, President, Board of
Education

Susan Patton, Secretary, Board of
Education