

January 14, 2026

The Board of Trustees of Willis ISD met in Regular Business Session on January 14, 2026 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 announced 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

Dr. Kim James announced the next steps for the meeting calling Meador Elementary Principal, Tamara Good and students to lead the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation.

#### ANNOUNCEMENTS/PROCLAMATIONS/RESOLUTIONS/RECOGNITIONS

Meador Elementary Principal Tamara Good, recognized David Pavlock has been named Student of the Month for his exceptional positive impact on the Meador Elementary community. He consistently embodies the school's core values through his genuine kindness, ensuring that every classmate feels included and valued. Beyond his friendliness, David is recognized for his deep respect toward others and his maturity in taking responsibility for his actions. Most notably, he possesses the courage to act with integrity and make the right choices, even when standing alone. His joyful energy and role-model behavior make him a standout student who truly represents the best of the district.

WHS Principal Eric King and veteran educator Emily Meech honored Mia McGowen as the Student of the Month for Willis High School. Celebrating her 24th year in the district, Ms. Meech highlighted Mia's extensive involvement in activities ranging from Color Guard and Choir to the Superintendent Advisory Committee. Mia is deeply committed to leadership, recently sharing her passion for the subject through a presentation to Montgomery County Leadership High School. Her primary goal as a leader is to ensure every student, from freshmen to seniors, feels included and possesses a strong voice within the school culture. Because of this dedication, she is recognized as a vital student leader who makes everyone feel valued and part of the community.

In celebration of School Board Appreciation Month, Willis ISD principals and Superintendent Kim James extended their profound gratitude to the Board of Trustees for their unwavering commitment to the district. The leaders highlighted that the board's thoughtful leadership and countless hours of service are essential in ensuring schools remain environments where students can truly thrive. During this current era of growth and transition, the board's vision is credited with guiding the district in a new and exciting direction. A veteran administrator, serving the district for 27 years, shared a heartfelt reflection on how the board has successfully navigated the district's evolution from a small rural system to a rapidly growing community. Despite the challenges of endless construction and increasing student needs, the board has remained focused on doing what is best for both students and educators. Superintendent Kim James emphasized that while recognition happens in January, the board's dedication is a year-round commitment characterized by asking tough questions and demanding excellence. Their leadership ensures that every financial and academic decision is scrutinized to provide the best possible outcomes for Willis ISD. The district's administrators expressed that this steady support is a primary reason why staff choose to stay and serve the community for decades. To conclude the ceremony, tokens of appreciation were presented on behalf of all campus communities as a symbol of their partnership and respect. Collectively, the leadership team thanked the trustees for their integrity and for making Willis ISD a place worth staying and growing.

#### PUBLIC COMMENTS

Board President Hoegemeyer introduced the public comment period, strictly limiting it to 30 minutes total, with each Speaker allotted a maximum of three minutes to address the board. He mandated that the board will not respond to Comments and reminded speakers to respect privacy by refraining from naming students, employees, or community Members. The President also reserved the right to determine if an administrative attempt at resolution has been made; if Not, the speaker will be referred to the appropriate policy before proceeding.

Bob Holden began his public comment by reiterating his recommendation that the district provide anti-choking devices in every cafeteria, noting that his previous suggestion to the SHAC committee was dismissed. He then shifted to educational content, praising the board for their past handling of biological definitions before transitioning into a critique of climate change narratives. Mr. Holden argued that students should be taught the "truth" about Earth's history, claiming that volcanic eruptions dwarf human emissions and that warming periods have historically been beneficial for life. He further denounced green energy as environmentally destructive and a "scam" rooted in historical efforts to control the population and extract money. Finally, he used a 1919 New York Times headline about melting ice caps to suggest that modern climate warnings are repetitive and unreliable.

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CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Minutes
- B. Approval of Harris County Department of Education (HCDE) Interlocal Agreement for Specialized Services: Academic Behavior School (ABS) West  
*Speaker(s): Randi Gay, Director of Special Education*
- C. Approval of the Ranking of Design Builder for the Yates Stadium Scoreboard Project and Delegate Authority to the Superintendent  
*Speaker(s): Bob Eaton, Chief of Operations and Construction*
- D. Approval of the Purchase of Passenger and SPED Buses  
*Speaker(s): Michael Haggerty, Director of Transportation*
- E. Approval of the Selection of Huckabee as the Architect of the Turner Elementary Expansion  
*Speaker(s): Bob Eaton, Chief of Operations & Constructions*

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

PROGRESS MONITORING UPDATES

HB3 Lone Star Governance – Update on HB# Goals and Superintendent’s Guardrails  
*Speaker(s): Dr. Susan Clardy, Exe. Director of Accountability, Research, & Eval.*

The Board expressed high levels of "excitement" and "pride" regarding the current state of elementary education in Willis ISD. Key themes included:

- **Principal Accountability:** Board members noted a significant shift over the last three years, praising principals for "taking ownership" of their campus data, identifying specific problems, and executing clear plans to fix them.
- **Data-Driven Culture:** The Board credited Dr. James with successfully emphasizing data-driven instruction, which they believe has been the catalyst for recent improvements.
- **Campus Gains:** Members celebrated the "uptick" in performance, specifically highlighting that two elementary campuses have achieved "A" ratings.

District Leadership provided insights into the data trends during the preparation of the reports:

- **Reading:** Highlighted as the area of greatest pride. Improvement has been consistent across all schools and levels, gaining significant momentum.
- **Science:** Described as "night and day" compared to previous performance.
- **Math:** While reading currently leads, leadership expects to see similar momentum in math as the new curriculum takes hold.

The Board inquired specifically about the difficulties and the "struggle" associated with the new math curriculum. District Leadership and Principals provided the following context:

- **Conceptual Shift:** The new curriculum focuses on concrete models and conceptual understanding (e.g., "number bonds"), which requires teachers to start at a different, often more uncomfortable, instructional point than in previous years.
- **Knowledge Assumptions:** A significant challenge is that the curriculum assumes students used it the prior year. Consequently, teachers are currently filling gaps for students who lack that specific foundational background.
- **Sequencing & Trust:** The curriculum teaches topics in a different order than teachers are used to. This requires a high degree of "faith" and trust from the teaching staff that the end results will be achieved.
- **Growth & PD:** Teachers are gaining confidence through Professional Development (PD) and support from Region 6. The district is moving into "deep implementation" phases much faster than other districts in the area.

A Board member inquired whether data was currently available for Algebra I and Biology, specifically looking for performance indicators since benchmarks have not yet been administered.

The District's Response

- **Benchmark Timeline:** It was clarified that benchmarks for End-of-Course (EOC) subjects are not scheduled until February, so that specific data set is currently unavailable.
- **Midterm Data:** While the benchmarks haven't occurred, staff confirmed that students in these subjects did complete midterm exams in December.

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- **Follow-up Action:** The district offered to provide the midterm exam results to the Board to demonstrate student progress ahead of the February benchmarks.

Board members highlighted that just three years ago, the campus was struggling with a performance score of 52. The Board described the campus's progress as "unbelievable" and "gratifying," noting that the team's hard work has resulted in a complete culture shift. The Board praised Dr. Moore for her intense passion and persistence. It was noted that while the journey "wasn't easy," her ability to get the entire team to "buy in" was the key to their success. A board member referenced this specific mantra used by the campus to define their high expectations and drive for excellence. The Superintendent and Board called for all middle school principals to stand and be recognized, noting that the entire group is performing at a high level. The district leadership confirmed that high school benchmark testing is scheduled for February. Data and performance results from these assessments will be formally reported to the Board once the testing window is complete and the results have been analyzed.

Motion by Paulett Traylor and seconded by Scott Carson to approve the HB3 Goals and Superintendent Guardrails as presented. Motion carried unanimously, 7-0.

*TAP and Tip Mid-Year Update*

*Speaker(s): Dr. Susan Clardy, Exe. Director of Accountability, Research, & Eval.*

Bilingual Student Testing

- **The Question:** A Board member asked whether bilingual students were taking assessments in English or Spanish and how that data was being reported.
- **The Response:** Staff clarified that the language of the assessment depends on the student's LPAC (Language Proficiency Assessment Committee) status.
  - **Grade Level Trends:** Third-grade students had a higher volume of Spanish testers, but as students move up in grade levels, they progressively shift toward taking the assessments in English.
  - **Reporting:** The data presented to the Board is summarized, meaning the results for both English and Spanish testers are combined into one set of metrics.

Campus Support & Interventions

- **The Question:** The Board inquired if the campus required any additional resources or support.
- **The Response:** The principal stated that no additional resources are needed at this time, highlighting a proactive intervention strategy:
  - **Tutors:** One tutor has been confirmed for in-school math support, and a second is being recruited.
  - **Goal:** The objective is to have one tutor per grade level to "push in" and assist teachers with targeted student interventions.

The Board President emphasized that the district's recent success stems from a newfound "passion to be the best" and a culture where principals have taken full ownership of their campuses with minimal turnover. He credited the Superintendent's academic leadership and "oversight" for moving the district away from waiting on end-of-year tests toward a model of identifying and fixing instructional issues in real-time. Ultimately, the Board expressed deep pride in the progress at every level, noting that strengthening the elementary foundation today will ensure long-term success for students as they transition into junior high and beyond.

## OTHER BUSINESS

Student Enrollment Report

*Speaker(s): Heather Gattinger, Director of PEIMS*

Financial Reports / Bill Payment / Bond Summary

*Speaker(s): Garrett Matej, CFO*

Investment Reports

*Speaker(s): Garrett Matej, CFO*

- **The Question:** The Board asked for a prediction on where interest rates are headed.
- **The Response:** While noting the unpredictability of the market, the CFO anticipates a drop of 25 to 50 basis points over the next year.
- **The Impact:** The CFO noted a "double-edged sword" effect: while falling rates reduce interest earnings on district investments, they provide strategic opportunities to save money on the district's debt service.

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#### Annual Bilingual/ESL Program Update

*Speaker(s): Erika Del Rio, Bilingual/ESL/LOTE Coordinator*

#### Teacher Certification & Requirements

- **The Question:** Board members asked what is being done to help teachers obtain ESL certification and questioned why it is no longer a contractual requirement with strict deadlines (as it was in previous years).
- **The Response:** The district provides test prep through "ESL Academies" at both the district level and through Region 6.
- **Contractual Status:** While not explicitly in the current written contract, the district still maintains verbal "timeline" expectations during the hiring process.

#### Instructional Coaching & Campus Support

- **The Question:** The Board inquired about the placement of the two Bilingual Instructional Coaches and expressed concern that certain campuses (specifically Brabham Middle School) might be underserved.
- **The Response:** One coach handles Pre-K through 2nd grade at Cannon and Hardy; the second (new) coach handles 3rd through 5th at those same schools and supports Lynn Lucas Middle School.
  - **Strategy:** Lynn Lucas was prioritized because it is a "heavy hitter" campus with a high volume of EB students.
  - **Coverage Gaps:** For campuses without a dedicated coach, the department head visits the LPAC coordinators to assist with teacher planning.

#### Special Education Annual Program Review

*Speaker(s): Randi Gay, Director of Special Education*

- **The Question:** A Board member requested the actual number of students currently identified with dyslexia within the district.
- **The Response:** It was confirmed that as of December 19th, there are 676 students identified with dyslexia.
- **The Question:** A Board member asked the Special Education Director if the district had ever achieved "100% across the board" in the past.
- **The Response:** The Special Education Director explained that she could only speak to the data collected since her arrival in the district; therefore, she could not confirm if that milestone had been reached in previous years.
- **Board Commendation:** A Board member highlighted the Special Education department, noting that they are doing an "outstanding job" and expressing appreciation for their current level of performance and transparency.
- **The Question:** A Board member inquired whether the revenue generated by specific programs remains within those individual programs or is allocated elsewhere.
- **The Response:** The Special Education Director confirmed that every dollar generated is sent back to the district's General Fund, rather than being retained specifically by the department that earned it.

#### Long-Range Planning Committee Membership

*Speaker(s): Dr. Sarah Blakelock, Chief of Communications*

*Transportation Update on Senate Bill 546*

*Speaker(s): Michael Haggerty, Director of Transportation*

#### Transportation and Seat Belt Retrofitting

- **Board Question:** The Board asked about the age and mileage of the current fleet, specifically questioning the logic of spending nearly \$3 million to retrofit old buses with seat belts.
- **Response:** The Director explained that some buses date back to 2007 and only 40% of the fleet currently meets modern standards.
- **Board Comment:** One member expressed that spending millions to retrofit buses slated for replacement by 2029 makes "no sense" compared to buying new ones for \$10 million.
- **Response:** It was noted that state grant money may be available for retrofitting but likely wouldn't cover the purchase of an entirely new fleet.
- **Board Question:** A member asked about the current seat belt policy and whether students are actually required to wear them if they are available.

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- **Response:** Drivers are only required to tell students to put them on; they are not mandated to enforce usage once the message is delivered.
- **Board Question:** The Board inquired if there had ever been a major injury or fatality in the district's history involving a bus accident.
- **Response:** A Director Leader recalled one fatal accident involving a third-party vehicle, but noted that no students were injured, emphasizing that buses remain the safest vehicles on the road.

#### Stadium and Facilities Updates

- **Board Question:** A member asked for clarification on the scoreboard relocation at Yates Stadium from the Consent Agenda Items.
- **Response:** The administration confirmed the plan is to move the scoreboard to the north end of the stadium and abandon the current south-end location.

#### Architectural Contracts and Budget

- **Board Question:** The Board asked if the district would be charged the same price point for the Turner Elementary expansion as they were for the Cannon Elementary project.
- **Response:** Leadership clarified that the firm was selected based on their resume and that final costs would be negotiated by the Superintendent.
- **Board Question:** A member inquired if the project would stay within the original budget parameters even if the building size increased slightly.
- **Response:** The district confirmed they feel comfortable staying very close to the original budget despite minor adjustments to the square footage.

CLOSED SESSION\*: Consideration of matters for which closed sessions are authorized by Title 5, Chapter 551, Texas Government Code Sections (.071-.084)

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

The Board convened into Closed Session at 7:33 PM.

RECONVENE IN OPEN SESSION

The Board reconvened into Open Session at 9:42PM. President Hoegemeyer asked if there are any motions from closed session.

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

#### DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS

Discuss and Consider Approval of the Annual Financial audit for the Year Ending August 31, 2025

*Speaker(s): Garrett Matej, CFO*

Motion by Scott Carson and seconded by Nikita Lagway to approve the Superintendent's recommendation and approve the district's annual financial audit for the year ending August 31, 2025. Motion carried unanimously, 7-0.

Discuss and Consider Approval of the GEAR UP grant award for the next 7 years

*Speaker(s): Meghan Ballard, Director of Federal Prog./Compliance, & Grants*

The Board inquired about the specific number of students needed to meet the 25% threshold for 8th-grade Algebra I enrollment next year. Leadership explained that while one group is already on track, they need to identify approximately 30 additional "bubble" students who can be fast-tracked through summer programming or intensive support to ensure they are prepared for the advanced coursework.

Motion by Paulett Traylor and seconded by Nikita Lagway to approve the Superintendent's recommendation to approve the GEAR UP grant award for the next seven years. Motion carried unanimously, 7-0.

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Discuss and Consider Approval of the Completion of the Lone Star Governance Board of Trustees Second Quarter Self Evaluation

*Speaker(s): Kyle Hoegemeyer, Board President*

Motion by Scott Carson and seconded by Paulett Traylor to approve the completion of the Lone Star Governance second quarter evaluation. Motion carried unanimously, 7-0.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

There were no board member comment

SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS

FUTURE BUSINESS/MEETINGS

Public Meeting – TAPR @ 4:30 PM and Regular board meeting is set for February 11, 2026 at 5:30 PM.

ADJOURNMENT OF REGULAR MEETING

Motion by Cliff Williams and seconded by Paulett Traylor to adjourn. Motion carried unanimously, 7-0.

The meeting adjourned at 10:25 PM