



7001 E. EXPRESSWAY 83, MERCEDES, TX
78570

P: 956.565.2454

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Education Improvement Council (EIC) Meeting Minutes: January 21, 2026

Meeting Duration: 5:00PM-5:57 PM

South Texas Preparatory Academy:Saire Moreno, Jada Carrera
South Texas World ScholarsJoshua Zamora, Veronica Castro
Medical Professions: Hanai Vasquez, Bruno Sanchez
Health Professions: Ariel Nieto, Paola Salazar
Rising Scholars Academy..... Debbie Delgado, Elvis Reid
Science AcademyLorena Lopez, Esthela Pacheco
Virtual Academy Lirio Arredondo, Monica Perez
Student Representatives.....Andrea Guerrero (SA) Eiza Salinas (HP)
Professional Non-Teacher Amy Pena
District Level ProfessionalMarcos Flores
Parents.....Eddie Lucio, (RSA), Armando Salinas (HP), Angelica Camarillo (MP)
Community MembersIsabel Alvarez (SA), Sonia Kerps (WS)
Business MembersNativdad Hinojosa (MP), Christine Molis (STPA)

EIC Meeting Minutes 5:00-5:57PM

1. Welcome

Amy Pena called the meeting to order at 5:00PM

2. Review and Vote on EIC Minutes from Wednesday, November 12, 2025.

All EIC Members were directed to the minutes located in the agenda packet to review.

Motion made to approve the EIC meeting minutes from November 12, 2025.

- o 1st Motion : Hanai Vasquez 2nd Motion : Paola Salazar
- o Motion passed unanimously

3. Review and Recommend New Courses

A. Presentation by Mr. Gutierrez (Principal, Science Academy) Proposed Two New Courses which are included in the South Texas College Dual Enrollment Psychological Science Program

- PSYC 2320 (Abnormal Psychology)

13024400 Interpersonal Studies- 0.5 credit (semester course)

- PSYC 2389 (Academic Cooperative Direct Research)

1304600 Counseling and Mental Health- 0.5 credit (semester course)

- Courses will be available to all 11th and 12th grade students at Science Academy enrolled in the STC DEPSA Program.
- Courses would begin in the 2026-2027 School year.
- Courses would carry a 1.1 GPA weight in alignment with board policy
- Courses will enhance students' opportunity to complete an associate degree program while in high school

Floor open for discussion: No questions.

Mr. Gutierrez continued with additional course adjustment proposals for Science Academy

B. Science Academy Course Adjustments

- PLTW Engineering Design and Development (EDD)
 - 12701107 Career and Technical Education Project-Based Capstone 1 credit (year course)
- PLTW Civil Engineering and Architecture
 - 13036500 Engineering Design and Presentation 1 credit (year course)
 - Courses will be available to all 11th and 12th grade students at Science Academy enrolled in the CTE Engineering Foundations Program of Study
 - Courses would begin in the 2026-2027 School year.
 - CTE Courses would carry a 1.0 GPA weight in alignment with board policy

Rationale:

- provided for maintaining Project-Based Civil & Architectural Engineering coursework due to the opportunity for students to earn a second Industry-Based Certification (IBC) (Revit – a resident certification).
- It was noted that students at Science Academy have been highly successful in earning this certification, and it provides a clear benefit within the engineering pathway.
- If not approved, the course would need to be removed, resulting in loss of certification opportunities.

- Clarification provided that architectural engineering content will be consolidated into Civil Engineering & Architecture, and Architectural Engineering as a standalone course will no longer be offered.

Floor opened for discussion- No questions.

Motion made to approve Science Academy course proposals and revised Science Academy engineering course offerings.

- 1st Motion : Joshua Zamora 2nd Motion : Bruno Sanchez
- Motion passed unanimously

C. New Mathematics Course – South Texas ISD Medical Professions

Presentation by Mr. Lucio (Principal, Medical Professions) regarding a proposed

- Elementary Statistical Methods
 - Course is currently available to students through UTRGV (online); proposal would allow the course to be offered face-to-face by a district instructor through TSC (Texas Southmost College) dual enrollment.
 - Eligible students would be 11th and 12th grade student at Medical Professions
 - Purpose of the course is to expand postsecondary opportunities and provide additional instructional options.

Floor opened for discussion

- Discussion included:
 - Course sequence placement (following Algebra II / Pre-Calculus, as an alternative to AP Statistics or AP Calculus).
 - Clarification that the course carries a 1.1 GPA weight consistent with dual-credit policy.
- Motion made to approve Elementary Statistical Methods for the Medical Professions program.
 - 1st Motion: Hanai Vasquez 2nd Motion : Jada Carrera
 - Motion passed unanimously

4. Review and possible vote on calendar for 2026–2027 School Calendar

The committee reviewed the proposed 2026–2027 district calendar.

Emphasis placed on the importance of approving the calendar early to support:

- Enrollment planning
- Course selection
- Professional development planning
- Family planning and communication

The proposed calendar closely mirrors the 2025–2026 calendar.

Key Considerations Discussed:

- Adjustments made in prior years to address:
 - Semester exam schedules
 - Transportation and early-release challenges
 - Family concerns regarding student pickup times
- Expansion of instructional minutes to allow flexibility for exam scheduling.
- Adjustments between semesters to better accommodate:
 - Dual-credit students
 - Students in specialized programs with varying schedules
- Benefits of front-loading and back-loading professional development days.

Open Discussion – Calendar & Instructional Time

- Saire Moreno expressed appreciation for the front-loading of professional development, noting it allowed for more instructional preparation time in the classroom.
- Bruno Sanchez noted that the district exceeds required instructional minutes by approximately 1.5 days.
- Mr. Garza explained that the removal of certain testing days (e.g., BOY assessments) has increased instructional time in classrooms and reduced disruptions to teaching and learning.
- Esthela Pacheco observed that student attendance appears lower on C Days and asked whether all campuses follow the same instructional schedule.

Instructional Minutes & Compliance

- Instructional minutes were clarified as all-time from the first bell to the last bell, inclusive of passing periods and lunch, as defined by the State of Texas.
- It was noted that the district exceeds required instructional minutes by approximately 2.5 days and maintains waivers in the event of inclement weather.
- Required documentation will be submitted if weather-related closures occur.

Assessment & Accountability Updates

- Joshua Zamora shared that upcoming STAAR assessment updates may impact course structure and calendar alignment.
- Mr. Garza explained that the new assessment model will replace BOY, MOY, and EOY testing.
 - The state is still refining implementation details.
 - No official dates have been released.
 - Transition is expected to be smoother due to the district's existing BOY and EOY assessments.
 - Full implementation is anticipated in 2027–2028, with further review during a future EIC cycle.

Calendar Structure Clarifications

- Bruno Sanchez requested clarification on the calendar color coding.
- Mr. Garza explained:
 - Dark Green: Student instructional days (168 days)
 - Blue: Teacher contract days (187 days)
 - 12-Month Employees: 226 workdays
- Professional Development days are sometimes scheduled on holidays (e.g., MLK Day) to minimize student absenteeism and accommodate family schedules.

Teacher Workday Discussion

- Committee members expressed gratitude for the three-week winter break.
- Discussion focused on the placement of the teacher workday at the start of second semester:
 - Mr. Garza explained the trade-off between placing the workday at the end versus the beginning of the semester.
 - It was noted that starting the semester with students rather than PD supports routine and engagement.
 - Increased teacher engagement was observed following the January 19, 2026 PD day.
- Lirio Arredondo emphasized the importance of having time to ensure systems and classrooms are fully operational.
- Jada Carrera shared that returning from break can be stressful and that a full workday before students return would be beneficial.
- Efrain Garza acknowledged the value of activity time but emphasized the need to manage instructional time effectively.

Data Action Plans

- Saire Moreno expressed concern that Data Action Plans are due on the teacher workday and requested consideration of extending the deadline to January 11 or the end of that week.
- Efrain Garza shared that discussions will take place with principals and clarified that Data Action Plans should ideally be completed by the January PD.

Graduation & Calendar Constraints

- Joshua Zamora stated that the teacher workday should remain on December 18 due to grading and exam responsibilities.
- Mr. Garza noted that calendar shifts would push the school year later, complicating graduation scheduling and venue availability.
- Any day removed from students would need to be added elsewhere in the calendar.

Proposals Discussed

1. Take the proposed calendar back to campuses for feedback.
 2. Proceed with immediate action and vote.
- Saire Moreno indicated that returning to campuses for feedback may not be necessary due to limited flexibility in calendar options.
 - Mr. Garza proposed:
 - Exploring the possibility of adding a teacher workday on January 11.
 - Sharing two calendar options electronically with EIC members at the beginning of the following week.
 - Holding a formal vote at the February 2026 EIC meeting.

Additional Considerations

- Dual Enrollment programs will align with the proposed calendar, including any adjustments to the January teacher workday.
- Paola Salazar suggested a buffer teacher workday on January 8.
- Saire Moreno noted that August 7 currently functions as a partial PD/workday and could be reconsidered.
- Armando Salinas (parent) raised concerns about dual enrollment professors (UTRGV/STC) not always being available during the first week of classes despite student attendance.

- Efrain Garza acknowledged that the district may eventually need to operate different calendars for different campuses and programs and emphasized ongoing coordination with partner institutions.
- Joshua Zamora shared that administrators allowed teachers to come in voluntarily on January 8 to prepare classrooms and technology.

Action Items & Next Steps

- Administration will explore revised calendar options and share them electronically with EIC members.
- Feedback will be collected prior to the February 2026 meeting.
- Calendar approval is targeted for School Board consideration by the end of February.

Final Motion to end the meeting

- 1st Motion: Joshua Zamora 2nd Motion : Bruno Sanchez
- Motion passed unanimously
- Meeting adjourned at 5:57 p.m.

Minutes taken by EIC Secretary: Ariel Nieto