

**Minutes of the Regular Board of Education Meeting of
Hawthorn Community Consolidated District #73, Lake County, Illinois
841 W. End Ct, Vernon Hills IL 60061
7:00 p.m. on the 5th day of February 2026**

CALL TO ORDER

President Robin Cleek called the Board of Education meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. All present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

The Board Secretary called attendance and the following members attended: George Fievet, Karl Borchers, Michael Engle, Robin Cleek, Joel Finfer, Stephanie Peters and Julie Clifford. Also in attendance were Asst. Supt. of Finance & Business Operations Ms. Jennifer Akin; Asst. Supt. of Student Services Ms. Alicia Corrigan; Asst. Supt. of Teaching & Learning Dr. Allison Stein; Asst. Supt. for Human Resources Mr. Adam Palmer; and Superintendent Dr. Pete Hannigan.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment at this time

RECOGNITION

Board Members Karl Borchers and George Fievet spoke on behalf of the Board to recognize 29 students selected to participate in the ILMEA District 7 Music Festival. These students were chosen from more than 700 middle school musicians representing 84 schools across the north and northwest suburbs of Chicago. It was also shared that 11 of those students advanced to the ILMEA Junior All-State Honors Concert and performed this past weekend. These students earned placement in the All-State Band, Chorus, or Orchestra through a competitive audition process. Music directors from Middle North and Middle South offered brief remarks in recognition of the students' achievements. Students were presented with certificates and medals of excellence.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

No announcement(s) at this time.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Robin Cleek provided a brief report and reminded Board members of the upcoming IASB Lake Division Dinner scheduled for April 15 at the DoubleTree in Mundelein. Board members were asked to notify Jessica if they plan to attend. Additional event details were previously shared via email.

ED-RED REPORT

Mr. Joel Finfer reported on the recent ED-RED Dinner, noting that the keynote speaker was Congressman Brad Schneider. He shared that the Congressman's remarks were particularly inspiring, highlighting the influence and responsibility of educators given current events across the country. Mr. Finfer emphasized the value of the evening, noting the meaningful opportunity to engage with other school board members and legislators and to gain insight into issues impacting districts throughout the state.

SEDOL REPORT

Mr. Engle reported that the SEDOL Executive Board last met on January 22, and the Governing Board last met on December 3. Highlights of the Fiscal Year 2024 final audit were presented and approved. The Fiscal Year 2025 audit is currently underway, with an anticipated completion date of June 30, 2026. Mr. Engle further reported that the Executive Board approved an amended budget for Fiscal Year 2026 and recommended it for Governing Board approval at the March 4 meeting. He also shared that SEDOL is offering interactive program tours on March 5 (Laremont School, SEDOL Academy, and Gages Lake School) and March 12 (Fairhaven School and John Powers Center), from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. Lastly, Mr. Engle noted that a welcome reception will be held prior to the March 4 Governing Board meeting for the new SEDOL Superintendent, Dr. Jennifer Thomas, who will assume the role on July 1.

SITE & FACILITIES SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

No report at this time.

WELLNESS COMMITTEE REPORT

Board Member Julie Clifford reported that the Wellness Committee met last week and continues refining the pillars used to measure the "whole child": ensuring students feel healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. During the meeting, the committee discussed ways to measure progress within each pillar and established goals based on current benchmarks to guide improvement efforts. Ms. Clifford also noted a significant increase in student engagement compared to last year, highlighting the positive involvement of middle school students in the committee's work.

KEY TO 73 FOUNDATION REPORT

Board Member Julie Clifford reported that planning continues for the upcoming Key to 73 Foundation golf outing. She noted that the Foundation is currently seeking sponsors, volunteers, auction items, and general donations. Community members are encouraged to visit the Foundation's website, keyto73.org, to sign up for updates and learn how to get involved.

Ms. Clifford also announced an upcoming parent social event at Aged in Oak in Vernon Hills on February 20. The event will provide an opportunity to learn more about the Foundation, socialize with other parents, and participate in bingo to win fun prizes. No registration is required.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Dr. Hannigan and the team discussed PRESS Policy Issue 120. Dr. Hannigan reported that the Policy Subcommittee met on January 22 to review 31 policy updates included in PRESS Issue 120. The revisions span multiple areas, including board governance, student services, curriculum and instruction, human resources, and business operations. The updates primarily reflect changes in state law, revised legal references and cross-references, clarification of procedures, and continuous improvement efforts. Several revisions address topics such as student safety and conduct, attendance, curriculum requirements, staff qualifications, employment practices, and fiscal management. The revised policies will be brought forward for Board consideration at the February 19, 2026 board meeting.

Assistant Superintendent Dr. Allison Stein was accompanied by Director of Teaching & Learning Stephanie Sidaway and teachers Kelli Burke, Bethany Dahm, Stefanie Mihalka, and Nichole Petersen to discuss the Elementary Math Foundational Resource Recommendation. The team outlined the purpose and process of the resource trial, which aligned with the District's six-year curricular review cycle. Based on teacher feedback and student performance trends, a districtwide trial of *Bridges in Mathematics, Third Edition* was conducted. Forty-five teachers across 11 teams participated, with professional learning and instructional coaching support provided throughout the process. Trial feedback indicated strong support for the updated edition, citing improvements in lesson structure, assessment design, rigor, student engagement, differentiation, and cultural responsiveness. The resource received an "All Green" rating from EdReports for alignment and usability, and the team recommended adoption of *Bridges in Mathematics, Third Edition* as the District's next elementary math foundational resource. The estimated cost for the adoption year is \$72,220 with a projected six-year total of approximately \$281,420. If approved, implementation would begin at the start of the upcoming school year with continued professional learning, curriculum alignment work, and monitoring of student performance data.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Superintendent Dr. Hannigan reported that registration for Summer School opened this week, with strong early interest from families. Students have already enrolled in programs including the Hawthorn Enrichment Institute, Volleyball Camp, and Music Camp. During Kindergarten Information Night, principals also shared information about the Early Start Kindergarten program, which supports incoming kindergarten students as they build foundational skills prior to the start of the school year.

Dr. Hannigan further reported that the Illinois 5Essentials Survey window opened this week. Families are encouraged to review the District Digest for additional information. Students in grades four through eight will complete the survey during the school day, and the District will continue to promote parent and guardian participation as part of its continuous improvement efforts.

CONSENT AGENDA

- 6.1 Board Meeting Minutes: December 17, 2025
- 6.2 Personnel Report

New Hires: 5

Leaves of Absence: 1

Resignations: 3

Change of Status: 1

5 New Hires: Deepika Babu, Instructional Assistant, MN, 01/20/2026; Tamara Blagojevic, Instructional Assistant, MN, 02/20/2026; Holly Hovagimian-Beck, Instructional Assistant, MS, 01/20/2026; Srividya Manoj Balakrishnan, Library/Media Instructional Assistant; TL; 02/02/2026; Shelby Vojcak, Nurse, EN, 02/02/2026

1 Leave of Absence: Claire Jones, LBS1 Teacher, MN, 01/26/2026.

1 Resignations: Brooke Pieper, 2nd Grade Teacher, EN, 06/01/2026; Anitakumari Rathod, Lunch/Recess Supervisor, HSYL, 01/16/2026; Maria Rodriguez, Lunch/Recess Supervisor.

MOTION: George Fievet moved that the Board of Education approve the **Consent Agenda** items as presented; seconded by Michael Engle.

Roll Call Vote: Karl Borchers, Michael Engle, George Fievet, Julie Clifford, Robin Cleek, Stephanie Peters and Joel Finfer.

Motion carried: 7 ayes; 0 nays

Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Business Operations Jennifer Akin, accompanied by Tom McGrath of Lamp Construction reviewed the bid results for the 2026–2027 Middle South Summer Projects. Mrs. Akin noted that preliminary bid results were previously shared at the January meeting. Since that time, reference checks have been completed and bids verified. The total projected cost for the project, including general trades, painting, and electrical work, is \$2,427,938. The business department recommended Board approval to proceed with the project as presented.

ACTION ITEMS

Bid Results for the 2026-2027 Summer Projects

MOTION: Joel Finfer moved that the Board of Education approve the Bid Results for the 2026-2027 Summer Projects; Stephanie Peters seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote: Karl Borchers, Michael Engle, George Fievet, Julie Clifford, Stephanie Peters, Robin Cleek, and Joel Finfer.

Motion carried: 7 ayes; 0 nays

INFORMATION

1. Enrollment - Uploaded
2. FOIA Log, Dr. Hannigan reported that the District has received six FOIA requests since the last board meeting and has been responded to as identified in Section 8.2 of the Board agenda.
3. Media Clips

TOPICS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

No topics for future discussion.

ADJOURN TO CLOSED SESSION

Pursuant to 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1) and 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(21), President Cleek requested a motion to adjourn to CLOSED SESSION for the following purpose(s):

- *Discussion of minutes of meetings lawfully closed under the Open Meetings Act, whether for purposes of approval by the body of the minutes or semi-annual review of the minutes as mandated by Section 2.06. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(21).*
- *The appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees, specific individuals who serve as independent contractors in a park, recreational, or educational setting, or specific volunteers of the public body or legal counsel for the public body, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee, a specific individual who serves as an independent contractor in a park, recreational, or educational setting, or a volunteer of the public body or against legal counsel for the public body to determine its validity. However, a meeting to consider an increase in compensation to a specific employee of a public body that is subject to the Local Government Wage Increase Transparency Act may not be closed and shall be open to the public and posted and held in accordance with this Act. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1).*

With no further business to discuss in open session, Karl Borchers made a motion to adjourn to closed session. The motion was seconded by George Fievet. The Board adjourned to closed session at 7:45 p.m.

RETURN TO OPEN SESSION

With no further business to discuss in closed session, Joel Finfer made a motion to adjourn the closed session and return to open session. The motion was seconded by Michael Engle. The Board returned to open session at 8:21 p.m.

With no further business to discuss in open session, Karl Borchers made a motion to adjourn the open meeting. The motion was seconded by Stephanie Peters. The Board adjourned the meeting at 8:21 p.m.

All in favor? Yes.

Motion carried: 7 ayes; 0 nays

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Flores

Robin Cleek, President

Julie Clifford, Secretary

Date Minutes Approved: _____