



**LITTLEFIELD UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT #9  
GOVERNING BOARD WORK SESSION  
Administrative Services Site  
3490 East Rio Virgin Road  
Monday, February 2, 2026  
6:00 P.M.  
(Doors Open at 5:45 p.m.)**

**Mission Statement**

The Littlefield Unified School District is committed to excellence. Therefore, we are committed to providing opportunities for all students to learn and develop socially, emotionally, and academically. We are committed to providing resources to our students, parents and teachers in an ongoing effort to help students transition from childhood to adulthood.

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Board President Cobb called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. There were seven (7) people in attendance. Board Secretary Hogan was absent when the meeting started.

2. ROLL CALL:

Mark Cobb, Board President  
Sean Hogan, Board Secretary  
Mike Fagnan, Board Member  
Karen Johnson, Board Member  
Cathy Wright, Board Member

Troy Heaton, Superintendent/Secondary Principal  
Darlene McCauley, Interim Elementary Principal  
Edward Dickie, Business Manager  
Sheree Goessman, Human Resources Director

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

At this time, the public may speak to the Governing Board on topics of concern with the public body's jurisdiction, even if the topic is not specifically included on the agenda. The public must state their full name for the record and will be allowed up to three minutes to address the Governing Board. No action will be taken as a result of public comments. The Board expects that citizens who address the board will present concerns regarding the activities in question rather than make personal attacks upon Board Members, District Personnel or other persons in attendance or absent. In addition, questions or comments on matters that are currently under legal review will not be accepted.

3. Public Comment.

Rena Moerman stated that she has heard some comments from members of the public regarding separating the Principal/Superintendent position. At the time the positions were combined, the district had more than 500 students, and it was determined that once enrollment dropped below 500, the district could no longer afford two separate positions. At that point, duties from each job description were reviewed and selected to create the combined role.



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There are currently job descriptions for the Superintendent, High School Principal, and the combined position. Mrs. Moerman suggested that the Governing Board review these job descriptions to ensure the current role aligns with the Board's expectations. She noted that the position is extremely demanding, and in her experience, administrators routinely worked well beyond an eight-hour day. Whether positions are combined or separated, priorities must be established. If the Board considers separating the roles, she recommended reviewing salaries in comparable districts. Mr. Heaton indicated this topic could be discussed further at the meeting the following day with the Board President.

Trisa Cummings read a prepared statement in which she reviewed the agenda and provided comments on each item. She asked how the new van would be funded and whether teachers and coaches would still be allowed to drive the larger van. Board President Cobb suggested that she address her comments during the discussion of each respective agenda item.

## **DISCUSSION**

### 4. Discussion regarding the potential purchase of a 15-passenger van for district-wide use.

Board Member Fagnan stated that this topic was discussed during this year's budget process, at which time the Board decided to table the item until October. He noted that now, as the district approaches the first of the year, we are confident that we have the money for the purchase.

Mr. Heaton added that the Board had previously approved the purchase of a passenger van, but at that time he was still gathering budget information and felt it was not appropriate to proceed with a major purchase. He stated that Mr. Dickie has since done an excellent job providing regular budget reports, and he is now confident that the district has sufficient funds to move forward.

Gloria Etter expressed support for the van purchase and asked whether the district would retain the existing van and who would be authorized to drive the vans, noting that drivers are not limited to bus drivers. Mr. Heaton confirmed the district would have more than one van and explained that while bus drivers are still used, some coaches are not comfortable driving buses. He added that vans are significantly cheaper to operate and that he would prefer coaches drive vans for trips to Las Vegas. Drivers would be required to complete training videos at the beginning of the year through the trust.

Board President Cobb asked whether teachers would also be required to complete the training. Mr. Heaton responded that the training could be incorporated into staff trainings held at the beginning of the school year.

Rena Moerman noted that at one point the district had to remove vans from service and believed it was related to the trust. Mr. Heaton explained that the issue has since been resolved, as the older 15-passenger vans were deemed unsafe and were no longer insurable by the State of Arizona. He noted that the newer vans have a wider wheelbase, are safer, and are classified as alternative transportation vehicles.

Board Member Johnson asked how many vans the district currently has. Mr. Heaton responded that the district has one minivan. Board President Cobb asked whether the van currently parked



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at the District Office could be traded in toward the purchase of a new van, and Mr. Heaton stated he would look into that option.

Randy Hoopes asked whether training would be required prior to driving the vans. Mr. Heaton explained that there are specific training requirements for 15-passenger vans.

Gloria Etter shared that during her training to renew her certification; she had inquired about purchasing a bus to convert into a camper and was told that buses must go to auction. Mr. Heaton confirmed that buses must either be sold at public auction or scrapped, depending on their condition, and that specific requirements apply. Board Member Johnson asked whether the auction would be local. Mr. Heaton stated that there are two buses that will need to be scrapped and others that will be placed on public surplus.

#### 5. Discussion regarding the FY26 staff survey results.

Trisa Cummings stated that she understood the staff survey was intended to be an evaluation of the Superintendent. Patricia Hoopes asked where a copy of the survey could be obtained. Mrs. Goessman responded that she could contact her directly and she would email a copy of the survey.

Gloria Etter stated that she received an email to complete an evaluation of her department and asked whether it was the same survey and whether it had been sent to all employees. Mrs. Goessman acknowledged that it was the same survey. Rena Moerman clarified that the Superintendent is the only employee of the Governing Board and is the only employee the Board evaluates. She noted that all other employees report to the Superintendent. Mrs. Moerman stated that while members of the public may submit complaints through the established process, it is not the public's role to formally evaluate the Superintendent.

Board President Cobb stated that he wanted staff to have the opportunity to provide feedback through an evaluation process. Mr. Heaton noted that this topic was discussed during his contract negotiations and reiterated that he works for the Governing Board. Board Member Johnson stated that if few people respond to the survey, they cannot later complain about not being heard.

Rena Moerman added that one reason for the low response rate may stem from a survey conducted several years ago that was described as confidential but was later found not to be confidential. Trisa Cummings stated that she believed state law allows all stakeholders to provide input on how the school is functioning and questioned whether evaluations should be conducted by administration or by an uninvolved third party. She expressed that she believes it is appropriate for stakeholders to provide feedback.

Board Member Fagnan responded that while stakeholder input may be appropriate regarding the school as a whole, the evaluation of the Superintendent is the responsibility of the Governing Board. He stated that the purpose of the work session was to allow public comment and noted that seven community members were present to share their perspectives on what they believe is happening within the school. He added that in larger districts, such as Maricopa County, it would be unrealistic to expect all stakeholders to complete a survey.

Board Member Johnson stated that the limited number of responses makes the survey



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statistically invalid. Board President Cobb noted that the work session was scheduled an hour later than usual to allow more people the opportunity to attend.

Randy Hoopes asked whether discussion during the meeting must be limited to agenda items. Board President Cobb stated that it is at his discretion whether an item is added to a future work session or to a regular Governing Board agenda.

Randy Hoopes then asked about school policy regarding cell phones. Mr. Heaton stated that the cell phone policy had been revised and now requires students to place their cell phones in pouches at the beginning of each class period. Board President Cobb added that Faraday bags are used as part of the disciplinary process.

Mr. Heaton explained that while he drafted the school policy, he anticipated the cell phone policy would be controversial and therefore presented it to the Governing Board for support. Board Member Fagnan stated that he attended a meeting with Mr. Heaton and the high school teachers to discuss the policy. He explained that opinions among teachers were initially divided, with approximately five teachers supporting no change and five expressing concerns. One teacher stated that she approached enforcement as if it were a job, assigning an "F" for the day if a student used their cell phone. Board Member Fagnan noted that teachers unanimously supported the use of Faraday bags as a disciplinary measure and stated that he believed the written policy was effective.

Rena Moerman stated that she believes the issue will become moot in a short period of time, noting that Utah has passed legislation prohibiting cell phones in classrooms and is seeing positive results. Gloria Etter added that in some schools, teachers stand outside classrooms with a bag and students place their phones in the bag upon entry.

#### 6. Discussion regarding the process for reviewing Littlefield USD policies.

Mrs. Goessman reviewed the process for adopting policies, regulations, and exhibits. Mr. Heaton added that Arizona Revised Statutes and the Arizona Administrative Code constitute state law and must be followed. He also addressed comments regarding the use of administrative leave, explaining that such actions are taken in accordance with state law requirements.

Trisa Cummings stated that after reviewing the policies, she believes the Governing Board should revisit its goals. She expressed concern that assigning multiple roles to individuals could create potential conflicts of interest and suggested the Board explore alternative organizational structures to improve efficiency and reduce those risks.

Board President Cobb responded that Rena Moerman had previously provided historical context regarding why the current structure was implemented. He noted that the Board has received no complaints regarding Troy's performance and emphasized that the Board does not want concerns to go unaddressed.

Ms. Reynolds said that staff cannot talk at a board meeting or they will be reprimanded. She further shared that there are several employees at the Elementary School who want to file a grievance but they don't feel comfortable doing so. Mrs. Goessman explained the grievance



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process and why employees cannot bring concerns directly to the Board. Mr. Heaton further outlined the grievance procedure, emphasizing that employees must follow the established process.

Board Member Fagnan suggested creating a role similar to a shop steward who could assist employees in initiating grievances with Human Resources. Rena Moerman shared her experience handling grievances and arbitration, explaining that such a representative must be willing to work collaboratively with both administration and employees. She outlined that grievances should begin at the supervisory level, move to Human Resources if unresolved, then to the Superintendent, and ultimately to the Governing Board if necessary. The Board serves as the final decision-maker and does not participate until the final level. Mr. Heaton noted that the grievance process has been utilized successfully six to eight times during his tenure, with only one grievance advancing to the Board.

Gloria Etter shared her experience as a former union president and described representing a clerk in a grievance matter. Board President Cobb reiterated that the goal is to address concerns appropriately rather than conceal them. Board Member Fagnan added that understanding grievance procedures helps determine whether a concern has merit.

Karen Johnson emphasized the importance of maintaining a safe environment where employees can communicate concerns without fear. Mr. Heaton acknowledged that while the grievance process exists, some employees may be reluctant to use it. He suggested placing a review of the grievance process on a future agenda.

Board Member Wright expressed concern about a perceived lack of trust and fear among staff, stating that employees should feel safe raising concerns without fear of retaliation. Ms. Reynolds agreed that trust in the system appears to be lacking.

Randy Hoopes requested clarification on how the grievance process functions. Mr. Heaton explained that grievances typically begin with Human Resources, which works with the direct supervisor to attempt resolution. If unresolved, the matter proceeds to the Superintendent and may ultimately be appealed to the Governing Board for a final decision. Employees may choose to have their grievance heard in open or closed session.

Mr. Hoopes noted that many grievances involve Human Resources and asked whether employees may bypass a direct supervisor if the grievance involves that supervisor. Mr. Heaton confirmed that employees may bring concerns directly to the Superintendent in such cases. Rena Moerman cautioned that bypassing the first level may prevent early resolution at the supervisory level.

Board Member Johnson raised concerns about potential retaliation if an employee files a grievance. Board President Cobb stated that he would want to be informed if retaliation were to occur. Rena Moerman acknowledged that concerns about retaliation are common in grievance systems.

Gloria Etter asked whether Mr. Heaton has access to school bus drivers' text messages. Mrs. Goessman responded that he does not.



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Rena Moerman added that several employees are currently overextended due to holding multiple roles, which contributes to organizational strain.

Returning to the topic of organizational structure, Ms. Cummings suggested exploring options such as a part-time Superintendent, shared Superintendent services, or coordination with county or state resources. She reiterated concerns about potential conflicts of interest under the current structure and stated that while the district may not be able to afford a full-time Superintendent, redistribution of district office responsibilities could be considered. She also shared her background in personnel management and expressed concern that she has heard only one perspective regarding recent administrative matters.

Board Member Johnson questioned why affected employees did not address the Board directly. Ms. Cummings stated that she believed attempts had been made. Board Member Fagnan responded that the Board was advised by legal counsel not to respond. Ms. Cummings questioned why the two employees were not permitted to share their side of the story with the Board. Mr. Heaton explained that the individuals were provided an opportunity to present their case before a hearing officer and that the Board would receive the hearing officer's recommendations prior to the next meeting. He added that legal requirements obligate the Board to remain impartial as the final decision-maker.

Rena Moerman addressed the suggestion of a part-time or shared Superintendent, explaining that such options were previously explored but were not feasible due to geographic considerations and the scope of responsibilities. She noted that the Board would still need to determine how duties would be allocated in such an arrangement.

Board President Cobb expressed concern about hearing that employees feel reprimanded for raising concerns and stated that staff should feel they have a voice. Mr. Heaton reiterated that the grievance process could be reviewed. Board Member Johnson shared her experience attending board meetings as a teacher in Utah, where staff were encouraged to provide feedback during policy discussions.

Board President Cobb stated that the purpose of the work session was to encourage open dialogue. Rena Moerman clarified that there is a distinction between policy discussions and formal grievances, noting that policy concerns do not constitute grievances. She suggested providing additional education to staff regarding that distinction and proposed exploring ways to separate Human Resources from the Superintendent role to strengthen trust. She further noted that Sheree is highly qualified and skilled in her position.

Board Member Wright concluded by emphasizing that rebuilding trust is essential and that employees should feel confident in their leadership and supervisory structures.

## 7. Discussion regarding the student attendance policy.

Board President Cobb asked whether an absence is considered excused if a teacher sends a student home, but unexcused if the student provides a doctor's note.

Mr. Heaton explained that the district receives funding based on Average Daily Membership (ADM). At the high school level, if a student accumulates 10 absences, the State of Arizona may



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reduce the district's ADM funding. He stated that letters are sent to parents after six absences and again after eight absences, and a meeting is scheduled once a student reaches ten absences. Documentation must be maintained in the student's file to verify that notification letters were sent.

Mr. Heaton further explained that the state indicates districts are not required to award credit after ten absences. However, if a student is passing the class, he allows the student to receive credit. He emphasized that the district must strictly follow attendance procedures because the state closely monitors compliance and may withhold funding if requirements are not met.

8. Discussion regarding the Littlefield USD Organization Chart.

Board President Cobb asked if there is anything else on this item. Mr. Heaton advised the organization chart was approved last December.

9. Discussion regarding onsite ASBA Trainings and possible dates for training.

The Governing Board reviewed what trainings they are interested in. Mrs. Goessman will check with ASBA regarding the 4 trainings the board is interested in and will follow-up with the Board.

Gloria Etter asked about the grant for cell towers. Mr. Heaton said that is the COPS Grant and it doesn't open until April. Ms. Etter noted the bus drivers have issues hearing each other on their radios.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:57 p.m.

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Mark Cobb, Governing Board President

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Troy Heaton, Superintendent

Respectfully Submitted by:

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Sheree Goessman  
Human Resources Director