

**WESTSIDE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS ~ DISTRICT 66**  
**Board of Education Meeting Minutes ~ February 9, 2026**

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The Board of Education of School District 66 was convened in an open and public session on February 9, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. at the District Administration Office, 909 S. 76th St., Omaha, Nebraska.

**Board members present:** Kris Karnes, Vice President  
Meagan Van Gelder, Treasurer  
Sarah Rider, Treasurer-Elect  
Beth Morrissette, Secretary  
Dana Blakely, Director

**Board member absent (excused):** Adam Yale, President

Notice of the meeting was given by placing advance notice on the front page of the District's website no less than 48 hours in advance of the scheduled commencement of the meeting as authorized by Board Policy 1220. Notice for this meeting appeared beginning on January 13, 2026, and appeared continuously up through the start of this board meeting. Notice of the meeting was also published in the Daily Record on February 6 and 9, 2026, and on their website at [omahadailyrecord.com](http://omahadailyrecord.com), as well as the NE Press Association website at [nepublicnotices.com](http://nepublicnotices.com). Copies of proof of publication are attached to the official minutes. Notice of this meeting and the availability of the agenda were simultaneously given to all members of the Board of Education and available to anyone at the Board of Education office. All proceedings hereafter shown were taken while the convened meeting was open to the attendance of the public.

**District Staff in Attendance:** Mike Lucas, Mark Weichel, Andrea Haynes, Molly Hurley, Kim De La Cruz, Kami Jessop, Kelcy Tapp, Laura Mann, Robert Aranda, Matt Lee, Jake Ritonya.

**Others in Attendance\*:** Carolyn Roeder. \*Members of the public are not required to identify themselves to attend. Attendee names appearing in these minutes are those who signed a voluntary sign-in sheet.

Ms. Karnes called the Board of Education Meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. She welcomed those in attendance and confirmed that public notice had been given of the meeting under the Nebraska Open Meetings Act and that a copy of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act was posted at the meeting and on the district website, as required by law. She acknowledged that the meeting had been publicly announced and the agenda was available to any interested parties. Board Meeting attendance is noted above. Ms. Karnes requested a motion to approve an excused absence for Mr. Yale. Ms. Blakely moved for approval; Ms. Rider seconded. Motion carried by unanimous roll call vote. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**Approval of Minutes**

Ms. Karnes requested a motion for approval of the minutes from the Board of Education Meeting held on January 12, 2026. Ms. Morrissette moved for approval; Ms. Blakely seconded. Motion carried by unanimous roll call vote. Ms. Karnes requested a motion for approval of the minutes from a Grievance Hearing held on February 2, 2026. Ms. Blakely moved for approval; Ms. Rider seconded. Motion carried by unanimous roll call vote.

**Communications: Celebration of School Board Appreciation Week**

Ms. Elizabeth Power, Director of Communications and Engagement, welcomed dozens of guests representing all of our school buildings - students, staff, families - who were in attendance to help celebrate our Board of

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Education and School Board Appreciation Week. Students from each building shared messages of thanks for all the hard work our board members do to help make Westside Community Schools so awesome!

### **Bond Oversight Committee Semi-Annual Phase II Report to the Board**

Mr. Matt Herzog, Project Advocates, and Mr. Sean Conway, Bond Oversight Committee Chair, presented the semi-annual update on Phase II Bond Projects. All Phase II projects continue to remain on time and on budget. Phase II projects that have been completed on time and on budget include: ABC Building HVAC and ADA accessibility updates; WMS cafeteria expansion; and WHS restroom renovations. New buildings at Westgate and Hillside are completed; demolition of old buildings and grading for new parking lots and playgrounds is in progress. Also in progress and scheduled for completion in August 2026 are: WHS cafeteria expansion and locker room renovations; Paddock Road and Rockbrook gyms and Early Childhood Centers; and mechanical / infrastructure upgrades at Underwood Hills. Building envelope and HVAC upgrades at Westbrook Elementary will continue on a phased schedule, with work being completed in the summers of 2026; 2027 and 2028. Construction of the new Loveland Elementary will begin this spring once school is dismissed for the summer. Worksite construction fencing will be going up this month, with demolition and site-clearing of surrounding homes to begin in March. Copies of the Executive Summary and slide presentation are included in the board documents folder.

### **Phase II Bond Project: Loveland Elementary Early Release Work Package**

Mr. Herzog presented an Authorization for Early Release Work at Loveland Elementary from MCL Construction for board approval. This work will include site demolition, site grading and acquisition of precast materials. Demolition of the existing houses is scheduled to start March 1, 2026, and construction on the school site is scheduled to begin in June 2026. Staff and students will move to the District's Swing School (108th & Grover) during construction. Ms. Rider moved for approval; Dr. Van Gelder seconded. Motion carried by unanimous roll call vote. Copies of the Executive Summary and Early Release Work Authorization are included in the board documents folder.

### **Find the Why - Symphony Workforce Partnership**

Dr. Mark Weichel, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, and Mr. Todd Smith, CEO of Symphony Workforce, introduced a partnership between WCS and Symphony Workforce and the implementation of "Find the Why" career exploration. Westside Community Schools will serve as the anchor public school district for this workforce initiative that also includes the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce and the Aksarben Foundation. "Find the Why" is a nationally recognized platform that connects students to real-world, industry-aligned challenges and skill-based learning experiences, and has been implemented as the exclusive college recruiting tool for Nebraska Medicine. "Find the Why" challenges provide students with the opportunity to find solutions for real-world problems in any number of career fields, including technology, healthcare, specialty and skilled trades, manufacturing, and public service. Dr. Weichel shared that the district is planning a limited rollout during the 2026-2027 school year. This phase will include micro-challenges aligned to existing high school coursework and programming and middle school EY offerings. The challenges will be available to all students. If implementation is successful, the work will expand to a broader audience in future years. A copy of the Executive Summary is included in the board documents folder.

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### **WHS West Campus Programming Update - Curriculum and Career Development**

Ms. Heather Rogers, Program Coordinator at WHS West Campus, was joined by fellow West Campus teachers Ms. Melissa Lawson, Special Services Teacher; Mr. Ethan Jones, Art Teacher; and Mr. Corey Kennedy, JAG Teacher, to provide an update on the great success West Campus students are having with two programs that have recently been implemented: Edgenuity, a credit recovery platform; and JAG (Jobs for America's Graduates). Ms. Lawson shared that the curriculum content in Edgenuity is more engaging for students, with video lessons and virtual labs. A "guided notes" feature highlights key take-aways of lessons for students, and an "integrated accommodations" feature modifies lessons as needed, providing the teacher with more one-on-one time with each student. With the implementation of JAG at West Campus, students are provided with exposure to post-secondary education, military and job opportunities. In the classroom, students receive instruction on building their resume; polishing their speaking and personal presentation skills; and mock interviews. WHS West Campus students JoJo P., Rae D., and Eli W. were on hand to share their experience with JAG and how the course has allowed them to envision and plan for their futures after graduation from high school. A copy of the Executive Summary and slide presentation are included in the board documents folder.

### **Board Policies for Approval - #6300 and #6310**

Dr. Andrea Haynes, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, requested approval of revisions to two existing policies that were previously presented by Mr. Nick Lesiak, In-House Legal Counsel, for board consideration on January 12, 2026. (Mr. Lesiak was unable to be in attendance at tonight's board meeting.)

#### #6300 - Controversial Issues (Instruction)

These revisions come from KSB's policy book and are intended to outline the requirements for teachers teaching controversial subjects and include renaming the policy to "Sensitive Topics". Ms. Rider moved for approval; Ms. Blakely seconded. Motion carried by unanimous roll call vote.

#### #6310 - Speakers (Instruction)

These revisions are intended to clarify the steps necessary to request and approve guest speakers for classes/extracurricular activities/clubs and assemblies. The Teaching and Learning team has also provided input on these revisions. Dr. Van Gelder moved for approval; Ms. Morrissette seconded. Motion carried by unanimous roll call vote.

A copy of the Executive Summary is included in the board documents folder.

### **Personnel Report: Employment Actions Related to the Contracts of Certified Staff Members**

Dr. Andrea Haynes, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources and District Operations, presented the personnel report (six certified staff probationary contracts; one certified staff leave of absence; one certified staff retirement; four certified staff resignations; one non-approval of certified staff resignation; and one administrator contract) for board approval. Ms. Blakely moved for approval; Ms. Rider seconded. Motion carried by unanimous roll call vote. A copy of the personnel report is included in the board documents folder.

**Public Comment:** There were no requests for public comment.

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**Board Member Representation / Legislative Updates / Announcements**

The Board was represented at a number of activities and meetings over the last two weeks, including: Student Board Connection Meeting; District Caucus; 3:1 meetings; Westgate Elementary ribbon-cutting and open-house; building visits at Rockbrook, Westbrook, Loveland and WHS; middle and high school show choir competitions; swim meets and volunteering at the Lisa Ellis Westside Invitational Swim Competition; WHS Competition of Excellence; Grievance Hearing; NASB Legislative Committee meeting; and the NASB Legislative Issues Conference.

February 13, 2026	No School for Students - Teacher Work Day Metro Swim Meet at Westside High School
February 16, 2026	No School for Students - Professional Learning Day for Staff
February 17, 2026	Bond Oversight Committee Meeting - ABC Building - 6:00 p.m.
February 23, 2026	Board of Education Meeting - ABC Building - 6:00 p.m.

There being no further business, Ms. Karnes adjourned the meeting at 7:35 p.m.

  
Beth Morrissette, Secretary, Board of Education

**WESTSIDE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS  
NOTICE OF MEETING**

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2/6, 2/9 ZNEZ



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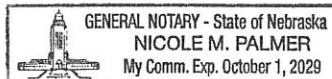
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Monday, February 09, 2026

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2/6, 2/9 ZNEZ

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