

March 2, 2026

The Board of Education, Community High School District 99, met in Workshop Session at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, March 2, 2026 at the Administrative Service Center.

Upon the Secretary's roll call, the following Board members answered present: Don Renner, President; and Members Katie Courtney, Ken Dawson, Christopher Espinoza, April Finan and Michael Riske. Kara Casten, Vice President, was absent.

Also present were Hank Thiele, Superintendent; Gina Ziccardi, Associate Superintendent for Student Learning; Scott Wuggazer, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services; Jeff Bergholtz, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources; Jill Browning, Chief Communications Officer; Courtney DeMent, North High Principal; Arwen Lyp, South High Principal; Student Board Members Ryan Enright and Romina Papavero-Gonzalez; and Juli Gniadek, Secretary.

There were three visitors. A copy of the Visitors Roster is attached.

1. STUDENT PERSPECTIVES – SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL

Ms. Lyp explained that emerging clubs are student driven and the students recruit members for the club as well as the club sponsor. She introduced two emerging clubs at South High.

Elly Hanlon and Emma Herman, members of the Society of Women Engineers Next (SWENext) club, shared the club is open to everyone. Ms. Hanlon spoke about the club allowing students to explore careers, is a safe space and has guest speakers. Ms. Herman shared club members are participating in the Period Product Drive and are working on outreach with the middle and elementary schools.

Members of the High School Alliance of Future Physicians (HSAFP) club, Danna Garcia De La Cruz and Stephanie Hernandez-Plata, shared the club is directed towards students who are pursuing a career in medicine. The club provides guest speakers from different medical fields and volunteer opportunities, according to Ms. Garcia De La Cruz. Ms. Hernandez-Plata spoke about plans for a dance marathon fundraiser, the opportunity to be more hands-on with specimens and the hope to expand student connections with medical professionals to provide more opportunities for the students.

The Board thanked the students for presenting about their new clubs.

2. STUDENT BOARD MEMBER QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

South High Student Board member Romina Papavero-Gonzalez stated there is a strong push on the message that Every Day Matters, being engaged and present in class, and holding yourself accountable. She noted spring sports are starting and South High is holding a Polar Plunge to benefit Special Olympics. Ryan Enright, North High Student Board member, shared 50 students are attending the State DECA conference. He reported students are not putting phones in the pouches but are practicing self-regulation and keeping them in backpacks and scanning has become routine, with security staff ensuring students are present in class.

3. PRESENTATION OF DISTRICT 99 EDUCATION FOUNDATION CHECKS TO GRANT RECIPIENTS

Julia Beckamn, District 99 Education Foundation President; Donna Daswon, Foundation Vice President and Grant Chair; and Martha Merilos, member of the Foundation Grant Committee, presented ceremonial checks to Foundation Grant recipients.

Jeff Grant, North High Science teacher and Science Club sponsor, shared that the grant funds were used to purchase plants for a Rain Garden on the southeast corner of North High. Mr. Grant explained the Rain Garden helps to capture and clean rain water so it does not go into the sewer system.

Kim Pakowski and Allison Bava, South High and North High Library Department Chairs, used Foundation grant funds to bring in Lincoln Award author Lamar Giles to both schools. According to the Chairs, between both schools, over 675 students were able to hear Mr. Giles speak about the writing process, his personal experiences and the writing profession in general.

Ms. Bava also received a grant to purchase six Metaquest headsets and learning management system software. Four short videos were shared by Allison Bava of how students are using the headsets for science and social studies.

Ms. Dawson stated the spring grant application went out today and applications are being accepted through the end of April. Ms. Beckman welcomed Board Members Finan and Courtney as the Board liaisons to the Foundation.

Board members thanked the grant recipients for sharing the use of their Foundation grant funds.

4. INNOVATIVE STAFF

Dr. DeMent stated the Climate of HOPE Conference brought together over 500 science educators at North High on the County Wide Institute Day. She introduced Brian Glasby, North High Science Department Chair, Jeff Grant, and Christine Christensen, Science Department Administrative Assistant, who were the key individuals in putting together the Conference. They shared the Conference provided hands on experiences for educators; the presenters were “boots on the ground” scientists, including a Nobel Prize winner, Dr. Richard Alley, serving as one of the keynote speakers; and had student volunteers coming in on their day off to assist. Mr. Glasby shared information on Project 2100, an event at the Morton Arboretum the day before, where 64 students from 20 high schools, including 13 students from District 99, were able to engage with Dr. Alley.

Jennifer Jordan, member of the South High CTE Department who holds certification in Work-Based Learning (WBL) coordination, presented to the Board information how WBL can and should be done every day in all classes, all four years, so all students can have the experience. She explained why WBL is important for students and what it entails. Ms. Lyp stated Ms. Jordan presented information on Work-Based Learning to her peers as part of a professional development showcase.

Mercedes Wynter and Bryan Flood, first year support staff members, shared how they support the PATH Program and supervise In-School Interventions (ISI). Mr. Flood detailed student expectations while in the classroom and some of the behavioral reasons students are assigned there. Ms. Wynter shared, though students are not always happy to be there, expectations are laid out from the beginning so students

are set up for success. She noted the relationships they develop with the students who have made a bad choice leads to some of the students stopping by to visit after they leave the program.

The Board thanked the staff for presenting their innovative ideas and practices.

President Renner left the meeting and appointed Member Riske Acting President.

5. 2026-2027 STAFFING PROCESS

Dr. Thiele presented an overview of key staffing considerations for 2026-2027, which included decreasing enrollment in grade 9 at South High, decreasing numbers of English Learners District-wide, more students participating in work-based learning, and an increasing number of District 99 students and outside tuition paying students at T99. He stated the result of these changes is a net decrease in cost of 2.0 FTE, with no full-time tenured staff being eliminated. Mr. Bergholtz noted, at the next Board meeting, he will present more in depth on the sectioning process and the impact on staff; Jake Giblin and Keith Palz, South and North High Associate Principals, and Gina Ziccardi, will share the program impact of the staffing allocations; and Scott Wuggazer will report on special services staffing.

6. RECEPTION OF VISITORS – PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

7. CLOSED SESSION

Member Espinoza moved and Member Dawson seconded the motion that the meeting be adjourned to Closed Session for the purpose of discussing:

- A. **OMA Exception (1) Personnel:** 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).

Upon the Secretary's roll call, Members Espinoza, Dawson, Fian, Riske and Courtney voted AYE. The Acting President declared the motion carried.

Dr. Thiele stated the only Action the Board will be taking when it comes out of Closed Session is to Adjourn.

The meeting adjourned to Closed Session at 8:09 p.m.


8. RECONVENE TO REGULAR SESSION

Upon the Secretary's roll call, the following Board members answered present: Acting President Michael Riske and Members Katie Courtney, Ken Dawson, Christopher Espinoza and April Finan. Don Renner, President, and Kara Casten, Vice President, were absent.

Also present were Hank Thiele, Superintendent; Jeff Bergholtz, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources; Courtney DeMent, North High Principal; and Juli Gniadek, Secretary

9. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business or discussion, Member Dawson moved and Member Espinoza seconded the motion that the meeting be adjourned. Upon the unanimous voice vote of the five members in attendance, the Acting President declared the motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 8:23 p.m.



Don Renner, President



Juli Gniadek, Secretary

