

The Board of Trustees of the Willis Independent School District will meet in a Regular Meeting on Wednesday, February 11, 2026 in the Willis ISD Boardroom located at 612 N. Campbell Street in the Sharon Hill Jennette Administration Building in Willis, Texas, and the business to be conducted is listed below.

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Board Secretary, Chad Jones called the Regular Business Meeting to order at 6:00 PM and announced that a quorum was present and that notice of the meeting had been posted for the time and manner required by law.

Board Secretary, Chad Jones called the roll.

Members Present: Cliff Williams, Scott Carson, and Nikita Lagway

Members Absent: Kyle Hoegemeyer, Paulett Traylor, and Charles Perry Sr.

Board Secretary, Chad Jones turned the meeting over to Superintendent, Dr. Kimberley James

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND INVOCATION

Dr. Kim James announced the next steps for the meeting calling Turner Elementary Principal, Dr. Michelle Hall and students to lead the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/PROCLAMATIONS/RESOLUTIONS/RECOGNITIONS

Parker Posey, a fifth grader at Turner Elementary, has been honored as the district's Elementary Student of the Month. Her teachers describe her as a natural leader who embodies every positive character trait taught at her school. She is recognized for her academic perseverance and her ability to offer creative solutions while working in teams. Beyond her studies, Parker is a source of constant encouragement, frequently supporting peers who feel frustrated or discouraged. Ultimately, her kind actions ensure that every student and staff member feels valued, making her an outstanding role model for the entire community.

Ananda Nath has been recognized as the Student of the Month at Brabham Middle School for his exceptional character and academic dedication. His teachers describe him as a responsible, respectful, and hardworking student who consistently puts forth his best effort in every activity. Beyond his studies, Ananda is a gifted musician and a "fantastic" trumpet player. He is known for his creative problem-solving skills and a great sense of humor that makes him a joy to be around. With a kind nature and a "great smile," he is celebrated as a well-rounded individual who truly cares about the quality of his work.

The Willis ISD Fine Arts Department highlighted a decades-long tradition of participating in the Houston Livestock and Rodeo Art Contest, involving nearly 3,000 students this year. After a rigorous selection process focused on technical requirements and creative growth, 40 finalists were sent to NRG Center to compete for prestigious awards and scholarship opportunities. The presentation concluded by celebrating the eight standout students who earned Best in Show, Gold Medal, or Special Merit honors for their Western-themed artwork.

Dr. Chasity Simon was officially introduced as the new principal of Ruth Castleschouldt Elementary, bringing 23 years of dedicated educational experience to Willis ISD. In her address, she expressed deep gratitude to God, the school board, the hiring committee, and her family for their support and trust in her appointment. Dr. Simon shared her excitement and her commitment to working closely with students, staff, and families. Her primary vision for the school is to establish a "purposeful community" where every child feels safe, valued, and supported. She concluded by pledging to build a high-level learning environment that inspires a genuine desire for students to come and learn every day.

Willis ISD honored its professional school counselors as "unsung heroes" who support students through both their highest achievements and their most difficult personal crises. The presentation recognized a full roster of counselors from every campus level—elementary, middle, and high school. Special regional and state honors were highlighted for three specific individuals:

- **Amanda Cheetum (Lynn Lucas):** Named the Region 6 Middle School Counselor of the Year.
- **Diane Wilson (Brabham):** Earned the Lone Star State School Counseling Association Bronze Award for comprehensive programming.
- **Amber McDuffy (Brabham):** Recognized alongside Diane Wilson as they both work toward achieving the Silver Award level.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Board Secretary, Chad Jones introduced the public comment period, strictly limiting it to 30 minutes total, with each Speaker allotted a maximum of three minutes to address the board. He mandated that the board will not respond to Comments and reminded speakers to respect privacy by refraining from naming students, employees, or community Members. The President also reserved the right to determine if an administrative attempt at resolution has been made; if not, the speaker will be referred to the appropriate policy before proceeding.

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Miss Sarah Willenberg was called upon to speak first, but she was not present when her name was announced. Following this, the board called for Miss Joy Dautat, who then stepped forward to deliver her comments. Parent Joy Dautat addressed the Willis School Board to request the reinstatement of middle school tennis PE and seventh-grade Spanish I electives. She argued that removing these courses creates academic and athletic inequities, noting that her daughter will lack the same early-credit opportunities her son previously enjoyed. Dautat highlighted that tennis provides vital exposure for students who cannot access the sport elsewhere, ultimately serving as a pipeline for competitive high school programs. Regarding academics, she emphasized that earning foreign language credits in middle school opens doors for future dual-credit and advanced coursework. Her testimony concluded with a plea to ensure all students have equal access to these "stepping stones" for success regardless of their outside resources.

Consent Agenda

- A. Approval of Minutes
- B. Approval of the Purchase of Library Materials
 - Speaker(s): Courtney Brown, Digital Integration Coordinator
- C. Approval of the 2026-2027 Willis Independent School District Academic Calendar
 - Speaker(s): Travis Utecht, Exe. Director of HR
- D. Approval of Staff Development Minutes Waiver for 2026-2027 School Year
 - Speaker(s): Travis Utecht, Exe. Director of HR
- E. Approval Not to Exceed Amounts for Castleschouldt Elementary School Technology Package
 - Speaker(s): Stephen Shannon, Technology
- F. Approval of the Annual Purchase of the Tyler Technologies Transportation Software
 - Speaker(s): Bob Eaton, Chief of Operations & Construction
- G. Approval of the Vendor Selection for Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment (FF&E) for Castleschouldt Elementary
 - Speaker(s): Bob Eaton, Chief of Operations & Construction
- H. Approval of the Delivery Method for Multi-Campus Data and Power Project
 - Speaker(s): Bob Eaton, Chief of Operations & Construction
- I. Approval of the Material Testing for Transportation Center
 - Speaker(s): Bob Eaton, Chief of Operations & Construction
- J. Approval of Interlocal Cooperation Contract between the University of Texas at Austin and Willis ISD regarding the use of Email Threat Detection services provided by the UT Austin Regional Security Operations Center (RSOC)
 - Speaker(s): Stephen Shannon, Exe. Director of Technology
- K. Approval of a Bilingual Sign-On Bonus 2026-2027
 - Speaker(s): Travis Utecht, Exe. Director of HR
- L. Approval of the Lone Star College Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
 - Speaker(s): Dr. Sue Clardy, Exe. Director of Accountability, Research, & Eval.
- M. Approval of District Plan to Address Uncertified Teachers
 - Speaker(s): Travis Utecht, Exe. Director of HR

Motion by Cliff Williams and seconded by Scott Carson to approve the Consent Agenda items as presented. Motion carried unanimously, 4-0.

PROGRESS MONITORING UPDATES

MOY NWEA MAP Update

- Speaker(s): Tracy Jackson, Assessment Coordinator

Willis ISD presented Middle of the Year (MOY) MAP data, showing that elementary students across all campuses exceeded projected growth in math, science, and reading, despite the rollout of a new curriculum. While middle and high school levels showed "blown out of the water" success in science and biology, administrators identified Reading Language Arts (RLA) and English as a primary area of concern due to stagnant or negative growth in older grades.

Superintendent James and board members expressed high praise for the elementary principals, noting they have been "waiting 30 years" to see such consistent growth across all campuses. In response to the data, the board and staff discussed implementing targeted supports, including small group instruction and tutorials, to address the gaps in secondary RLA. The presentation concluded with the Superintendent noting that the district is "far ahead" of where it was last year, expressing strong confidence in upcoming STAR results.

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Lone Star Governance HB3 and Superintendent's Guardrail Update

- Speaker(s): Dr. Susan Clardy, Exe. Director of Accountability, Research, & Eval

The Lone Star Governance (LSG) presentation detailed progress on House Bill 3 (HB3) College, Career, and Military Readiness (CCMR) goals and Superintendent Guardrail 5.3 regarding district safety.

HB3 Goal 3: CCMR Progress Measures

The district aims to increase the percentage of college-ready graduating seniors from 14% to 50% by 2030.

- **SAT Participation (PM 3.3):** The 2026 goal is 39% participation. While currently at 19%, the district expects to exceed 41% following the mandatory school-day SAT for 11th graders on March 18, 2026.
- **College Readiness (PM 3.4):** Currently, 2.5% of students are college-ready in both Math and English against a 12% goal for 2026. English readiness (8.4%) is currently higher than Math (3%).
- **The "Triple Crown" (PM 4.1):** This tracks seniors who earn an Industry-Based Certification (IBC), a CCMR point, and are college-ready. The district is at 6.8% toward a 12% goal, with many IBCs (like Welding and Cosmetology) pending completion at the end of the semester.

Superintendent Guardrail 5.3: Safety Standards

The district is working toward 100% compliance with TEA safety and audit standards, including conducting at least one unannounced drill per semester.

- **Drills & Audits:** Willis ISD conducted 32 unannounced emergencies in the fall with zero incidents. To date, 100% of audited instructional buildings passed their yearly intruder detection audits.
- **Panic Systems:** A silent panic alert system has been implemented in 100% of staffed district buildings.
- **Fire & Safety Checks:** All campuses were visited by the fire marshal; eight required amendments to findings. Currently, 7 out of 12 campuses have completed their unannounced safety drills for the semester, with results pending.

Board Questions and Responses

Question	Response
Are there subpopulations not included in the data?	The charts include all students (9–12), but the sub-pop breakdown highlights the largest groups (Hispanic, African-American) and key demographics (Special Ed, Eco-Disadvantaged) to monitor equity.
What is being done to improve ELA readiness?	High school teachers attended a specialized in-service to learn test-taking strategies for the SAT, ACT, and TSIA2, which are now being embedded directly into the daily curriculum.

Motion by Nikita Lagway and seconded by Scott Carson to approve the HB3 Goals and Superintendent Guardrails as presented. Motion carried unanimously, 5-0.

Please note for the record that Board President Kyle Hoegemeyer arrived at the meeting at 6:55 PM.

Upon his arrival, President Hoegemeyer was present for the Lone Star Governance (LSG) update and subsequent vote. At that time, he also officially took control of the board meeting and presided over the remaining agenda items.

Supporting Student Success through CCMR, Guidance, and Counseling

- Speaker(s): Kelly Locke, Director of Guidance & Counseling

Safety Update: Required 3 Year Texas School Safety Center Audit on Willis ISD

- Speaker(s): Meghan Ballard, Director of Federal Prog./Compliance & Grants

OTHER BUSINESS

Student Enrollment and Attendance Report

- Speaker(s): Heather Gattinger, Director of PEIMS

Financial Reports

- Speaker(s): Garrett Matej, CFO

2026-2027 Budget Calendar

- Speaker(s): Garrett Matej, CFO

Budget Calendar Overview

- **February/March:** Staffing reviews begin, including meetings with campus and department leaders. A major focus is accounting for the opening of **Castleschouldt Elementary**.
- **April/May:** Board workshops will focus on budgetary goals, enrollment assumptions, and compensation scenarios. The goal is to finalize **staff compensation** by April or May.
- **June/July:** The district will refine revenue projections based on updated property values and decreasing interest rates (affecting investment revenue). The team will also finalize the debt service budget and tax rate strategies.
- **August:** A public hearing will be held followed by the official adoption of the budget and tax rate.

Key Discussion Points & Staffing Focus

The district noted that **payroll accounts for 84% of the budget**, making staffing the most significant financial impact. Key steps include:

1. Finalizing elementary rezoning (to project campus-specific needs).
2. Reviewing secondary course selections to determine enrollment-based requirements.
3. Receiving preliminary property values in May to solidify the general fund and debt service.

Board Questions and Responses

Question	Response
Regarding debt strategies, are we looking at another defeasance (paying off debt early)?	The district is currently targeting refunding (refinancing) for the fall. As interest rates continue to fall, the district's financial advisors are identifying specific bonds to refund to lower interest costs.

Long-Range Planning Update

- Speaker(s): Dr. Sarah Blakelock, Chief Communications Officer

Capital Project Updates

- Speaker(s): Bob Eaton, Chief of Construction and Operations

Board Questions & Responses: Capital Projects

Question / Comment	Response

Question / Comment	Response
Have all the new lockers been completed at the high school?	Yes, the locker replacements for the three different locker rooms in the athletic department are 100% finished.
The "Basskat" Practice Field (High School Detention Pond): A board member joked about seeing water in the new pond and finding "desert fish" there.	The district confirmed the nickname and acknowledged the water level in the new high school detention pond.
Financial Stewardship & Bond Savings: Recognition was given to CFO Garrett Matej for effectively managing funds from the 2020, 2022, and 2024 bonds.	These savings are being directly reinvested into high-priority needs, such as the 10-classroom additions for both Cannan and Turner Elementary.

Board President’s Comments on Principals

Before moving into executive session, the Board President took a moment to personally address the school principals regarding their recent MOY (Middle of the Year) data presentations:

- **Inspiration and Energy:** He noted that the principals' action plans were so impressive and high-energy that he received phone calls from other members saying they were "hyped up" and felt like they "wanted to go be a principal."
- **Moving the Needle:** He emphasized that the board deeply appreciates the hard work being done, acknowledging that while the job is not easy, the district is clearly "moving the needle" on student performance.
- **Collective Appreciation:** He spoke on behalf of the entire board to ensure the principals knew their dedication was recognized and valued before they left for the evening.

CLOSED SESSION*: Consideration of matters for which closed sessions are authorized by Title 5, Chapter 551, Texas Government Code Sections (.071-.084)

Personnel Matters Texas Gov’t Code §551.074

Security Devices/Audits Texas Gov't Code §551.076

Consultation with Attorney: Pursuant to Texas Gov’t Code §551.071

The Board convened into Closed Session at 7:47PM

RECONVENE IN OPEN SESSION

The Board reconvened into Open Session at 9:09PM. President Hoegemeyer asked if there are any motions from closed session.

Motion by Cliff Williams and seconded by Scott Carson to approve the personnel as listed. Motion carried unanimously, 5-0.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS

Discuss and Consider the Acceptance of the LASO 4 Grant Awards and Programs

Speaker(s): Meghan Ballard, Director of Federal Prog. /Compliance & Grants

Motion by Chad Jones and seconded by Cliff Williams to approve the Superintendent’s recommendation to approve the following LASO Grant Awards and Programs as presented. Motion carried unanimously, 5-0.

Discuss and Consider Approval of the Board Resolution Regarding Senate Bill 11

Speaker(s): Travis Utecht, Exe. Director of HR

Motion by Scott Carson and seconded by Chad Jones to approve the Resolution providing a period of prayer and reading of the Bible or other religious text as provided by Section 25.0823of the Texas Education Code. Motion failed unanimously, 0-5.

Discuss and Consider Approval of Rezoning the Attendance Boundaries for Ruth Castleschouldt Elementary

Speaker(s): Bob Eaton, Chief of Construction & Operations

Motion by Scott Carson and seconded by Chad Jones to approve the Superintendent’s recommendation to approve the Attendance Boundaries for Ruth Castleschouldt Elementary. Motion carried unanimously, 5-0.

Discuss and Consider Approval of an Agreement with the City of Conroe for Utility Function, Cost Sharing, and Infrastructure Improvements and Delegating Authority to the Superintendent

Speaker(s): Dr. Kimberley James, Superintendent

Superintendent Dr. Kim James presented a \$1.858 million infrastructure and cost-sharing agreement between Willis ISD and the City of Conroe to secure water, sewer, and road services for Calfee Middle School, Castleschouldt Elementary, and the 9th Grade Campus. A key benefit of the deal is that the City will own, build, and maintain all associated infrastructure long-term, relieving the district of future maintenance obligations.

The agreement bundles several distinct financial responsibilities:

- **Water & Sewer:** A capped pro-rata share of \$718,797 for utility participation.
- **Road Obligations:** \$688,355 for the MP Clark Road project near Castleschouldt Elementary.
- **Tree Mitigation:** \$460,910 to satisfy city ordinances for the 9th Grade Campus property.

Utility rates for the elementary and middle school campuses will be set at twice the in-city rate since they are located in the City's Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ), while the 9th Grade Campus will receive standard rates. To meet school opening timelines, the district must pay the full amount within 45 days, ensuring the City completes utility connections by May 5th.

Motion by Chad Jones and seconded by Scott Carson to approve the Agreement with the City of Conroe for Utility Function, Cost Sharing, Infrastructure Improvements, and Delegate Authority to the Superintendent to Finalize and Execute the Agreement. Motion carried unanimously, 5-0.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Board President specifically thanked City of Conroe representatives Gary and Nancy for attending the board meeting. He expressed his appreciation for their presence and apologized for the meeting running late, highlighting the importance of the partnership between the City and the School District.

SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS

Superintendent Dr. Kim James expressed deep gratitude for the district’s "amazing" MAP scores and asked the community to keep board member Miss Traylor and her daughter in their prayers.

FUTURE BUSINESS/MEETINGS

March 18, 2026 5:30PM

ADJOURNMENT OF REGULAR MEETING

Motion by Cliff Williams and seconded by Scott Carson to adjourn. Motion carried unanimously, 5-0.

The meeting adjourned at 9:25PM