



Always Innovating

**South  
Texas ISD**

**RIO GRANDE VALLEY | GRADES 6-12**

## Minutes of Regular Meeting

### The Board of Directors South Texas ISD

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A Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors of South Texas ISD was held January 20, 2026, beginning at 7:00 PM in the Central Office Teaching and Learning Center, 7001 E. Expressway 83, Mercedes, Texas 78570.

1. Welcome.

Mr. Henry LeVrier, Board President, welcomed guests, staff and fellow Board members.

2. Board Meeting called to order.

The meeting was called to order by Henry LeVrier, Board President at approximately 7:00 p.m., at which time he was assured by Superintendent Dr. Marco Antonio Lara, Jr., that notices of the meeting were posted properly according to the laws of Texas and that a quorum of the Board was present.

The following board members were present:

David Briones	La Feria
Douglas E. Buchanan	Raymondville
Abiel J. Cantú	Raymondville
Sasha Crane	McAllen
Adrian Garcia	Brownsville
Irma Garcia	McAllen
Margarita Garcia	San Juan
Noel Garza, DDS	Mission
Sylvia Sánchez Garza, Ph.D.	Edinburg
Andrea E. Gonzales-Loya	Raymondville
Henry LeVrier	Brownsville
Sandra Garza Ochoa, Ph.D.	Weslaco
Eduardo Roberto Rodriguez	Brownsville
Oscar Salinas	Edinburg
Jaime R. Solis	Edinburg
David Suarez	Weslaco
Rick Villarreal, DDS	Rancho Viejo

Sue Ann Villarreal

Raymondville

The following Board members were absent:

Eduardo L. "Larry" Cantu	Los Fresnos
Robert J. Lerma	Brownsville
Rodolfo "Rudy" Ramirez	Edinburg
Ruth Villarreal	Mission
Zach Zamora	Mission

The following staff members were present:

Marco Antonio Lara, Jr., Ed.D.	Ramon Longoria
Efrain Garza	Mathew Maciel
Amanda Odom	Carmen Noriega
Marla Knaub	
Chief Steven Cortez	
Frank Trevino	
Marcos Flores	
Brenda De La Garza, Ed.D.	
Reynaldo Rodriguez, Ed.D.	
Marco Zamora	
Cynthia Chairez, Ed.D.	
Eric Gutierrez	
Michele Guajardo, Ph.D.	

3. Pledges of Allegiance.

The Pledges of Allegiance were led by Dr. Sandra Garza Ochoa.

4. District Call to Action.

The District Call to Action was led by Dr. Sandra Garza Ochoa.

5. Moment of Silence.

The Board held a moment of silence.

Board President, Henry LeVrier, recommended a motion to move the order of agenda items 8 and 9 as next to be addressed. A motion was made by Dr. Noel Garza, seconded by Jaime Solis, approving to re-order the items to be addressed as recommended by the Board President. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Public Comments for Agenda Topics.

The Board did not receive any requests to address the Board of Directors on any agenda topics.

7. Public Audience for Non-Agenda Topics.

A request for Public Audience for a non-agenda topic was received by Vanessa Castillo, regarding parent concerns regarding procedural transparency and documentation. The Board allotted three minutes for comment.

8. Receipt of appointment by Hidalgo County Judge Richard F. Cortez of Irma Garcia to the South Texas ISD Board of Directors for the unexpired term of Hidalgo County At-Large position.

Hidalgo County Judge Richard F. Cortez of Irma Garcia to the South Texas ISD Board of Directors for the unexpired term of Hidalgo County At-Large position.

9. Administer Oath of Office for newly appointed Board member.

Honorable Richard F. Cortez, Hidalgo County Judge, was present to administer Oath of Office for newly appointed Board Member.

10. Public Hearing: 2025 Federal Report Card and Texas Academic Performance Report.

Niranda Flores, Director for Academic Excellence provided a report on the 2025 Federal Report Card and Texas Academic Performance Report.

11. Awards & Recognitions.
  - A. Recognition of South Texas ISD Board of Directors in honor of School Board Recognition Month.

On behalf of the Board, Campus Principals shared remarks of gratitude and tokens of appreciation to the Board in honor of School Board Recognition Month.

- B. Swearing in of STISD's Police Officer/K9 Handler

Chief of Police, Steven Cortez swore in Police Officer/K9 Handler/Instructor, Armando Peña.

12. Approval of Consent Agenda.

In order to promote efficient meetings, the Board may act upon more than one item by a single vote through the use of consent agenda. Consent items shall be items placed on the Agenda marked with an asterisk (\*) for which no Board discussion is anticipated and for which the Superintendent recommends approval. Prior to the meeting, at the request of any member of the Board of Directors, any item on the consent agenda shall be removed and given individual consideration. Requests for individual consideration are made at least a half-hour prior to Board meetings and requests must be directed to either the Board President or the Superintendent.

A motion was made by Abiel J. Cantú, seconded by Doug Buchanan, approving the consent agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

13. \*Action: Review and act on the December 2, 2025 Board Meeting Minutes.

Approved with the consent agenda.

14. \*Action: Review and act on the December 10, 2025 Board Special Called Meeting Minutes.

Approved with the consent agenda.

15. Finance & Operations Committee - Noel Garza, D.D.S. and Doug E. Buchanan, Co-Chairs

Dr. Noel Garza reported on the following items:

- A. \*Report on checks written since last report.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- B. \*Action: Review and act on removing assets from district inventory.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- C. \*Action: Review and act on approving the following donations:
  1. Donation to South Texas ISD Rising Scholars Academy in the amount of \$1,000.00 from Mr. Cesar A. Gonzalez and Ms. Inez M. Leal for the Athletic Department.
  2. Donation to South Texas ISD Health Professions in the amount of \$40.00 from Krisha Danae Brister for the Chess Club.
  3. Donation to South Texas ISD Science Academy of a Conductor Podium from Melhart Music Center with an estimated value of \$548.00 for Band and Choir events.

Approved with the consent.

- D. Action: Review and accept Financial Statements & Report of Independent Certified Public Accountants, South Texas Independent School District/South Texas Independent School District Public Facilities Corporation, for the year that ended August 31, 2025.
  1. Annual Financial Report

Ricky Longoria and Luis Lopez from Burton McCumber & Longoria, LLP, reported on the Annual Financial Report for the Year Ended August 31, 2025. A report titled South Texas Independent School District Annual Financial Report was distributed, discussed, and accepted. Mr. Longoria reported the financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the respective financial position of the governmental activities, each major fund, and the aggregate remaining fund information of South Texas ISD, as of August 31, 2025, and the respective changes in financial position, and, where applicable, cash flows thereof for the year then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

In short, Mr. Longoria reported there were no findings for this audit report and the evidence obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide the basis for their audit.

A motion was made by Jaime Solis, seconded by Eduardo Rodriguez, to accept the Financial Statements & Report of Independent Certified Public Accountants, South Texas Independent School District/South Texas Independent School District Public Facilities Corporation, for the year that ended August 31, 2025. The motion passed unanimously.

E. \*Action: Review and act on the following payment applications:

1. Payment application #15 to Gerlach Builders, LLC in the amount of \$315,520.59 for the Mercedes Athletic Fields project.
2. Payment application #2 (final) to Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc. in the amount of \$8,100.00 for the Medical Professions Portable Building.
3. Payment application #2 (final) to Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc. in the amount of \$11,400.00 for the Preparatory Academy Portable project.
4. Payment application #13 to Holchemont, LTD in the amount of \$4,152.66 for the Edinburg Athletic Fields project.
5. Payment application #6 to Herrcon in the amount of \$231,591.00 for the Science Academy CTE Expansion project.

Approved with the consent agenda.

F. \*Action: Review and act on the following requisition(s):

1. Requisition #138003 to Magazine Subscriptions in the amount of \$3,341.80 for the purchase of magazines for Medical Professions.
2. Requisition #138217 to Follett Content Solutions in the amount of \$2,175.93 for the purchase of books for Biblioteca las Americas.
3. Requisition #139144 to Barnes and Noble in the amount of \$2,365.20 for the purchase of books for Gateway to the World.
4. Requisition #139169 to Follett Content Solutions in the amount of \$1,081.83 for the purchase of books for Gateway to the World.
5. Requisition #139184 to Follett Content Solutions in the amount of \$1,991.68 for the purchase of books for Biblioteca las Americas.

Approved with the consent agenda.

16. Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment Committee - Sandra Garza Ochoa, Ph.D. and Sue Ann Villarreal, Co-Chairs

Dr. Sandra Garza Ochoa reported on the following items:

- A. \*Report on the 2025 Federal Report Card.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- B. \*Report on 2024 Texas Academic Performance Report.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- C. \*Action: Review and act on the proposed action to update course codes under the AP Capstone Diploma Program.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- D. \*Action: Review and act on the approval of the addition of new CTE Course.

Approved with the consent agenda.

17. Buildings and Grounds Committee - E. Larry Cantu and David Suarez, Co-Chairs

David Suarez reported on the following items:

- A. Report on the following projects:
  - 1. Athletic Fields
  - 2. CTE Automotive Expansion at Science Academy

An update was provided on the Athletic Fields and the CTE Automotive Expansion at Science Academy.

- B. Action: Review and act on approving additional projects to the 2025-2026 Capital Improvements, and approving Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc. as the architect of record for those projects.

A motion was made by David Suarez, seconded by Jaime Solis, approving the addition of the Parking Lot and Performing Arts Center to the 2025-2026 Capital Improvement Projects and approving Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc. as the Architect of Record for the Parking Lot and authorizing Administration to go out for Request for Qualifications for an Architect for the Performing Arts Center. The motion passed unanimously.

- C. Action: Review and act on accepting the Science Academy Athletic Fields and Concession Stand/Restroom project as substantially complete.

A motion was made by David Suarez, seconded by Jaime Solis, accepting the Science Academy Athletic Fields and Concession Stand/Restroom project as substantially complete. The motion passed unanimously.

- D. Action: Review and act on accepting the Health Professions Concession Stand/Restroom project as substantially complete.

A motion was made by David Suarez, seconded by Eduardo Rodriguez, accepting the Health Professions Concession Stand/Restroom project as substantially complete. The motion passed unanimously.

18. Policy, Planning, Projects & Partnerships Committee - Abiel J. Cantú and Oscar Salinas, Co-Chairs

Abiel J. Cantú reported on the following items:

- A. Report on Resolution Regarding Senate Bill 11 Period of Prayer and Reading of the Bible or Other Religious Text.

Efrain Garza reported on the resolution regarding Senate Bill 11: Period of Prayer and Reading or other Religious text. This was only a report.

- B. Action: Review and act on TASB (LOCAL) Policy Update 126.

A motion was made by Abiel J. Cantú, seconded by Oscar Salinas, approving the TASB (LOCAL) Policy Update 126. The motion passed unanimously.

19. Community & Governmental Relations Committee - Ruth Villarreal and Zach Zamora, Co-Chairs

Sasha Crane reported on the following items:

- A. \*Report: Update regarding the current marketing campaign and future possibilities for student recruitment.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- B. Report on Enrollment Process for 2026-2027 School Year.

Amanda Odom shared an update on the Enrollment Process for the 2026-2027 School Year.

20. Superintendent's Report - Marco Antonio Lara, Jr., Ed.D.

A. \*Campus Reports

1. Preparatory Academy - M. Zamora
2. Rising Scholars Academy - R. Rodriguez, Ed.D.
3. World Scholars - C. Chairez, Ed.D.
4. Medical Professions - J. Lucio
5. Health Professions - M. Guajardo, Ph.D.
6. Science Academy - E. Gutierrez
7. Virtual Academy - E. Gutierrez

Approved with the consent agenda.

B. \*Action: Review and act on the following out of district student/staff travel:

1. 2026 National High School Chess Championship, March 27-29, 2026, in Chicago, IL.
2. TSA National Competition, June 22-26, 2026, in Washington D.C.

Approved with the consent agenda.

C. District Reports

1. Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources
  - a. \*Report on resignations and retirements of professional staff.
  - b. \*Report on professional vacancies.

Approved with the consent agenda.

2. Executive Director for Student Support
  - a. \*Enrollment and Attendance Report.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- b. \*Action: Review and act on proposed admission qualifications for students and campus target populations for 2026-2027 school year.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- c. Report on Student Support Services.

Marcos Flores provided an update on Student Support Services.

3. Executive Director for Special Programs
  - a. Report on Special Programs.

Dr. Brenda De La Garza provided a report on Special Programs.

- b. Report on the South Texas Tri-County Special Education Co- Op.

Dr. Brenda De La Garza provided a report on the South Texas Tri-County Special Education Co-Op.

4. Executive Director for Academic Excellence
  - a. Report on Curriculum, Instruction and Assessments & Bilingual/ESL Program.

Niranda Flores provided a report on Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessments & Bilingual/ESL Program.

5. Chief of Police
  - a. Report on Safety and Security.

Chief Steven Cortez provided an update on Safety and Security.

- b. Action: Review and act on accepting the K-9.org grant for one Narcotics Detection K9 for the South Texas ISD Police Department.

A motion was made by Andrea E. Gonzales Loya, seconded by Abiel J. Cantú, accepting the K-9.org grant for one Narcotics Detection K9 for the South Texas ISD Police Department. The motion passed unanimously.

21. **EXECUTIVE SESSION: The Board of Directors met on January 20, 2026 at 8:42 p.m. in a closed or executive session as pursuant to the Texas Government Code Section, 551.071, 551.072, 551.074, 551.082, 551.084 and 551.001. The Board Vice-President, Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza, served to record the minutes of the closed session to discuss the following:**
  - A. 551.074, 551.071 Personnel Matters and consultation with school attorney regarding Personnel Matters: Closed Meeting
    1. Recommendation of professional staff for the remainder of the 2025-2026 school year.
      - a. District Student Wellness Specialist
    2. Discussion and possible action to approve employee permission for 3rd party employment as part-time lecturer (K.L.).

The Board ended the Executive Session at 9:06 p.m.

22. OPEN SESSION: Action on any Item Deliberated in Closed Meeting

A. 551.074, 551.071 Personnel Matters and consultation with school attorney regarding Personnel Matters:

1. Action: Review and act on recommendation of professional staff for the remainder of the 2025-2026 school year.
  - a. District Student Wellness Specialist

Dr. Tony Lara, Superintendent of Schools, recommended the employment of Amanda Jade Aguayo as District Student Wellness Specialist (11 months) for the remainder of the 2025-2026 school year.

A motion was made by Eduardo Rodriguez, seconded by Jaime Solis, approving the recommendation of professional staff as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Consideration and possible action to approve employee permission for 3rd party employment as part-time lecturer (K.L.).

The Board did not take any action on this item.

23. Adjournment.

The Board adjourned the meeting at 9:08 p.m.