

April 21, 2026

The Board of Trustees of Willis ISD met in a PASA Workshop on April 21, 2026 at the Sharon Hill Jennette Administration Building in the Willis ISD Boardroom, 612 N. Campbell Street, Willis, Texas 77378, and the business to be conducted is listed below.

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

President Kyle Hoegemeyer called the Board Workshop to order at 7:04 PM, announcing 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: Scott Carson, Charles Perry, Kyle Hoegemeyer, Paulett Traylor, Nikita Lagway, & Chad Jones

Members Absent: Cliff Williams

BOARD WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

- **Purpose:** To review and update board policies, many of which had not been revised in over 20 years (some dating back to 1994/1995).
- **Cost Efficiency:** The administration is moving specific information (X policies) from formal board policy to administrative regulations or handbooks to save **\$45 per page** in TASB maintenance fees.
- **The "X to A" Transition:** Policies labeled with an **X** are district-designed; transitioning them to **A** adopts TASB's standard boilerplate language.

Policy Updates: Questions & Responses

Section A & B: Board Operations & Governance

Policy	Topic	Action/Discussion
AE	District Goals	Deleted. Information will now live on the website and in board operating procedures to save costs.
AF	Innovation District	Updated. Standardized boilerplate language used. References to the DOI plan were removed from individual policies to a single link to reduce charges.
BAA	Board Powers/Duties	Deleted. Removed due to redundancies with policy BE (Legal) .
BBB	Board Elections	Updated. Basic update to election years and terms.
BBD	Training/Orientation	Updated. Designates the Chief Communications Officer as the Public Information Coordinator instead of the Superintendent.

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Policy	Topic	Action/Discussion
BBE	Board Authority	Updated. Shored up language regarding special report requests and removed info already covered in operating procedures.
BBF	Ethics/Code of Conduct	Updated. Aligned with the TASB model.

Board Question (Mr. Jones): Why was the "Code of Conduct" language removed?

- **Response:** TASB recommended removal because it differed from standard models. However, the Board can choose to keep it if they feel it represents core values, despite the \$45/page cost.

Section C: Business & Support Services

Policy	Topic	Action/Discussion
CDA	Investments	Updated. Removed detailed liability language already covered by the Public Funds Investment Act.
CE	Annual Budget	Updated. Removed requirement for enrollment projections from formal policy; these are now standard operating procedures.
CFB	Inventories	Updated. Threshold for capitalization increased from \$5,000 to \$10,000 to match state law.
CFG	Cash Handling	Updated. Moved specific handling procedures to the business office manual for easier updates.
CH	Purchasing	Action: Increased board approval threshold from \$50,000 to \$100,000 .
CV	Facilities/Construction	Action: Increased board approval threshold from \$25,000 to \$100,000 .
CNB	District Vehicles	Updated. Authorizes the Superintendent to use district vehicles/buses for emergency/disaster relief (e.g., hurricanes).

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Policy	Topic	Action/Discussion
CPC	Records Management	Updated. Designates the Chief Communications Officer as the Records Management Officer.

Board Question (On CH/CV): How will we stay informed if the threshold is higher?

- **Response:** The district will maintain proper communication for any items hitting the \$50k+ mark, even if they don't require a formal vote.

Section D: Personnel

Policy	Topic	Action/Discussion
DBA/DCA	Employment/DOI	Updated. Cleaned up language to refer to the District of Innovation plan rather than repeating details.
DCA	Probationary Contracts	Updated. Aligns with standard DOI practice for "five of eight" year contracts.
DCB	Term Contracts	Updated. Updated titles from "Assistant Superintendent" to "Superintendent's Executive Team."
DEEC	Leaves & Absences	Action: Removed the 30-day cap on local leave accumulation. Added a requirement to retire under TRS to receive the \$50/day payout.
DFE	Resignations	Updated. Allows the HR lead to accept resignations for contract employees in the Superintendent's stead (with prior communication).
DNA	Performance Appraisal	Updated. District is moving to T-TESS 2.0 as one of 15 pilot districts in Texas.

Section E: Instruction

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Policy	Topic	Action/Discussion
EHBF	Special Ed Cameras	Updated. Explicitly adds the Executive Director of Technology and Director of Special Education as authorized viewers of footage.
EIC	Academic Achievement	Updated. Removed the 4.0 unweighted GPA from the <i>ranking</i> section to avoid confusion with the 6.0 weighted GPA used for class rank.

Board Question (On EIC): Do middle school courses count toward GPA?

- **Response:** Courses like Algebra or Biology taken in middle school count toward the **4.0 GPA** (for college apps) but **do not** count toward the high school **weighted class rank**. This encourages students to take risks without hurting their rank.

GPA & Grading Clarifications

Course Auditing and Failures

- **Auditing:** Parents have the right to request a student repeat a course they have already passed (e.g., to strengthen content knowledge). In these cases, the student **audits** the course; they receive the knowledge, but the new grade is **not calculated** in the GPA.
- **Failing Grades:** If a student fails a course and retakes it, **both grades** (the failure and the passing grade) are calculated into the GPA and class rank. The district does not average them or drop the failing mark.

The "No D" Policy (Cohort 2026 Forward)

- Willis ISD does not recognize a grade of "D" (traditionally 60–69).
- **Current Practice:** A grade of **70–79 is a C**, which earns **2.0 quality points**.
- **The Correction:** While this was being calculated correctly for the *weighted* GPA, a glitch was found in the *unweighted* 4.0 GPA. The district has recently communicated with seniors (Cohort 2026) to correct this alignment.
- **Dual Credit Exception:** Lone Star College allows grades of 60–69 (a "D"). If a student earns this in a dual credit course, the district converts it to a **70** to ensure it is a passing grade under local policy.

The Transition to a Three-Tier System (Cohort 2030)

Beginning with the incoming 9th graders (Class of 2030), the district is shifting to a **Whole Number System** to comply with state recommendations (Mike Morath/TEA) and to ensure fairness across tiers.

New Tier Structure (Cohort 2030)

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Tier	Courses
Tier 1	AP and Dual Credit (Academic)
Tier 2	Honors and CTE Dual Credit
Tier 3	All Level Courses

Why Move to Whole Numbers?

The move from decimals (e.g., 5.1, 5.2) to whole numbers (5.0, 4.0) was necessary for two reasons:

1. **Equity for Tier 3:** Under the old decimal system, modified content students were essentially being given a "D" (1.0) as a starting point. Moving to whole numbers allows them to start at a **2.0 (a "C")**, matching the baseline of other tiers.
2. **Avoiding "Honors Penalties":** In a decimal-based three-tier system, "Level" students could mathematically end up with the same quality points as "Honors" students, which would be unfair to those in more rigorous courses.

Valedictorian, Salutatorian, and Tiebreakers

Ranking & Enrollment

- **Calculation Date:** For seniors, "walking" class rank is calculated using the **3rd nine-week grades** plus the **4th nine-week grades** pulled during the **6th week of the last quarter** (typically late April).
- **Eligibility:** To be Valedictorian or Salutatorian, a student must be **continuously enrolled** for the last two years immediately preceding graduation. This prevents "move-ins" from taking top honors from long-term students.

Tiebreaker Procedures

If two students have the same GPA, the following steps are taken in order:

1. **Count Tier 1 Courses:** The student who completed more Tier 1 (AP/Dual Credit) courses wins the tie.
2. **Tier 1 GPA:** If still tied, the district calculates the GPA of **only** the Tier 1 courses out to the **fourth decimal point**.

Note on "Highest Ranking Graduate": By law, the highest-ranking graduate receives a specific college scholarship. Starting in 2027, the local Valedictorian and the "Highest Ranking Graduate" will always be the same person to ensure the scholarship stays with a local student.

GPA Exemptions & Local Credits

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- **Exemptions:** Students can exempt **one course** in their junior year and up to **two** in their senior year from their GPA (typically fine arts or athletics). This allows high-achieving students to remain in extra-curricular without "diluting" their GPA with a lower-weighted course.
- **Local Credits:** Positions like "Office Aide" are considered local credit and are **not** included in GPA calculations.

Instructional & Admissions Policy Updates

Policy EIE: Retention and Promotion

- **Clarification of "Passing":** The definition of a passing grade was updated to reflect "essential knowledge and skills" (TEKS) rather than just a numerical scale. The passing standard remains a **70**.

Policy FDA: Inter-district Transfers

- **Removal of Academic Barriers:** Following TASB recommendations, the district will no longer use **STAAR scores** or **previous grades** as conditions for accepting transfer students.
 - **Remaining Criteria:** The district continues to evaluate transfers based on **attendance** and **disciplinary history**.
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Operational & Student Services Updates

Policy	Topic	Action/Discussion
FEA	Compulsory Attendance	Updated. Per Labor Code 60, the district can only require proof of reading, spelling, grammar, math, and citizenship for homeschooling; Science and Social Studies requirements were removed.
FE	Attendance / Campus	Updated. Willis remains a closed campus (students cannot leave for lunch). This was moved from formal policy to the student handbook/regulations as there is no legal policy requiring it to be at the board level.
FFA	Wellness Plan	Updated. Oversight of the district wellness plan was transferred from the Assistant Superintendent level to the Director of Nursing .
FFAA	TB Screening	Deleted. Tuberculosis screening is no longer a legal requirement for students; the outdated language was removed.
FFAC	Narcan Training	Updated. Standardized language to require "at least one" authorized individual per campus to meet legal minimums, though the district typically trains 6–8 staff members per campus.

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Policy	Topic	Action/Discussion
FL	Student Records	Updated. Title changed to "Director of Special Education." The records address was updated to the District Administration Building.
FMB	Student Government	Deleted. Removed from formal policy and moved to administrative regulations.
FMG	Student Travel	Updated. The authority to approve in-state/out-of-state trips was shifted from the Superintendent to the Executive Directors of Elementary and Secondary Education.
FNAB	Use of Facilities	Updated. Added Elementary campuses to the policy allowing non-curriculum student groups (e.g., "Cats for Christ") to meet on-site.
FNCA	Dress Code	Updated. Removed the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP) from the general dress code policy; DAEP will maintain its own specific dress code in its handbook.
FNF	Drug Testing	Action: Amended policy to align with actual practice, limiting random drug testing to grades 9–12 (previously 7–12).
GE	Parent Organizations	Updated. Guidelines for Booster Clubs and PTOs moved to administrative regulations and the booster club handbook.
GKD/A	Facility Use/Literature	Updated. Maintained current practice for facility rentals/pricing and clarified that non-school literature is placed on designated public information tables.

BUDGET WORKSHOP #1 (FY 2026-2027)

Current Fiscal Year (2025-2026) Status

- **Revenue Surplus:** The district is projecting a **\$3 million surplus** for the current year. This is primarily due to state property values coming in lower than projected (resulting in more state aid) and high CTE (Career & Technical Education) enrollment.
- **Current ADA:** Average Daily Attendance is holding steady at **8,739** (projected 8,750).

Proposed Retention Payment (Action Item for Tomorrow)

Due to the current year surplus, the administration recommends a **one-time retention payment:**

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- **Amount:** \$1,500 for all eligible employees (exempt, non-exempt, part-time, and SROs).
- **Eligibility:** Must be employed by **May 1, 2026**.
- **Claw back Provision:** To discourage mid-year resignations, employees who receive the payment and resign or are terminated before **January 31, 2027**, must reimburse the \$1,500.
- **Total Cost:** Approximately **\$1.8 million** (covering ~1,200 employees).

2026-2027 Budget Assumptions

- **Enrollment Growth:** Projected growth of **211 students** (Total ADA: 8,950).
- **Property Values:** Official values and tax rates are not yet available (Non-legislative year).

Baseline Budget: The district is currently building the "layering" for the new budget, Current Year Surplus: Strategic Reinvestment

After the proposed **\$1.8M - \$2M retention payment** (which covers approximately **650 certified teachers** and 680 other staff), the district is exploring strategic one-time purchases to offload future costs from the general fund.

Technology & Infrastructure Priorities

The community survey indicated a preference for using general fund money rather than bond money for technology.

- **Teacher Laptop Refresh:** Approximately **650 units** needing replacement (**\$400k - \$520k**).
- **CTE Lab Upgrade:** A "domino" strategy where CTE labs get new high-end computers, and their current units (which still support Windows 11) are shifted to administrative desks to replace aging desktops.
- **Chromebooks:** Proactive planning for an investment in the next 1–2 years to maintain 1:1 student ratios.

Safety & Programs

- **Security Radios:** Standardizing district-wide communication with a **\$263k** investment (offset by a **\$110k safety grant**).
- **Fine Arts:** Establishing a formal replacement schedule for instruments.

2026-2027 Revenue & Baseline Projections

The district is starting with a **\$104M revenue baseline**. While interest rates are declining (lowering anticipated interest income), property value growth and enrollment are expected to fill the gap.

The "Five Million Dollar" Buffer: The district has a projected **\$5M margin** between baseline revenue (\$104M) and baseline expenditures (\$99M). However, the administration cautioned that new staffing and inflation will quickly "eat these buckets."

New Staffing Layers for 2026-2027

1. Castleschouldt Elementary Staffing (\$1.22M)

Staffing remains "lean," with 90-95% of teachers transferring from other campuses following the students.

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- **New Roles:** Principal, AP, Counselor, Secretary, Registrar, and specialist positions (Art, Music, PE) that cannot be shared.
- **Operations:** 5 custodians and 2 groundskeepers to maintain the new facility.

2. Enrollment Growth Positions (\$1M)

Based on district ratios, **14 new teaching positions** are projected across campuses to keep class sizes manageable. The budget assumes an average of **\$72k per teacher** (Step 6 with benefits).

3. Special Education (SPED) Impact

SPED enrollment is outpacing general growth.

- **The Request:** Initial campus requests totaled 25 positions (**\$1.5M**).
- **The Goal:** Administration is working to "whittle" this down to roughly **\$800k - \$900k** while still meeting legal requirements.
- **Funding Gap:** While the state recently added a **\$1,000 incentive** for initial evaluations, the district spends significantly more on SPED personnel than the state's **\$10.6M** allocation provides.

4. Transportation Realignment (\$383k)

The move to a **three-tier bus schedule** has shifted drivers from 6-hour contracts to 8-hour days.

- **Impact:** Every additional hour worked district-wide adds **\$4,000** to the daily budget.
- **Note:** The district continues to provide transportation to every student regardless of distance (exceeding the state's 2-mile reimbursement rule) to ensure student safety.

5. Additional Administrative & Support Roles (\$414k)

Six key positions made it through the final review levels:

- High School Nurse.
 - Split Assistant Principal (Cannan/Turner) for Bilingual/SPED support.
 - Assistant Director of HR.
 - Elementary Math Specialist.
 - Fine Arts Para (Roark).
 - Data Analyst/Cloud Safety Specialist (Technology).
- Including staffing for the new elementary school and upcoming compensation scenarios.

Final 2026-2027 Budget Capacity Snapshot

The district is working with a narrow margin as it moves toward the official budget adoption in August.

Item	Amount	Status
Total Projected Revenue	\$104,000,000	Preliminary

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Item	Amount	Status
Baseline Expenses	(\$99,000,000)	personnel & operations
Initial Working Capacity	\$5,000,000	
<i>Staffing: Castleschouldt Elementary</i>	(\$1,250,000)	Hard Number
<i>Staffing: Enrollment Growth</i>	(\$1,000,000)	Hard Number
<i>Transportation: Realignment of Hours</i>	(\$383,000)	Hard Number
<i>Special Education (Estimated)</i>	(\$850,000)	In Review
<i>Additional Positions & Reclasses</i>	(\$500,000)	In Review
Remaining Capacity for Raises	\$916,000	Available for Comp

The administration noted that the **Special Education** and **Additional Position** buckets are still being aggressively reviewed. While the initial SPED request was \$1.5M, the goal is to cut that to \$800k–\$900k through strategic use of IDEA-B grants.

Staff Compensation Scenarios

Because the remaining budget capacity is only ~\$916k, the district faces challenges in matching previous years' raises without additional revenue or further cuts.

1. Teacher Scale (Step Increases)

- **Scenario A (Steps only):** Simply moving teachers to the next year of experience costs **\$558,000**.
- **Scenario B (Steps + \$500 Scale Increase):** Costs **\$868,000**. This nearly exhausts all remaining capacity before addressing non-teaching staff.

2. Non-Instructional & Hourly Staff

- **3% Increase across the board:** Costs **\$856,000** (split between \$275k for Admin and \$386k for non-exempt/hourly).

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- **Combined Impact:** Doing a \$500 teacher scale increase *plus* 3% for other groups would cost **\$1.7 million**, putting the budget into a **deficit**.

Strategic Context

The administration reminded the board that the **\$1,500 retention payment** (to be voted on tomorrow) was designed to provide immediate relief because of the tight 2026-2027 raise capacity.

Debt Service & Financial Comparison

The district reviewed its debt profile as it prepares for future facility needs. Total current debt (principal + interest) through 2055 is **\$747.7 million**.

Regional Comparison (Debt per Student)

To provide "apples-to-apples" context, the district compared its debt to neighbors:

- **Waller ISD:** \$178,000 per student (Tax rate: \$0.44)
- **Montgomery ISD:** \$99,000 per student (Tax rate: \$0.37)
- **Willis ISD: \$77,838 per student** (Tax rate: \$0.368)
- **New Caney / Splendora:** Similar debt levels but taxing at the \$0.50 state ceiling.
- **Conroe ISD:** Outlier due to massive tax base (\$0.28 rate).

Future Bond Capacity

- **No Tax Rate Increase:** The district could pass up to **\$75 million** in new bonds without raising the tax rate.
- **Incremental Increases:** Every **\$25 million** beyond that point would require a tax rate increase of approximately **0.7 cents**.

Early Debt Redemption

The district is identifying opportunities to pay off some existing debt early this summer to create future capacity and be strategic with interest savings.

Summary Conclusion: The district remains in a strong position with a current-year surplus, but opening new campuses back-to-back creates significant "payroll drag." The board will continue to monitor enrollment and property values throughout May and June to finalize raise amounts.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: No one signed up for public comment.

ADJOURNMENT OF REGULAR MEETING

Motion by Chad Jones and seconded by Paulett Traylor to adjourn. Motion carried unanimously, 6-0.

The meeting adjourned at 9:20 PM