May 4, 2026

The Board of Education, Community High School District 99, met in Workshop Session at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, May 4, 2026 at the Administrative Service Center.

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

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; Travis McGuire, Assistant Superintendent for Learning Resources; Jeree Ethridge, CSBO; Jill Browning, Chief Communications Officer; Phil Howard, Chief Technology Officer; Kelly Zuerner, Director of Staff Experiences; Ryan Doherty, Director of Student Experiences; Courtney DeMent, North High Principal; Arwen Lyp, South High Principal; Student Board Members Ryan Enright and Romina Papavero-Gonzalez; and Juli Gniadek, Secretary.

There was one visitor. A copy of the Visitors Roster is attached.

1. STUDENT RECOGNITIONS – SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL

South High IHSA Short Film Sponsor Chris Blum introduced Marley Birch, Screenwriter and Assistant Director for the 4th Place in State IHSA Short Film. Ms. Birch recognized the following, who were part of the 4th Place Production: Gretchen Haselhorst, Director; Adrian Herres, Editor; Leo Popovich, Camera; Kate Wills, Costume; and Cast members Pierre Brown, Joseph Conyer, Brady Dillon, Em Dow, Camila Rostro-Duran and Miles Price.

Shannon Lahey, South High Cheerleading Coach, introduced Jada Judkins Mixon who received IHSCCO honors. Ms. Lahey also recognized Olivia Rodriguez, who received the same honor, but was unable to attend. South High FCCLA Advisor Amanda Forrest, introduced Victoria Zibert, who placed in the Top 5 and received a perfect score in Fashion Construction. Ms. Forrest recognized Evelyn Benitez, who was unable to attend, for placing in the Top 5 in Pastry Arts.

Those in attendance congratulated the students on their accomplishments.

2. STAFF RECOGNITIONS

Dr. Thiele displayed a list of staff members recognized by the Regional Office of Education as Educator of the Year nominees and shared Darin Gipson (Educational Support Person), Jeff Grant and Marybeth Senser (High School Educators), and Gina Ziccardi (School Administrator) were all named finalists. He announced Mr. Grant was named the DuPage Regional Office of Education Educator of the Year.

3. STUDENT PERSPECTIVES – ISBE STUDENT SUMMIT

South High students Anvi Krishnardula, Smera Sujith Kumar and Yamil Pacheco shared their experiences at the ISBE Student Summit in Springfield. Ms. Krishnardula provided an overview of the day's activities; spoke about the different perspectives she heard from students around the State; and

commented on all the opportunities District 99 offers. Ms. Sujith Kumar shared what she learned from other high school students about the programs their schools offer; their views on AI and cell phones; and expressed appreciation for all the AP offerings District 99 has and how those classes prepare students for college.

Mr. Pacheco, one of 21 members of the Student Advisory Council from across the State, spoke about the preparation that went into planning the Student Summit and presenting the students' findings to the Illinois State Board of Education. Dr. Thiele presented Mr. Pacheco, from the State Superintendent of Education Dr. Tony Sanders, a letter, cords and a plaque in recognition of his service on the Student Advisory Council.

Those in attendance thanked the students for presenting and congratulated Mr. Pacheco.

4. STUDENT BOARD MEMBER QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

Student Board members Romina Papavero-Gonzalez and Ryan Enright both reported the last day for seniors is May 12; AP exams have started; their schools hosted Senior Awards; prom was great; and the focus remains on student attendance and accountability. Ms. Papavero-Gonzalez also shared spring sports are ongoing, many concerts are coming up and last Friday was Decision Day, where seniors wore their college shirts. Mr. Enright shared six people went to Atlanta for DECCA Nationals.

Both students thanked the Board for the opportunity to serve and expressed appreciation for the Board's hard work and focus on students. Board members expressed gratitude to the students for providing their perspectives and direct feedback.

5. SURVEYS

Jill Browning reported on the results of the State-mandated school survey given to parents, students and staff, which had a 95.9% response rate by students. Ms. Browning displayed data demonstrating that across all 14 dimensions measured by the survey, the combined responses of students, staff and families, on a 1-5 scale, were 3.6 or higher. The data also showed that in only one area, Teacher-Student Relationships, as reported by staff, was there a decrease in the 2025 number. Board members expressed concern over decreased staff participation rates.

Ryan Doherty presented data on the spring survey, also given to parents, students and staff. He reported that, according to the survey, a majority of staff feel the new cell phone policy has had a positive impact on student engagement and academics, while less than one-half of students feel that way. Mr. Doherty noted the data shows a large increase (16%-55%) in the percent of staff who feel supported when addressing attendance issues; student and parent numbers regarding attendance expectations and supports remain almost constant. He shared high quality professional development, according to the survey data, is of key importance to staff. Ryan Doherty stated key takeaways from the survey include continuing the focus on attendance; increased engagement of students; and providing staff professional development addressing their specific needs.

Dr. Zuerner shared the data from the morale survey, which was broken down by the six categories of morale, and only given to staff members. She pointed out that in five of the six categories the average score was four out of five points. Kelly Zuerner provided detailed data on the Ownership and Input

category, as it was the District's focus this year. She noted in this category, in all areas, there was an increase in the number of staff members who felt they have ownership over their work environment and their opinions are valued by school and District leaders. Kelly Zuerner shared the key themes from staff feedback, which included: clear progress around attendance and student engagement; a call for greater consistency and accountability; and the value of the progress made this year.

Dr. Thiele reported on the feedback from the District Leadership Team and the Board. He shared the themes going forward from these two groups should include building on what was started this year, increasing student engagement, and increasing students' sense of belonging.

6. DRAFT STATEMENT OF WORK

Dr. Thiele displayed the proposed Statement of Work for 2026-2027 and explained it progresses from the 2025-2026 Statement, where the focus was on students showing up and being on time, to students leaning in and being more engaged in 2026-2027. He shared most of the negative data comes from first period and that once students get here, they do go to class. Dr. Thiele stated staff are being surveyed on the proposed Statement of Work and what student engagement looks like in the classroom, noting an integral part of next year's work will be professional development for staff.

Hank Thiele stated, if the Board approves the Statement of Work for 2026-2027 at the May 18 Board meeting, an Action Plan will be developed.

7. ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION CONSOLIDATED DISTRICT PLAN

Ms. Ziccardi stated this is the eighth year the District has been required to complete the Consolidated District Plan, which is a single plan that covers the Title I, II, III (2 grants), IV and IDEA grants. Ms. Ziccardi explained the data points the District focused on this year included: graduation rates, ACT scores, chronic absenteeism and first semester grade data. She stated in these areas the all student group data is good, but there is disproportionality among some of the subgroups. The Plan, according to Ms. Ziccardi, requires districts to look at supports and interventions that assist all students as well as those that target subgroups. She reported some of the newer District-wide supports and interventions to support students are: an increase in EL classes and resources; offering EL Summer School; the addition of Math 3 Lab; the math specialist also supporting science; and the hiring of a multi-lingual coordinator who will work with students and programs.

Gina Ziccardi stated the Plan could change based on feedback received from the Parent-Teacher Advisory Committee meeting and will be brought back to the Board later this month for a vote.

8. SASED FACILITY PLANNING, JOINT AGREEMENT UPDATES AND BOARD REPRESENTATION

Dr. Thiele reported SASED is moving toward purchasing permanent locations for some of its programs instead of renting spaces. He explained there is a recommended change in how a district can leave the cooperative, which necessitates a change to SASED's by-laws. Member Espinoza shared the move from renting to purchasing will increase efficiency and the current space SASED is occupying is not equipped to handle the number of students it serves.

Dr. Thiele stated at the May 18 Board meeting the Board will vote on the changes to the by-laws and take Action on the Board representatives to SASED.

9. BOARD COMMITTEE/LIAISON APPOINTMENTS

President Renner stated Board members will be keeping the committee assignments they currently have.

10. REFLECTIONS ON 2025-2026 SUPERINTENDENT LEADERSHIP EVENTS

Dr. Thiele explained he provided two reflections – one based on groups he led and one based on his learning experiences. He thanked the Board for the opportunity to participate in the different organizations and noted his involvement allows him to have early knowledge of upcoming trends and their impact.

11. RECOGNITION OF CURRENT STUDENT BOARD MEMBERS

Dr. Thiele thanked the Student Board members and recognized them for their focus on the District goals and their impact on students. Mr. Enright shared he will be attending University of Colorado, Boulder, majoring in Finance and Marketing. Ms. Papavero-Gonzalez shared she will be attending the University of Michigan, majoring in Political Science. Dr. Thiele presented both students with a token of appreciation from the Board. The Board thanked the students for their insights throughout the year and showed its appreciation for the students' contributions.

12. RECEPTION OF VISITORS – PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

13. CLOSED SESSION

Member Dawson moved and Member Espinoza 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).
B. **OMA Exception (2) Collective negotiating matters:** Collective negotiating matters between the public body and its employees or their representatives, or deliberations concerning salary schedules for one or more classes of employees. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(2)

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

President Renner 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 8:28 p.m.

14. RECONVENE TO REGULAR SESSION

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

Also present were Hank Thiele, Superintendent; Jeff Bergholtz, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources; and Juli Gniadek, Secretary.

15. 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 seven members in attendance, the President declared the motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Don Renner, President

Juli Gniadek, Secretary

Community HIGH SCHOOL District 99

BOARD OF EDUCATION

MAY 4, 2026

VISITOR ROSTER

NAME

MIKE DAVENPORT

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