
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION, NAPERVILLE COMMUNITY UNIT
SCHOOL DISTRICT 203, DUPAGE AND WILL COUNTIES, ILLINOIS, HELD AT DISTRICT
ADMINISTRATION CENTER, 203 WEST HILLSIDE ROAD, NAPERVILLE, IL.
May 4, 2026, AT 7:00 P.M., CLOSED SESSION 5:30 p.m.

Call to order

Vice President Gericke called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m. Board members present: Charles Cush, Melissa Kelley Black, Holly Blastic, Joe Kozminski, and Marc Willensky, Kristine Gericke, and Amanda McMillen.

Administrators present were:

Dan Bridges, Superintendent,

Dr. Mark Cohen, Deputy Superintendent High Schools,

Dr. Meredith Haugens, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources,

Michael Frances, Chief Financial Officer/CSBO,

Lisa Xagas, Assistant Superintendent for Strategy and Engagement,

Closed Session

Amanda McMillen moved, seconded by Joe Kozminski, to go into Closed Session at 5:31 p.m. for consideration of:

1. Pursuant to 5 ILCS120/2(c)(1) The appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees or legal counsel, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee or legal counsel to determine its validity.
2. Pursuant to 5 ILCS 120/2 (c)(2) Collective negotiating matters between the school board and its employees or their representatives, or deliberations concerning salary schedules for one or more classes of employees.
3. Pursuant to 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(8) Security procedures, school building safety and security, and the use of personnel and equipment to respond to an actual, a threatened, or a reasonably potential danger to the safety of employees, students, staff, the public, or public property.

A roll call vote was taken, those voting yes: Blastic, Gericke, Kelley Black, Kozminski, McMillen, and Willensky. Those voting no: None. The motion carried.

The Board of Education entered closed session at 5:31 p.m.

Meeting Opening

Amanda McMillen made a motion, seconded by Joe Kozminski to return to Open Session at 7:24 pm. A roll call vote was taken. Those voting yes: McMillen, Gericke, Blastic, Kelley Black, Willensky, Cush, and Kozminski. No: None. The motion carried.

Welcome and Mission

Charles Cush welcomed all and read Naperville Community Unit School District 203's Mission Statement.

Roll Call

Board members present: Charles Cush, Kristine Gericke, Melissa Kelley Black, Amanda McMillen, Joe Kozminski, Holly Blastic, and Marc Willensky.

Pledge of Allegiance

Led by the Board of Education

Administrators present: Dan Bridges, Superintendent, Chuck Freundt, Assistant Superintendent for Leadership and School Services, Mark Cohen, Deputy Superintendent/High Schools, Michael Frances, Chief Financial Officer/CSBO, Chuck Freundt, Assistant Superintendent for Leadership and School Services, Meredith Haugens, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, Katie Matthews, Assistant Superintendent for Elementary, Allison Boutet, Assistant Superintendent for Middle Schools, Melissa McHenry, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services.

Recognition:

Good News:

We recently got the opportunity to celebrate this school year's retirees at a special breakfast event. It was a fun morning filled with student performances, good food, departing words for the retirees, and reminiscing about their careers with the district.

We are so honored to have been a part of your lives and want to extend a heartfelt thank you and congratulations to all of our retirees.

A team of NCHS students placed first in the Illinois Personal Finance Challenge sponsored by Illinois Treasurer Michael Frerichs

The contest is designed to provide students with an opportunity to build, apply, and demonstrate their financial knowledge in areas like earning income, spending, saving, managing credit, investing, and managing risk.

Congratulations to Harsh Patel, Taran Nathan, Krish Patel, Rohan Jain, and their coach, Mr. Borge!

The team will advance to the National Personal Finance Challenge next month in Atlanta, Georgia.

Good luck!

Kim Blitek from Kingsley has been selected as the Illinois Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance Elementary Physical Education Teacher of the Year.

Kim has been a part of the Kingsley family since 2014. She runs the Cardio Club, kicking off the day for over 100 students twice a week with fun and engaging running activities. She also plans a highly themed and detailed Field Day each year and collaborated with the Adaptive PE teacher and PT to start a Peer Buddies program for 5th graders to mentor students in Structured Learning.

Her high-energy teaching style keeps students engaged while she models and participates in activities alongside them. She will be honored at the organization's State Convention awards ceremony in December. Congrats Kim!

The Naperville 203 Elementary Battle of the Books just finished its 39th year! The goal of Battle of the Books is to encourage elementary students to read quality literature of various genres from a 40-book list. Many of the schools start the year with a literature club, focusing on content from the books on that year's list.

In January, interested students form the Battle teams. These students read and reread the books to prepare for the competition in April. A semifinal is held at KJHS, where all 4th and 5th-grade teams compete. The top four teams for each grade level go on to the finals at Nichols Library.

Here are this year's winners:

4th Grade

1st Place: Steeple Run

2nd Place: Meadow Glens

3rd Place: Elmwood

4th Place: Highlands

5th Grade

1st Place: Highlands

2nd Place: Meadow Glens

3rd Place: Maplebrook

4th Place: Beebe

The Naperville Public Library and Anderson's Bookshop have partnered with the District on this event since its inception. We're looking forward to year 40!

The Asian Culture Association (ACA) stopped by the administration office to deliver 98 books that will be distributed to each elementary school in celebration of Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month. The volunteers from the ACA who dropped off the books are Naperville North senior Alice Wang, and 203 parents Holly and Leigh.

This is the 6th year that the ACA has donated books to our district, and the partnership has grown over the years into a meaningful collaboration dedicated to enriching students' learning experiences through culturally diverse literature.

The books donated this year follow the theme: "When East Meets West — Sharing History and Cultural Heritage," which helps students explore Ancient Chinese history, East-West cultural exchange, and Asian American experiences.

The Seal of Biliteracy is an award granted to high school students who demonstrate proficiency in two or more languages by graduation. This distinction recognizes bilingualism as a valuable and essential skill in today's global society. Earning the Seal can strengthen college applications, may lead to college credit depending on the institution, and signals readiness for careers in an increasingly multilingual world.

This year, 97 students in Naperville CUSD 203 earned the Seal of Biliteracy across 11 languages. This is a significant accomplishment that reflects our students' dedication, academic excellence, and commitment to developing multilingual proficiency.

We are proud to celebrate this achievement and the diverse linguistic assets our students bring to our community.

Public Comment:

None.

Action by Consent:

President Cush reminded the Board and Community of the board agreements. He noted that it is each Board member's responsibility to prepare for each meeting and to effectively express our concerns either to the Superintendent or the Board President in a timely manner. Board members have also agreed that avoiding surprises is paramount in displaying respect to all District Administration. The Board has tasked itself to send questions in advance of each meeting to the Superintendent to allow the provision of the best possible response for the community. It also allows for efficiency during the community's meeting. Those same questions as well as new ones may be asked in Open Session. For transparency, please note if any questions were asked earlier. Mr. Bridges, did you receive questions from Board members? Superintendent Bridges responded that he received questions from seven Board members.

1. Adoption of Personnel Report

	Effective Date	Location	Position
RESIGNATION-CERTIFIED			
Marisa Bolin	5/25/2026	JJHS	School Psychologist
LEAVE OF ABSENCE-CERTIFIED			
Macey Curry	11/02/26 - 12/18/26	Ellsworth	Learning Behavior Specialist
Norma Cornforth	05/01/26 - 5/22/26	Riverwoods	Multilingual Teacher
Allison Hillyer	SY 2026/2027	NNHS	FACS

Katherine Ulreich	11/02/26 - 12/18/26	NCHS	Mathematics
Allie Boscacci	12/3/26 - 1/29/27	4th Grade	Elmwood
RESIGNATION-CLASSIFIED			
Nicole Aguilar	5/8/2026	Ann Reid	Behavior Support Paraprofessional
Lia Lopez	5/28/2026	Lincoln	Senior Secretary

2. DAOES Appointment

Kristine Gericke made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, as presented, seconded by Amanda McMillen. Those voting yes: Kozminski, Kelley Black, McMillen, Willensky, Gericke, Blastic, and Cush. Those voting no: None. The motion carried.

Board of Education Reports:

Board member McMillen stated she has attended a lot of performances and community celebrations. Senior art show at NCHS. Amazing talent of youth. The talent is phenomenal. Color Run at Kingsley. Sponsors allowed all students to participate with no fee. Each student received a T-shirt and glasses. A lot of energy.

Board member Wilensky attended the Mill Street Cross Town classic at JJHS. Last CAP steering committee of the school year. Celebrated those who will be moving on to college.

Board member Blastic mentioned her attendance at the Diversity and Advisory Committee last Monday. Was able to look back over the year. There is a calendar of many special cultural days.

Board member Kozminski also attended the CAP meeting. Great to hear the students' voices. A nice overview of the progress made this year. Exciting to hear of some things being rolled out a head of schedule.

Board member Kelley Black mentioned the loss of her mom. She thanked the School District for the flowers and the support of the community.

President Cush gave condolences.

President's Report:

I attended the Maplebrook Fun fest. It was a very successful event. Favorite event was the cake walk. I also attended the SUCCESS event at NNHS. They honored the seniors. Joe Kozminski received the Ripple Effect Award for sharing resources like STEM resources.

Superintendent/Staff/School Reports:

Invited Executive Director of NEF, Wendy Goettsch. Happy to be in partnership with them.

NEF Update

Wendy shared what NEF has added to the district this year and some fun things that will be coming.

The Naperville Education Foundation (NEF) operates with a mission to foster creativity, innovation, and excellence within District 203 by funding opportunities that exceed the limits of the tax-supported budget. As the district's philanthropic partner, NEF focuses its support in four primary areas: enrichment to district programs, signature NEF programs, serving as a vehicle for direct donations to schools, and administering scholarships for graduating seniors. Throughout the current school year, the foundation has invested over \$698,000 to enhance student experiences across these domains.

Key program highlights include a significant \$59,000 investment to introduce LEGO Education Science kits to over 4,000 kindergarten through third-grade students, making District 203 one of the first in the nation to implement this hands-on curriculum.

In addition to academic enrichment, NEF plays a vital role in student well-being by providing over \$172,000 for on-site behavioral health services and mental health platforms. The foundation's Kid Booster Anonymous program has also distributed 14,400 grant opportunity for educator entrepreneurship to pilot innovative classroom projects. These efforts are sustained by strong community partnerships and successful fundraising events, such as the recent 33rd annual breakfast benefit which hosted 415 attendees. To expand this support, NEF announced a new centralized Resource Center to be housed at Connections. This center will be operated by students from the special needs community, providing them with vocational training while ensuring that essential supplies like winter gear and personal care items are distributed efficiently to students in need.

The foundation also awarded 19 express grants totaling \$125,000 in scholarships to graduating seniors this spring. These comprehensive efforts are sustained by strong community backing.

Board Questions/Comments:

Being the leader and how you focus on data driven results. This partnership helps us to be exceptional. Thank you for your dedication and thank you to the trustees. It is great to see the number of students who are impacted.

The work that your group does is terrific. Thank you for all the hard work.

This is my favorite committee to be on because of the modeling of collaborating and creativity for our students. This group is joyful and committed. Thank you to you, your staff, trustees, volunteers, and the community.

RISE Update

Superintendent Bridges introduced Assistant Superintendent for Student Services Missy McHenry.

Joining Missy:

- Kim Dreisbach; Supervisor of Social Work Services
- Heather Kocisco; RISE Coordinator
- Andrea Fischer; Endeavor/RISE Counselor
- Amit Thaker; Referral GPS Founder

The RISE program, which stands for Removing barriers, Individualized support plans, Services for students, and Empowering families, originated in 2019 through a partnership with the Naperville Education Foundation to address a growing need for student behavioral and mental health support. Initially launched as a pilot in seven elementary schools, the program first focused on broad wraparound services, including housing and food assistance, before refining its focus based on early challenges such as limited affordable housing and complex care coordination. In its current second phase, RISE has sharpened its objective to specifically dismantle barriers to mental health care, expanding its reach to impact a significantly larger number of students across the district.

Central to the program's success are strategic partnerships with Endeavor Health's Linden Oaks and Referral GPS. Through these collaborations, RISE provides two primary pathways to care: embedded on-site therapy at four district schools for immediate during-the-day access and a care navigation system that connects families with external community providers or flexible telehealth options. This dual approach addresses common obstacles such as transportation, scheduling, and provider availability.

The impact of this refinement is evident in the program's growth; while it served 118 students last year, it has already supported 146 students in the current school year.

Data from the pilot program illustrates a successful transition from crisis to connection, showing a decrease in unscheduled mental health visits and classroom disruptions. Most notably, the program

has demonstrated a direct link between mental health support and academic achievement, with evidence showing an increase in passing grades for participating students. By helping students build a "toolkit of coping skills," RISE enables them to remain present and engaged in their learning. Currently funded through grants and partnerships, the program continues to seek sustainable funding models to ensure that mental health challenges do not remain a permanent roadblock to student success.

Board Questions/Comments:

Thank you for the presentation. It is amazing how this program has grown from the initial grant. How are the services communicated to staff and schools so all students can have access?

Mrs. McHenry stated our RISE Coordinator meets with all schools to introduce the program. She will return to schools who have not used the services to do a refresher.

I want to commend this program. I was on NEF when we did the initial pilot. Seeing the growth with the partnership with Linden Oaks and Referral GPS has been great. It is great that the district has created these partnerships. When a family is looking for therapy, what are some of the criteria they give to Referral GPS?

Mr. Thaker responded that it is family and a timing component. Sometimes it is helping families navigating insurance. It is understanding each family's unique needs. We have to understand the barriers.

How big is the network you are working with?

Mr. Thaker noted that sometimes it is location. Does telehealth work? If so, it enlarges the network of providers available. Network expands depending on what they are looking for.

Thank you for the presentation. What happens over the summer months? How do students get the support they need?

Mrs. McHenry noted that it is an individual conversation with families.

What happens if there is a crisis over the summer?

Mrs. McHenry stated we will reach out to local providers.

Is this an area of focus?

Mrs. McHenry responded, not yet.

What stood out was the thoughtfulness of the pilot. Took the time to figure out what the problems are. The testimonials emphasize the importance of this program. You are looking at the student and the family. The well roundedness of the student. The importance of doing this program builds trust. Grant based program. What do you foresee?

Mrs. McHenry noted that we are currently researching other grants and partnerships.

What can we do as a Board to advocate for this program?

Superintendent Bridges stated we should look at advocacy for the state to support more programs like this. Continued advocacy for these types of programs. If you are a social worker by trade and have connections, that would be helpful.

I was at the dining room table when this was first talked about. Seeing the growth and expansion has been amazing. The reduction of barriers that families have is so impactful.

Thank you for your thoughtfulness as to the needs of our families. Can you describe the metric of the increasing of passing grades?

Ms. Kocisco noted it is all students who have been serviced by RISE. The support given to these students has helped them be present and engaged.

These results are amazing.

Superintendent Bridges thanked the group and all the partners who work to make this a success.

Discussion without Action:

Superintendent Bridges stated this begins our discussion on our 2026-2027 budget. There will be multiple opportunities to discuss this. Invited all to submit questions as you review the budget book. We will work to get these answers and will be posted on Board Docs.

2026-2027 Tentative Budget Presentation

Michael Frances thanked Tracy Angel and Lisa Xagas for their help in the development of the budget and the budget book.

The 2026-2027 tentative budget represents a critical turning point for District 203 as it transitions from the pandemic recovery era toward a sustainable, long-term fiscal model reliant primarily on local resources. This shift is necessitated by three primary pressures: the phase-out of federal ESSER relief, declining state support—which included a 4 million operating deficit for the upcoming fiscal year. Initially, the board directed a balanced budget, but this was modified to allow for a more gradual transition that protects core student programming.

To address this structural imbalance, the budget is built on three pillars: strategic reductions, staffing streamlining, and revenue maximization. The district has implemented a 15% reduction in school site budgets and a 25% reduction in department discretionary spending, which involved a line-by-line audit to eliminate non-essential travel and duplicative software platforms. Furthermore, the district is eliminating 59 positions—including administrative, certified educator, and support personnel—to right size the workforce through retirements and attrition in alignment with enrollment trends. Despite these cuts, personnel costs will continue to rise due to binding contractual obligations.

On the revenue side, the board approved adjusted user fees for student fees, driver's education, and facility rentals to ensure these programs accurately reflect actual costs rather than being subsidized by the general operating budget. A specific concern remains the cafeteria fund, which currently faces a \$1.6 million deficit. Regarding capital investments, the district expects a total fund balance decrease of nearly \$40 million as it spends down reserves previously allocated for major multi-year infrastructure projects, such as junior high renovations and the construction of a new transportation facility.

The district achieved significant one-time savings, including 1.22 million in transportation by reducing the number of replacement bus purchases. While some board members expressed concern regarding the deficit and the transparency of separating "operating funds" from "all funds," the administration maintains that this approach aligns with board policy to use excess reserves for nonrecurring capital expenses. The tentative budget was placed on public display starting May 8, with a final public hearing and board adoption scheduled for June 15, 2026.

Board Questions/Comments:

Will we stick to the three minutes?

Yes, the Board indicated the process is appropriate.

Slide 9- What is the difference between the funds?

Mr. Frances explained that operating funds cover day-to-day costs (education, maintenance, transportation), while "All Funds" includes capital projects and debt services, which can skew annual budget figures because they involve spending down reserves over multiple years.

AMC-some that are not focused on our day to day needs.

MF-our debt service fund is very low. That is levied for separately.

Why does the "All Funds" ending balance appear larger than the operating balance?

Mr. Frances responded that some of these projects were approved after the current budget was approved. A small balance (a few million dollars) remains in the capital projects fund (Fund 60).

We are looking at all of but are really focusing on the operating funds. I appreciate the work done to streamline.

Thank you for this presentation. I appreciate the additional detail. I hope we continue to share this level of detail. What additional steps are we going to be taking to make sure we stay on budget?

Mr. Frances stated that staff manage their budgets well, he is more concerned with external "unknowns" like state funding and fluctuating diesel fuel prices.

What are some contingency plans?

Mr. Frances replied that the district's sufficient fund balance acts as a bridge for short-term issues, but persistent rising costs would eventually require further adjustments.

This is the first time that our budget has been separated into operating funds and all funds. I am concerned about the amended budget where we will have a \$40 million deficit. Because of the construction, we have a deficit. Our revenues are going up. We are amending our budget to

have a \$31 million deficit and we are taking it out of our education fund. We got the clear message that the community does not want direct services reduced.

This spending is not sustainable.

Mr. Frances stated that is not the first time we are separating the budget, We did it last year because we did some significant capital projects and to show the board that they are different. **Board Member The monthly treasury report is divided the same way.**

Mr. Frances noted the page is new in the book this year but it was in the presentation last year. Due to policy 4:20, the Administration is to present options to the Board for spending the fund down to get it in the Board directed amount. That is why there is a larger deficit because of the spending down of the fund.

I appreciate the clarity and the layout. The operating fund is like the household budget. The all funds/fund balance is like the savings and that has to be used at times. The Board has opted to do with some of these capital projects that have been previously approved by the Board.

Can you talk about what has already been approved by the Board and clarifying where we are in the spending?

Mr. Frances responded that to get specific spending to date, I will have to get those numbers. When the transportation facility was approved and the approval of the NUEA contract created the necessity of an amended budget.

What the capital projects are and what we have spent as well as the labor costs.

Mr. Frances noted these changes do not mean we are going over budget, these are just changes from when the budget was approved.

In IT, are there opportunities to reduce spending?

Can you give me an order of magnitude on what we spend on fuel?

Mr. Frances replied that we spend over \$500,000.00 on fuel.

Does this fall in the discretionary bucket?

M. Frances stated that he doesn't see this as discretionary? We have to fuel our buses. If we had the luxury to choose when we ran our buses, maybe.

The budget is approved by the Board each year. All recommendations are brought to the Board the Board does not have to approve the spending.

Mr. Frances stated that is correct. The Board approved all of those projects.

Can we do another round?

I agree that those capital projects have been approved, but they are presented as by the Administration. I have been asking for a comprehensive plan. The Budget should be what we realistically spend. We do this at a time when other boards don't do this. We don't have all the numbers. Can we switch this process, so we have more accurate budgets? Would this be more realistic and help us not have the deficits?

Can you tell us the rationale of the timing?

Superintendent Bridges referenced policy 4.10. This has been the practice of the district and if the Board wants to change this policy, we can work on that.

This is best practice for our district. These budgets are not guesses. This is based off of years and years of experience.

Every budget is going to have some level of guestimates. We had a \$12.4 million deficit projected and it is now been reduced to \$3.9 million. It is going to take us several years to get us back on budget. We still have to address the deficits for this year and the coming years.

I want to point out that the policy 4.20 doesn't have to be only on capital projects. We can make changes.

The plans for these discussions to go until June 15. Please get all questions into Superintendent Bridges and team.

2026-2027 Board Meeting Schedule

Superintendent Bridges noted these follow the typical schedule of 1st and 3rd except as noted with an *. We did identify that the September 21 meeting is on Yom Kippur

Board Questions/Comments:

I like the change of the September 21 meeting to September 22.

Superintendent Bridges will revise the date and bring for action on May 18.

PRESS Policy Update 121

Superintendent Bridges noted that Mark Cohen has reviewed these policies. Please review, they will be brought for action in June.

Board Questions/Comments:

For the next Board meeting can we look at policies 4.40 and 7.280? to see the extra language we have added?

Dr. Cohen replied that we can have counsel take a look at them.

Sometimes we have a Policy Consent agenda, will we do that with some of these?

Superintendent Bridges noted that makes sense.

These will be back for action in 2 weeks.

Discussion with Action:

Establish Date for Public Hearing Regarding FY26 Amended Budget

Superintendent Bridges reviewed what Michael Frances stated before.

This is setting the date for the Public Hearing.

Board Questions/Comments:

None.

Joe Kozminski made a motion to approve the Establish Date for Public Hearing regarding the FY26 Amended Budget as presented, seconded by Amanda McMillen. Those voting yes: Gericke, Blastic, Kozminski, Cush, Willensky, McMillen, and Kelley Black. Those voting no: None. The motion carried.

Establish Date for Public Hearing Regarding the Intent to Effect Interfund Transfers

Superintendent Bridges noted this will be needed if the Board approves to amend the FY26 budget.

Board Questions/Comments:

I will vote nay because we don't have all the numbers. I think our budget should be the way other districts do it.

Amanda McMillen made a motion to approve the Establish Date for Public Hearing Regarding the Intent to Effect Interfund Transfers as presented, seconded by Kristine Gericke. Those voting yes: Cush, McMillen, Kozminski, Blastic, Willensky, and Gericke. Those voting no: Kelley Black. The motion carried.

Establish Date for Public Hearing and Direct Tentative FY27 Budget to be put on Public Display

Board Questions/Comments:

I flip flopped my answers. I still would have voted nay because we still need some information.

This is just to set the date for the hearing?

Superintendent Bridges replied yes.

It would be better if we delayed the process.

Amanda McMillen made a motion to approve Establish Date for Public Hearing and Direct Tentative FY27 Budget to be put on Public Display as presented, seconded by Joe Kozminski. Those voting yes: McMillen, Blastic, Gericke, Willensky, Cush, and Kozminski. Those voting no: Kelley Black. The motion carried.

New Business

None

Old Business

None

Upcoming Events

May 17 Commencement

May 18 next Board meeting.

Adjournment

Joe Kozminski moved and seconded, by Amanda McMillen, to adjourn the meeting at 9:31 p.m. Those voting yes: Cush, McMillen, Blastic, Willensky, Kelley Black, Kozminski, and Gericke. Those voting No: None. The motion carried.

Approved: May 18, 2026

Charles Cush, President
Board of Education

Susan S. Patton, Secretary
Board of Education