



Minutes of Regular Meeting

The Board of Directors South Texas ISD

A Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors of South Texas ISD was held April 29, 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
Henry LeVrier	Brownsville
Oscar Salinas	Edinburg
Jaime R. Solis	Edinburg
David Suarez	Weslaco
Rick Villarreal, DDS	Rancho Viejo
Ruth Villarreal	Mission
Sue Ann Villarreal	Raymondville

The following Board members were absent:

Eduardo L. “Larry” Cantu	Los Fresnos
Andrea E. Gonzales-Loya	Raymondville
Robert J. Lerma	Brownsville
Rodolfo “Rudy” Ramirez	Edinburg
Eduardo Roberto Rodriguez	Brownsville
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	
Jose Lucio	

3. Pledges of Allegiance.

Bjorn Jorgensen, Veteran and STISD Police Officer, led the Pledges of Allegiance.

4. District Call to Action.

Board Member, Dr. Noel Garza led the District Call to Action.

5. Moment of Silence.

The Board held a moment of silence.

The Board President, Mr. Henry LeVrier, requested a motion to move item 8. Awards and Recognitions as the next item to be addressed. A motion was made by Dr. Noel Garza, seconded by Sasha Crane, moving Awards and Recognitions as the next item to be addressed. The motion passed unaimously.

Board President, Mr. Henry LeVrier, made a recommendation to remove the following items from the consent agenda: 19.C.1.c. *Action: Review and act on approving employee for third party employment and item 19.C.1.d. *Action: Review and Act on approving the request for New Professional Position(s) for the 2026-2027 school year and the Announcement of Vacancy. In addition, moving item 19.F. Action: Review and act on approving an Agreement for legal

services with Eichelbaum Wardell Hansen Powell & Munoz, P.C. into executive session for discussion.

A motion was made by Abiel J. Cantú, seconded by Doug Buchanan, approving the recommendations to the agenda as presented. The motion passed with one abstention (Dr. Rick Villarreal).

6. Public Comments for Agenda Topics.

The Board received a request for Public Comment on Agenda Topics from Javier Peña regarding Personnel Issues. The Board allotted three minutes for Mr. Peña to address the Board.

7. Public Audience for Non-Agenda Topics.

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

8. Awards & Recognitions.

A. Swearing in of the STISD Police Department's first K9.

Chief Steven Cortez swore in the first ever STISD K-9, Leah, to the STISD Police Department.

B. Recognition of Health Professions, Medical Professions, Rising Scholars Academy, Science Academy and World Scholars for being designated Apple Distinguished Schools for the 2026-2029 program term.

C. Recognition of World Scholars student for being selected as one of only 350 winners globally in Apple's 2026 Swift Student Challenge.

D. Recognition of STISD for receiving a \$304,864 Jobs and Education for Texans (JET) Grant for the Science Academy Automotive program.

E. Recognition of Athletic State Champions for the 2025-2026 Season.

On behalf of the Board, Amanda Odom recognized the district and campuses on their achievements.

9. 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.

10. *Action: Review and act on the March 31, 2026, Special Called Board Meeting Minutes.

Approved with the consent agenda.

11. *Action: Review and act on the April 1, 2026, Special Called Board Meeting Minutes.

Approved with the consent agenda.

12. *Action: Review and act on the April 7, 2026, Special Called Board Meeting Minutes.

Approved with the consent agenda.

13. *Action: Review and act on the April 21, 2026, Special Called Board Meeting Minutes.

Approved with the consent agenda.

14. Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment Committee — David Briones and Sue Ann Villarreal, Co-Chairs

David Briones reported on the following items:

- A. *Action: Review and act on the 2026-2027 District and Campus Improvement Plans.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- B. *Action: Review and act on the annual Certification of Provision of Instructional Materials for the 2026-2027 school year.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- C. *Action: Review and act on the Math Instructional Materials adoption for the 2026-2027 school year.

Approved with the consent agenda.

15. Buildings and Grounds Committee — E. Larry Cantu and Jaime Solis, Co-Chairs

Jaime Solis reported on the following items:

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

Approved with the consent agenda.

- B. Action: Review and act on approving the job order contracting proposal with TelePro Communications for the Edinburg Intercom project.

A motion was made by Adrian Garcia, seconded by Jaime Solis, approving the job order contracting proposal with TelePro Communications for the Edinburg Intercom project. The motion passed with three against (Sasha Crane, Dr. Noel Garza, and Oscar Salinas).

- C. Action: Review and act on approving Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc. as the Architect for the New Performing Arts project (RFQ 27-007).

A motion was made by Dr. Noel Garza, seconded by Sasha Crane, tabling the item due to budgetary considerations. The motion passed with three against (Doug Buchanan, Adrian Garcia, and Dr. Rick Villarreal).

- 16. Finance & Operations Committee — Sylvia Sánchez Garza, Ph.D., and Noel Garza, D.D.S., Co-Chairs

Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza reported on the following items:

- A. *Report on District Comparison of Revenues/Expenditures.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- B. *Report on checks written since last report.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- C. *Report on school district investments:
 - 1. Investments owned by the district.

Approved with the consent agenda.

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

Approved with the consent agenda.

- E. *Action: Review and act on approving the following donations:

1. Donation to Health Professions in the amount of \$1,000 from Osmin Vargas Family Clinic to PASF Club.
2. Donation to Health Professions in the amount of \$2,000 from Branden Etienne & Kwabena Andoh-Baidoo for one Student Scholarship.
3. Donation to Science Academy in the amount of \$100 from Faisal Saleem to Science Academy Electric Car Club.
4. Donation to Medical Professions in the amount of \$1,500 from Sombrero Festival to Senior Class.
5. Donation to Medical Professions in the amount of \$1,500 from Sombrero Festival to General Activities.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- F. *Action: Review and act on the following payment applications:
1. Payment application #9 (final) to Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc. in the amount of \$1,700.97 for the Medical Professions Audio/Video Intercom project.
 2. Payment application #1 to Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc. in the amount of \$234,000 for the New Rising Scholars Academy project.
 3. Payment application #1 to Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc. in the amount of \$121,800 for the Medical Professions Athletic Fields.
 4. Payment application #1 to Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc. in the amount of \$83,751.39 for the Edinburg Intercom project.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- G. *Action: Review and act on the following budget amendment(s):
1. Title I Part A (211)
 2. Title I Part C (212)
 3. Title II Part A (255)
 4. Title III Part A (263)
 5. Title IV Part A SSAEP (289)
 6. IDEA B (313)

Approved with the consent agenda.

- H. Action: Review and act on Senate Bill 546 regarding 3 point seat belts on buses.

A motion was made by Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza, seconded by Doug Buchanan, approving Senate Bill 546 regarding 3 point seat belts on buses to include 35 new buses over the next three years and installing seat belts on 24 buses. The motion passed unanimously.

- I. Consideration and possible approval of an order approving and authorizing publication of Notice of Intent to Contract Under the Public Property Finance Act for Constructing Certain Public School Facilities.

A motion was made by Dr. Noel Garza, seconded by Jaime Solis, approving and authorizing publication of Notice of Intent to Contract Under the Public Property Finance Act for Constructing Certain Public School Facilities. The motion passed unanimously.

- J. Consideration and possible approval of a Resolution by the Board of Directors of the South Texas Independent School District establishing the district's intention to reimburse itself for the prior lawful expenditure of funds from the proceeds of obligations to be issued on behalf of the district for authorized purposes, and other matters in connection therewith.

A motion was made by Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza, seconded by Dr. Noel Garza, approving a Resolution by the Board of Directors of the South Texas Independent School District establishing the district's intention to reimburse itself for the prior lawful expenditure of funds from the proceeds of obligations to be issued on behalf of the district for authorized purposes, and other matters in connection therewith. The motion passed unanimously.

- K. Consideration and possible approval of a Resolution Appointing Members to the South Texas Independent School District Public Facility Corporation Board of Directors, calling a meeting of the South Texas Independent School District Public Facility Corporation Board of Directors and approval of other matters related thereto.

A motion was made by Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza, seconded by Jaime Solis, approving a Resolution Appointing Members to the South Texas Independent School District Public Facility Corporation Board of Directors, calling a meeting of the South Texas Independent School District Public Facility Corporation Board of Directors and approval of other matters related thereto. The motion passed unanimously.

17. Policy, Planning, Projects & Partnerships Committee — Abiel J. Cantú and Robert J. Lerma, Co-Chairs

Abiel J. Cantú reported on the following item:

- A. Consideration and possible approval to adopt Resolution Approving Contingent Fee Legal Services Contract.

A motion was made by Abiel J. Cantú, seconded by Doug Buchanan, tabling the item to be further discussed at a future board meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

18. Community & Governmental Relations Committee — Sasha Crane and Zach Zamora, Co-Chairs

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

Approved with the consent agenda.

19. 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. HOSA International Leadership Conference, June 16–21, 2026, Indianapolis, IN.
- 2. TSA National Conference, June 22–26, 2026, Washington, D.C.
- 3. National Conservation Foundation Envirothon Competition, July 19–25, 2026, in Starkville, MS.
- 4. The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) Conference 2026, October 24–27, 2026, Orlando, FL.

Approved with the consent agenda.

C. District Reports

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

Approved with the consent agenda.

- b. *Report on professional vacancies.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- c. *Action: Review and act on approving employee for third party employment.

Item was removed from consent. A motion was made by Jaime Solis, seconded by Doug Buchanan, approving employee for third party employment. The motion passed with one abstention (Oscar Salinas).

- d. *Action: Review and Act on approving the request for New Professional Position(s) for the 2026-2027 school year and the Announcement of Vacancy for the following:
 - 1. Speech Language Pathologist (1)
 - 2. Special Education Counselor (1)
 - 3. Wellness Counselor (1)
 - 4. TIA Director (1)
 - 5. Teacher (2)

A motion was made by Abiel J. Cantú, seconded by David Briones, approving the request for New Professional Positions for the 2026-2027 school year and the Announcement of Vacancy as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

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

Approved with the consent agenda.

- b. *Report on Student Support Services.

Approved with the consent agenda.

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

Approved with the consent agenda.

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

Approved with the consent agenda.

- 4. Chief of Police
 - a. *Report on Safety and Security.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- D. *Action: Review and act on amending summer 2026 office hours.

Approved with the consent agenda.

E. Report on the 2026 TASB Advocacy Conference in Washington, D.C.

Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza gave a verbal report to the Board regarding the 2026 TASB Advocacy Conference in Washington, D.C. Board members met with legislators in Washington to advocate for issues that impact our district and community.

F. Action: Review and act on approving an Agreement for legal services with Eichelbaum Wardell Hansen Powell & Munoz, P.C.

This item was moved into Executive Session for discussion.

A motion was made by Doug Buchanan, seconded by David Briones, approving an agreement for legal services with Eichelbaum Wardell Hansen Powell & Munoz, P.C. The motion passed unanimously.

Ruth Villarreal left the meeting at 8:05 p.m.

20. **EXECUTIVE SESSION: The Board of Directors met on April 29, 2026 at 8:05 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 and the 2026-2027 school year.
 - a. Bilingual Coordinator
 - b. Coordinator of Instructional Services
 - c. Director of Special Programs
 - d. Educational Diagnostician Co-Op
 - e. Speech Language Pathologist Assistant Co-Op
 - f. Teacher(s)
 - 2. Review recommendations for renewal/extension/non-renewal/termination of employment contracts for Central Office Administrators, Principals, Teachers and other Professional staff.
 - a. Renewal of Chapter 21 and Non-Chapter 21 term and probationary employment contracts for Central Office Administrators, Principals, Teachers and other Professional staff for the 2026-2027 school year.
 - b. Consider Superintendent's recommendations regarding the employment and contract status of M.G.
 - 3. Discussion on the Superintendent's contract for Lone Finalist.

The Board ended the executive session at 9:36 p.m.

21. 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 2026-2027 school year.
 - a. Bilingual Coordinator
 - b. Coordinator of Instructional Services
 - c. Director of Instructional Services
 - d. Educational Diagnostician Co-Op
 - e. Speech Language Pathologist Assistant Co-Op
 - f. Teacher(s)

A correction was noted to the position c. The position should read Director of Special Programs.

Dr. Tony Lara, Superintendent of Schools, recommended the employment of Cynthia Ann De La Garza-Gonzales as Director of Special Programs (12 months) for the remainder of the 2025-2026 school year and the 2026-2027 school year. In addition, Lizella Campbell as Bilingual Coordinator (12 months), Yolanda Chamberlain as Coordinator of Instructional Services (12 months), Susana Hernandez as Educational Diagnostician Co-Op (11 months), Felipe Alejandro Garcia Requena as Teacher (10 months), Yadira Cavazos as Teacher (10 months), Alberto Garcia as Teacher (10 months), Denet Gavin Partida as Teacher (10 months), Jose Antonio Mendez, Jr. as Teacher (10 months), and Jessie Jennifer Salazar as Speech Language Pathologist Assistant Co-Op (11 months).

A motion was made by Adrian Garcia, seconded by Abiel J. Cantú, approving the recommendation of professional staff as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Action: Review and act on recommendations for renewal/extension/non-renewal of employment contracts for Central Office Administrators, Principals, Teachers and other Professional staff.

Dr. Lara recommended the extension of employment contracts through June 30, 2028, for Efrain Garza, Marla Knaub, Lissa Frausto, Amanda Odom, Marcos Flores, Dr. Brenda De La Garza, and Chief Steven Cortez; and the extension of employment contracts through June 30, 2027, for Niranda Flores, Marco Zamora, Dr. Cynthia Chairez, Jose Lucio, Eric Gutierrez, and Dr. Reynaldo Rodriguez. In addition, the Superintendent recommended the renewal of employment contracts for teachers and other professional staff as listed on agenda pages 329-336 for the 2026-2027 school year.

A motion was made by Sasha Crane, seconded by Dr. Noel Garza, approving the recommendations extending all contracts for one year. The motion failed with eight against (Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza, Jaime Solis, Margarita Garcia, Irma Garcia, Dr. Rick Villarreal, Abiel J. Cantú, Adrian Garcia, and Doug Buchanan) and one abstention (David Suarez).

A motion was made by Adrian Garcia, seconded by Doug Buchanan, approving the recommendations as presented. The motion passed with four against (David Briones, Dr. Noel Garza, Oscar Salinas, and Sasha Crane).

3. Review and act on renewal of Chapter 21 term and probationary employment contracts for Central Office Administrators, Principals, Teachers and other Professional staff for the 2026-2027 school year.

A motion was made by Adrian Garcia, seconded by Dr. Rick Villarreal , approving the renewal of Chapter 21 term and probationary employment contracts for Central Office Administrators, Principals, Teachers and other Professional staff for the 2026-2027 school year as presented on agenda pages 329-336. The motion passed with three against (Oscar Salinas, Dr. Noel Garza, and Sasha Crane).

4. Consider Superintendent's recommendations regarding the employment and contract status of M.G.

A motion was made by Jaime Solis, seconded by Doug Buchanan, proposing the non-renewal of the Chapter 21 contract for Dr. Michele Guajardo. The motion passed with one against (Dr. Noel Garza) and one abstention (Oscar Salinas).

5. Approval of offer to employ new Superintendent.

A motion was made by Dr. Rick Villarreal, seconded by Adrian Garcia, accepting Dr. Sandra Garza Ochoa's resignation from the Board of Directors and approving her contract as Superintendent of Schools as discussed in executive session with the contract start date as June 1, 2026. The motion passed unanimously.

22. Adjournment.

The Board adjourned the meeting at 9:52 p.m.