

Board of Education Meeting Highlights

September 22, 2026 – Regular Meeting

This report provides highlights of the Board of Education meeting and is not intended to serve as the official meeting minutes.

Student Board Members:

Junior Morgan Bunker was seated as a new Student Board Member and will serve a two-year term alongside **Senior Gustavo Commarela**, who is beginning his second year. Gustavo introduced students who shared their leadership experiences at the **Cebrin Goodman Teen Institute** and discussed plans to bring similar opportunities to more Freeport students through a local Snowball program. Morgan and Gustavo also provided student perspectives on the new **cell phone policy**, noting that while the adjustment has presented challenges, students are making the adjustment. Some students report improved focus in class and on assignments.

Public Hearing:

The Board held a **public hearing on the 2026–2027 District Budget**, which was initially presented in August. **Mr. Mark Bertolozzi provided a high-level overview of the budget** and key financial information. The proposed budget was available for **public inspection for 30 days at the District Administrative Office**, and notice of the hearing was published in the local newspaper. No members of the public offered comments or questions, and the hearing was subsequently closed.

Superintendent's Report:

FSD 145 is celebrating **National Hispanic Heritage Month, September 15–October 15**, recognizing the rich histories, cultures, achievements, and contributions of Hispanic and Latino communities. The **Department of Language & Culture** has organized district-wide activities that bring students, staff, families, and community members together to celebrate, learn, and strengthen appreciation for the diversity within our schools and community.

The rest of the Superintendent's Report centered around priorities outlined in the District's **2026–2029 Strategic Plan, All In For All Kids**. As the roadmap guiding FSD 145 over the next three years, the Strategic Plan ensures that the District's work, decisions, and initiatives remain focused on our established priorities and our commitment to student success.

PRIORITY 1 | ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

- District enrollment data was reviewed as of September 17. Currently, total enrollment is 3702 students. That includes 3622 in FSD seats. The other students are in alternative placements outside of the district.
- **School Improvement Day is September 23**, with district teams engaging in professional learning and collaborative work focused on continuous improvement and PLC inquiry cycles.
- PFA/PFAE monitoring information and expectations were also shared.

PRIORITY 2 | SAFE & HEALTHY LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

- **FACE hosted its Passport to Resources Community Resource Event on September 17**, welcoming **394 attendees** and connecting families with community agencies, mental health and family supports, food, activities, and other resources.
- FACE continues **home visits, family outreach, attendance support, the Backpack Program, and community partnerships**. Upcoming initiatives include **FACE TO FACE**, designed to strengthen two-way communication with families, and development of a **Family Care Closet** to provide basic and emergency necessities.
- **Exclusionary discipline data** will be monitored monthly, including comparisons with building enrollment demographics, to identify trends while recognizing that current numbers are too small to draw broad conclusions.
- A **Health-Life Safety walkthrough of the Banks-Bergagna Educational Center** identified several repeat violations requiring corrective action. The District is working with ROE #8 on mitigation measures and must submit a formal corrective action update by **October 9**.

PRIORITY 3 | HIGH-QUALITY STAFF & COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- Staff have been engaged as partners through the formation of the **Insurance, Budget Reduction, Core Interview Questions, and Differential committees**.

PRIORITY 4 | FISCAL RESOURCEFULNESS

- As part of the District's commitment to **budget transparency**, an all-staff budget presentation will be held at the JLT to provide employees with information about the District's financial outlook and ongoing fiscal planning.

Information Reports:

Mr. Mark Bertolozzi, Interim Assistant Superintendent for Business & Finance presented the **Monthly Financial Report**. The Board was advised that the District must **restructure its** existing debt repayment schedule to allow for the issuance of \$5 million in Working Cash Bonds. Discussion also included the potential impact on the District's tax levy. The restructuring will help

maintain financial solvency through the end of the fiscal year while extending the timeframe for repayment of existing debt. Further details will be provided in the board meeting minutes.

Resolution of Intent (Funding): The resolution authorizes the District to restructure its existing debt repayment schedule to allow for the issuance of \$5 million in Working Cash Bonds. This action will provide needed funding to help the District maintain financial solvency through the end of the fiscal year, while extending the repayment period for existing debt.

Resolution of Intent Working Cash Funds: The Board considered the issuance of Working Cash Bonds to provide the funding necessary for the District to meet its financial obligations and continue operations through the end of Fiscal Year 2027. The additional debt will be repaid over time as part of the District's ongoing fiscal management.

2026 Tentative Tax Levy: The Board was presented with the 2026 Tentative Tax Levy, which is being brought forward earlier than usual to allow for approval in October. The earlier timeline is necessary to support the District's issuance of Tax Anticipation Warrants (TAWs). Property tax revenue generated through the levy provides essential funding for District operations.

Revisions to Policy 7:70 Attendance and Truancy: The Board reviewed revisions to **Policy 7:70 – Attendance & Truancy**, which is required to be submitted to the Illinois State Board of Education every two years. The policy already meets all required components, with revisions limited primarily to **updating staff roles and responsibilities related to absenteeism and truancy**. There is no financial impact to the District. The changes included removal of the Family Resource Coordinators and Attendance Liaison.

JEA Conference: The Board received information on a proposed trip for 12 FHS Media Production students to attend the JEA National High School Journalism Convention in Orlando, Nov. 19–22. Students will participate in workshops and competitions to strengthen journalism, media, and leadership skills. Board action is anticipated in October.

Approved Consent Agenda

1. Freeport School District & CareerTec Bills
2. Personnel Report, 09/22/26 - the athletic trainer
3. High School Athletic Training Contract - ***this item was pulled from the consent agenda for a separate vote.***

The High School Athletic Training Contract was approved in a separate vote.

Approved Board Action Items

1. Adoption of FSD 145 FY 2027 Budget

2. Showtime Tour 2027
3. Early childhood Support Specialist
4. Press Issue 122
5. Zero Health
6. Resolution of Intent - Funding
7. Resolution of Intent - Working Cash funds
8. Revisions to Policy 7:70

Committee Reports

Finance: President Furst and Member Sosnowski noted that many topics were addressed in Mr. Bertolozzi's finance and budget reports. The Deficit Committee continues to identify strategies to reduce the district's budget deficit while ensuring responsible spending and effective use of resources.

Education: Member Williams reported that the committee discussed IB teacher-training options; MAP and Illinois Assessment of Readiness testing; AIMSweb literacy screening; the use of fall data to finalize School Improvement Plans; and updates to walkthrough data collection, which will now include teacher participation.

Safety & Security: Member Seal shared that the district continues the extensive process of revising district and school crisis plans. ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate) training is also being implemented, and the district now has 14 certified Crisis Prevention Institute instructors.

Next Meeting

The next regular meeting of the Freeport School District Board of Education will be held on:

 17 October, 2026
 6:00 PM
 Jones-Farrar School - 17171 W. Eby St

Community members are encouraged to attend Board of Education meetings and stay informed about district initiatives, programs, and student achievements.