
**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION, NAPERVILLE
COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT 203, DUPAGE AND WILL COUNTIES, ILLINOIS,
HELD AT District Administrative Center, 203 W. HILLSIDE RD, Naperville, IL 60540
August 17, 2026, AT 7:00 P.M., CLOSED SESSION 6:00 p.m.**

Call to order

Vice President Gericke called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Board members present: Kristine Gericke, Holly Blastic, Marc Willensky. Absent: Melissa Kelley Black and Charles Cush.

Administrators present were:

Dan Bridges, Superintendent,
Meredith Haugens, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources,
Michael Frances, Chief Finance Officer/CSBO,

Closed Session

Amanda McMillen moved, seconded by Joe Kozminski, to go into Closed Session at 6:00 p.m. for consideration of:

1. Pursuant to 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(21) Discussion of minutes lawfully closed under the Open Meetings Act, whether for purposes of school board approval of the minutes or semi-annual review of the minutes as mandated by the Act. 07/20/2026, 08/03/2026.
2. Pursuant to 5 ILCS 120/2(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.
3. 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.

Those voting yes: Gericke, Blastic, Kozminski, McMillen, and Willensky. Those voting no: None. Absent: Kelley Black and Cush. The motion carried.

The Board of Education entered Closed Session at 6:01 p.m.

Meeting Opening

Kristine Gericke made a motion, seconded by Holly Blastic, to return to Open Session at 7:02 pm. A roll call vote was taken. Those voting yes: Cush, Kelley Black, Blastic, Willensky, Kozminski, McMillen, and Gericke. 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, Holly Blastic, Marc Willensky, Melissa Kelley Black, Joe Kozminski, and Amanda McMillen.

Student Ambassadors present: None.

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Administrators present: Dan Bridges, Superintendent, Michael Frances, Chief Financial Officer/CSBO, Meredith Haugens, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, Melissa McHenry, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services.

**Pledge of Allegiance:
Led by Board of Education.**

Good News

We welcomed our students back for the start of another great school year on Thursday! Exciting events were happening before and during the school day, including assemblies and a special welcome from local first responders. Here's to another amazing year!

Some of our Naperville 203 educators gathered at Naperville Central on August 6th for Inspire 203: a day dedicated to exploring, energizing, and reimagining learning together.

From an empowering keynote by George Couros (Core-Ohs) to peer-led workshops and inspiring student insights, staff recharged their creative spark for the 2026-2027 school year.

Thank you to everyone who joined, shared, and brought the energy. Here's to an amazing year ahead!

Our middle school teachers kicked off the school year with a Staff Development Day on August 11th. They didn't let the bad weather rain on their parade and kept the day going after a brief interlude to hunker down for the storms. One of their activities had staff choose ribbons based on the impact for our students they want to focus on for the school year that they wove together to create fun boards for each school.

Staff also got to vote for which inflatable won in a race without knowing the results or who was wearing the costume, and the winners got some swag as prizes!

We welcomed our new District 203 Substitute Teachers on Wednesday, August 12th and the district administrative building. Substitutes play a huge role in our daily operations, and we are always so honored to have such a great group of people helping us out each year!

We are making great progress on construction projects across the district. At Washington, Project Lead the Way classrooms are open and ready for students! At Kennedy, the FACs room is ready as well!

This completes the final phase of those space renovations.

The new transportation facility is well underway. Photos show the building has the walls up and crews are hard at work for substantial completion in December and having in fully operational shortly after.

And finally, at North, you can see the addition is starting to come together. They even had a beam signing for that project, more on that later. This project is still ready for substantial completion by August 2027. We'll continue to keep you posted on these projects!

The Naperville Education Foundation has been receiving generous donations to their Kid Booster Resource Center in preparation for the new school year. They were able to send over 700 items last week to many of our schools to meet anticipated student needs. The Resource Center not only provides essential items for expected and unexpected student needs, but it also provides real-world vocational training opportunities for Naperville 203 students with special needs, who help to operate the Resource Center.

If you would like to donate and help refill the shelves for the upcoming school year, please visit the Naperville Education Foundation's Facebook page or their website at nef203.org.

Naperville North students, staff, coaches, and families had the opportunity to sign a steel beam that was being installed in the new building addition. The white beam covered in signatures stands out against the other parts of the structure. A big thank you to Pepper Construction for helping to give these members of our NNHS community the opportunity to be a permanent part of the new area!

Prairie Elementary teachers and staff rode the Naperville Trolley on August 12th around the Prairie neighborhoods to wave to their students. Students and families were invited to come out and wave as the trolley passed by to show their excitement for the upcoming school year.

Grade-level teams at Ranch View Elementary got together before the start of the school year. Each grade-level team works together to support not only each other but also the learning of each student, helping them grow and excel throughout their time in the district.

Public Comments:

President Cush gave the parameters for Public Comments.

Public comments focused primarily on student safety, administrative transparency, employee leave policies, and free speech advocacy. Multiple speakers raised concerns regarding allegations of grooming, physical abuse, and boundary violations by district staff, criticizing a perceived lack of timely reporting to law enforcement or child protective services. Community members questioned whether administrative role overlap or participation in a risk management insurance pool creates conflicts of interest that affect transparency and disciplinary responses. Proposals offered to address these issues included adopting police-led internet safety instruction, retaining an independent third party to audit safety practices, and publishing a safety scorecard with key performance indicators. In response, a parent and physician offered a counterpoint in defense of an elementary educator, stating her children felt safe and urging reliance on objective facts rather than social media campaigns.

Additional comments addressed institutional transparency and governance, with speakers contrasting board communication practices with other local governing bodies. A retired employee alleged systemic obscurity in administration, citing changes to leave calculation methods that were implemented without advance notice or updated policy documentation. Furthermore, a veteran educator, accompanied by supporting speakers, presented a formal rebuttal against disciplinary action and administrative leave resulting from expressions of support for Palestinian students. They requested an investigation into alleged retaliatory conduct and intrusive evaluation requirements, emphasizing obligations under culturally responsive teaching standards and human rights principles.

Due to a lack of honoring the time limit for Public Comments, President Cush called a brief recess of the Board of Education. The Board will return at 8:00pm.

President Cush called the meeting back to order at 8:03pm

President Cush reminded the Board and Community that because questions raised during Public Comment address District Operational matters board has designated our Superintendent as the spokesperson for the District. As our designate to respond to Public Comment, he will apprise the Board accordingly.

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 all Board members.

Board agreed by consensus at the February 2, 2026, Board of Education meeting. Each Board member will get three minutes per agenda topic to ask questions. The Board may agree to ask a second set of questions.

Monthly Reports

- **Treasury Report-** The Board received the June Treasury Report Fund Balance is YTD- report shows how the district resources are being prioritized. She noted the decline of the education fund and the transportation fund. These numbers are important. operating fund balances continue to decline. The Board of Education needs to understand how these impact our staff and families. Community expects us to be good stewards but to also protect our financial resources. Needs to be a discussion of communities priorities. Conversation should be clear.

- **Investments-** The Board received the June Investment Report

- **Insurance-** The Board received the June Insurance Report

Does the insurance report show how much was put in to cover the additional receipts?

Mr. Frances stated there was no money put into the fund. It was a swap from long term investments to short term investments. The Insurance is a part of the education fund.

How much was the amount?

Mr. Frances clarified that no new money was added to the insurance fund; rather, a swap of \$5 to \$6 million in long-term investments was executed between the Education Fund and Insurance Fund to improve liquid asset availability for monthly bill payments.

Budget- The Board Received the June Budget Report

This is the year-end report, not the final which will come in the audit report. Need to adequately explain the financial status of the district. We approved a plan with continued deficits. Need to be clear about what is causing the deficits. Taxpayers need to know why there are financial issues. When does the district plan to get back to a balanced budget.

Action by Consent:

1. Bills and Claims from WARRANT NO. 1077677 THRU WARRANT NO. 10778056 AND WARRANT NO. 900000169 & 9000000170 TOTALING \$27,637,228.45 FOR THE PERIOD OF July 21, 2026, to August 17, 2026.

Kristine Gericke reviewed Bills and Claims with Michelle Swope. She thanked her for sharing information and answering his questions.

2. Kristine Gericke made a motion to approve WARRANT NO. 1077677 THRU WARRANT NO. 10778056 AND WARRANT NO. 900000169 & 9000000170 TOTALING \$27,637,228.45 FOR THE PERIOD OF July 21, 2026, to August 17, 2026, seconded by Amanda McMillen. Those voting yes: Willensky, McMillen, Blastic, Kozminski, Gericke, and Cush. Those voting No: Kelley Black. The motion carried.

Mr. Cush for including the memo from the attorney. This memo confirms what I have been saying. How can we validate that overcite. The policy says we are to review, approve and vote. I do have the right to disagree with the procedure. I do have a right to refuse to approve these bills and claims when I don't have the information.

3. Personnel Report

	Effective Date	Location	Position
APPOINTMENT-CERTIFIED FULL-TIME			
Maryann Kelly Flock	8/10/2026	Highlands, Naper, Ranchview	Music Teacher
Ashley Baker	8/10/2026	Highlands	5th Grade Teacher
Abigail Pasternak	8/10/2026	Elmwood	3rd Grade Teacher
Smilte Krugliakovaite	8/10/2026	Beebe	3rd Grade Teacher
Sarah Fournier	8/10/2026	Prairie	1st Grade Teacher
Madeleine Gignac	8/10/2026	River Woods	4th Grade Teacher
Debra Landorf	08/10/26 - 12/18/26	Connections	Learning Behavior Specialist
APPOINTMENT-CERTIFIED PART-TIME			
Joseph Zec	8/10/2026	Steeple Run & Beebe	Physical Education Teacher
RETIREMENT-CLASSIFIED			
Marnee Hutter	8/11/2026	River Woods	Instructional Paraprofessional
RESIGNATION-CLASSIFIED			
Fiona Curran	8/14/2026	NCHS	High School Main Office Receptionist
Naomi Deighton	8/11/2026	Mill Street	Special Education Paraprofessional
Gracia Livie	8/11/2026	Meadow Glens	Special Education Paraprofessional
Yuliia Vus	8/11/2026	Mill Street	Behavior Support Paraprofessional
Mitch Konrad	8/12/2026	NNHS	Campus Supervisor
Kimberly Jennings	8/11/2026	Connections	Behavior Support Paraprofessional
Zachary Ward	8/25/2026	Connections	Head Custodian
Swanshae Jones	8/7/2026	Mill Street	Special Education Paraprofessional
EMPLOYMENT-CLASSIFIED FULL-TIME			
Saida Sharif	8/12/2026	NNHS	Special Education Paraprofessional
Courtney Finn	8/4/2026	Lincoln	Custodian
Kathryn Pesci	8/5/2026	Transportation	Senior Secretary
Ella Selman	8/12/2026	NCHS	Special Education Paraprofessional
Kavya Varatharaj	8/12/2026	Lincoln	Special Education Paraprofessional
Jennifer Santor	8/12/2026	Kennedy	Behavior Support Paraprofessional

Ksenia Clarke	8/12/2026	Maplebrook	Special Education Paraprofessional
Thomas Jansen	8/4/2026	Transportation	Bus Driver
Marie Meza	8/11/2026	NNHS	Attendance Specialist
Jennifer Baboyian	8/12/2026	Kingsley	Special Education Paraprofessional
Marta Vidal	8/12/2026	River Woods	Special Education Paraprofessional
Denise Bayer	8/12/2026	District	Classroom Nurse
Christine Navea	8/12/2026	Highlands	Instructional Paraprofessional
Aimee Higgs	8/17/2026	NNHS	Literacy/Writing Center Assistant
Brenda Henry	8/14/2026	Connections	Special Education Paraprofessional
Cara Ziegler	8/17/2026	Ellsworth/Naper	LRC Paraprofessional

Kristine Gericke made a motion to approve the Personnel Report, seconded by Amanda McMillen. Those voting yes: Cush, McMillen, Kelley Black, Blastic, Kozminski, Gericke, and Willensky. Those voting No: None. The motion carried.

4. Board Meeting Minutes: 07/20/2026, 08/03/2026

Kristine Gericke made a motion to approve the Board Meeting Minutes from 07/20/2026, seconded by Holly Bastic. Those voting yes: Cush, Willensky, Blastic, and Gericke. Those voting No: None. Abstain: Kozminski, McMillen, and Kelley Black. The motion carried.

Kristine Gericke made a motion to approve the Board Meeting Minutes from 08/03/2026, seconded by Amanda McMillen. Those voting yes: Willensky, Gericke, Blastic, McMillen, Cush, and Kozminski. Those voting No: None. Abstain: Kelley Black. The motion carried.

5. Closed Meeting Minutes: 07/20/2026, 08/03/2026

Kristine Gericke made a motion to approve the Closed Meeting Minutes from 07/20/2026, seconded by Holly Bastic. Those voting yes: Blastic, Willensky, Gericke, and Cush. Those voting No: Kelley Black. Abstain: Kozminski, McMillen. The motion carried.

Kristine Gericke made a motion to approve the Closed Meeting Minutes from 08/03/2026, seconded by Amanda McMillen. Those voting yes: Gericke, Kozminski, McMillen, Willensky, Blastic, and Cush. Those voting No: Kelley Black. The motion carried.

Board member shared that 08/03/2026-not specific enough. Does not allow those who are absent to know what happened. The records should be thorough.

6. Health Insurance Updates

Board member read a statement-appreciate the work of the insurance committees work. She reviewed the balance. I am not seeing where we received feedback from staff. They will be the ones to absorb these fees. Employees need to understand the long term impact on their health care. Were district employees informed of these changes? They need to have a voice in decisions that impact their financial situation. We need to be transparent.

Board member asked for clarification regarding employee input on the Health Insurance Committee recommendations.

Superintendent Bridges confirmed the long-standing committee includes administrative leaders, staff representatives from all four district associations, and non-represented employees, with three association presidents and the UNISERV director present in support.

Kristine Gericke made a motion to approve the Health Insurance Updates, seconded by Amanda McMillen. Those voting yes: Cush, Blastic, McMillen, Kozminski, Willensky, and Gericke. Those voting No: Kelley Black. The motion carried.

Written Communications

Freedom of Information Requests:

Canganelli Freedom of Information Act Request- Human Resources Information
Boisvert Freedom of Information Act Request- Business Office Information
Huntington Freedom of Information Act Request- Business Office Information
Data Branch Freedom of Information Act Request- Business Office Information
Data Branch Freedom of Information Act Request- Business Office Information
Data Branch Freedom of Information Act Request- Business Office Information
Data Branch Freedom of Information Act Request- Business Office Information
Figueroa Freedom of Information Act Request- Buildings and Grounds Information
Millar Freedom of Information Act Request- Human Resources Information
Wenig Freedom of Information Act Request- Business Office Information

Someone FOIA'd information and they did not receive the requested information. As a school Board member, I know what you know. What did the investigation entail? The parents deserve the facts.

Board of Education Reports:

Board member Willensky attended the first day of school and visited my adopted schools. Great to see students back to school. Each building is a community. Takes a lot of people to make these buildings operate.

President's Report:

President Cush noted his opportunity to visit all buildings. Thanked Ross Berkley and Dan Bridges who visited all them with me. There is such energy and excitement in the buildings. Thanked all the leaders of the buildings.

He then addressed recent conduct and allegations of a Board member about the conflict of interest with the Alive Center. There are no contracts with the Alive Center. There is no conflict of interest between Amanda McMillen and Mark Willensky and the Alive Center. This post is reckless and violates board policy and two previous censure resolutions. This Board member was asked to cease and desist this behavior. CC apologized for this behavior.

Board member asked for a copy of the legal letter.

President Cush stated we will post the letter.

Superintendent's Report:

Superintendent read a statement about the district's response to student safety concerns. There are laws that protect student and staff privacy. Our not speaking publicly does not indicate that we are not taking these claims seriously.

Forward Together Introduction

Superintendent Bridges shared the plan of Forward Together. We will finalize and publish the Forward Together framework in August 2027. He shared about the survey card being sent to each household in the district.

Board Questions/Comments:

Board member gave a statement disparaging this plan. We do not need another listening campaign. The issue has not been a lack of feedback, it is a lack of response. Administration and Cabinet is in charge of facilitating these conversations. Process cannot produce honest feedback if there is fear of retaliation. The district should employ a third party to do these conversations.

Is this just an introduction? I have seen how there has been a lot of community engagement and discontent in some areas. The only way to start rebuilding trust by going into the community to hear directly from the staff and community. This is a proactive approach to keep us all accountable. Thank you for trying something different. We can only rebuild trust by engaging.

Board member noted her involvement in SCAC-new last year. Names selected by an outside organization. People were comfortable being very direct. That was a wonderful start. I see this as a next step. The more we are in the community and listening is a step forward.

This will be smaller groups than FOCUS 203. I like the small group setting. It will allow for more engagement. Can engage thru a survey or in person. We do talk to people in the community. We take the feedback and try to integrate in all that we do. Please take advantage of this opportunity. Need to let the process play out. Please participate in these events.

Every home is going to get a postcard with a QR code. So, all will have an opportunity to participate. The more we hear from, the better we will be and the better the information we receive. I am excited to see the input and the output.

Student Services Update

Superintendent Bridges introduced the Student Services team.

Missy introduced her team, Caitrin Gruchot, Taylor Bird, Ashley Johns, Mary Muszynski, and Bridget Ortmann who will present this update.

The District 203 Student Services team presented an update on Strategic Blueprint Commitment 1.4A, which focuses on evaluating specialized self-contained programming to ensure students' diverse needs are met through efficient resource models. The district intentionally launched its work in specialized self-contained classrooms (Phase 1.4A) ahead of non-specialized general education resource supports (Phase 1.4B) to address critical staff retention needs in high-intensity environments and to strengthen local capacity to reduce out-of-district placements.

The presentation emphasized that District 203 consistently exceeds state averages for educating students with IEPs within the general education environment. Specialized programs—encompassing structured learning, multi-needs, emotional support, secondary specialized, and Connections—are structured to deliver intensive, tailored support while working toward transitioning students back into general education settings whenever appropriate. Over a multi-year committee process involving certified staff, paraprofessionals, and administrators, the team established updated program definitions, aligned curriculum maps to general education standards, and adopted the *Everyday Speech* social-emotional learning curriculum. To ensure district-wide equity and support building leadership, the committee created "Administrator Look-For Guides" and an internal "Specialized Program Playbook" targeted for full implementation in August 2027.

Feedback shaping these initiatives was gathered through surveys and interviews with both current and former specialized staff to directly analyze turnover patterns and workplace stressors. Board discussion centered on staff retention, parent engagement, mental health supports for educators following student dysregulation incidents, and the feasibility of aggregating individual IEP outcome metrics using EasyIEP software. Next steps for the 2026–2027 school year include gathering parent and community

input, conducting staff professional development on the playbook, and initiating work on Phase 1.4B non-specialized support systems.

Board Questions/Comments:

Thank you for putting this together. Thank you for answering my questions that I sent ahead of time. I am happy to see that this year you will be having conversations with parents and better addressing their concerns. EasyIEP-houses IEPs. Does that help us get data on outcomes?

Mrs. McHenry noted we utilize it to create our IEP's and it houses them. The progress is measured on an individualized basis. We can pull reports out of IEP. I can ask the company to look at data in a bigger way.

Interested in the data so you can say to the Board how many have met their goals.

Mrs. McHenry stated there are a wide range of skill sets. We are looking at individualized growth. We collect data and provide it to parents every trimester. We provide Professional Learning for staff.

I understand that. Can we say how many are meeting their goals? At a high level, can we say we are on target or we are lagging?

Superintendent Bridges responded that we can identify some measurable goals that can be shared with the Board. Overall are we meeting the needs.

Thank you for your work on this. Can you talk a little bit about how the look fors are used?

Mrs. McHenry remarked they came from feedback from several different people. The team decided that consistency was needed across buildings. Could be what the classroom should look like. For Administration, they requested more guidance on a Specialized classroom.

For the Specialized Program playbook-will that PL be for everyone who is involved?

Mrs. McHenry stated we are proud of the playbook. It is driven from feedback we received. It encompasses expectations for each person who steps into the classroom.

Important to get everyone on the same page and standardized.

I am excited about the playbook as well. There are trends in turnover in the roles who work with these specialized populations. Did some of your feedback come from exit interviews?

Mrs. McHenry noted we reached out to current and previous staff members. It was purposeful as consistency is important with this population. We leaned into the more critical feedback.

I liked how you started out asking about the goals. Our job is to look at the outcomes. We have to make sure that what we committed to is being done. Other districts get this data you are asking for. There are programs that can look at each strategy being used. We can then make decisions about our investments. Delays are learning time our students lose. We will know we are using data to know that students are getting what they need. My area is to know if the process is working. There is no data telling me if we are reaching goals. Not enough information.

I can see the work and the model you have created you had honest feedback and you leaned into it. Appreciate you looked at best practice and looked at what will work best in the classroom. Great that each classroom will have the playbook for a resource. I do think that down the line to see the next phase in talking to parents and students what they are getting. Your work is really showing through.

I appreciate the report. These reports help me when SIP's come to us to review. This broad work helps me understand why buildings choose the goals they make. Appreciate all the work that has gone into building this. Thanks for leaning into the uncomfortable parts.

Thank you for explaining the look for questions. Will get some really good data form that.

A concern is the high turnover and staff turnover. It is obvious you are looking into that. Have you looked at things like additional mental health support for staff members?

Mrs. McHenry noted we do have conversations about that and we do have protocols in place. As a district our staff have access to EAP.

Mrs. Muszyinski stated as a Social Worker we are there for the whole community. We can be there in a therapeutic role for each other.

In regard to metrics-encourage you to think about other bench marks. Talking to those who have come in from other districts to see how we compare.

Mrs. McHenry responded that we offered an opportunity for all staff to be a part. We also specifically asked some staff members who came from other districts. We value the parents. The specialized classroom teachers are in touch with parents daily. Because of the turnover and burnout, we started with staff.

**Discussion without Action:
None.**

**Discussion with Action:
None.**

**Old Business:
None:**

**New Business:
We have heard from parents about safety and busing. We need to have a conversation about these concerns. Want to know what is being done to address these concerns.**

Superintendent Bridges stated we will provide an update on transportation under Superintendent's report. Routes and stops are being evaluated, and some tweaks have been made. Staff have been working with families tonight.

There are different thoughts on capacity and safety.

***It is a good idea for us to share the information we have received with the community.
Board member noted the website and Straight to the Core which show formal responses to questions that are being asked.***

**Upcoming events:
Tuesday, September 8, 2026, Next Board of Education meeting
September 15-Board of Education Self Evaluation.
Are Board members able to submit questions/concerns?
President Cush stated a survey is typically sent out by the IASB representative.**

Adjournment

Amanda McMillen moved seconded by Joe Kozminski to adjourn the meeting at 10:04 p.m. A roll call vote was taken. Those voting yes: Blastic, Willensky, Kelley Black, Kozminski, McMillen, Gericke, and Cush. Those voting no: None. The motion carried.

Approved: September 22, 2026

Charles Cush, President, Board of
Education

Susan Patton, Secretary, Board of
Education