Jamestown Public Schools Board
Regular Meeting
Unofficial Minutes

The regular meeting of the Jamestown Public School Board was held on Monday, October 5, 2026 at 5:30 PM in Thompson Community Room, at the Middle School

Present: Jason Rohr, President, Aaron Roberts, Vice President, Jamie Bear, Melissa Gleason, Heidi Larson, Owen McKenna, Jacob Meier, Interim Superintendent, Adam Gehlhar and Kristi Grounds, Business Manager. Mindy Skunber and Steve Veldkamp were absent.

President Rohr called the Jamestown Public School Board to order and welcomed the audience, Jason Linz, Jamestown Video and Amy Neustel, Administrative Assistant

Mr. Roberts moved to approve the Consent Agenda which consisted of September 21, 2026, regular board meeting minutes, payment of bills, open enrollment with Medina and Pingree Buchanan, non-resident report and open enrollment report, the 2026-2027 tuition formula, the 2025-2026 Jamestown and JVCTC financial reports, and the September 23, 2026, communication meeting notes. Horizontal advancement report is moved to the next meeting. Mrs. Gleason seconded the motion. Roll call with unanimous “yes” vote. Motion carried.

Mr. Justin Connell, Assistant Middle School Principal, and Mr. Brandon Beta, Assistant High School Principal, presented on the Student Attendance Review Board (SARB) process. They explained SARB's purpose in addressing attendance concerns as symptoms of larger barriers, focusing on early identification, understanding barriers (transportation, housing, food, counseling), and building paths forward through school and community supports. The SARB team members, including elementary counselors Lisa Anderson, Dorothy White, Joseph Samuelson, Julie Kudrna, and middle school social worker Kerrie Soulis. Outside agencies like Buffalo Bridges, CPS, Juvenile Justice, and Human Services were noted as partners. They defined key attendance monitoring terms: Average Daily Attendance, Chronic Absenteeism (missing >10% of school, excused or not), and Truancy. The referral and intervention continuum involves monitoring, identifying, intervening, individualizing, consulting, connecting, and following up. Interventions include communication, schedule adjustments, accountability, connecting students to trusted adults and resources, and fostering a sense of belonging. The SARB process aligns with the strategic plan's goals for students with five or fewer absences and chronic absenteeism below 12%, a target JPS has met. Future steps include formalizing referral criteria, aligning attendance procedures, ensuring consistent communication, scaling interventions, and continuous follow-up.

Superintendent Gehlhar noted JPS's strong attendance rates (97% high school, 96% other schools) compared to the state average of 20% chronic absenteeism. Mr. Connell attributed this success to the team's willingness to ask tough questions, staff ownership, and the collective efforts of counseling staff, teachers, and paras.

Strategic Plan Progress Monitoring dashboard for board members to review. Superintendent Gehlhar noted that the metrics are updated according to the board education plan, and final results for items like attendance from North Dakota Insights would be available at the next meeting.

Mr. Gehlhar reported the guiding coalition has been studying educational trends, district enrollment, and various schedule models, considering teacher workloads and student experience. This process, which began in 2021 with a master schedule study, is crucial due to declining student cohorts. Parent engagement opportunities are scheduled for October 12th (High School) and October 13th (Middle School) from 6:00-7:00 PM, along with student focus groups.

Mr. Gehlhar reported the Internet Safety presentation by the North Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigation will be held on Wednesday from 5:30-6:30 PM at the High School, aimed at parents to address online safety for students. Childcare will be provided, as the presentation is not suitable for children.

Mr. Gehlhar reported the district is addressing staff shortages in special education by exploring incentives and potential transitions from general education, with recommendations to be brought to the finance committee.

Mr. Gehlhar reported on open enrollment trends show students enrolling in outside districts as kindergartners and continuing there, potentially impacting JPS enrollment by 100-120 K-12 students. The board discussed its authority to deny open enrollments, noting that such a decision would need to apply to all requests to avoid discriminatory practices. A survey for exiting families has been developed but often receives limited responses.

Mr. Gehlhar reported the facilities committee has an upcoming meeting to discuss the appraisal results for Washington Elementary and the building's condition, as well as broader elementary facilities and footprint, with a report due at the next board meeting.

Mr. Gehlhar reported Mrs. Eckert has worked diligently to facilitate the addition of Medina and Griggs County School Districts to the JVCTC consortium, building on Medina's previous non-member status for an advanced mechatronics program. This requires board approval.

Mr. Gehlhar reported on the recommendation for approval of zero-hour extended contracts for PE instructors, funded by a rural health transformation grant, would be presented later in the agenda.

Mr. Roberts moved to approve the welding II course at the Career and Technology Center. Seconded by Mrs. Bear. Roll call with unanimous “yes” vote. Motion carried.

Mrs. Bear moved to approval the executive summary and the final budget of the 2026-2027 school year. Seconded by Mrs. Gleason. Roll call with unanimous “yes” vote. Motion carried.

Mr. McKenna moved to approve the submission of the resolution for 2026-2027 tax levies. Seconded by Mr. Meier. Roll call with unanimous “yes” vote. Motion carried.

Mrs. Bear moved to authorize the addition of Medina and Griggs County School Districts to the JVCTC consortium for 2027-2028. Seconded by Mrs. Gleason. Roll call with unanimous “yes” vote. Motion carried.

Mr. Gehlhar presented a detailed update on the secondary schedule, reiterating the ongoing process since 2021 and the need for a decision by October 21 meeting for moving forward for the fall 2027 due to student opportunities, staffing, and enrollment. He highlighted the smaller student cohorts and the proactive approach needed to preserve opportunities. Two primary base schedules under consideration are a 4-block base (80–90-minute classes, semester system, up to 8 credits/year) and a 5-period trimester (65–70-minute classes, 3 terms/year, up to 7.5 credits/year). Advantages of longer periods include more time for labs, hands-on learning, internships, and feedback. Concerns raised included the impact of absences, course gaps, student stamina, and fitting AP/dual credit courses. Middle school unique needs like teaming and advisory were also discussed. Staff meetings have provided feedback, noting positives like project-based learning and relationship building, and concerns about stamina and absences. Teacher workload and potential budget flexibility through attrition were detailed, with mathematical modeling suggesting potential savings at both high school and middle school. Site visits to Fergus Falls and Dickinson provided insights into different models, with Fergus Falls showing increased college and CTE course enrollments. Superintendent Gehlhar emphasized that cost savings are a "perk" and not the primary driver, but rather a proactive response to challenges. He outlined a timeline for a recommendation at the next meeting (October 21st), with PD days in November for staff planning.

Dr. Larson moved to approve a school board retreat for November 2nd. Seconded by Mr. Meier. Roll call with unanimous “yes” vote. Motion carried.

Mrs. Bear moved to approve the hiring of Mr. Bill Nelson and Mrs. Brandy Hardy as zero-hour grant PE instructors for 2026-2027 school years upon a successful

background check and appropriate licensure. Seconded by Mr. McKenna. Roll call with unanimous “yes” vote. Motion carried.

President Rohr reviewed the timeline for the Superintendent's evaluation. Board members were reminded to complete their evaluations by October 9th. Superintendent Gehlhar would complete his self-evaluation the following week. Mrs. Neustel will compile the results for the President. President Rohr and Mr. Gehlhar would meet to review the results and will bring to November 2, 2026 meeting for final approval.

Mrs. Gleason moved to approve three amended policies: Policy BA (School Board Ethics), Policy BC (Meetings of the Board), and Policy FDD (Education of Pregnant and Parenting Students). Seconded by Mr. Roberts. Roll call with unanimous “yes” vote. Motion carried.

Mrs. Gleason moved to approve the 2026-2027 tuition agreements with Kensal and Pingree Buchanan Public Schools. Seconded by Mrs. Bear. Roll call with unanimous “yes” vote. Motion carried.

No further business, President Rohr adjourned the meeting.