

## **MINUTES – BOARD OF EDUCATION BOARD WORKSHOP**

**Fresno, California  
September 16, 2026**

Fresno Unified School District, 2309 Tulare Street, Fresno, California 93721.

At a workshop of the Board of Education of Fresno Unified School District, held September 16, 2026, there were present Board Members Cazares, Davis, Jonasson Rosas, Levine, Thomas, Wittrup, and Board President Islas. Superintendent Mao Misty Her was also present.

Board President Islas CONVENED the workshop at 4:36 p.m.

### **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Ambra O'Connor led the Flag Salute.

### **OPPORTUNITY for Public Comment on Closed Session Item**

For the record, the Board received zero (0) public requests to address the Board on Closed Session.

Board President Islas ADJOURNED the workshop to Closed Session at 4:37 p.m.

Trustee Thomas arrived at 4:38 p.m.

Board President Islas RECONVENED the workshop at 5:09 p.m.

For the record, Board Members provided comments and raised questions about information provided in the presentation. A summary of Board Member feedback is below:

**Member Jonasson Rosas** asked if there were any common characteristics between sites, such as demographics or programs offered.

**Member Wittrup** asked if staff were seeing an uptick in families waiting to take vacations until September and asked what the district can do to discourage this.

**President Islas** commented that there is an understandable level of chronic absenteeism specifically at schools for medically fragile students; however, Islas is not sure if the district is effective in developing strategies to address the need of medically fragile students for added support. Therefore, President Islas requested staff to remove the schools from the chronic absenteeism assessment.

**Member Levine** asked if Fresno Unified is back to pre-pandemic levels of chronic absenteeism in student groups. Member Levine asked how Fresno Unified compared to large urban districts and if there are lessons to learn from those that may have lower chronic absenteeism.

**Member Wittrup** commented that the district needs to keep students in special programs that are medically fragile or emotionally fragile on the page, to follow how they are doing and if they need specialized support. Member Wittrup noted that the district's guardrail says the district will not leave anybody behind.

**President Islas** commented that her suggestion was not to leave any student behind, but that they are a group the district can expect will have higher levels of absenteeism.

**Member Thomas** commented that it would be helpful for Board members to see reasons why students are absent. Member Thomas asked that office staff, teachers, and campus safety assistants receive information about services that community schools can offer.

**President Islas** commented on dollars lost from students moving to charter schools. President Islas requested staff to provide an in-depth analysis of what attendance areas students live that are leaving Fresno Unified for a charter school; is the charter a neighborhood school or are students going to the charter from all attendance areas across Fresno Unified.

**Member Davis** requested clarity as to the number of sites. Member Davis asked to have information presented for 109 sites.

**Member Wittrup** asked if the district still had a Student Attendance Review Board process.

**Member Thomas** commented that the community school at King Elementary did an amazing job of supporting a family in need.

**Member Jonasson Rosas** asked if texts sent from Everyday Labs are the same as those sent when a student is absent. Noted that for this strategy to work families need to update their contact information in Atlas. Member Jonasson Rosas suggested an improvement to communication to excuse and absence, and recommended that the text could say, please reply to this text message as to why your child was absent. Member Jonasson Rosas shared that there is no clear way to correct an unexcused absence.

**Member Thomas** asked if the platforms ParentSquare and Everyday Labs communicate. Member Thomas asked if staff could program ParentSquare to show a student's attendance at the beginning of a school year at 100% and as absences happen the percentile adjusts; suggesting this could be a means to help parents. Member Thomas asked if the district offers full-day preschool, as well as whether full-day Transitional Kindergarten would help increase the district's average daily attendance.

**Member Levine** asked staff to share more information on John's Hopkins and Kaiser's roles in helping the district to get students to school. Member Levine shared interest in connecting this where applicable or natural to community schools.

**President Islas** expressed appreciation for the data provided by staff, commenting that the data confirms the issue of declining enrollment, which schools affected by declining enrollment, student groups affected, and the loss of revenue.

President Islas noted that what was missing from the data was the reason, noting that knowing the reason helps the Board decide the correct interventions to put in place. President Islas asked if this is an opportunity for the district to hold focused groups with chronically absent students. President Islas suggested an exit interview would be beneficial to show where students go when they leave the district, as well as the district provide more intentional engagement with populations known to experience chronic absenteeism; providing an opportunity for the district to ask parents what would change their decision to leave the district.

President Islas reiterated her request to hear directly from Fresno Unified students and families, commenting it would help the district to have research come from a representative sample of Fresno Unified families.

**Member Jonasson Rosas** echoed the comments made by President Islas and advocated to compensate parents that take part in the representative sample.

**President Islas** expressed support for the idea of an incentive to motivate people to help the district with this work.

**Member Levine** asked staff to ensure the process does not make decisions based on assumptions about the right input, but decisions based on input received directly from focus groups with students and families.

Member Levine referred to a time when district staff made an intentional effort to sit down with unhoused students and families and heard directly and clearly from them that an intervention that made sense to the district had been put in place but it was not really the right intervention; the unhoused students and families provided suggestions for ways to better intervene. Member Levine asked if the district continued engagement sessions with unhoused students as well as other vulnerable student populations.

**Member Levine** commented on a visit to the Middle School Academy at Tioga, the district's creative approach to support vulnerable middle school students; and commented on hearing that learning for staff has already surfaced related to successes and areas for improvement.

**Member Davis** asked if regional community schools are clearinghouses for people in need and asked how to strategize community schools with community organizations to better serve students and families.

**Member Wittrup** commented that the Board does need to know why so the Board can put proper interventions in place and do not have to guess. Member Wittrup referred to the eight schools with attendance at 93% or above and noted that they all do universal attendance awards and acknowledgments in the classrooms and the schools. Member Wittrup referred to Starr Elementary School, commenting that the school takes pride in perpetuating a culture of good attendance and suggested the district look at what these schools are doing and how the district can replicate it at other schools.

**Member Cazares** asked if there is someone at the high schools to support and follow up with high school students to clear absences; commenting that as a parent of a high school student Member Cazares does not receive calls to clear up absences. Member Cazares asked how attendance will affect students in terms of the number of classes, programs, supports, and schools on the back end, two years from now.

Member Cazares asked Superintendent Her to explain more about what a sixth through eighth grade school would look like related to the community engagement process. Member Cazares asked the district to share information about community engagement sessions multiple times on ParentSquare.

**Member Jonasson Rosas** commented that the district is facing significant cuts, school closures, program eliminations, and cuts to staff and our community needs to see the prep work the messiness of the work because these will be painful points and by providing public discussions so families are aware and part of the process will keep people from feeling surprised.

**Member Thomas** thanked staff for their work, commenting the meeting was necessary but not easy. Member Thomas asked that the district heavily promote the engagement meetings so that people do not feel any backdoor deals are taking place.

For the record, Superintendent Her, Patrick Jensen, Dr. Carlos Castillo, Rita Baharian, and Abigail Arie were available to respond.

#### **OPPORTUNITY FOR UNSCHEDULED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS**

For the record, the Board received one (1) request to address the Board during Unscheduled Oral Communications. The individual's name and summary of topic are as follows:

1. Deshunna Monay Ricks referred to the district guardrail two under the equitable access goal and commented that the district needs to provide equitable access to its African American students.

#### **D. ADJOURNMENT**

Board President Islas ADJOURNED the workshop at 6:56 p.m.