

Granite School District
Board of Education Meeting
Tuesday, February 17, 2026

A meeting of the Board of Education of Granite School District convened in the Boardroom at the Granite Education Center, 2500 South State Street, Salt Lake City, Utah. President Nicole McDermott called the meeting to order at 5:03 PM, those in attendance:

Nicole McDermott	President
Kris Nguyen	Vice President
Connie Burgess	Board Member
Kim Chandler	Board Member
Julie Jackson	Board Member
Clarke Nelson	Board Member
Karyn Winder	Board Member

The following members of the administration were present:

Ben Horsley	Superintendent
Todd Hauber	Business Administrator
Dr. Mitch Nerdin	Chief of Staff
Leslie Bell	Assistant Superintendent
Dr. Tyler Howe	Assistant Superintendent

Doug Larson, General Counsel, and Stacy Bushell, Executive Secretary, were in attendance.

STUDY ITEMS

School Leadership and Improvement Update

Dr. Tyler Howe, Wes Cutler, Secondary SLID and Jon Adams, Elementary SLID, gave a presentation on recent restructuring within the School Leadership and Improvement department to allow School Leadership and Improvement Directors (SLIDs) to further implement their focus on coaching school principals. All eight SLIDs are currently obtaining a coaching endorsement. The new department structure was presented to principals last August. By shifting past responsibilities to other district departments, SLIDs have more time to dedicate to formal and informal school visits with principals. They shared data on coaching visits and feedback from principals about how the department is doing at meeting principals' needs for support, professional growth and collaboration.

Board comments and discussion:

What extra effort is going to Granger High where the success rate numbers are lower compared to other high schools? (Karyn Winder)

It is important to know that the purpose of this measure is for schools to look at their own growth and then to use data from other schools as context. Granger is a BOOST school, funding was provided to allow more time for teachers to unpack standards, create formative assessments and evaluate data to improve student outcomes. Nicole McDermott pointed out that Granger attained highest growth. While some assumed lowering the failure rate would mean lowering standards, Dr. Howe said only 1.7% of teachers reported this as a reason for improving this area.

Do we have enough SLIDs? (Kris Nguyen, Nicole McDermott)

Dr. Howe is the high school SLID and Assistant Superintendent, regarding feedback that split responsibilities could lead to overload and be unsustainable, he thinks these concerns come from high school principals and he is working to adjust, this is something for the department to be mindful of in general too. Regarding support for assistant principals, each assistant principal is assigned a SLID. There is a greater focus on coaching principals because instructional leadership starts with the principal. We recognize adjustments and enhancements may be needed to ensure that assistant principals are trained and prepared for future leadership. Lynne Rada is the SLID assigned to onboarding, she plans and leads monthly training for interns, deans of students, assistant principals, and new principals. She conducts one-on-one visits with all interns. Julie Jackson commented that she has noticed SLIDs are much more aware of principals, students and specifics at their schools. School specific coaching is crucial because each school is unique. She hopes SLIDs ask themselves, “How can I add value for this school and principal?”

Extended School Year

Dr. Mitch Nerdin reported on a proposed initiative for an extended school year pilot at Plymouth Elementary. Reasons, goals, a draft calendar and daily schedule for this pilot were reviewed. There is not a plan for implementation yet, allowing time to evaluate whether this pilot is the best course of action. Other possible actions to close the achievement gap will also be explored.

Board comments and discussion:

Karyn Winder appreciates looking at innovative solutions for a school that is struggling and is hitting turnaround status at the federal level. She has struggled with the procedure and rollout of this proposal. When it was introduced a few months ago several board members had very specific concerns and were not on board. She was shocked and unhappy about the survey that went to the Plymouth community in January. It seemed like the district was moving full steam ahead. She asked, “Who was around the table when the decision to go ahead and survey despite at least half of the board not in favor?” She believes the board should be in support before a survey is conducted.

Superintendent Horsley answered saying that he takes full responsibility for the decision. Information was needed from the community in terms of the proposal to that point in time. The idea was not to negate the concerns from the board. Results of the survey showed about half of the community was ready to go but that presented a problem and we could not proceed either way. The survey information was needed, and we weren’t going to proceed until we had the support of the board. He did not want to come back to the board without good information from the community to see if it’s even feasible and to address their concerns. The team worked hard to get responses from 88% of families, of which we’ve never had that amount of feedback. Regarding teachers and reconstitution, we generally don’t make those decisions until this time of year. Having the board’s support is critical, we’re not moving forward and haven’t decided yet.

Karyn Winder’s second question, “Will this pilot dilute the Title I funds going to other schools in her precinct? Dr. Nerdin said Granite receives Title I funds based on poverty within our communities. After set asides the remaining funds are allocated to qualifying schools based on their PPA.

The remaining discussion centered on questions about community support for a pilot. Logistical questions about the model, calendar, staffing and attendance. Board members expressed concern about meeting the needs of families and truly considering their input, support, buy-in and involvement in the success of the school.

Administration provided answers to questions and rationale for considering this pilot. There were 47% of families who said they were not interested in starting the extended year this summer, however, many comments expressed interest if there was more time before implementation. Only 2.4% said they would go to a different school if the pilot came to Plymouth. Those families would have a transportation option to another Granite school on a traditional schedule. With open enrollment, there is potential to draw students from outside the boundary with regional advertising. Interest should increase in the second year of the pilot as parents see success. Dr. Nerdin emphasized that this is not a program designed to be a punishment forced on the community. Plymouth received a federal designation for turnaround and Granite is obligated to address the achievement gap. This program is meant to give resources and support to meet student needs and accomplish significant improvement. The concept for this program has been discussed at the state level dating back to when Dr. Nye was superintendent. Legislators, including the senate president, were ready to fund \$1M, over the course of three years. Those discussions backed off considering board concerns and community input. If this pilot were implemented and the data showed success it could continue beyond the initial three years and possibly be funded by the legislature.

Superintendent Horsley would like to continue to visit with this community to learn more about their concerns, and to see if there is a pathway forward with a pilot such as this. Administration would gather more data and hold meetings in the spring and fall. Then a final recommendation could be presented to the board before October.

Board members will follow up by sending their thoughts and preferences to board leadership.

ADJOURN

President Nicole McDermott adjourned the meeting at 7:44 p.m.

Note: A copy of related materials and an audio recording of the meeting can be found at <https://www.utah.gov/pmn/> and <https://meetings.boardbook.org/Public/Organization/2744>

APPROVED: March 3, 2026