



MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Washington County School District
121 West Tabernacle, St. George, Utah
March 23, 2026
2:00 p.m.

Present: Board President David Stirland, Board Vice President LaRene Cox, Board Member Craig Seegmiller, Board Member Burke Staheli, Board Member Heidi Gunn, Superintendent Richard Holmes, Business Administrator Brent Bills, Assistant Superintendent Nate Esplin, Assistant Superintendent Cheri Stevenson, Executive HR Director Darin Thomas, Executive Director Susan Harrah, Executive Director Steve Gregoire, Executive Director Rusty Taylor, Executive Director Wade Jensen, Technology Director Jeremy Cox, Communications Director Steven Dunham, Learning Director Brian Stevenson, and Student Services Director Brad Christensen.

Board Member Ron Wade and Board Member Craig Hammer participated electronically.

Minutes: Executive Secretary Kajsia Boyer

Reverence by Member Gunn.

WORK SESSION

Sharp Survey – Warren Hall

Superintendent Richard Holmes said the Sharp Survey will be given again next year. Warren Hall shared information about the survey. The Sharp Survey continues as a vital tool to track youth health risks and guide prevention efforts in schools. It is conducted biennially with grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 to follow cohorts longitudinally. The survey covers physical health, safety, mental health, bullying, substance use, screen time, sleep, and parental involvement. Parents are required to opt in for their child to take the survey and the responses are anonymous. The ongoing survey trends show declining drug and alcohol use with Utah youth reporting 3.8% alcohol use in the last 30 days and a 33.6% drop in vaping experimentation since the last survey. There is emerging concern about rising use of nicotine pouches, though still under 2% usage among youth. Mental health improvements were noted with a 7% decline in moderate depression and 28.4% fewer serious suicide considerations since the prior survey. Parental influence and protective factors strongly correlate with lower risky behaviors. Data emphasizes the role of family in prevention efforts and school-community partnerships. Youth eating at least one family meal weekly are 32% less likely to feel depressed and 49% less likely to vape. The survey shows that 81.7% of students report clear screen time rules are being set by parents. Survey data helps qualify for state and federal grants funding mental health assistance, suicide prevention, and elementary counselors and enables schools to address emerging issues like nicotine pouch use and tailor interventions based on localized data. Partners like Southwest Behavioral Health use data to educate counselors, parents, and community through presentations. It was suggested to create concise, compelling data summaries to share with parents at back-to-school events. Messaging to explain the survey purpose and benefits may reduce opt-outs and boost participation.

Elementary Calendar Update – Nate Esplin

Nate Esplin reviewed some of the changes to the elementary calendar. Adjustments to the elementary calendar focus on reducing lost instructional time while maintaining essential assessments. Diagnostic Reading Assessments will be shifted to Paraprofessionals with teachers assisting to minimize teacher time

away from instruction. Thursday, August 27, 2026 will be an early-out day. The kindergarten scheduling keeps more consistency and introduces half-day sessions for the entire first week. Experience showed starting full days immediately posed challenges for kindergartners while half-day sessions provide a more gradual introduction to the school day. The state no longer requires a pre-kindergarten assessment. Our schools have still liked to have the pre assessment to help with planning. Assessments will be done on non-contract days in the summer and kindergarten teachers will then take time off on August 27, 28 or on the January Teacher Prep day.

2026-2027 School LAND Trust Plans – Brent Bills

Brent Bills said the plans are out for Board review. The link was shared.

COSSBA Conference – Craig Seegmiller and Ron Wade

Craig Seegmiller and Ron Wade reported on attending the national COSSBA Conference. There were about 1500 attendees. Considerations included content relevance, political neutrality, and networking opportunities. Feedback from Ron and Craig emphasized the value of regional flavor and practical sessions. The conference compared favorably to NSBA in relevance and quality of sessions, highlighting a more neutral political tone aligned with Southern Utah values. Presentations emphasized practical skills and relationships within school governance and AI Technology sessions provided both opportunity and caution. Discussions addressed the benefits for education and risks such as AI-enabled bullying and misinformation. Board members expressed cautious optimism, noting AI's limited impact on math education but significant influence on language arts. Future Board decisions will weigh experiences from NSBA and COSSBA to select the best fit for next year.

Legislative Update – Superintendent Richard Holmes

Superintendent Richard Holmes shared information from legislation. There were 1014 bills with 541 passed. JLC supported 62% of bills that were passed and opposed bills were defeated 82% of the time, showing the strong advocacy impact. Some of the key bills that passed were the classroom technology bill limiting technology K-3, school cell phone revisions, school construction, early literacy that targets 80% of students ready by third grade, and software in education. The school board referendum and school lunch bills failed. There is one bill SB295 on school clubs is being taken to the Governor to veto. Superintendent Richard Holmes feels the literacy bill was a positive thing. He mentioned that there will be a lot of interventions with the retention bill. Education funding increases included a 4.2% rise in the Weighted Pupil Unit (WPU) and boosts to at-risk student funding. There will be JLC meetings on April 17 and May 15.

Building Update – Bryan Dyer

Bryan Dyer shared an update on building projects.

Snow Canyon Middle School construction ahead of schedule with recent delivery of metal panels and major structural milestones. Masonry work expected to complete by second week of April. Coordination with excavation and utility contractors progressing to support site and parking lot work. Expected building completion ahead of summer 2027, enabling demolition of old building and summer site work.

The Dixie High Vocational Building is ahead of schedule. The structural steel and roof joists and being installed. The retaining wall at Dixie High is stepped and tiered to the parking lot.

Pine View Middle School renovations progressing with courtyard and media center work nearing completion. Classroom upgrades are ongoing with phased teacher and student moves to maintain learning environment. Project delays pushed media center completion to summer 2027 due to added scope. New outdoor shade structure and turf areas enhancing student common spaces.

Pine View High athletic locker room and storage building upgrades targeted for completion by July to support summer conditioning. Structural waterproofing and reinforcement work are underway on stadium storage. The new locker rooms feature open layouts and improved access adjacent to weight and training rooms. Coordination is required for the chemical storage tank relocation to maintain safety during construction.

Pine View High auditorium renovation is on track for August completion with seating and acoustic work in final stages. New sound booth stairs have been installed improving the safety and accessibility. The project is running approximately three weeks ahead of schedule despite supply chain challenges.

Enterprise High School pre-construction meeting was held in March. The electrical and fire alarm safe-off have been completed. Temporary fencing has been installed to maintain site security and parking access during demolition. The total building construction costs are at \$9,741,811.00, equating to \$573 per square foot. Additional 10,000 square feet added will be added to the auditorium.

There were 101 priority projects with a budget of \$3,616,796.00. The maintenance and technology departments completed 53 projects internally, delivering cost savings. There were 56 capital projects with a budget of \$10,170,885.00. Thirty-two of the projects were performed by WCSD Staff. There are nine projects left to complete including parking lot improvements at LaVerkin, Hurricane, and Dixie High, and field upgrades at Desert Hills Middle. The press box at Pine View High remains on future planning list.

Brent Bills said we need contracts signed for the Washington Elementary, Panorama Elementary, Santa Clara Elementary, and LaVerkin Elementary renovations and for the Enterprise Field House. He also mentioned he will be working to get architects for the Water Canyon project.

USBA Regional Meeting Update – Superintendent Richard Holmes

Superintendent Richard Holmes mentioned that USBA will be sharing updates from the regional meetings.

Financial Report – Brent Bills

The Financial Report was shared with the Board for approval on the consent agenda.

Board Member Seegmiller presented a motion to go into a closed session at 3:32 p.m. Board Member Gunn seconded the motion that passed unanimously.

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Board Member Ron Wade and Board Member Craig Hammer participated electronically.

CLOSED SESSION

Personnel Items

Property, negotiation, and personnel items.

Board Member Cox presented a motion to go out of the closed session at 5:39 p.m. Board Member Staheli seconded the motion that passed unanimously.

CONSENT AGENDA

- 1. Personnel Specific Items**
- 2. Financial Report**

Board Member Staheli presented a motion to approve the Personnel Specific Items. Board Member Seegmiller seconded the motion that passed unanimously.

Board Member Cox presented a motion to approve the Financial Report. Board Member Gunn seconded the motion that passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON BOARD ACTION ITEMS

No public comments were given.

ACTION ITEMS

2026-2027 Priorities and Capital Plan

Board Member Seegmiller presented a motion to approve the 2026-2027 Priorities and Capital Plan. Board Member Gunn seconded the motion that passed unanimously.

Board Member Staheli presented a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:41 p.m. Board Member Cox seconded the motion that passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT