

MINUTES OF THE STUDY SESSION – September 10, 2026

The Board of Education of the Aspen Peaks School District met in a Study Session on Thursday, September 10, 2026, at 4:01pm. The Study Session took place in the boardroom at the Alpine School District office in American Fork, UT.

Board members present: Board President Diane Knight, Vice President Amber Bonner, Nicki Brammer, Jeanne-Marie Burrows, Jason Hart(arrived at 4:17pm), and Jason Theler. Steve Sparti was absent.

Also present: Superintendent Perkins and Business Administrator Bea Twede. There were approximately 5 others in attendance.

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Board Governance Handbook - we continued going through the handbook from the previous study session
 - a. Section 4 - Training and Continuing Education - just a reminder that the policy numbers are place holders, not our numbering system.
 - i. Policy 1070 - sets the minimum for continuing education
 1. OPMA and Land Trust
 2. Public records, privacy, ethics, finance or other training assigned by the District, USBE, the Utah Office of the State Auditor, legal counsel or Board policy.
 3. We also have training for the specific committees that we serve on.
 4. Question was raised on who keeps the record of the completed training? Business Administrator or someone else
 5. Approximately 12-20 hours of training per year.
 6. The purpose is not to count hours. It is to ensure the Board is steadily building the knowledge and discipline required to govern a public school district well.
 7. We need to keep in mind the distinction of governance versus management.
 8. We need to monitor progress without overstepping management.
 9. We need to act as a body, not as individuals.
 10. We need to raise concerns without directing staff or undermining the Superintendent's authority.
 - ii. Open meetings, public records and ethics
 1. OPMA training
 2. Closed session rules and limits.
 3. Agenda, notice, minutes and voting requirements.
 4. This training matters disproportionately because most governance mistakes happen through ordinary communication: texts, emails, social media messages, informal conversations, or attempts to be helpful outside the formal Board process.
 - iii. School finance, audit and fiduciary oversight
 1. The Board's purchasing policy and the contract threshold above which an item comes to the Board for approval.
 - a. A purchase of \$50,000 or more needs to be approved by the Board.
 - b. Monthly board reports show big changes that have been paid that month. Anything above \$50,000 will be brought before the Board at Board Meeting. We will put this amount in policy.
 2. Board members do not need to become school finance experts. They DO need to understand the budget well enough to govern responsibly.
 - iv. Student outcomes and academic oversight
 1. Student achievement and growth data
 2. In the District's early years, training weight sits on building baseline systems. Over time, the Board's training should increasingly support meaningful oversight of student outcomes.

3. We can share these achievements in SCC meetings.
- v. Superintendent and Business Administrator evaluations
 1. The only 2 employees that the Board hires are the superintendent and the business administrator. We are required by law to evaluate them annually.
 2. We need to evaluate senior administrators as a Board, not as individual members.
 3. We need to be trained prior to their evaluations.
 4. Our focus areas for the evaluations will come from our KPI's.
- vi. Communication, public relations and social media
 1. Training on how to communicate as an individual Board member without appearing to speak for the Board.
 2. Training on how to use social media responsibly as an elected official.
 3. Training on how to avoid escalating conflict online.
 4. School districts face unusual public attention, uncertainty and scrutiny. Board members do not need polished corporate messaging. They DO need shared experiences for clear, disciplined, legally appropriate communication.
- vii. Community engagement and conflict management
 1. Listening to community concerns without making commitments outside Board action.
 2. Handling complaints respectfully and consistently.
 3. Understanding escalating pathways.
 4. Managing public comment professionally.
 5. Recognizing when a concern reflects a broader system issue.
 6. Engaging with families, staff, students and community members without bypassing the Superintendent's management role.
- viii. Advocacy and legislative context. Board members should understand:
 1. The Utah legislative process as it affects public education.
 2. The Board's role in advocacy.
 3. How to communicate with USBE, legislators and other state agencies.
 4. How to track statutory changes that affect District policy, finance, governance, curriculum, facilities and student services.
 5. How to distinguish personal political advocacy from Board-authorized advocacy.
 6. We need to be aware of the USBE issues that are currently being discussed.
 7. Participation in USBA legislative training, regional meetings and legislative updates is strongly encouraged.
- ix. Safety, crisis and high-stakes governance
 1. The Board's role in a crisis is not to manage the incident. It is to preserve governance discipline, support lawful communication, protect confidentiality and ensure the Superintendent has appropriate authority and support to manage the District's response.
 - a. What should board members do when there is a safety/crisis situation?
 - i. The Communication's Dept has a protocol they follow during any safety/crisis situation. We will follow that protocol.
 - ii. We will have additional training from the Communications Dept.
 - iii. The Board would like to be kept informed so they know what is appropriate to share
- x. Recommended Training Sources
 1. Utah Office of the State Auditor - 8 modules, 10 minutes each
 2. Utah School Boards Association(USBA) - new Master Board Certification
 3. Utah State Board of Education
 4. Utah Division of Archives and Records Service
 5. District legal counsel
 6. USBE Internal Audit
 - a. 3 modules - module 1 is required for all board members' onboarding

- b. We can complete some of the modules together
 - xi. Training Plan by Board Role
 - 1. New Board members
 - a. The State Auditor's introductory course
 - b. OPMA and closed session training
 - c. Board role, and where governance ends and management begins
 - d. District policy structure
 - e. School finance basics
 - f. Public communication and social media expectations
 - g. The Superintendent evaluation process
 - h. Community complaint and concern routing
 - i. School LAND Trust responsibilities, where applicable
 - j. Module #1 of the USBE Internal Audit
 - 2. Board President and Vice President - have specific training
 - 3. Committee assignments - have specific training
 - xii. How to plan training each year
 - 1. Each spring, after the Board self-evaluation, the Board identifies two or three governance development priorities for the coming year. Those priorities guide the training calendar.
 - 2. Diane has asked Jason Hart to put together a list of possible topics for Board training during study sessions:
 - a. Auditor Training (Do modules as a board?)
 - b. Unique ones may be Budgets (with an auditor focus), Ethics and Nepotism, Separation of Duties
 - c. OPMA and GRAMA Basics - what does it look like in detail?
 - d. Governance versus Operations
 - e. Policy and Administrative Rules
 - f. Community Engagement and Interactions
 - g. Board Self-Assessment
 - h. Assessing Superintendent and BA
 - i. Reading district reports and budgets
 - j. Interpreting and evaluating data
 - k. Decision Making?
 - l. Compliance and Laws
 - m. Dealing with a Crisis
 - n. *Encouraging Public Participation* (The Guide to Effective School Boards)
 - o. *Working with the News Media* (The Guide to Effective School Boards)
 - p. Nicki recommended a book reading and discussing the book
 - q. At this time with the start of a new district we need to train on topics prior to the beginning date of July 1, 2026.
 - xiii. Governance Retreat or Work Session
 - 1. A retreat should not replace regular training, but it helps the Board build shared understanding and common language. Shared training is often more valuable than individual attendance at unrelated sessions, because the Board is not only building individual knowledge; it is building a governance culture.
 - b. Section 5 - Preparing for Board Meetings
 - i. Board Docs
 - 1. We will change the timeline and remove the 72 hour deadline. 72 hours will be a standard and followed when possible.
 - 2. Family-impact notes if applicable, brief statement on the impact. State Code asks that a brief statement be made when a policy is going to impact the family.

3. If you have substantive questions that staff could research before the meeting, send them to the Superintendent at least 24 hours in advance. Advance questions often make the difference between a discussion that resolves the question and one that gets stuck.
4. This is not lobbying for an outcome. It is information-gathering. The pattern: ask the question, receive the data, then form your view.
- ii. Meeting Decorum
 1. Disagree on substance, not character. The Board is a body of seven and disagreement is how good decisions get made.
- iii. What to expect at a meeting
 1. We need to add Study Session and Closed Session
 2. Pledge of Allegiance and Reverence - we will assign an individual to lead the pledge and give a reverence message. Once our district opens we may assign schools to fulfill these assignments.
 3. Public comments - we would like to have more comments and interaction with our community members
 - a. Do we want to add additional time for comments?
 - b. Can we respond to comments if needed?
 - c. Can we ask clarifying questions?
 - d. We will look at Policy 1001 and readdress the public comments.
- c. Section 6 - Communication Norms - You may communicate with fellow Board members between meetings, but with care.
 - i. Between meetings, among board members
 1. OPMA limits
 2. Topical messages, not deliberation
 3. Confidentiality - don't share information from closed sessions
 4. No surprises - Do not surface a significant concern, objection or new piece of information for the first time in an open Board meeting, not for the Superintendent, the Board President, fellow Board members, or staff. If you have a concern about an agenda item, raise it with the Board President or Superintendent beforehand. Governance works better when everyone in the room has had a chance to think, not just react.
 5. We need to keep in mind the "Rolling Quorum"
 - ii. The Single-Point-of-Contact Rule
 1. Operational concerns or questions go to the Superintendent, or to the Board President if the Superintendent is the subject.
 2. If a staff member contacts you directly with information about operations, accept it courteously, then promptly inform the Superintendent of the substance.
 3. If a staff member contacts you to lobby for or against a personnel matter, decline politely and refer the matter to the Superintendent.
 4. If a staff member raises a safety, fraud, or legal concern, treat it seriously, refer it to the Superintendent or, in extraordinary cases, the Board President, and let those channels respond.
 5. Do not direct staff in the conduct of their duties. Do not make commitments to staff on the Board's behalf.
 6. These concerns can be brought up in our weekly Superintendent Meeting.
 7. This is not about distance from staff. It is about ensuring the Superintendent is the appropriate manager of the staff, and that individual Board members do not inadvertently set conflicting expectations.
 - iii. Board Policies that are referenced in the Board Governance Handbook draft
 1. Pg 12: Policy 1070 - Board Continuing Education & Training
 2. Pg 21: Policy 1300 - Board Meetings
 3. Pg 21: Policy 1050 - Board Member Code of Ethics & Conduct: Closed Session

4. Pg 23: Policy 1030 - Board Member Communication
5. Pg 23: Policy 1500 - Superintendent: Communication/Single-Point-of-Contact Rule

The meeting adjourned at 5:29pm.

APPROVED