



MINUTES
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Washington County School District
121 West Tabernacle, St. George, Utah
August 10, 2026
4:30 p.m.

Present: Board President David Stirland, Board Vice President LaRene Cox, Board Member Craig Seegmiller, Board Member Burke Staheli, Board Member Craig Hammer, 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 Rusty Taylor, Executive Director Wade Jensen, Communications Director Steven Dunham, Technology Director Jeremy Cox, Learning Director Brian Stevenson, Student Services Director Brad Christensen, and Facilities Director Bryan Dyer. Board Member Ron Wade is participating via web.

Minutes: Executive Secretary Kajsia Boyer

Reverence by Executive HR Director Darin Thomas.

Board Member Seegmiller presented a motion to go into a closed session at 12:34 p.m. Board Member Cox seconded the motion.

Board Member Seegmiller voted Aye
Board Member Cox voted Aye
Board Member Staheli voted Aye
Board Member Hammer voted Aye
Board Member Gunn voted Aye
Board Member Stirland voted Aye

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A. CLOSED SESSION

1. Property and Personnel Items

Property, legal, and personnel items discussed.

Board Member Cox presented a motion to go out of the closed session at 3:02 p.m. Board Member Seegmiller seconded the motion that passed unanimously.

Brent Bills reported on the meeting with Washington City and the Inland Port Authorities. The inland port proposal risks diverting commercial and industrial property tax revenue away from education funding. A significant portion of industrial property taxes, which support schools, could be absorbed by

the inland port area. Washington City and the inland port authority expressed willingness for a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to limit the inland port's size and tax impact. Concerns include some of the area that is already being built out with building pads that should not be part of the Inland Port. There is a second expansion that is already in the planning. The inland port could expand from half a square mile to about one square mile, raising concerns due to similar rapid expansions elsewhere in Utah. The default property tax diversion rate is 75% for 25 years, with possible extensions, potentially impacting two generations of school children. The board will await a draft MoU from Washington City, expected to clarify limits on inland port expansion and tax diversion. Once received, the board will review the draft in a closed session to address remaining concerns before continuing discussions. Board members noted that Inland Port Authorities may underestimate the long-term consequences for local education funding. Inland Ports attract large industrial projects that increase jobs but reduce tax revenue for schools, potentially raising taxes on residents. The board emphasized the importance of public awareness and transparency to pressure Inland Port authorities to consider the community impacts.

B. FOLLOW UP FROM PREVIOUS BOARD MEETING

There were no follow up items.

C. WORK SESSION

1. Board PLC Training (Literacy) – Susan Harrah

Presentation postponed.

2. Guardian Program Update – Brad Christensen and Ed Del Toro

Ed Del Toro reported on the school guardian program. The school guardian program has approximately 130 volunteers, with each school having at least one guardian and some schools having multiple guardians. The District has a really strong program. All guardians are compliant with Utah State Code and have completed trauma first aid, scenario-based training, and semi-annual firearm recertification. Training benefits from a strong partnership with local law enforcement agencies providing one-on-one coaching and shooting range support. Guardians carry concealed nine-millimeter firearms and have designated concealment vests with ID for quick identification during emergencies. State law does restrict disclosure of guardian identities to protect privacy and safety. Scenario training includes active shooter responses and proper interaction with arriving law enforcement to ensure coordination and safety. Discussion included the potential benefits of public signage like Texas' "School Marshals" to deter threats and reassure families. Board members acknowledged mixed community feelings but emphasized the program's goal to protect children and reduce violence. Recent media interviews have increased transparency and awareness about the program's scope and safeguards against accidental shootings. Guardians receive a \$500 stipend to offset firearm costs; the district covers all training expenses. Guardians range from former law enforcement and military personnel to community members new to firearms, with tailored training for all skill levels. The program is recognized as one of the best in the state due to its thorough training, law enforcement cooperation, and community engagement.

3. Catalyst Center Grant – Jon Butler

Jon Butler reported on the District Catalyst or APEX grant award of \$1.4 million to develop an aviation program in partnership with Southern Utah University (SUU) over three years. The program will occupy newly vacated space previously used by the graphics department at Dixie High School. It offers pilot ground school and aviation mechanics coursework aligned with SUU's bachelor's degree programs, but excludes flight hours. Plans are to coordinate with our JROTC programs focused on drones and pilot ground school for complementary student pathways. Partnerships with RAM Company and SkyWest Airlines aim to provide internships and aerospace-related experiences. The program includes advanced flight simulators, including desktop and wraparound models, enhancing student training without requiring on-aircraft flying initially. Program space renovation will begin in January after graphics move out, targeting program readiness by the 2029-2030 school year. After the grant period, program funding will derive from CTE student enrollment fees, ensuring financial sustainability. SUU's recent NASA grant enhances potential collaboration and resource sharing for aerospace education in the region. We have been running an aviation program at Crimson Cliffs High, but this will have the finances to make a really great program.

4. Policy 1331 Paid Parental and Postpartum Leave – Darin Thomas

Darin Thomas reported on the proposed updates to Policy 1331 as per HB 329 including paid leave provisions for employees involved with foster care.

5. Retirement Event Proposal – Cheri Stevenson

Cheri Stevenson shared a proposal to create a retirement event to allow family and friends to really celebrate retirement. The event would be held at the PLC building and would have a place for pictures, and a screen showing each retiree's name, photo, years of service, and schools served. It would make a nice event to recognize those employees retiring. Brent Bills said that Food Services is putting a menu together for things that could be served at events like this. Burke Staheli said principals could really help market this and encourage employees retiring to attend. She suggested holding it on May 10th following Board Meeting.

6. Teen Centers – Superintendent Richard Holmes

Brian Gunnell shared data from the Teen Centers. Teen centers recorded over 50,000 unique student visits last year, serving snacks, school supplies, and basic needs without stigma. Centers operate as safe, welcoming spaces where students can access laundry, showers, and food, addressing food insecurity and hygiene. Staff affectionately known as "school moms" manage the centers, often working full-time hours to support students. Superintendent Richard Holmes shared seeing a steady stream of kids coming into the Teen Center for a snack. Local community members and organizations have donated snacks, bikes, and funds, including a \$10,000 donation for Pineview High School's teen center. Events like free haircut days and school supply drives have strengthened community ties and student well-being. The Utah Food Bank and Bishop Storehouse provide ongoing support with healthy snacks and produce, supplementing the Foundation's efforts. Simplified record-keeping and increased expenditure limits (up to \$150 per student without extra approval) have improved responsiveness. Teen center staff proactively reach out to at-risk students to increase engagement and provide discreet support. These centers contribute to creating nurturing school environments that help reduce violent incidents and improve student connection.

7. UHSAA Update – Rusty Taylor

Rusty Taylor reported on proposed changes to Policy 2920 which states that students providing false or misleading residency information will be ineligible for extracurriculars for one calendar year. This is stricter than the current Utah High School Activities Association (UHSAA) rules. The policy aims to deter recruiting violations and boundary manipulation by enforcing clear, firm consequences. Board members acknowledged difficulties verifying residency due to potential document forgery, including AI-generated utility bills. The policy relies on evidence gathering and investigations, with input from legal counsel and school officials. Some concerns were raised about unintended impacts on students genuinely following proper transfer procedures. The board expressed strong commitment to uphold the policy and expects community and parental support when enforcement actions are necessary. The policy includes a signed declaration from families acknowledging consequences for falsifying information. The state will cap 4A state tournaments at 16 teams to maintain competitive balance. A 20-hour weekly practice limit for all sports will be audited, with cheer and drill teams subject to more frequent reporting. New safety bases are being introduced in baseball to improve player safety, and realignment discussions are underway to minimize travel costs.

D. OPEN DISCUSSION OF THE BOARD

1. Board Committee Discussions

Craig Seegmiller said the audit committee is anxious to hear the audit report. Brent Bills is scheduling a time.

Burke Staheli said FCAOG will need time to come and present about their finances and receive input.

E. ITEMS FOR BOARD REVIEW

1. Enrollment

2. Safe Schools
3. GRAMA Requests
4. Department Reports

A regular meeting of the Board of Education of the Washington County School District was held after due, legal, and timely notice being given to all members and interested parties. Board President David Stirland called the meeting to order and welcomed all visitors. Board members present were Craig Seegmiller, LaRene Cox, Burke Staheli, Craig Hammer, and Heidi Gunn. Staff members present were Superintendent Richard Holmes and Business Administrator Brent Bills

F. OPEN MEETING – 4:30 p.m.

1. Reverence Member Staheli
2. Welcome – Board President Stirland
3. Pledge of Allegiance Member Seegmiller
4. Lt. Dustin Killpack Recognition
5. Student Recognition
6. CTSO Recognitions

Brad Christensen recognized Lt. Dustin Killpack for his leadership with the School Guardian Program county-wide. Lt. Killpack was put over security of our schools. He organized expert training including shooting ranges and scenario drills to maintain high safety standards. Partnerships with law enforcement and district leadership ensured program credibility and sustainability. The program is recognized statewide for excellence and is considered a model for collaboration and preparedness. Lt. Killpack also recognized the role of Ed Del Toro in recruiting guardians which was critical to the program success. Dr. Willie Chen, State School Safety Center, was present and recognized for the guidance and support provided by the center. Board President David Stirland said school safety is paramount for the Board and expressed appreciation for our local law enforcement agencies.

CTE/Business Teacher, Tracey Garner, recognized Scott Chamberlain for his top rankings in Microsoft Word365 competitions. He received the top score in state and national competitions and took 4th in the world competition among 135 finalists from 36 countries. His national success included a \$3,000 prize, highlighting tangible rewards for student excellence. Scott Chamberlain reported on his experience competing in the world competition. He enjoyed meeting a lot of students from around the world.

CTE Director Jon Butler briefly reported on the CTSO competitions. Those who take first in state are able to participate in national competitions. He invited the school advisors to recognize their students.

FCCLA Advisor, Ashley Christensen, recognized Jacie Jennings and Taija Batt who received 1st place in the Event Management national competition. She also recognized Kylee Bangerter who is the FCCLA National Vice President of Public Relations. She will represent Washington County at the national level. Kylee Bangerter thanked the Board for their support of CTSO's and said she is excited to represent Washington County.

Skills USA Advisor, Jeremiah Herron, recognized students who placed in nationals including Aliya Crane in Graphic Imaging, Brian Bang and Dallin Brown in Additive Manufacturing, Kinsley Herron in T-Shirt Design, and the Desert Hills team in Quiz Bowl. He shared that part of the CTSOs and SkillsUSA is the competing to show technical skills but another big part is students being able to build technical, workplace, employability, and personal skills. He also recognized Mikiah Herron who is the chapter president at Pine View High School and reported that they achieved a Gold Model of Excellence, which is the highest level you can achieve. He recognized Zoie Meeks and Addie Wyatt from Career Tech High who also achieved gold for the second year. He mentioned that both Dixie High School and Desert Hills High School also completed their chapter excellence this year and they were both bronze or silver chapters as well.

Jon Butler also recognized Jeremiah Herron who was awarded the Region SkillsUSA Advisor of the Year this past year.

Ryan Rarick recognized Lily Burnett who placed 7th in Educators Rising Moment and students Sheily and Ariana who placed 5th for their Spanish Inside Our Schools Presentation. He also recognized Elyse Kidman who came in 2nd place for her Children's Book Pre-K – 3rd Grade. She wrote and illustrated a bound book for children based on the preschoolers that she has been teaching called *The Magical Night Before School*. The book is about a girl who is going to a new school and is really nervous. She chose the plot line because her preschool students are all going to kindergarten this year and they were all kind of nervous about it and really excited.

DECA and FBLA Advisor Tiffany Moore recognized Macy Mullen who placed 1st in the state for DECA Business Financial Consulting and 1st in the state and 2nd nationally for FBLA Business Management.

Jon Butler mentioned that all of these CTSO activities are outside of school time. Students and advisors are doing these things beyond their regular school day.

G. CONSENT AGENDA

1. Minutes
 - a. June 8, 2026 Meeting of the Board of Education
 - b. July 13, 2026 Special Meeting of the Board of Education
2. Financial Report
3. Personnel and LEA Specific License Items
4. Bloomington Elementary TSSA Plan Change
5. Snow Canyon Middle School TSSA Plan Change

Board Member Cox presented a motion to approve the Consent Agenda items 1-5. Board Member Staheli seconded the motion that passed unanimously.

H. WHAT'S RIGHT IN WCSD SCHOOLS

1. Enterprise Elementary – Principal Warrin Richins

Principal Warrin Richins asked several students to highlight what they love about Enterprise Elementary. The shared what they love about the school including supportive teachers, learning activities, and principal involvement. Students appreciate personalized help from teachers and enjoy varied activities such as monthly subject-themed events. They feel that Principal Richins interactive involvement, including eating lunch with students, contributes to a welcoming atmosphere. Students value friendships and field trips, reinforcing a positive social and learning environment. Principal Richins said they are looking forward to a great year.

2. Crimson Cliffs Middle School – Principal Steve Showalter

Principal Steve Showalter and Assistant Principal Morgan Thompson shared the great things at Crimson Cliffs Middle School. Crimson Cliffs Middle School has worked to improve the school climate through inclusive student activities and academic support programs designed to build belonging and engagement at school. Monthly competitions in academics and athletics foster student involvement and camaraderie, improving student outlook. Counselors implemented a “connections project” to identify and support students lacking trusted adults, leading to every previously disconnected student gaining a positive connection by year's end. Academic mentoring involves weekly check-ins for students with failing grades, addressing both academic and social needs. Crimson Cliffs Middle School achieved the highest proficiency in language arts and math, and scored high in science proficiency reflecting their academic progress.

I. PUBLIC COMMENT ON BOARD ACTION ITEMS

Jill Hunt shared her concern with the boundary waiver policy. She said open boundaries are causing low class enrollment and JV sport cancellations at multiple high schools. It is also having a negative impact

on course availability, such as the cancellation of Interior Design at Dixie High due to low enrollment. Transportation challenges make attending classes at other campuses impractical for many students. She also expressed safety concerns regarding younger athletes competing against much older students.

J. BOARD ACTION ITEMS

1. EHS Athletic Field House Project CMGC – Brent Bills

Brent Bills asked for this item to be tabled to allow more time to review the bids.

Board Member Staheli presented a motion to table the approval of the EHS Athletic Field House Project CMGC. Board Member Gunn seconded the motion that passed unanimously.

2. Policy 5120 Maintenance and Operation of Physical Facilities – Rusty Taylor

Rusty Taylor shared the proposed changes to the policy including a name change to the policy – Maintenance and Alteration of Buildings and Facilities. He has worked with the maintenance and facility directors on the policy update. The policy was changed to reflect how administrators can work with the Facility and Maintenance Department when projects are needed. Essential projects are projects that are required to happen for ADA or safety compliance. Non-essential are projects that are requested but are not required for safety. The policy changes give clearer guidelines and removes outdated provisions.

Board Member Hammer presented a motion to approve Policy 5120 Maintenance and Alteration of Buildings and Facilities. Board Member Cox seconded the motion that passed unanimously.

3. Policy 2920 Boundary Waiver – Rusty Taylor

Rusty Taylor shared the proposed changes to the Student Enrollment Policy related to boundary waivers. The area of change is specifically around boundary waivers. The process will be pulled from the school and will be submitted for review and approved through a district committee. The current policy has that sitting on the principals shoulders. The committee will be led by the Director of Student Services Brad Christiansen, who will review applications with input from affected principals and families. A new clause penalizes false or misleading information with a one-year extracurricular activity ban. The policy aims to deter misuse of boundary waivers and improve fairness in enrollment management.

Board Member Seegmiller presented a motion to approve Policy 2920 Student Enrollment related to Boundary Waivers. Board Member Hammer seconded the motion that passed unanimously.

K. DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Policy 1331 Paid Parental and Postpartum Leave – Darin Thomas

Darin Thomas shared proposed changes to Policy 1331. The update ensures district alignment with recent state legislation.

2. Policy 3740 Personal Device Use Policy – Nate Esplin

Nate Esplin said the changes to the policy are based on a legislative change. Districts are required to have a place for parents to put in a request for accommodation. Parents can request brief device access for family logistics or medical reasons via principal-approved forms. Use is limited to passing periods or lunch to maintain instructional focus and safety. This would be for accommodations outside of IEP or 504 plans.

L. INFORMATION ITEMS

There were no information items presented.

M. REPORTS

1. Superintendent

Superintendent Richard Holmes mentioned that school starts on Thursday. The District has hired 122 new certified employees including teachers and counselors. He mentioned that we bus approximately 41% of our students due to our large geographic area. The district operates about 150 buses, with 100 active daily routes. This rate nearly doubles that of comparable large districts in the state. He shared a reminder to the public emphasizing safety and patience as many students travel to and from school, including younger and new riders.

2. Board

There were no reports given.

3. Association

Annette Merchant, WCEA, said they are excited for school to start and to welcome students back.

4. PTA/PTO/Community Council

There were no reports given.

N. PUBLIC OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS THE BOARD – 3 minutes each

Jill Hunt shared her concern again with boundary waivers. She feels it has to be enforced or it won't change. She shared concerns about the new Clear Choice registration system and feels it is confusing and unfriendly. She was frustrated with having limited counselor time available and felt it complicates registration support not having them available. She feels that counselors should be more available leading up to the school year to help students and parents.

Board Member Hammer presented a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:54 p.m. Board Member Cox seconded the motion that passed unanimously.

O. ADJOURNMENT