



MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Washington County School District
121 West Tabernacle, St. George, Utah
August 24, 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 Ron Wade, 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 Steve Gregoire, Executive Director Rusty Taylor, Executive Director Wade Jensen, Communications Director Steven Dunham, Technology Director Jeremy Cox, Learning Director Brian Stevenson, and Student Services Director Brad Christensen.

Minutes: Executive Secretary Kajsia Boyer

Reverence by Executive Director Wade Jensen.

A. FOLLOW UP FROM PREVIOUS BOARD MEETING

1. Board PLC Training (Literacy) – Susan Harrah

Susan Harrah reported that the District is well-positioned to meet the Senate Bill 241 goal of 80% third graders reading at or above benchmark by 2030, leveraging strong existing systems and extensive teacher training. We have strong progress on Science of Reading training with 95% of K-3 teachers already trained, equating to 528 employees, enabling a smooth legislation adoption. The kindergarten focus starts this year, with Individual Reading Plans (IRPs) beginning after the mid-year assessments. IRPs target "red" or "yellow" students with tailored interventions to improve reading skills. Kindergarten teachers receive IRP training by November, with parent-teacher conferences planned in February. Currently our schools are at 75% with our kindergarten above 80% proficiency showing the positive impact of all-day kindergarten on literacy. We are already working hard with the schools. Superintendent Richard Holmes said our big push will be retention in kindergarten if students are not performing at level rather than waiting until 3rd grade. Dual immersion students who are English learners receive exemptions, but English-speaking dual immersion students must meet the reading benchmarks.

B. WORK SESSION

1. CE/AP Update – Warren Hall

Warren Hall shared information on Concurrent Enrollment and Advanced Placement. The District is managing a complex landscape of AP and Concurrent Enrollment (CE) with rising CE participation and strategic counseling to optimize college credit transfer and student success. CE course enrollments rose to 10,220 last year, up from 8,943, while AP enrollments declined to 1,627 from 1,938, reflecting a trend favoring CE courses for college credit and rigor. CE offers continuous assessment for credit with guaranteed in-state university transfer, unlike AP's single test hurdle and variable university acceptance. Counselors actively guide students based on intended postsecondary institutions, steering those targeting private universities toward AP and public university-bound students toward CE. AP credit acceptance varies greatly by university, with Utah Tech accepting scores of 3 while BYU requires 4 or 5 for equivalent credit, causing confusion and necessitating detailed advising. CE credits transfer uniformly across Utah public universities, facilitating first-year completion and eligibility for honors diplomas and scholarships. Students must be cautious about overloading CE courses, as exceeding 130 credits can jeopardize scholarships and federal aid, highlighting the need for balanced course planning. District counselors

provide thorough guidance to parents and students starting in 8th and 9th grades to navigate AP and CE options amid evolving course approvals and credit policies.

2. Water Update – LaRene Cox

LaRene Cox reported that the District and Hildale City are collaborating on the Water Canyon secondary water system, preparing for community engagement to transition residents from free to metered, paid water usage. Upcoming on October 5th will be a community meeting at the high school to present water project plans, highlighting the end of free water hookups and introducing metering and billing partnerships with Hildale City. Legal and operational frameworks are being developed to meter water use and link billing to existing city systems, reducing administrative burdens for the District. Residents will pay for installation of meters and hookups, with guaranteed access to water when available, prioritizing fiscal sustainability. Recent monsoon rains have improved pond levels, reducing urgent reliance on culinary water and underscoring the project's importance for water conservation. Discussions continue about staffing and oversight, with potential need for a dedicated part-time water system custodian or leveraging Hildale City resources for administration and monitoring. The community meeting on October 5th will not be a public hearing but will be an information meeting.

3. USBA Update – Heidi Gunn

Heidi Gunn reported on USBA items. Julie Jackson was elected as a legislator, vacating USBA board seat. Brigit Gerrard was elected as the president-elect to ensure experienced leadership continuity. Linda Hanks has won her seat for state school board, strengthening district connections at the state level. The new USBA training platform launched on Canvas was delayed but is expected to rollout by early September, with ongoing feedback to fix glitches. There is committed to NSBA membership for next three years despite national controversies, recognizing the benefits of leadership influence and regional collaboration. There is discussion ongoing about shifting political influence between NSBA and emerging COSSBA, with implications for future advocacy clout. Legislator Day in the Classroom is planned for September to increase legislator engagement with district schools. Board members were encouraged to provide availability to Kajsia for scheduling visits with the legislators. The USBA Conference will be January 7-9, 2027.

4. UHSAA Update – Rusty Taylor

Rusty Taylor shared an update on the UHSAA reclassification. Information was shared in the board packet on reclassification. The biggest change is the composite realignment index number which introduces changes aimed at balancing school size, socioeconomic factors, and competitive success, with implications for regional play and sports culture. He mentioned that rule #3 allows geographic adjustments, notably for Washington County, to maintain region integrity despite classification changes. It will all come out on November 19th. They will only be counting 10th and 11th grade for classifications. Burke Staheli said that regions are set by the state. He feels that this is a good fix for travel. Football realignment remains separate, with pressure to maintain traditional regional rivalries despite changes, ensuring schools play their geographic regions regardless of classification. Smaller schools express concern about competitive disadvantages playing larger schools, especially in football due to physicality and safety. Enrollment and socioeconomic factors heavily influence classification, with some large schools playing down due to low sports participation rates, causing imbalance. Transfer and enrollment loopholes, including address manipulation and apartment residency, remain major challenges that legislation has not resolved, impacting competitive fairness.

5. Enrollment Update – Nate Esplin and Cheri Stevenson

Nate Esplin and Cheri Stevenson reported that elementary enrollment is declining due to demographic shifts, while secondary schools show mixed trends with some growth driven by leadership and program offerings. Elementary enrollment down district-wide, driven by large fifth-grade cohorts and smaller kindergarten classes. Bloomington Elementary, Desert Canyons Elementary, Coral Canyon Elementary, Enterprise Elementary, and Horizon Elementary show growth due to boundary changes. Little Valley Elementary lost about 23 students due to boundary adjustments but remains stable overall. South Mesa Elementary is holding steady. Santa Clara Elementary, Sandstone Elementary, Red Mountain Elementary,

and LaVerkin Elementary all dropped enrollment but all elementary schools are about where they were projected to be. Many of the schools are using TSSA and SLT funds to help with staffing. Secondary enrollment is down about 308 students from last year, aligning with projections, but Water Canyon High School increased by approximately 50 students. The group talked about some of the development and growth in the community that is planned. Cheri Stevenson mentioned that Dixie Intermediate School is down about 50 students and is following through that cone-site. Pine View is seeing growth and Crimson Cliffs is still growing. Cheri Stevenson said the feedback on the boundary change has been good. The administration and improvements at the Pine View schools have been good.

6. Statewide Read-a-thon – Superintendent Richard Holmes

Superintendent Richard Holmes shared information on the statewide Read-a-thon scheduled for October 2nd.

7. NSBA – Brent Bills

Brent Bills gathered information from board members wanting to attend NSBA on April 3-5, 2027 in Washington D.C. All members would like to attend NSBA. Burke Staheli is also available to attend COSSBA on March 12-15, 2027.

Brent Bills reviewed the Fraud Risk Assessments with the School Board. Every year his department has to do a Fraud Risk Assessment. He reviewed the basic separation of duties page that makes sure the District has a proper separation of duties for controls of money. We do have policy for conflict of interests, procurement, ethical behavior, reporting fraud and abuse, travel credit, purchasing cards, personal use of entity assets, IT and computer security, and cash receipts and deposits. We do have a CPA as part of the management team, Aaron Brickey. The department also has many people who have a bachelor's degree in accounting. The employees and elected officials are required to annually commit to abide by the statement of ethical behavior which we do through the Safe Schools Training. The Board also completes specific board member training on the state site. At least one of the management team (Brent Bills and others) receive at least 40 hours of formal training related to accounting, budgeting or other finance areas annually. The District does have a fraud hotline. We also have two formal internal audit functions and a formal audit committee. The District scored 395 out of 395 points on the assessment which puts the District at a very low risk level.

8. Ibigawa Japan Delegation – Superintendent Richard Holmes

Superintendent Richard Holmes mentioned having a member of the board travel to Ibigawa Japan with the St. George delegation on November 3-11, 2026. David Stirland or Craig Hammer will look at their schedules to attend.

9. September Board Meeting – September 28, 2026

David Stirland reminded the board that the Meeting of the Board of Education will be held on September 28th meeting at 12:00 noon.

C. CONSENT AGENDA

- 1. LEA Specific License Items**
- 2. Dixie High School TSSA Plan Change**
- 3. Snow Canyon Middle TSSA Plan Change**

Board Member Seegmiller presented a motion to approve the Consent Agenda items 1-3. Board Member Gunn seconded the motion that passed unanimously.

D. PUBLIC COMMENT ON BOARD ACTION ITEMS

No public comments were given on Board Action Items.

E. ACTION ITEMS

- 1. EHS Athletic Field House Project CMGC – Brent Bills**

Brent Bills reported on the CMGC contract proposals. There were nine proposals submitted. The low cost was Hughes Construction. They proposed using their same team who is already working in Enterprise. He mentioned that the District will be working with a couple of companies who had not bid with us before and were missing items. There were also some with no education experience. They will be working with all of them so we have more options in the area. The recommend from the committee is to select Hughes Construction. Superintendent Richard Holmes said as a larger district we don't qualify for some of the funds that smaller districts receive. This metal building would allow them to go into the building and practice during still winter conditions in their area. The building would just be the bare basics and would not be extravagant. It would have a few tracks for walking, batting cages, and a practice area. The total cost will be \$4.1M. Brent Bills said this will give them the ability to do things in the winter. Heidi Gunn said the community is really excited to have open field time in the winter.

Board Member Gunn presented a motion to approve the selection of Hughes Construction for the EHS Athletic Field House Project CMGC. Board Member Cox seconded the motion that passed unanimously.

2. Updated WCSD Fee Schedule and Policy 3400 School Fees/Solicitation of Funds – Brent Bills

Brent Bills reported on the school fees audit. They felt we were doing a lot of things right. One of the hits was choir shirts for elementary schools. One school was charging \$12 and will have to refund the extra \$2.00. The fee is being removed from the schedule as it is an afterschool program. The other charge was for a calculator rental which cannot be charged. Anyone who was charged will have to be refunded. A few changes are being made to the policy to be in compliance with state law. He reviewed the changes including the policy being reviewed and approved annually, the code updated, the fee waiver privacy act, fees for items charged for classes or activities for elementary during the regular school day. Textbook fees may only be charged to students who take Advance Placement, International Baccalaureate or Concurrent Enrollment courses but they remain subject to fee waivers. We also need to include SNAP and McKinney Vento in policy for fee waiver. Service assignments will be appropriate for the age, physical condition and maturity of students, and follow the state and federal laws. Fee payment requirements will be suspended while the fee waiver appeal is pending. The appellant may file the appeal with the Superintendent or designee.

Board Member Wade presented a motion to approve the updated WCSD Fee Schedule and Policy 3400 School Fees/Solicitation of Funds. Board Member Staheli seconded the motion that passed unanimously.

Board Member Cox presented a motion to go into a closed session at 4:24 p.m. Board Member Staheli seconded the motion.

Board Member Seegmiller voted Yes

Board Member Cox voted Yes

Board Member Staheli voted Yes

Board Member Wade voted Yes

Board Member Hammer voted Yes

Board Member Gunn voted Yes

Board Member Stirland voted Yes

Present: Board President David Stirland, Board Vice President LaRene Cox, Board Member Craig Seegmiller, Board Member Burke Staheli, Board Member Ron Wade, 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 Steve Gregoire, 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 Executive Secretary Kajsia Boyer.

F. CLOSED SESSION

1. Personnel and Property Items

Personnel items discussed.

Board Member Seegmiller presented a motion to go out of the closed session at 5:40 p.m. Board Member Hammer seconded the motion that passed unanimously.

Board Member Staheli presented a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:40 p.m. Board Member Hammer seconded the motion that passed unanimously.

G. ADJOURNMENT