

# MINUTES

## BOARD OF EDUCATION VALLEY STREAM SCHOOL DISTRICT 24

---

BUSINESS MEETING  
October 16, 2024

WILLIAM L. BUCK SCHOOL  
6:45 PM

---

**Members Present:** President Hernandez, Vice-President Herrera, Trustee Clark, Trustee Maier, Trustee Wheeler, and Trustee Wilson

**Others Present:** Superintendent Dr. Karakas, Dr. Lisa Conte, Dr. Jack Mitchell, and School District Attorney

**Absent With Prior Notice:** Trustee Nunez

---

### I. DETERMINATION OF QUORUM & CALL TO ORDER – PRESIDENT HERNANDEZ

Having a quorum, the Business Meeting was called to order at 6:45 pm by President Hernandez at the William L. Buck School. Motion to enter Executive Session at 6:45 pm was made by Trustee Maier and seconded by Trustee Wilson to discuss Personnel and Contractual Obligations. Motion carried.

Motion to exit Executive Session at 7:30 pm by Trustee Maier and seconded by Trustee Wilson. Motion carried.

The Business Meeting was reconvened at 7:32 pm, at the William L. Buck School by President Hernandez.

### II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** September 25, 2024 and October 9, 2024.  
Motion to approve the minutes made by Trustee Maier and seconded by Trustee Wheeler, 6-0 motion carried.

**IV. WELCOME TO VISITORS:** At this time the Board of Education welcomes questions or comments relative to the items on tonight's agenda.

**V. CORRESPONDENCE REPORT– MS. JENNIE PADILLA, DISTRICT CLERK**

Good evening. I have received one FOIL request since the last BOE Business Meeting. The request came via email on September 27, 2024 from Ms. Anastasia Valeeva, a reporter from Newsday.

Thank you and that concludes my correspondence report.

**VI. SUPERINTENDENT REPORT – DR. UNAL KARAKAS**

Good evening, everyone. It is the month of October and the weather is getting cooler, but the great learning happening in our classrooms is only warming up.

As I've been sharing with our community, this year's motto is 'Make the Connection – Innovating Our Future.' This month, we will highlight some of the exciting work we're doing to drive innovation forward.

We are thrilled to announce that, with innovation at the forefront, Valley Stream 24 has joined the League of Innovative Schools, a network run by Digital Promise. Established by Congress in 2008, signed into law by President George W. Bush, and formally launched by President Barack Obama in 2011, Digital Promise aims to advance education through technology and innovation.

Our district is proud to be one of only 150 school districts nationwide selected to join the League. This esteemed group focuses on innovative practices that promote equity, enhance technology integration, and advance curriculum development. As members of the League, we collaborate with like-minded districts to lead the way in educational excellence.

I had the privilege of representing Valley Stream 24 in Lindsay, California, where I visited the Lindsay Unified School District and observed student-centered practices in action. Superintendents and district leaders from across the country worked together to brainstorm innovative strategies and technologies that we can implement in the future. One key takeaway for me from Lindsay was the power of student-centered learning. During a tour with one of their student ambassadors, known as Empower Leaders, I asked what happens when students fall behind or need additional support, either academically or socially. The student's response was profound: 'In this district, there is no opportunity for any student to be unseen.' How powerful! That sentiment truly resonates with our mission, as we strive to ensure every student at Valley Stream 24 feels just as supported and visible.

We are excited to be part of a network of forward-thinking educators and look forward to the collaboration, resources, and opportunities the League offers as we advance our Vision 2030 initiative. It's an incredible honor to be selected, and we thank the Board of Education for their unwavering support of initiatives like these.

Last month, I shared some sneak peek photos of our redesigned classrooms, though those pictures didn't include students. This month, I'm excited to showcase more images, this time with students actively engaged in these innovative spaces.

In the photo on the left, Ms. Albahae is working with a student on math at a low table, which can actually be written on with Expo markers. When I spoke with the student, he shared that his favorite part of the classroom is the low table, as it allows him to sit on the rug and work closely with his teacher to get the support he needs. How incredible!

On the right, you can see our new Mio table in action, with educators using small group instruction to enhance learning through intentional use of technology.

These redesigned classrooms are thoughtfully designed to encourage collaborative and interactive learning. We're grateful to the Board of Education for their vision and unwavering commitment to making these innovative spaces a reality.

This month I held Coffee Hour with the Superintendent. It was held in the morning at WLB, as I am rotating Coffee Hour between the morning and evening sessions so that more parents have the opportunity to attend the one that best matches their schedule. We had great discussion about innovation and the work of our district, and our parents are very excited about Vision 2030. The next Coffee Hour will be at Brooklyn Avenue School on November 7th.

Coffee Hours are a great way to chat with families and answer any questions our families may have, while also learning firsthand about initiatives we are launching.

This month we also celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month. Our schools have been integrating culturally relevant learning within reading, writing, and the academic areas. To celebrate the month, however, our schools also brought in guest speakers to share about their culture, as well as engage in culinary, cultural, and educational activities. We thank all of our Equity Teams, building principals, staff, and family members who continuously work to celebrate cultures present in our district.

We are very excited about some important accomplishments in our district. This summer we had an extended summer school program, which ran for 5 hours each school day in July. We are proud to announce that proficiency measures from a pre to post assessment went up 15% in ELA and 18% in Math as a result of the program. Thank you to all our educators who ran a successful summer school program.

Our chronic absenteeism rate also declined significantly, down to 14.8% from 19.4% the year before. There are many articles across the nation that still discuss chronic absenteeism as being an issue across districts, and we are proud that we are making incredible progress in this area. Chronic absenteeism is defined as students who are absent for more than 10% of the school year.

Additionally, our SWDs dropped their chronic absenteeism rate by 41% last school year!

Our participation rate on State Assessments went up to 76%, up from 61% the year before. Also, our students outperformed the State in ELA, Math, and Science by nearly double digits in all subjects.

Lastly, in wonderful news, our students showed double digit gains in the NWEA Reading and Math Assessment results from the Fall to Spring last school year.

A big thank you to our administrators, teachers, staff, students, and families for a job incredibly well done.

Here are some upcoming important district dates and events in the coming weeks. For building-specific events, please visit our website and view our district calendar which has all events listed for our families.

We've had a fantastic start to the new school year and look forward to an exciting month ahead. Please be sure to visit us at [valleystreamschooldistrict24.org](http://valleystreamschooldistrict24.org) and follow our social media pages for regular updates on all the great things happening throughout our district as we Make the Connection and Innovate our Future.

## **PRESENTATIONS:**

Board Appreciation Presentation (Student Council Students)  
Staff Recognition

We have presentations today. We will honor a very special staff member and also honor our Board of Education trustees as this week is Board of Education Appreciation Week.

## **VII. OTHER REPORTS:**

### **A. VALLEY STREAM CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT**

There are three delegates from Valley Stream UFSD Twenty-Four on the Central High School Board of Education: President Hernandez, Vice President Herrera, and Trustee Maier.

**Residency Hotlines:**

Valley Stream School District	516-872-5677
Village of Valley Stream	516-592-5140
Town of Hempstead	516-584-5000

**VICE-PRESIDENT HERRERA:**

I have nothing to report at this time. Thank you.

**B. LEGISLATION REPORT - TRUSTEE NUÑEZ**

I have nothing to report at this time. Thank you.

**VIII. LIST OF ITEMS FOR ACTION:**

**A. PERSONNEL – VICE PRESIDENT HERRERA**

*V.P. Herrera 1<sup>st</sup>, to move A1-A4, Trustee Maier 2<sup>nd</sup> 6-0 motion carried.*

1. **BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education hereby appoints Rakhi Ghosh as a Full-Time Teacher Aide, effective October 17, 2024, pending civil service clearance. Compensation for this appointment will be at Step 1 in accordance with the agreement between the Board of Education and the United Public Service Employees Union (UPSEU).
2. **BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education hereby appoints Donna Bailey as a Full-Time Teacher Aide, effective October 22, 2024, pending civil service clearance. Compensation for this appointment will be at Step 2 in accordance with the agreement between the Board of Education and the United Public Service Employees Union (UPSEU).
3. **BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education hereby appoints Latoya Jackson, as a

School Monitor Part-Time, effective October 17, 2024, pending fingerprint and civil service clearance. Compensation for this appointment will be Step 1 in accordance with the agreement between the District and the United Public Service Employees Union (UPSEU).

4. **BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Board of Education hereby approves the Wage & Benefits Agreement between the District and Lisa Davis, Secretary to the Superintendent, for the 2024-2025 school year, and further authorizes the President of the Board of Education to execute the necessary documents to effectuate same subject to review by counsel.

*V.P. Herrera 1<sup>st</sup> , to move A5, Trustee Maier 2<sup>nd</sup> 5-0 motion carried.  
President Hernandez abstained from voting on A5.*

5. **BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Board of Education hereby approves the Wage & Benefits Agreement between the District and Saundra Hernandez, Principal Account Clerk, for the 2024-2025 school year, and further authorizes the President of the Board of Education to execute the necessary documents to effectuate same subject to review by counsel.

*V.P Herrera 1<sup>st</sup> , to move A6-A17, Trustee Wheeler 2<sup>nd</sup> 6-0 motion carried.*

6. **BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Board of Education hereby approves the Wage & Benefits Agreement between the District and Catherine Cancro, Senior Account Clerk, for the 2024-2025 school year, and further authorizes the President of the Board of Education to execute the necessary documents to effectuate same subject to review by counsel.
7. **BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education approves an intermittent leave of absence for medical reasons (pending documentation and review) for Marie Walsh, School Nurse, effective September 30, 2024, through no later than June 27, 2025.
8. **BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education approves the leave of absence without pay for maternity/childcare purposes (pending documentation and

review) for Michelle Schaaake, Part-Time Speech Teacher, on or around November 15, 2024, until on or around February 6, 2025.

9. **BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education appoints the following teacher liaisons for clubs/departments for the 2024-2025 school year at the appropriate Club Extra Pay Amount per the VSTA contract as follows:

**Teacher Liaisons for Departments:**

ENL	Kathleen Murray
Nurses	Estelle Dempsey

**Science:**

WLB	Christine Brenneis
RWC	Shannon Quinn
BAS	Kathleen Carter

**William L. Buck School - Clubs:**

Student Council	Marissa Campo/Christine Iadevaio
Robotics	Samantha Ponzo Byrams
Vocabulary/Scrabble Club	Ashleigh Jones-Harrison
Chess Club	Chris Chruma

**Brooklyn Avenue School - Clubs:**

Student Council	Jo-Anne Casucci/Samantha Ponzo Byrams
Robotics	Cheryl Calamiong
Art/STEAM	Nicole Barci
Sports	Ashley Goldman

**Robert W. Carbonaro School - Clubs:**

Student Council	Cathy Haufler/Pam Fowler
Robotics	Ariana Arnone
Book Club	Chelsea Cittadino
School News Club	Deborah Adler

**District: Instrumental Music:**

Senior Orchestra Club - B Club	Gary Garzetta
Senior Band Club - B Club	Nick Shmorhun



District Instrumental Music- C Club

Nick Shmorhun

10. **BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education hereby appoints the following staff to teach the Learning Lab Program for ELA and/or MATH for the 2024-2025 school year. Compensation is in accordance with the appropriate hourly rate of pay as per the current Valley Stream Teachers' Association contract:

**BROOKLYN AVENUE SCHOOL:**

Kathleen Carter  
Anastasia Cutolo  
Kaitlyn Gillespie  
Ashley Goldman  
Jennifer Joyce  
Kara Kinkela  
Vinny Milano  
Samantha Ponzio Byrams  
Grace Riordan

**WILLIAM L. BUCK SCHOOL:**

Nicolette Hernandez  
Lisette Lucifero  
Adianna Ortiz-Ulino  
Donna Ruggiero  
Katarina Sloboda  
Amy Tappeto

**ROBERT W. CARBONARO SCHOOL:**

Ariana Arnone  
Chelsea Cittadino  
James Fischman  
Drew Jakubowski  
Jennifer Mechetti  
Laura O'Callaghan  
Jean Oestreich  
Stephanie Shapiro

Alexis Thomas  
Kathleen Murray  
Shannon Weber

11. **BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education approves an extension of the leave of absence for medical reasons for Samia Kamran, Full-Time Aide, through no later than January 2, 2025.

12. **BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education accepts the resignation of Ammara Haroon, Full-Time Teacher Aide, effective October 22, 2024.

13. **BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education accepts the resignation of Brenda King, Full-Time Teacher Aide, effective October 10, 2024.

14. **BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education accepts the resignation of Maria Paz, School Monitor Part-Time, effective September 30, 2024.

15. **BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education accepts the resignation of Donna Bailey, School Monitor Part-Time, effective October 21, 2024.

16. **BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education hereby rescinds the appointment of Michael D. Winkowski as a as a Full-Time Teacher Aide as listed in the resolution of September 25, 2024.

17. **BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education hereby rescinds the appointment of Brandon Ocasio as a School Monitor Part-Time as listed in the resolution of September 25, 2024.

**B. EDUCATION – TRUSTEE MAIER**

*Trustee Maier 1<sup>st</sup>, to move B1-B2, Trustee Wheeler 2<sup>nd</sup> 6-0 motion carried.*

1. **BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, that the Board of Education accepts the confidential recommendations of the Committee on Pre-School Special Education previously approved by the Committee on Pre-School Special Education on 09/20/2024, pertaining to students being considered for pre-school special education services as set forth in a schedule provided to the Board of Education and the Board of Education hereby approves and ratifies said recommendations of the Committee on Pre-School Special Education.

2. **BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, that the Board of Education accepts the confidential recommendations of the Committee on Special Education previously approved by the Committee on Special Education on 09/24/2024, 09/23/2024, 09/24/2024, 09/24/2024, 09/11/2024, 08/28/2024, 09/12/2024, 09/04/2024 and 09/16/2024, pertaining to students being considered for special education services as set forth in a schedule provided to the Board of Education and the Board of Education hereby approves and ratifies said recommendations of the Committee on Special Education.

**C. FINANCE – TRUSTEE WILSON**

*Trustee Wilson 1<sup>st</sup>, to move C1, Trustee Maier 2<sup>nd</sup> 6-0 motion carried.*

1. **BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board hereby accepts the Treasurer's Report, Collateral Report, Claims Auditor's Report, Appropriation Status Report, Revenue Status Report, Trial Balance for August 2024.

**D. POLICY - TRUSTEE WHEELER**

I have nothing to report at this time. Thank you.

**IX. UNFINISHED BUSINESS, IF ANY: N/A**

**X. NEW BUSINESS:**

*Trustee Maier 1<sup>st</sup> , to move X1-X7, Trustee Wheeler 2<sup>nd</sup> 6-0 motion carried.*

1. **BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, that the Board of Education hereby approves the Agreement between the District and Rohan Murphy (Consultant/Speaker) for the 2024-2025 school year, and further authorizes the President of the Board of Education to execute the necessary documents to effectuate said Agreement on behalf of the Board of Education.

2. **BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education hereby authorizes the District to enter into an updated agreement with White Glove Community Care, Inc. for healthcare services for the 2024-2025 school year, and further authorizes the President of the Board of Education to execute the necessary documents to effectuate said Agreement.

3. **BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education hereby authorizes the District to enter into a Service Agreement with The Omni Group (“OMNI”) for the fiscal year July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025, at a fee not to exceed \$1,788.

4. **BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, that the Board of Education enters into an agreement with a parent to transport one student to Crescent School from October 17, 2024 to June 30, 2025 at a reimbursement rate of \$0.67 per mile, and further authorizes the President of the Board of Education and the Superintendent of Schools to execute the necessary documents to effectuate said agreement.

5. **WHEREAS**, equipment has been determined to be broken, surplus and/or obsolete, and

**WHEREAS**, it is in the best interest of the School District to dispose of such broken, surplus and/or obsolete equipment, therefore

**BE IT RESOLVED**, that such broken, surplus and/or obsolete equipment will be disposed of in a manner that services the best interest of the Valley Stream Union Free School District Twenty-Four, and

**BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Superintendent of Schools, or his designee is hereby authorized to proceed with the disposal and sale of the following items:

<u>Item</u>	<u>Make/Model/Serial</u>	<u>Machinery/Device</u>
-------------	--------------------------	-------------------------

1	Toro 72202 250000119	Lawn Tractor
2	Agri-Fab 45-0326-200	Lawn Sweeper

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that funds received from the professional auctioneer through the sale will be recorded in A2670 *Sale of Property*.

6. **BE IT RESOLVED**, the Board of Education approves the charges for the following established Board Committees: Audit, DEI, Education, Finance, Legislation, Personnel and Policy.

7. **BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education authorizes the revision to the Agreement between the District and Lawrence Public Schools for student health and welfare services, to reflect the 2023-2024 school year.

*Trustee Maier 1<sup>st</sup>, to amend the agenda and remove item X8, Trustee Wilson 2<sup>nd</sup> 6-0 motion carried.*

8. **BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, that the Board of Education hereby accepts, with gratitude, a donation of forty (40) backpacks with supplies included from United Way and Green Acres.

## XI. DISCUSSION

## XII. AUDIENCE TO VISITORS

## XIII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn the Business Meeting at 8:02 pm made by Trustee Maier and seconded by Trustee Wilson. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,  
*Jennie L. Padilla*  
Jennie L. Padilla  
District Clerk