

MINUTES

BOARD OF EDUCATION VALLEY STREAM SCHOOL DISTRICT 24

BUSINESS MEETING
September 17, 2025

WILLIAM L. BUCK SCHOOL
6:45 PM

Members Present: President Herrera, Vice President Wilson, Trustee Clark, Trustee Hernandez, Trustee Matthew, and Trustee Nunez

Others Present: Superintendent Karakas, Dr. Christopher Keogh, Dr. Jack Mitchell, and School District Attorney

Absent With Prior Notice: Trustee Maier

I. DETERMINATION OF QUORUM & CALL TO ORDER – PRESIDENT HERRERA

Having a quorum, the Business Meeting was called to order at 7:15 pm by President Herrera at the William L Buck School. Motion to enter into Executive Session at 7:15 pm was made by Trustee Nunez and seconded by Trustee Hernandez to discuss Personnel and Contractual Obligations. Motion carried.

Motion to exit Executive Session at 7:26 pm by Trustee Hernandez and seconded by Trustee Clark. Motion carried.

The Business Meeting was reconvened at 7:30 pm, at the William L. Buck School by President Herrera.

II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: July 1, 2025 and August 16, 2025. Motion to approve the Minutes made by Trustee Hernandez and seconded by Vice

President Wilson. 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**

I have nothing to report at this time.

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

Good evening everyone. It is the 11th day of School already, and the 2025-26 school year has been off to a great start.

This year we continue with innovation, inspiration, and academic achievement.

The first 11 days of school have gone exceptionally well. I've visited all three schools, where students are engaged and teachers are fully supporting learning. It's been a smooth start, and I'm excited for the great accomplishments ahead this year.

This month, I attended the 9/11 Memorial at Arthur J. Hendrickson Park, where Mayor Fare and community leaders honored those we lost. Next year will mark the 25th anniversary. I was grateful to see our students, families, and some of our trustees present at such a beautiful and meaningful ceremony.

This month, our teachers and families came together for Meet Your Teacher Night. I was able to visit all three schools in just 90 minutes, and the turnout from parents was outstanding. Teachers shared academic offerings and goals for the year, and each school also hosted a sixth-grade departmentalization meeting. During these sessions, sixth-grade teachers presented together on expectations, scheduling, and student supports that are in place. The feedback from students, parents, and teachers has been overwhelmingly positive as departmentalization is giving our sixth graders the chance to switch classes while staying cognitively engaged in a developmentally appropriate way.

Thank you to our principals and staff for a successful evening. Thank you as well to our BOE for its continued investment and commitment to high quality education in our district.

I sent a letter out to families earlier this month about Parent Square, our new communication platform that the district will be utilizing for district and school level communication. We have a lot of parents already signed up from all three schools, which is wonderful. We will begin officially utilizing the Platform for communication starting on October 1st, so please be sure to sign up. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to reach out to your building principal who can connect you with our technology team.

Tonight, as part of IT Professionals Week, I want to recognize and thank our incredible IT team: Mr. Onorato, Mr. Neri, Ms. Ponzio-Bryams, Ms. Razack, and Mr. Cestaro.

Together, this team keeps our district running every single day. They manage our technology systems, support our software, troubleshoot problems big and small, and ensure that our networks remain safe and secure from cybersecurity threats. Their dedication, expertise, and behind-the-scenes work allow our students to learn and our staff to teach without interruption.

On behalf of the entire district and our BOE, thank you for the professionalism, commitment, and excellence you bring to Valley Stream 24. We are truly grateful.

In exciting news, with the investment of our Board of Ed. and support of our community, we are proud to be able to offer the following additions this school year:

- Two redesigned classrooms in every school
- Two permanent substitutes in every school
- Roofing project completed at WLB and RWC
- Additional Extracurricular Clubs, including a District Drama Club which is very exciting.
- A new full-time CSE Chairperson position to support our Pupil Services department and our families

- Departmentalization in Grade 6 which we discussed and has been going incredibly well.
- Integration of AI through Magic Student in Grade 6 to enhance learning, not replace it

Here are upcoming important dates and events to take note of.

September 15-October 15- Hispanic Heritage Month
September 23+24- Rosh Hashanah (No School)
October 1-October 31- Italian American Heritage and Culture Month
October 2- Yom Kippur (No School)
October 8- Ray McNulty Vision 2030 Work
October 8- BOE Work Session (6:45 pm)
October 13- Columbus Day (No School)
October 16- Superintendent's Coffee Hour at BAS (6:00 pm)
October 20- Diwali (No School)
October 22- BOE Business Meeting (7:30 pm)

The year has been off to a great start. We look forward to continued excellence and innovation. That concludes my Superintendent's Report tonight.

- Present New Staff

Tonight, we are excited to welcome new staff members to Valley Stream 24. When I call your name, please stand so we can acknowledge you.

First, let us welcome Dr. Christopher Keogh, our new Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction. Dr. Keogh has been with us since July 1st and has truly hit the ground running—learning about our district, connecting with staff, and acclimating quickly to his new role. We look forward to his leadership as he guides our instructional vision forward.

Please join me in welcoming Mr. John Boniello, our new Director of Pupil Services. Mr. Boniello brings valuable experience as a Director of Special Education, and he has already jumped right in, supporting students and families with dedication. We are excited for the leadership he will bring to this important area.

Next, we welcome back one of our own, Ms. Hannah Johnston, who is now a teacher at Brooklyn Avenue School. Hannah is a proud graduate of BAS herself, and it is truly special to see her return to teach in the very school she once attended.

We are also proud to introduce Ms. Raina Lewis, our new CSE Chairperson. Ms. Lewis is a school psychologist with experience chairing meetings and supporting students with diverse needs. She is already making an impact, and we are grateful to have her expertise strengthening our Pupil Services department alongside Mr. Boniello.

At William L. Buck School, we welcome Ms. Breana Martinez. Ms. Martinez joins us from the New York City Department of Education and brings a wealth of classroom experience. She is also conversational in Spanish. We welcome Ms. Martinez to VS24.

We are also excited to welcome Ms. Amanda Plutner as our new District Challenge Teacher. Ms. Plutner has prior experience teaching in a Gifted and Talented School, and she will also be supporting our Enrichment for All Program. Her expertise will be instrumental in extending opportunities for our students.

Another familiar face is Ms. Grace Riordan, now a classroom teacher at William L. Buck. Ms. Riordan has been a permanent substitute in our district for the past two years, serving in several leave replacement positions. We are thrilled that she now has her very own classroom, where she is already making a difference for our sixth graders.

At Brooklyn Avenue School, we welcome Ms. Marlene Cazales-St. Jean, now joining us as a classroom teacher. Ms. St. Jean worked in our district last year as a substitute and filled several leave replacement roles at both BAS and RWC. We are pleased to officially welcome her into our Valley Stream 24 family.

And finally, let's welcome Ms. Jessica Witkiewicz, a new permanent substitute at Brooklyn Avenue School. We look forward to Ms. Witkiewicz supporting our students, teachers, and families.

Let's give a big round of applause to all of our new staff members—we look forward to your great work here at Valley Stream 24.

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 Herrera, Vice President Wilson, 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 Wilson:

Good evening. The next Board Meeting for the High School District will be on October 14, 2025. Thank you.

B. LEGISLATION REPORT - TRUSTEE NUÑEZ

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

VIII. LIST OF ITEMS FOR ACTION:

A. PERSONNEL – VICE PRESIDENT WILSON

V.P. Wilson 1st, to move item A1, Trustee Nunez 2nd 5-0 motion carried. Trustee Hernandez recused himself from voting.

1. **BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Board of Education hereby approves the Wage & Benefits Agreement between the District and Sandra Hernandez, Confidential Principal Account Clerk, for the 2025-2026 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. Wilson 1st, to move items A2 -A12, Trustee Nunez 2nd 6-0 motion carried.

2. **BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Board of Education hereby approves the Wage & Benefits Agreement between the District and Cathy Cancro, Confidential Senior Account Clerk, for the 2025-2026 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.

3. **BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education approves the following Salary Changes, effective September 1, 2025:

Grace Riordan	Step 1	MA
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4. **BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education approves the following additions to the per diem substitute list, pending successful completion of the onboarding process, for the 2025-2026 School Year:

SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS:

Gabriella Esposito
Fatima Latif

SUBSTITUTE TEACHER AIDE:

Aisha Shahid

SUBSTITUTE PART-TIME MONITORS:

Samantha Sensale

5. **BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education hereby appoints Rakhi Ghosh, as a Permanent Substitute Teacher, effective September 18, 2025, for the 2025-2026 school year.

6. **BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education approves the following teacher mentors for the 2025- 2026 School Year:
 - Kathleen Carter
 - Pamela Fowler
 - Marissa Campo
 - Suzanne Daly
 - Traci Ritterband
 - Kaitlyn Gillespie
7. **BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education approves the appointment of Vincent D'Arco, as Custodian, effective October 7, 2025, in accordance with Nassau County Civil Service List 40272024, established February 04, 2025. The appointment is for a 26-week probationary period, said probation set to expire on April 7, 2026. Compensation is in accordance with the current collective bargaining agreement with Local 74, United Service Workers Union.
8. **BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education hereby approves the permanent appointment of Jennifer Smith as a Principal Typist Clerk, effective September 18, 2025, in accordance with Nassau County Civil Service List 71710010B(S263) established September 11, 2025.
9. **BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education accepts the resignation of Samantha Sensale, School Monitor Part-Time, effective August 26, 2025.
10. **BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education hereby appoints Linda Bonacasa, as a School Monitor Part-Time, effective September 18, 2025, pending 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).

11.**BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education hereby appoints Mariana Saif, as a School Monitor Part-Time, effective September 18, 2025, pending Civil Service clearance and successful completion of the onboarding process. Compensation for this appointment will be Step 1 in accordance with the agreement between the District and the United Public Service Employees Union (UPSEU).

12.**BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education hereby appoints Denise Garcia, as a School Monitor Part-Time, effective September 18, 2025, pending Civil Service clearance and successful completion of the onboarding process. Compensation for this appointment will be Step 1 in accordance with the agreement between the District and the United Public Service Employees Union (UPSEU).

B. EDUCATION – TRUSTEE NUÑEZ

Trustee Nunez 1st, to move items B1 & B2, Trustee Clark 2nd 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 the dates listed below, 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.

Dates:
08/20/2025
08/20/2025
08/29/2025
09/03/2025
08/25/2025
08/25/2025

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 the dates listed below, 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.

Dates:

08/15/2025	08/27/2025	08/01/2025	08/26/2025	08/26/2025
08/27/2025	09/04/2025	09/05/2025	01/15/2025	09/05/2025
09/05/2025	09/03/2025	09/04/2025	09/05/2025	09/05/2025
09/05/2025	09/05/2025			

C. FINANCE – TRUSTEE MATTHEW

Trustee Matthew 1st, to move item C1, V.P. Wilson 2nd 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 July 2025 and the Claims Auditor’s Report for August 2025.

D. POLICY - TRUSTEE CLARK

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

IX. UNFINISHED BUSINESS, IF ANY:

X. NEW BUSINESS:

Trustee Hernandez 1st, to move items X1-X11, Trustee Nunez 2nd 6-0 motion

carried.

1. WHEREAS, Councilwoman Melissa Miller from the Town of Hempstead has offered to donate 15 backpacks containing school supplies and 14 drawstring backpacks for distribution to students, now therefore it is hereby

RESOLVED, pursuant to District Policy 1313, and upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the District hereby accepts, with gratitude, the donation by Councilwoman Melissa Miller, and authorizes the backpacks to be distributed to students as determined by the Superintendent or his designee.

2. WHEREAS, Northwell Health has offered to donate school supplies for distribution to students, now therefore it is hereby

RESOLVED, pursuant to District Policy 1313, and upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the District hereby accepts, with gratitude, the donation by Northwell Health, and authorizes the school supplies to be distributed to students as determined by the Superintendent or his designee.

3. **BE IT RESOLVED**, the Board of Education hereby ratifies the attached memorandum of agreement between the Valley Stream Association of Educational Office Personnel of the Valley Stream Teachers' Association, Local 163 for the term of July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2028.

4. **BE IT RESOLVED**, that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education authorizes the transfer of funds, \$78,233.03 from the Unassigned Fund Balance of the Cafeteria Fund.

5. **BE IT RESOLVED**, that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education authorizes the placement of an amount up to \$471,938.26 of unassigned fund balance from the 2024/2025 budget into the Capital Reserve established on May 21, 2024.

6. **BE IT RESOLVED**, that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education authorizes the use of the EBALR Reserve for the 2024-2025 accumulated sick leave payouts of \$156,854.34.
7. **BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education authorizes the allocation of funds to the Unassigned Fund Balance in an amount that is \$1,648,499, 4% of the 2025-2026 Budget.
8. **BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Board of Education adopts the Annual District Goals received from the Superintendent of Schools for the 2025-2026 school year as follows:
 - By June 2026, the District will maintain consistent and transparent communication with the Board of Education to ensure all members are informed, prepared, and engaged in effective governance.
 - By June 2026, the District will design and implement a comprehensive, districtwide professional development (PD) plan that supports academic excellence for all students by ensuring curriculum is aligned to the state's Next Generation Learning Standards, strengthening administrator and teacher capacity in data analysis, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), Social Emotional Learning (SEL), literacy, language acquisition for multilingual learners, innovation aligned with Vision 2030, inclusive practices, and adherence to district and state requirements.
 - By June 2026, the District will foster a culture of instructional excellence and inclusivity revolving around a student achievement focused vision by mentoring new teachers, providing administrator professional learning to staff aligned to data, innovation, and Vision 2030, strengthening early hiring practices to reduce potential bias, staffing with best qualified candidates, honoring student diversity through cultural celebrations, and implementing accountability systems that recognize excellence and support areas in need of growth.
 - By June 2026, the District will maintain its fiscal health by effectively

allocating resources to support educational initiatives aligned with district goals, monitor facilities needs aligned to goals, and ensure ongoing fiscal and facilities alignment with both short- and long-term district priorities.

- By June 2026, the District will promote a strong and positive image while fostering meaningful connections with students and the community, and will launch ParentSquare as a unified communication platform to standardize how parents interact with our schools and district.

9. **BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education hereby awards the Emergency Transportation Contracts beginning on September 3, 2025, through October 3, 2025, and authorizes the Board of Education President and Superintendent of Schools to execute the contracts, as set forth in the September 17, 2025, BOE Business Meeting Schedule below:
 Schedule for 31 Day Emergency Bid Contracts School Year 2025-2026

Bus Company	School	# of Students	Monthly Student/	Matron Cost	Total Annual Cost
Stork Bussing	Developmental Disabilities	1	Institute	\$10,800.00	\$10,800.00
Sunbright Transportation, LLC	Rhame Avenue	1		\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00
				Elementary School	

10. **BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education hereby approves the Agreement between the District and Hewlett-Woodmere UFSD for nursing services commencing September 18, 2025 for the remainder of the 2025-2026 school year and further authorizes the Board President and the Superintendent of Schools to execute the necessary documents to effectuate said Agreement.

11. **BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the

Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education hereby authorizes the District to enter into an agreement with Developmental Disabilities Institute (DDI) for Special Education services for the 2025 – 2026 school year and further authorizes the President of the Board of Education to execute the necessary documents to effectuate said Agreement.

XI. DISCUSSION

XII. AUDIENCE TO VISITORS

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn the Business Meeting at 7:50 pm by Trustee Hernandez and seconded by Trustee Clark. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennie L. Padilla

Jennie L. Padilla
District Clerk