

DCSD Board Meeting

Date: April 17, 2025

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Meeting Overview

On April 17, 2025, the Douglas County School District (DCSD) Board of Trustees convened a regular meeting at George Whittell High School in Zephyr Cove, Nevada.

The meeting commenced with Trustee Wagstaff calling for a motion to adopt a flexible agenda.. Trustee Susan Jansen moved to approve the agenda and seconded by Trustee Erinn Miller. No public comments were received, and the motion passed unanimously. Trustee Wagstaff noted the unprecedented absence of both in-person and online comments, a departure from prior meetings where robust public input often shaped discussions.

The board addressed a series of consent items. These included approving minutes from the February 27 and March 20, 2025, board meetings, which documented prior decisions on budget adjustments, personnel actions, and policy updates. Financial transactions were ratified, encompassing accounts payable special vouchers 2583 through 2590 and regular vouchers 2591 and 2592, totaling payments processed in compliance with Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS). The personnel report, detailing actions such as new hires, retirements, resignations, and salary adjustments aligned with district regulations, was endorsed to maintain staffing stability. The class size reduction report, a state-mandated submission, confirmed compliance with student-teacher ratio guidelines, critical for securing funding. The work-based learning (WBL) application update, required every five years by the Nevada Department of Education, was approved to sustain career and technical education programs. Budget adjustments, prepared by Director of Business Services Sue Estes under NRS 354.598005, were ratified to reflect fiscal realignments. Trustee Jansen and Trustee Katherine Dickerson abstained from voting on the special payment memo, personnel report, and voucher 2589 due to personal conflicts, with Jansen citing her inclusion in the voucher and Dickerson noting a similar issue. Trustee Miller moved to approve all non-pulled consent items, seconded by Jansen, and the motion passed unanimously after no public comments. For pulled items, Trustee Melinda Gneiting moved to approve voucher 2589, seconded by Trustee Markus Zinke, with Wagstaff abstaining; Miller moved for the personnel report, seconded by Gneiting, with Jansen and Dickerson abstaining; and Gneiting moved for the special payment memo, seconded by Zinke, with Jansen and Dickerson abstaining. All motions passed via roll-call votes as advised by legal counsel.

The “DCSD Shoutouts” segment, introduced by Trustee Wagstaff, celebrated exemplary contributions across the district. Trustee Zinke shared accolades for Principal Andrew Fromdahl, lauded for creating a welcoming environment at Minden Elementary, and Debbie Thomas, a human resources staff member praised for her compassion, humor, and exceptional support. Trustee Miller highlighted Jeremy Height, a math, computer, and science teacher at George Whittell High School, for inspiring future generations, and Tara Ald, a Carson Valley Middle School social studies teacher, for innovative methods like mummifying chickens to teach ancient Egypt. Trustee Jansen

commended Barbara McHugh from the transportation department for her cheerful assistance during challenging situations and Audra Page from Gardnerville Elementary for her tireless dedication. Trustee Dickerson recognized Logan Miller, a JROTC cadet at Douglas High School, for leadership in ensuring program efficiency, and Katie Hill, a Gardnerville Elementary teacher, for her kindness and academic support. Trustee Gneiting praised Lucas Whitmore, a Carson Valley Middle School teacher, for engaging food and nutrition lessons, and Shawna Ridge, a coach, for inspiring students through dedicated mentorship.

The leadership presentation from Minden Elementary School, delivered by Principal Andrew Fromdahl, Vice Principal Molly Ravenscroft, and students Reagan Summers and Janie Goring, provided a comprehensive overview of the school's initiatives, challenges, and goals. Fromdahl articulated the school's mission to cultivate a love of learning and responsible citizenship through robust partnerships with parents and the Douglas County community. With an enrollment of approximately 375 students, down from a high of 382, Minden Elementary serves pre-K through fifth grade in the central valley, drawing students from Gardnerville, East Valley, and Topaz Ranch Estates. The school's Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF) rating was reported as one star, reflecting significant declines in Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) proficiency and growth. Last year, English Language Arts (ELA) proficiency stood at roughly 38 percent, with math at 33 percent, compared to historical averages in the 50s and 60s a decade ago. Fromdahl noted a steady decline from the 40s in recent years, attributing part of the trend to post-COVID learning disruptions. Average daily attendance was strong at 94.4 percent, but chronic absenteeism, defined as missing 10 percent or more of school days, affected 13 percent of students, exacerbated by the school's expansive boundary zone, which requires some students to endure hour-long bus rides.

Ravenscroft detailed strategic initiatives to address academic challenges. The "What I Need" (WIN) Time program provides targeted interventions, focusing on foundational ELA skills for kindergarten through second grade and extending math, writing, and reading support for grades three through five. Flexible groupings and specialist involvement ensure tailored instruction, with data-driven adjustments made throughout the year. The "Minden's Marvelous Mondays" (3M) program, inspired by a San Diego school visit and pioneered by Jacks Valley Elementary's Pam Gilmartin, offers electives such as drama, crocheting, outdoor adventures, and retro games. Approximately 95 percent of students receive their top elective choices, with the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) contributing \$3,000 for supplies. Community partners, including retired educators and the Department of Fish and Wildlife, enrich the program, fostering interdisciplinary learning. A student performance strategies subcommittee, spanning kindergarten through fifth grade, was established to reverse SBAC declines, emphasizing school-wide systems, shared leadership, and a positive testing environment through the SBAC Olympics, where younger students cheer older peers during testing season. Summers and Goring highlighted student engagement, citing field trips to the Stewart Indian School in Carson City, which deepened their understanding of Native American history, and activities like the annual walk-a-thon, PBIS ticket rewards for safe and respectful behavior, and clubs such as Student Council and Kindness Club. The school's mascot, Rocky Rattlesnake, featured prominently in community events, boosting morale.

Trustee Zinke expressed concern about the historical SBAC decline, noting scores dropped from the 50s and 60s to the 30s, and requested data correlating SBAC results with district grading practices, particularly the 1-2-3 standards-based scale used for grades three through five. Zinke questioned the efficacy of the district's EPIC (Empower, Prepare, Inspire, Connect) learning model, citing similar declines at Scarselli and Jacks Valley elementaries, and suggested a potential mismatch between high classroom grades and low test scores. Trustee Jansen inquired about the 1-2-3 grading system's implementation, adopted three years ago for upper elementary grades, and its impact on student motivation compared to traditional A-F grades. Jansen hypothesized that the abstract nature of standards-based grading might reduce student drive, requesting a survey of students, teachers, and parents. Superintendent Frankie Alvarado committed to providing historical SBAC data, grading correlations, and an analysis of EPIC's impact, acknowledging the need to investigate the disconnect between classroom instruction and standardized test outcomes. Fromdahl noted that the elementary administrative team meets monthly to address this issue, focusing on aligning high-quality instruction with assessment results.

Infrastructure investments were a cornerstone of the meeting, with three maintenance contracts approved to address aging facilities. Tom Culloden, County Project Manager, and Bill Nicholson presented the bids, emphasizing a seven-year program initiated in 2018 to address deferred maintenance. The roofing maintenance project, targeting the commons area at Douglas High School, was awarded to CTR Roofing Ltd. for approximately \$96,450, with a not-to-exceed budget of \$100,000 to accommodate potential change orders. Culloden highlighted Garland Roofing's partnership, which provides extended warranties and mitigates risks, addressing Trustee Wagstaff's concern about the bid's variance from competitors. The concrete maintenance project, covering walkways and structures at Jacks Valley, Minden, Pau-Wa-Lu, and Scarselli elementary schools, was contracted to V & C Construction Inc. for about \$46,337, also capped at \$100,000. Nicholson noted the contractor's prior successful work on district projects, such as stair repairs, reassuring Trustee Dickerson's inquiry about reliability. The pavement maintenance project, focusing on deteriorated asphalt in Douglas High School's ROTC and weight room areas, was awarded to Colbre Paving and Grading of NV Inc. for roughly \$64,221, with the same budget ceiling. Culloden explained that keeping projects below the \$100,000 public works threshold avoids prevailing wage and administrative costs, saving approximately 20 percent. Trustee Wagstaff raised concerns about potential material cost increases due to tariffs, with Culloden confirming no provisions were included as projects were set to commence shortly, minimizing exposure. Trustee Jansen moved to approve all three contracts, seconded by Trustee Zinke, and the motion passed unanimously after no public comments.

Sue Estes presented the 2025–26 tentative budget, outlining significant fiscal challenges driven by declining enrollment and state funding constraints. A projected loss of 200–250 students reduced revenue by approximately \$206,000 compared to the December amendment, a critical concern given enrollment's direct impact on per-pupil funding. The state increased per-pupil funding by only \$100, down from \$500 in prior years, redirecting additional funds to salary investment accounts, with DCSD receiving \$2.2 million, of which \$1.1 million offset Nevada Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) increases. A 3.25 percent employer and 1.75 percent employee PERS hike strained the budget, necessitating staffing reductions that saved \$357,000 in salaries but were

offset by rising benefits costs. Estes allocated \$700,000 for textbook adoptions to meet state mandates, addressing years of underfunding, as mandated by the Nevada Department of Education (NDE). Legal fees, though reduced from prior years, remained elevated due to ongoing litigation, with expectations of further decreases in 2026–27. Utility savings were anticipated from lighting retrofits across school facilities, part of a broader energy efficiency initiative. Liability and property insurance costs, projected at \$83,000, continued to rise, reflecting national trends. The budget, described as speculative due to pending NDE guidance and union negotiations, incorporated seven colleges for eligible employees, a strategic investment in professional development. Estes emphasized the budget's fragility, noting that other Nevada districts, such as Washoe County with a \$10 million deficit, faced similar challenges, and urged state-level revisitation of funding formulas. Trustee Miller moved to approve the budget, seconded by Trustee Jansen, and the motion passed unanimously, with a public hearing scheduled for May 20, 2025, to finalize revisions.

The Jobs for Nevada's Graduates (JAG) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was presented by Mathew Stallworth and Kristelann Galarce, highlighting the program's impact on underserved youth. Serving 25 students at Douglas High School, with plans to expand to Aspire High School via a shared A/B day schedule, JAG focuses on college and career readiness through 87 competencies, including job attainment and life skills. The program reported a 100 percent graduation rate for seniors, 78 percent employment (all at full-time hours), and 89 percent pursuing further education, far exceeding the national benchmark of 35 percent. These outcomes, tracked through monthly connectivity checks and a 12–24 month follow-up phase. The district's proposed \$12,886 cost share per program, a new request due to rising salaries and operational costs, supports wraparound services like tutoring, transportation, and event lodging. Trustee Dickerson inquired about JAG's distinction from career-technical education (CTE), with Stallworth explaining its individualized, interest-driven approach and small class sizes of 15–20 students. Trustee Zinke asked about post-graduation employment retention, with Galarce noting extended support for underemployed students and anecdotal evidence of alumni returning as guest speakers. Trustee Jansen praised the program's outcomes, citing student Stella Rae Bradley's first-place win in a statewide public speaking competition and national representation in Washington, D.C. Trustee Jansen moved to approve the MOU, seconded by Trustee Dickerson, and it passed unanimously, reflecting alignment with DCSD's workforce development goals.

Sheri Brown and Michelle Rector presented the Seniors in Service Foster Grandparent Program MOU, aimed at placing volunteers aged 55 and older in schools for one-on-one academic support. With 86 volunteers across 43 Northern Nevada sites, the program, part of AmeriCorps Seniors since the 1960s, supports students who are academically behind, particularly in reading and math. A retired DCSD employee sought to volunteer at C.C. Meneley Elementary, prompting the MOU. Brown described volunteers' roles, which include small-group tutoring and mentoring under teacher supervision, with a focus on intergenerational connections. Volunteers receive a \$4 hourly stipend and 65 cents per mile for travel, supporting low-income seniors. Trustee Miller praised the program's community benefits, noting its value in a small district like George Whittell's single-class-per-grade elementary. Trustee Zinke questioned volunteers' tutoring capabilities, with Brown confirming teacher oversight and ongoing evaluations to address any decline in capacity. Trustee

Wagstaff raised concerns about background check delays, contrasting the district's four-week process with the program's week-and-a-half federal checks, and inquired about sharing results, with Brown noting legal barriers to data sharing. Trustee Dickerson clarified volunteer processing costs, ensuring no fiscal impact on the district. Trustee Miller moved to approve the MOU, seconded by Trustee Jansen, and it passed unanimously, with hopes of expanding volunteer presence district-wide.

Daria Singer presented the HEART for Youth Program Interagency Agreement with Partnership Douglas County, a grant-funded initiative to connect youth up to age 18 to mental health and substance use resources without law enforcement involvement. Launched April 1, 2025, HEART (Hope, Empowerment, Assistance, Recovery, Transformation) builds on the success of the Mobile Outreach Safety Team (MOST) for adults, focusing on referrals and case management rather than treatment, unlike the defunct Thrive program, which closed in December 2024. Singer emphasized HEART's role in reducing unnecessary hospitalizations and detentions, serving both English- and Spanish-speaking families with clinicians like Lance Crowley and Shana Piscotti. Trustee Dickerson expressed surprise at Thrive's closure, noting its unmet goal of becoming a Comprehensive Community Behavioral Health Center. Trustee Zinke raised concerns about referral processes, questioning who determines when a school refers a student and the risk of parental objections if consent is not secured. Singer clarified that referrals, which can come from educators, social workers, or parents, are not anonymous but are handled confidentially, with parental consent required before services begin. Data, redacted to comply with HIPAA, tracks age, race, and service types, stored securely and analyzed by a University of Nevada, Reno evaluator. The board, wary of potential missteps in referral protocols, deferred action, with Wagstaff requesting detailed policy and procedure documentation for review at the next meeting.

Leslie Peters presented proposed changes to Administrative Regulation (AR) 518(e), which governs high school credits for middle school courses like Algebra I, Geometry, and World Language I. The revision clarifies that removing a middle school course from a high school transcript could adjust a student's class rank, aligning with Infinite Campus calculations, as middle schoolers may not prioritize grades impacting future GPAs. AR 518(g), related to other credit policies, was deferred for further refinement with Shannon Brown and Kira Brown

Student representative Olive Hamner-Jillson provided a vibrant update on district activities. At George Whittell, the middle and high school track teams excelled, with a male student winning the 1600-meter race and a female student placing second in high jump. The middle school planned a spring break trip to Boston and New York, and a culinary dinner drew over 30 attendees. Douglas High School's prom, themed "Meet Me at Midnight," was a success, and its FFA team won multiple awards at the Nevada FFA convention, including second place in senior evaluation and an individual win by Courtney Polish.

Informational items included enrollment, donations, and bullying reports. Enrollment declined by two students since the last meeting, a smaller drop than the prior seven, totaling approximately 5,080 students district-wide. Donations exceeded \$6,000, including \$1,845 from Valley Christian Fellowship for graduation expenses, a \$3,000 2012 Kia Sportage from Michelle Latham for Douglas

High School's auto program, and angel account contributions from Sheila Gardner (\$100), Mary Stoll (\$12), Monty Barnhart (\$1,280), and a fundraiser (\$3,459) boosted by Bryan Schorr's \$852 addition. The third-quarter bullying report, presented by Shannon Brown, recorded 28 incidents from January to March 2025, with 21 involving male students and seven female, primarily at Douglas High School (25 incidents) and Pau-Wa-Lu Middle School (two incidents). Nine incidents were confirmed after investigation, with no suspensions or expulsions reported. No cyberbullying incidents were documented, prompting Trustee Zinke to question underreporting, particularly at Carson Valley Middle School, where zero incidents were reported despite anecdotal evidence from parents and his daughter's experiences. Trustee Dickerson echoed concerns, citing known bullying cases not reflected in the data. Brown explained that all involved students receive safety plans, with progressive discipline (e.g., in-school or out-of-school suspensions) applied based on severity. SafeVoice and direct reporting channels exist, but anonymous reports complicate investigations. Trustees Zinke and Dickerson urged improved administrator training and reporting clarity, with Alvarado confirming prior training and committing to follow-up before the next meeting.

Trustee Gneiting attended Jacobson High School's graduation, a music performance, a speech and debate tournament, and strategic planning sessions. Trustee Dickerson joined the graduation and debate events, praising student resilience. Trustee Jansen participated in school tours and a "Shark Tank" event, marveling at student entrepreneurship. Trustee Zinke attended governance training and community meetings, while Trustee Wagstaff noted a chamber of commerce presentation and budget discussions. Superintendent Frankie Alvarado reported school visits, federal funding webinars, and partnerships with the Washoe Tribe and local entities. A boiler project saved \$400,000, and tennis court renovations were proposed, with details forthcoming.

The meeting adjourned.