



BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

November 13, 2025
6:00 p.m.

Board of Education Board Room
1300 17th Street, City CENTRE – Bakersfield, CA 93301

1.0 GENERAL FUNCTIONS

1.1 The meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m.

1.2 Pledge of Allegiance

1.3 Roll Call

Board Members Present

Julie Beechinor Towse
Lori J. Cisneros
Lori Eskew
Joe L. Marcano
James V. Robinson

Board Members Absent

Jose E. Gonzalez, Jr.
Mary M. Little
Anabell Werner, *Student Representative*

KCSOS Employees Present

Dr. John G. Mendiburu, *Superintendent*
Steve Sanders, *Chief of Staff*
Merril Clanton, *Senior Executive Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent*

KCSOS Employees Absent

Christian Shannon, *Deputy Superintendent*

1.4 It was moved by Trustee Eskew, seconded by Trustee Beechinor Towse to approve the agenda.

Ayes: Trustee Beechinor Towse, Trustee Cisneros, Trustee Eskew, Trustee Marcano,
and Trustee Robinson.

Nayes: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Trustee Gonzalez, Jr., Trustee Little, and Student Representative Werner

- 1.5 It was moved by Trustee Robinson, seconded by Trustee Beechinor Towse to approve the Minutes from Regular Board Meeting held on October 14, 2025.

Ayes: Trustee Beechinor Towse, Trustee Cisneros, Trustee Eskew, Trustee Marcano, and Trustee Robinson.

Nayes: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Trustee Gonzalez, Jr., Trustee Little, and Student Representative Werner

2.0 CLOSED SESSION

CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL – ANTICIPATED LITIGATION

Significant exposure to litigation pursuant to paragraph (2) of subdivision (d) of Government Code section 54956.9: 1 potential case

3.0 PUBLIC COMMENTS

- 3.1 Public Comments were heard from the following:

- Penny Martinez
- Dennis McLean
- Ericka Delgadillo
- Robert Tafoya
- Audrey Chavez
- Sarah John
- Rev. Dawn Wilder
- Gabriel Garcia
- Nadine Escalante
- Louis Gillam
- Ellen Schafhauser

4.0 INFORMATION ITEMS – NO ACTION TAKEN

- 4.1 Presentation: CAASPP and CAST Data – Edward Gonzalez, Ed.D., Executive Director KiDS.

5.0 ACTION ITEMS

- 5.1 Consent Agenda

- 5.1.1 It was moved by Trustee Robinson, seconded by Trustee Cisneros to approve Graduation Diplomas.

Ayes: Trustee Beechinor Towse, Trustee Cisneros, Trustee Eskew, Trustee Marcano, and Trustee Robinson.

Nayes: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Trustee Gonzalez, Jr., Trustee Little, and Student Representative Werner

- 5.2 General Business

- 5.2.1 Item 5.2.1 – *Discussion and Possible Action: Resolution of the Kern County Board of Education for Posting of Historical Documents and Contract of Legal Representation – Mariah Gonderio, Litigation Counsel, Liberty Counsel*, was removed from the agenda and was not considered at this meeting.

- 5.2.2 It was moved by Trustee Beechinor Towse, seconded by Trustee Eskew to approve the 2025-26 School Plans for Student Achievement (SPSAs) for Court and Community Schools.

Ayes: Trustee Beechinor Towse, Trustee Cisneros, Trustee Eskew, Trustee Marciano, and Trustee Robinson.
Nayes: None
Abstain: None
Absent: Trustee Gonzalez, Jr., Trustee Little, and Student Representative Werner

6.0 REPORT OF COUNTY BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEMBERS

- 6.1 Trustee Cisneros began by expressing her excitement for the upcoming Thanksgiving luncheon at Blanton, noting that she hopes all trustees will be able to attend. She emphasized that the event provides a meaningful opportunity to serve food, interact with students on a personal level, and “love on those kids a little bit,” helping build relationships and trust within the school community. She then shared her experience attending the recent trustee dinner in McFarland, describing it as a wonderful evening filled with good food and great company. What stood out most to her was the student showcase, where students demonstrated their work in areas such as technology, music, and the STEAM program. Trustee Cisneros also highlighted Superintendent Aaron Resendez’s motivational speech during the event, noting that his message, which reminded trustees that their role is a calling and a purpose-driven responsibility was powerful and encouraging. Trustee Cisneros went on to describe her visit to the Bakersfield College Rodeo, calling it an exceptionally fun and impressive event. She praised the high quality of the rodeo, the smooth coordination, the strong safety measures, and the large turnout, mentioning that thousands of people attended. She also noted the vendors and overall atmosphere contributed to a memorable experience. Trustee Cisneros addressed the discussion regarding displaying historical documents, including the Ten Commandments, in schools. She stated her clear support for the initiative, explaining that she believes these documents reflect important historical truths about the nation’s founding. She emphasized that her support is not about promoting or teaching religion, but about acknowledging and displaying elements of the country’s heritage. In her opinion, Trustee Cisneros stated that such displays serve as reminders of foundational principles that have shaped governmental structures and values. She expressed concern that some modern ideologies in classrooms have moved away from these roots and reiterated her belief in the importance of bringing historical context back into focus for students, staff, and parents. She concluded by affirming that the display of such documents is not disrespectful, but simply an acknowledgment of history and the influences that helped establish the nation’s founding documents.
- 6.2 Trustee Robinson reflected on his recent experience attending the Harvest Festival in Tehachapi, hosted by Lori Cisneros, and described it as a wonderfully engaging and refreshing community gathering. He emphasized the unique atmosphere created by the cool weather and gentle breeze, combined with the presence of families, vendors, and lively activities that brought people together in a way he believes has become rare. He noted that events like this revive traditions worth bringing back, such as large community gatherings and live bluegrass music, which he found to be unexpectedly excellent. What stood out most to him was the sense of peace, relaxation, and genuine fellowship among attendees. He observed people of various backgrounds simply enjoying each other’s company, without concern for religious differences or personal doctrines, and he found this unity to be both meaningful and increasingly absent in schools today. Trustee Robinson shared that this experience influenced his perspective on the proposal to display historical documents, including the Ten Commandments, in schools. He argued that the Ten

Commandments are universal rather than exclusionary, pointing out that they belong to no single religious group and promote broadly applicable moral guidance. He expressed frustration with what he views as misplaced hostility and misunderstanding of the Constitution's Establishment Clause, criticizing opponents for citing constitutional arguments that he believes are inaccurate. While acknowledging that he heard a few thoughtful concerns during the meeting; though none that changed his overall position, he remained firm in his belief that the proposed displays would serve students and the community positively. He also emphasized that not only the Ten Commandments but all the historical documents under consideration carry equal importance. Robinson expressed disappointment that, due to legal threats and pressure from advocacy groups, including what he described as "clever tap dancing" by outside organizations, neither the Ten Commandments nor several other foundational documents were approved for display. He urged the community to thoroughly read and study these founding documents themselves rather than relying on misinformation, encouraging a deeper understanding of the nation's principles and a reconsideration of the value these materials could bring to schools.

- 6.3 Trustee Beechinor Towse reported that the Bakersfield College Rodeo was an outstanding and highly successful event, noting that it serves as a major fundraiser for a team of college athletes who are supported entirely through a nonprofit organization. She highlighted the impressive turnout, sharing that 232 college rodeo athletes participated and that the weekend was both memorable and well received by the community. Looking ahead, she expressed enthusiasm for the 2026 rodeo event. Shifting to the ongoing discussion about the proposed resolution regarding historical documents, Trustee Beechinor Towse chose not to share her personal position at this time. Instead, she emphasized her desire to hear directly from constituents living in Area One. She stated that she has not yet received any expressions of support from her area regarding the display of historical documents in schools and encouraged community members to reach out to her through the superintendent's office to engage in dialogue and share their views. She concluded by reiterating her interest in hearing from her constituents.
- 6.4 Trustee Eskew shared that the past month has been extremely busy, highlighting several community events she attended and expressing appreciation for the people involved. She described the KCSBA dinner in McFarland as an enjoyable evening where students impressed attendees with their work, including custom-printed shirts, noting she regretted forgetting to wear hers. The Superintendent's speech was emotional and meaningful, reminding trustees of their purpose. She also attended the Harvest Festival hosted by Trustee Cisneros as well as the BC rodeo, expressing admiration for the courage and skill of the college students who competed. Trustee Eskew then discussed her participation in "Chips for CHiPs," a fundraiser benefitting the families of fallen CHP officers, proudly noting that Kern County raised \$52,000. She mentioned that the downtown Bakersfield Christmas parade is coming soon and confirmed her role as Mrs. Claus, adding that she and Santa also helped open the Holiday Cottage, which collects Christmas gifts for local foster children. She encouraged others to donate by visiting the cottage. She further shared her privilege in volunteering at the Veterans Day Parade, speaking emotionally about the sacrifices veterans have made for the freedoms Americans enjoy, including the right to protest and express differing opinions. As a proud member of a military family; with a grandson in the Marines and a granddaughter in the Navy, she emphasized the importance of honoring veterans, recalling the mistreatment many Vietnam veterans faced. Transitioning to the discussion of the Ten Commandments and other historical documents, Trustee Eskew responded directly to criticism expressed by some members of the public. She questioned why certain controversial topics and books are permitted in schools while the Ten Commandments, whose messages include basic moral principles such as not lying, stealing, or murdering are treated as unacceptable. She expressed frustration with what she perceives as inconsistency, noting that issues such as explicit content in school library books, discussions of transgender topics in classrooms, and biological males using girls' restrooms do not receive the same level of objection

from critics. She argued that the Ten Commandments offer essential moral guidance that can help students learn honesty, respect, and responsibility, and she expressed similar support for displaying the Constitution, the Preamble, and other foundational documents. Trustee Eskew concluded by expressing her hope that she will ultimately be judged as having been a “good and faithful servant,” affirming her belief that supporting the inclusion of these historical and moral documents aligns with her values and sense of purpose.

- 6.5 Trustee Marcano reflected on several recent events he attended, beginning with the trustee dinner in McFarland, where he was highly impressed by the campus, the welcoming atmosphere, and especially the talent of the student band, which he described as exceptionally entertaining. Trustee Marcano also attended the Bakersfield College rodeo, thanking Trustee Beechinor Towse for the opportunity and expressed admiration for the remarkable athleticism and courage of the college students who participated, joking that he wished he were even half as athletic as they are! Turning to the discussion surrounding the historical documents, Trustee Marcano acknowledged that not everyone in attendance had been able to speak during the meeting, and he expressed his appreciation for the community’s input. Trustee Marcano stated that he truly values hearing perspectives from all sides of an issue and thanked everyone who attended for their time, even if they were not able to share their comments publicly.

7.0 REPORT OF COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT

- 7.1 Superintendent Mendiburu began by celebrating Wonderful Charter School’s recent recognition as 2025 Charter School of the Year, noting the significance of the honor and sharing that additional information about the award will be passed along to the board. He also highlighted the district’s ongoing efforts to support students with college readiness, reporting that more than 100 students and their families were assisted during the most recent weekend of free FAFSA clinics. These clinics were held at multiple locations; including East Kern, North Kern, and Central Bakersfield to help high school students complete their financial aid applications, and several additional clinic weekends are planned to continue serving students across the county. Superintendent Mendiburu then addressed the temporary federal shutdown that briefly halted the SNAP program, explaining that staff at the Dream Center quickly organized a food drive in partnership with various local organizations to ensure that students relying on the Dream Center did not go without food. He praised their rapid response and commitment to student well-being. In closing, Dr. Mendiburu expressed gratitude to the board for their service and for all they do to support students throughout Kern County. With Thanksgiving approaching, he extended warm holiday wishes and shared that he looks forward to seeing everyone in December.

8.0 AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

- 8.1 There were no recommendations for agenda items for the next meeting.

9.0 ADJOURNMENT

- 9.1 Unless otherwise posted, the next regularly scheduled meeting will be held on December 9, 2025, at 6:30 p.m.
- 9.2 The meeting was adjourned at 8:47 p.m.