



BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

March 10, 2026
6:30 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 6:31 p.m.

1.2 Pledge of Allegiance

1.3 Roll Call

Board Members Present

Julie Beechinor Towse
Lori J. Cisneros
Lori Eskew
Jose E. Gonzalez, Jr.
Mary Little
Joe L. Marcano
James V. Robinson

Board Members Absent

Lajaya Austin Turner, *Student Representative*

KCSOS Employees Present

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

1.4 It was moved by Trustee Robinson, seconded by Trustee Gonzalez to approve the agenda.

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

Abstain: None

Absent: Lajaya Austin Turner, *Student Representative*

1.5 It was moved by Trustee Little, seconded by Trustee Cisneros to approve the Minutes from the Regular Board Meeting held on February 10, 2026.

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

Nayes: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Lajaya Austin Turner, *Student Representative*

- 1.6 It was moved by Trustee Robinson, seconded by Trustee Little to approve the Minutes from the Board Study Session held on February 24, 2026.

Ayes: Trustee Beechinor Towse, Trustee Cisneros, Trustee Eskew, Trustee Gonzalez, Jr., Trustee Little, Trustee Marcano, and Trustee Robinson
Nays: None
Abstain: None
Absent: Lajaya Austin Turner, *Student Representative*

2.0 PUBLIC COMMENTS

- 2.1 Public Comments were heard from the following:

- Will Winn
- Joanna Kendrick
- Dr. Angelo Frazier
- Phil Rudnick
- Ellen Schafhauser

3.0 CLOSED SESSION

- 3.1 Expulsion Hearing – Appeal by Student A

The Board considered the Expulsion Hearing – Appeal by Student A. Based on parental acknowledgment that Student A committed an infraction in violation of his behavior agreement and due to a prejudicial lack of evidence, the Board granted the appeal.

Trustee Marcano moved to grant the appeal and overturn the expulsion decision. Trustee Robinson seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously by roll call vote:

Ayes: Trustee Beechinor Towse, Trustee Cisneros, Trustee Eskew, Trustee Gonzalez, Jr., Trustee Little, Trustee Marcano, and Trustee Robinson
Nays: None
Abstain: None
Absent: Lajaya Austin Turner, *Student Representative*

4.0 INFORMATION ITEMS – NO ACTION TAKEN

- 4.1 Presentation: STEAM Yard, Cole Sampson, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum and Instruction.

5.0 ACTION ITEMS

- 5.1 Consent Agenda

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

Ayes: Trustee Beechinor Towse, Trustee Cisneros, Trustee Eskew, Trustee Gonzalez, Jr., Trustee Little, Trustee Marcano, and Trustee Robinson
Nays: None
Abstain: None
Absent: Lajaya Austin Turner, *Student Representative*

5.2 General Business

5.2.1 It was moved by Trustee Beechinor Towse, seconded by Trustee Cisneros to Accept and File the Second Interim Report.

Ayes: Trustee Beechinor Towse, Trustee Cisneros, Trustee Eskew, Trustee Gonzalez, Jr., Trustee Little, Trustee Marcano, and Trustee Robinson
Nays: None
Abstain: None
Absent: Lajaya Austin Turner, *Student Representative*

5.2.2 It was moved by Trustee Cisneros, seconded by Trustee Eskew to Adopt the Resolution for School Bus Driver Day.

Ayes: Trustee Beechinor Towse, Trustee Cisneros, Trustee Eskew, Trustee Gonzalez, Jr., Trustee Little, Trustee Marcano, and Trustee Robinson
Nays: None
Abstain: None
Absent: Lajaya Austin Turner, *Student Representative*

5.2.3 It was moved by Trustee Little, seconded by Trustee Beechinor Towse to Adopt Revised Board Policy 9250.

Ayes: Trustee Beechinor Towse, Trustee Cisneros, Trustee Eskew, Trustee Gonzalez, Jr., Trustee Little, Trustee Marcano, and Trustee Robinson
Nays: None
Abstain: None
Absent: Lajaya Austin Turner, *Student Representative*

6.0 REPORT OF COUNTY BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEMBERS

6.1 Trustee Gonzalez, Jr. reported that he recently attended a local school board meeting in his area regarding the selection of a new superintendent. During the meeting, it was noted that the superintendent search had been conducted by the county office, and three well-qualified candidates were presented to the board. However, the board ultimately selected a different candidate who had previously served in other administrative roles. Trustee Gonzalez, Jr. also shared concerns he has heard regarding the individual's leadership style and interactions with community members and board attendees who may hold differing perspectives. He concluded his comments by noting that he wanted to bring this matter forward for awareness.

6.2 Trustee Cisneros shared that she recently attended the Kern County School Boards Association Spring Trustees Dinner hosted by the Career Technical Education Center (CTEC) in Bakersfield, where she enjoyed a performance by the Arvin High School Mariachi Band and heard from student ambassadors who spoke about their experiences in CTEC programs. She noted that the students demonstrated impressive maturity and confidence and that their enthusiasm was inspiring. Trustee Cisneros also acknowledged the recent recognition received by Dr. Mendiburu and expressed pride in his being honored by CSUB. She further provided an update on a recent legal development regarding parental rights in California, noting that the United States Supreme Court temporarily blocked certain state policies and affirmed that parents have a constitutional right to be informed if their child requests a gender transition at school; she added that the case has been sent back to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and that she will continue to follow its

progress. She also referenced proposed state legislation that would define sex in state civil rights laws as biological sex and address the use of school bathrooms and locker rooms. In addition, Trustee Cisneros shared information about a national bookmark design competition for students in grades K–8 in recognition of America’s 250th anniversary, with submissions due March 31, 2026, and suggested creating a centralized link on the county office website to help students learn about and access similar academic and creative competitions. She concluded by expressing appreciation for the recent update regarding the CAAT charter school and noted optimism about its progress.

- 6.3 Trustee Little shared that she attended the Kern County School Boards Association Spring Trustees Dinner and described it as one of the best events she has attended, highlighting the opportunity to hear directly from students about their programs and educational goals. She noted that the students’ confidence, enthusiasm, and commitment to their education were inspiring and reflected positively on the work being done by local schools. Trustee Little also attended the ACCBE Conference in Modesto with fellow trustees, where they heard from state legislators who expressed strong support for education and encouraged ongoing dialogue with school leaders. She recognized county office staff member Michelle Taylor-Langham for delivering a well-received presentation on community schools and the coordination of services for students, including those with Individualized Education Plans. Trustee Little also served as a judge at the recent History Day competition, where she commended the students’ research, presentation skills, and thoughtful analysis of historical change. In addition, she attended the CSUB Hall of Fame Dinner, where Dr. Mendiburu was inducted and received an enthusiastic response from attendees, and she congratulated all honorees recognized at the event. She concluded by expressing continued interest in the progress and potential expansion of the CAAT charter program.
- 6.4 Trustee Beechinor Towse shared that she enjoyed attending the recent CSUB Hall of Fame Dinner and the Spring Trustees Dinner, noting that the student panel from CTEC was particularly inspiring. She suggested exploring the possibility of featuring graduates from the RISE program as a small panel for the Board of Trustees or at a future Kern County trustees’ event, highlighting the value of hearing from students about their educational journeys and the impact of alternative education programs. She also expressed interest in tracking the post-graduation paths of RISE students to showcase their successes. Additionally, Trustee Beechinor Towse raised a procedural request regarding a recent email from CAAT concerning a facility request and potential policy change, asking that the matter be considered for placement on a future board agenda if action is required.
- 6.5 Trustee Eskew expressed support for highlighting student voices at board-related events and agreed with the suggestion to feature students in future presentations. She also shared that she enjoyed attending the recent Trustees Dinner and praised the student mariachi performance and panel discussion. Trustee Eskew noted her personal connection to career technical education through her granddaughter’s participation in the ROC veterinary program. She briefly commented on a recent Supreme Court decision related to parental rights and school communication, expressing appreciation for maintaining transparency with families. Additionally, she mentioned attending governance training and thanked staff for the clear budget presentation provided during the meeting. Trustee Eskew also shared that she had contacted Turning Point regarding the possibility of providing a short presentation at a future meeting. She concluded by thanking a community member for making public comments about Harriet Tubman and congratulated Dr. Mendiburu on his recent Hall of Fame induction, noting that his speech was both humble and inspiring.

- 6.6 Trustee Robinson reflected on his first 14 months of service on the board, noting that the experience has increased his awareness of the many educational programs and opportunities available through the county office that are not widely known in the community. He encouraged continued efforts to raise public awareness and promote greater community engagement with programs such as CTEC, CAAT, and other initiatives highlighted during the meeting. Trustee Robinson also shared that he plans to attend an upcoming Leaders in Life convention and expressed appreciation for the work being done across these programs. He briefly commented on a recent Supreme Court decision related to parental rights and communication with families. Additionally, Trustee Robinson emphasized the importance of maintaining respectful dialogue during public meetings and acknowledged the value of community members sharing their perspectives. He concluded by encouraging continued discussion regarding proposals to display historical documents, including the Ten Commandments, in schools, and expressed his belief that such discussions should remain thoughtful and open to differing viewpoints.
- 6.7 Trustee Marcano commented on several topics, beginning with the discussion of the Ten Commandments, noting that Dr. Frazier referenced other states, Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, and West Virginia, that have passed similar laws. He expressed openness to revisiting the topic if there are changes in California state law. Trustee Marcano congratulated Dr. Mendiburu on his induction into the CSUB Hall of Fame, describing the dinner as very enjoyable and noting that Dr. Mendiburu's speech was humble and inspiring. He also mentioned the induction of Judge David Zulfa and expressed appreciation for being part of that celebration. Trustee Marcano briefly commented on the impressive facilities at the Kern High School District CTEC building, noting that he did not have the opportunity to tour the site but would like to do so at a future time. Finally, he praised the Arvin High School Mariachi Band for their talent and performance during the event and expressed gratitude for being part of the student-focused celebration.
- 7.1 Dr. Mendiburu began his comments by expressing excitement to report that eight Kern County schools are being recognized as California Distinguished Schools, including Cesar E. Chavez High School, Delano High School, El Tejon Elementary School, Fruitvale Junior High School, Leon H. Olliver Middle School, McFarland High School Early College, Stonecreek Junior High School, and Wasco High School. These recognitions are based on California School Dashboard metrics acknowledging academic performance, student group progress, graduation rates, college and career readiness, and school climate, as well as rigorous state accountability standards. Dr. Mendiburu noted that, unlike in the past, schools now automatically qualify for this recognition based on established criteria. He invited trustees to attend a special event at Bell Tower Plaza on April 9, 2026, featuring tours of the building led by students from Valley Oaks Charter School and the RISE program, with demonstrations of the kitchen and cooking facilities for attendees. He expressed appreciation to the board for attending the CSUB Hall of Fame dinner, noting the honor of having them present. Dr. Mendiburu also provided an update on the CAAT charter school facility request. He explained that CAAT is expanding significantly and reviewed compliance requirements under state education code for material revisions whenever there is a facility or grade-level change. The school previously used temporary locations, such as First Presbyterian Church and part of their current site, without requiring a material revision because they were not permanent sites. However, the current high school facility would be permanent, and any new permanent location would require formal material revision, including submission of a lease, certificate of occupancy, and updates to the state school plan. He emphasized that the board cannot approve a location without meeting these requirements, and CAAT's request to streamline or shorten the approval process cannot bypass established procedures. Dr. Mendiburu assured the board that staff and attorneys are actively working with CAAT to ensure compliance and facilitate the process while maintaining adherence to the board's policies and legal obligations.

8.0 AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

8.1 Trustee Eskew requested a presentation from Turning Point.

9.0 ADJOURNMENT

9.1 Unless otherwise posted, the next regularly scheduled meeting will be held on April 14, 2026, at 6:30 p.m.

9.2 The meeting was adjourned at 9:07 p.m.

John G. Mendiburu, Ed.D., Ex-Officio Secretary to the Board of Education