



BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

April 14, 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 6:30 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 Beechinor Towse, seconded by Trustee Cisneros 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 Robinson, seconded by Trustee Eskew to approve the Minutes from the Regular Board Meeting held on March 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*

2.0 PUBLIC COMMENTS

2.1 Public Comments were heard from the following:

- John Harte
- Dr. Angelo Frazier
- Tonya Holt
- Ellen Schafhauser
- Allysa Jones
- Lori Braschler
- Matty Burnham
- Greg Ardoin
- Jes Sanders
- Dennis McLean
- Elizabeth Palencia

3.0 INFORMATION ITEMS – NO ACTION TAKEN

3.1 Presentation: Student Voice Ambassadors and Homeless and Foster Youth Services – Lourdes Bucher, Assistant Superintendent – Student Support and Curt Williams, Senior Director - School Community Partnerships.

3.2 Presentation: Turning Point USA Bakersfield College – Matt Sosa, Chapter President.

4.0 ACTION ITEMS

4.1 Consent Agenda

4.1.1 It was moved by Trustee Cisneros, seconded by Trustee Little 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*

4.2 General Business

4.2.1 It was moved by Trustee Cisneros, seconded by Trustee Beechinor Towse to adopt the Resolution for the Day of the Teacher.

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*

4.2.2 It was moved by Trustee Robinson, seconded by Trustee Gonzalez to adopt the Resolution for Classified School Employee Week.

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*

4.2.3 It was moved by Trustee Robinson, seconded by Trustee Beechinor Towse to approve the Resolution Declaring Property as Exempt Surplus Property located near the intersection of Cottonwood Road and Watts Drive in Bakersfield, California.

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*

4.2.4 It was moved by Trustee Little, seconded by Trustee Beechinor Towse to approve the Resolution Declaring Property as Exempt Surplus Property located at 901 Tower Way, Bakersfield, California 93309.

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*

4.2.5 It was moved by Trustee Robinson, seconded by Trustee Gonzalez to approve the Williams Act Uniform Quarterly Reports.

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*

5.0 REPORT OF COUNTY BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEMBERS

5.1 Trustee Robinson expressed appreciation for the reopening of the Bell Tower Plaza and the restoration of the historic building, noting the significance of hearing the bell ring at noon and commending the tasteful, high-quality renovations throughout the facility. He described the building as an important and elegant community gathering space with ample parking and expressed hope that it will serve the community for many years to come. He also acknowledged its historical significance, noting that it remained largely intact following the 1952 earthquake and recognizing those responsible for its original construction. Regarding public comment, he referenced the range of perspectives shared during the meeting and emphasized the importance of respectful, civil discourse, noting that differing viewpoints are a natural part of public dialogue. He further stressed the value of direct, face-to-face communication,

encouraging continued community engagement, even in disagreement and grounded in mutual respect and shared humanity. Trustee Robinson thanked attendees for their participation and, on behalf of the Board, affirmed its commitment to making decisions in the best interest of students and the community.

- 5.2 Trustee Eskew expressed appreciation to Matthew Sosa and his team for their work and support and shared her hope for a favorable outcome in the upcoming proceedings. As a Bakersfield native, she reflected on the significance of the Bell Tower and other historic buildings, describing the day as emotional and meaningful. She also commended the presence and presentation of the Honor Guard during the event and encouraged the community to visit the Bell Tower Plaza. Trustee Eskew shared a personal anecdote about her longstanding interest in historic local churches, noting her personal connection to such landmarks. She reported on her attendance at a conference in Sacramento and referenced the California Education Freedom Act, encouraging constituents to contact the Governor regarding participation in the program and its associated tax credit benefits. She also referenced ongoing litigation in the *Mirabelli v. Banta* case and expressed concern regarding anticipated attorney fee costs to taxpayers. Regarding public comment, Trustee Eskew clarified that the Turning Point USA presentation was informational only and not an agenda item or a district-adopted program, noting that no board action had been taken regarding its implementation in schools and that similar student access may exist at high school campuses by local choice. She further clarified that comments suggesting the Ten Commandments had been defeated were incorrect, stating that the item had been tabled.
- 5.3 Trustee Beechinor Towse expressed appreciation to Dr. Mendiburu, the Board, and the Board President for including KCSOS program presentations at Board meetings since she began serving in October 2023, noting that they provide valuable insight into countywide programs and the district's work. She shared her appreciation for the opportunity to learn more about these programs and expressed interest in potentially participating in the Foster and Homeless Education Program. She congratulated the eight California Distinguished Schools and acknowledged Stockdale High School in the Kern High School District for opening a new agriculture department, commending the continued expansion of career technical education programs and emphasizing their importance in providing students with hands-on career skills. Trustee Beechinor Towse also recognized KCSOS for hosting the College and Career Expo, noting her participation and the event's value in exposing students to career pathways, particularly in career technical education and animal science. She thanked staff for their support of student engagement. She concluded by announcing Garden Fest at Bakersfield College, scheduled for Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., noting that it is free and open to the public, features more than 70 vendors, supports environmental and horticulture programs, and encouraged community attendance.
- 5.4 Trustee Little reported attending her granddaughter's track meet at Discovery Elementary School and described a strong sense of student encouragement, peer support, and family engagement, commending school leadership for fostering an inclusive and positive school climate. She also reported reviewing a record number of scholarship applications for the Kern Community Foundation and expressed appreciation for students' personal narratives reflecting resilience, adversity, and educational goals. Regarding public comment, she emphasized the importance of respectful, face-to-face dialogue and expressed appreciation for civility in community engagement. She shared her positive impressions of the restored Bell Tower facility, describing it as welcoming and well-designed, and commended staff for the quality of the renovation and presentation, noting the significance of the bell ringing. She also referenced upcoming district events, including a spring barbecue scheduled for April 29, 2026, and noted the importance of establishing consistent naming for recurring district events being documented for CSBA submission, encouraging participation in the upcoming activity.

- 5.5 Trustee Cisneros requested consideration of creating brief trustee testimonial videos for the CSBA convention in December to allow participation from trustees unable to attend. She expressed appreciation for the opportunity to engage in discussion on a range of topics and addressed prior comments regarding her attire, stating that her clothing reflects her personal identity and background as a teacher, wife, mother, and farmer with ties to the Tehachapi agricultural, faith, and community sectors. She affirmed that she would continue to present herself in that manner. She noted her commitment to listening to and documenting public comments and referenced statements made during public comment regarding Turning Point USA and differing perspectives on faith, encouraging respectful dialogue and evidence-based discussion. She encouraged attendance at upcoming public events, including a presentation at Bakersfield College, and expressed appreciation for civic engagement and First Amendment expression. Trustee Cisneros also expressed interest in attending a previously referenced awards ceremony highlighting student voice and participation and indicated excitement for the upcoming spring barbecue. She concluded by emphasizing the importance of maintaining direct connections with students, noting the Board's role in decisions impacting educational programs and student outcomes, and underscored her commitment to student engagement, particularly in alternative education settings.
- 5.6 Trustee Gonzalez echoed comments regarding the Bell Tower Plaza, expressing appreciation for the restoration of the historic building and recognizing its significance. He noted the quality of the renovation and stated he hopes to attend future events held at the facility.
- 5.7 Trustee Marcano expressed appreciation for the Bell Tower Plaza ribbon-cutting event and noted he was glad to be able to briefly step away from work to attend. He thanked staff for their efforts in organizing the event. He shared personal reflections regarding the Bell Tower Plaza site, noting its significance to him and recalling personal memories associated with the location. Trustee Marcano congratulated the 2026 California Distinguished Schools, noting that several are located within his area, and specifically acknowledged Cesar Chavez High School, Delano High School, McFarland High School Early College, and Wasco High School. He concluded by thanking all participants and presenters, emphasizing the importance of respectful discourse, the value of differing viewpoints, and his appreciation for public engagement.

6.0 REPORT OF THE COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT

- 6.1 Dr. Mendiburu provided several updates, expressing appreciation for Board member attendance at the Bell Tower Plaza Grand Opening and noting that the event was successful and that the facility was placed into immediate use following the ceremony. He also acknowledged student involvement in preparing food, appetizers, and desserts, highlighting ongoing opportunities for student engagement in culinary arts and service-learning experiences. He reported that eight California Distinguished Schools were recognized at a recent Bell Tower event, where breakfast was served and awards were presented, and noted that official recognition from the State of California will occur on April 24, 2026, in Anaheim. Dr. Mendiburu announced upcoming events, including the RISE Program graduation ceremony scheduled for May 30, 2026, at Valley Oaks Charter School's Chester Avenue location, and the Kern County Superintendent of Schools Bus ROADEO, a statewide event to be hosted on May 24, 2026, at the Service Center on Union Avenue, and thanked staff for their coordination efforts. He further indicated that details regarding the Student Voice Ambassador Awards will be forthcoming. He concluded with a brief update on statewide testing, noting that districts are currently within varying testing windows occurring between now and mid-May, and thanked staff and partners for their continued work.

7.0 AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

7.1 There were no items suggested items for the May 12, 2026, meeting.

8.0 ADJOURNMENT

8.1 Unless otherwise posted, the next regularly scheduled meeting will be held on May 12, 2026, at 6:30 p.m.

8.2 The meeting was adjourned at 8:11 p.m.

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