



# BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

May 12, 2026  
6:30 p.m.

Board of Education Board Room  
1300 17<sup>th</sup> 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  
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 Beechinor Towse 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: None

- 1.5 It was moved by Trustee Eskew, seconded by Trustee Robinson to approve the Minutes from the Regular Board Meeting held on April 14, 2026.

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

Nayes: None

Abstain: None

Absent: None

## **2.0 PUBLIC COMMENTS**

2.1 Public Comments were heard from the following:

- Ellen Schafhauser
- Greg West
- Heather Lajanelei
- Jes Sanders

## **3.0 INFORMATION ITEMS – NO ACTION TAKEN**

3.1 Presentation: Defense Counterintelligence Security Agency – Process for Vetting School Staff – Joel MacKay.

3.2 Presentation: SISC – Self Insured Schools of California – Dr. Dave Ostash, Chief Executive Officer.

3.3 RISE – Spring Picnic.

## **4.0 ACTION ITEMS**

4.1 Consent Agenda

4.1.1 It was moved by Trustee Beechinor Towse, seconded by Trustee Cisneros to approve Graduation Diplomas.

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

4.2 General Business

4.2.1 Public Hearing for 2026-2027 Local Accountability Plan (LCAP) and Budget Overview for Parents.

4.2.2 Public Hearing for 2026-2027 County School Service Fund (CSSF) Budget.

4.2.3 Discussion regarding KCBOE Video Retention – No Action Taken.

## **5.0 REPORT OF COUNTY BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEMBERS**

5.1 Trustee Cisneros addressed several topics raised during prior public comments, including concerns regarding audio quality during board meetings. She noted that she had followed up with Dr. Mendiburu regarding the matter and shared that staff reviewed previous recordings and did not identify any major sound issues. Comments explained that microphone enhancements have been implemented over time to improve sound sensitivity and acknowledged that participants have also become more mindful about properly using the microphones. Trustee Cisneros also highlighted the accessibility of board meeting agendas on the Kern County Superintendent of Schools website, noting that agendas are posted online and physically at the City Centre building by Friday afternoon preceding Tuesday board meetings, in accordance with state law. She commended the website's user-friendly features, including clearly marked links for current and archived agendas as well as live-stream access to board meetings, and suggested that board

member biographies may benefit from updates during the election year. In closing remarks, Trustee Cisneros expressed appreciation for teachers as they conclude the school year, recognizing their hard work and dedication on behalf of students. She also congratulated graduating seniors throughout Kern County and expressed enthusiasm for upcoming graduation ceremonies. Additionally, Trustee Cisneros encouraged community members to participate in the June 2 primary election, emphasizing the importance of exercising the constitutional right to vote.

- 5.2 Trustee Little inquired about the continued use of the property near the Bell Tower and the adjacent building previously utilized for teacher trainings and was informed that the facility remains in use. She expressed appreciation for the presentation, noting that it was both informative and well delivered. Trustee Little also shared enthusiasm about the “Rise and Shine” activities initiative, highlighting its focus on motivating, connecting with, and transforming students. She noted that board members and staff proudly wore shirts featuring the program’s emblem and received positive feedback from the community regarding the initiative. Additionally, Trustee Little commented on the positive impact the program has had on students, staff, teachers, and the broader community, emphasizing the importance of building stronger relationships within school communities. She reflected positively on a recent visit to a community school campus, commending the welcoming atmosphere, professionalism of the staff, and the beauty of the campus. Trustee Little concluded her remarks by expressing anticipation for the upcoming CAT presentation scheduled for next month.
- 5.3 Trustee Beechinor Towse thanked the Board President for including the evening’s presentations on the agenda, noting the importance of discussions related to employee vetting, risk management, and school safety. Referencing recent news coverage surrounding the Camp Mystic trials in Texas, she emphasized the importance of proactive safety practices and accountability within educational institutions. Trustee Beechinor Towse stated that student and staff safety must remain a top priority and stressed that safety measures should extend beyond written plans to consistent practice and implementation. She expressed interest in reviewing current safety-related procedures and trainings, including updates regarding Narcan availability, CPR, first aid practices, emergency preparedness, and lockdown protocols, and requested an opportunity for the Board to revisit and refresh its understanding of the safety measures currently in place throughout schools. Additionally, Trustee Beechinor Towse recognized the accomplishments of the Bakersfield College rodeo team, congratulating three student-athletes who qualified for the College National Finals Rodeo in Casper, Wyoming. She commended the students for balancing academics, employment, and athletics while pursuing postsecondary education and highlighted their achievements as an example of the dedication and perseverance fostered through education from early childhood through college.
- 5.4 Trustee Eskew reflected on her recent visit to a community school campus, noting the positive atmosphere and highlighting the campus garden and hydroponic program, which provide students with opportunities to learn about gardening and growing their own vegetables. She shared that the visit also allowed her to reconnect with former colleagues and expressed appreciation for the welcoming environment on campus. Trustee Eskew additionally discussed her participation in activities at the Bakersfield College Turning Point program, where she engaged with students through discussion tables and conversations. She acknowledged graduating student leaders and expressed appreciation for the students’ willingness to engage respectfully and thoughtfully throughout the school year. Trustee Eskew also shared that she and her husband participated in a Cinco de Mayo celebration and prom activities with students at a Wasco special education program, describing the experience as one of the highlights of their year. She praised the students’ enthusiasm and noted that this year marked the first student-voted prom king and queen selection, which she described as a meaningful and memorable milestone. In addition, Trustee Eskew voiced support for continued discussions regarding employee background checks and school safety procedures. Drawing from her prior professional experience conducting background

checks, she expressed concern about student safety and suggested consideration of ongoing or recurring screening practices. She also voiced support for ensuring that teachers have access to first aid resources and Narcan training and availability as part of broader school safety efforts.

- 5.5 Trustee Robinson commented on the increasing participation in the Turning Point USA Turning Point student organization among Kern County high schools and at the Liberty Center, noting his appreciation for opportunities that encourage respectful discourse and discussion among students with differing perspectives. Trustee Robinson emphasized the value of civic engagement and open dialogue, stating that such organizations help foster productive conversations and greater community involvement. Additionally, Trustee Robinson encouraged greater public participation in local educational leadership and governance, noting that organizations such as the Revere Group provide information and resources for individuals interested in running for school and county board of education positions. He expressed support for increased community involvement in school board service and encouraged attendees and community members to consider participating in local elections and educational leadership opportunities.
- 5.6 Trustee Marcano reflected on the recent RISE picnic held at North Kern Community School, noting the positive interactions he had with students and staff during the visit. He shared that the students were welcoming and engaged, and he spoke with a student who discussed successfully completing probation and expressed optimism about his future. Trustee Marcano commented on the students' charisma and ambition, observing that many students at the school demonstrate significant potential and would benefit from continued guidance and support. He commended the faculty and staff for their work with students and emphasized the importance of student attendance, noting that regular attendance is a critical component of student success.
- 5.7 Student Representative Lajaya Austin Turner shared reflections on her experiences participating in board-related activities and events, including assisting at the Bell Tower coffee event, which she described as busy but enjoyable. She acknowledged that her initial experience attending board meetings felt overwhelming; however, over time she became more comfortable and found the experience positive and rewarding. Board members expressed appreciation for her service and participation, congratulated her on completing her term, and encouraged her to stay connected and share updates on her future endeavors.

## **6.0 REPORT OF THE COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT**

- 6.1 Superintendent Dr. Mendiburu provided several updates to the Board regarding state funding, district initiatives, and student safety efforts. He informed the Board that the Governor's May Revision to the state budget would be released later in the week and reported that Proposition 98 education funding is not currently expected to experience major reductions. Dr. Mendiburu stated that funding projections remain largely status quo at this time, including the anticipated cost-of-living adjustment, and noted that additional budget updates would be provided at the next board meeting should significant changes occur. Dr. Mendiburu also highlighted the upcoming graduation season, including the RISE graduation ceremony, and encouraged board members to participate in the celebration. He provided an update regarding the proposed funding measure for California Living Museum (CALM), noting that the required petition signatures had been submitted for verification and that, if validated, the measure would appear on the November ballot to support implementation of CALM's master expansion plan. He clarified that the County of Kern owns the property on which CALM operates and that the County Office of Education partners with the County to manage and expand the facility. Dr. Mendiburu acknowledged that public discussion regarding the proposed measure and expansion efforts is ongoing and emphasized the educational and community value of the project. Additionally, Dr. Mendiburu addressed reports of a recent security breach involving the Canvas platform, explaining that local school districts and the County Office of Education continue to work with the company to assess the situation.

He stated that, at the present time, no known student or staff data breaches involving local districts had been identified. Dr. Mendiburu also thanked the Board for its continued support of student-focused activities, including the RISE picnic and related events, noting that such efforts demonstrate the Board's commitment to students and school communities. Dr. Mendiburu further updated the Board regarding the upcoming CAAT charter presentation and facility expansion request, explaining that the June board meeting will include both the presentation and approval consideration in order to support the school's timeline for opening its expanded facilities prior to the upcoming academic year. Finally, he addressed comments related to school safety, Narcan availability, CPR, and employee vetting procedures. He shared that the County Office of Education collaborates with school districts, law enforcement, and emergency response agencies through the Safe School Coalition to support comprehensive school safety efforts and indicated that a future presentation on these initiatives would be scheduled for the Board. Dr. Mendiburu also reviewed current employee fingerprinting and arrest notification procedures and discussed recent changes in California law requiring school districts to conduct more thorough employment history reviews when hiring individuals from other districts, particularly regarding prior misconduct or disciplinary concerns.

## **7.0 AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

7.1 There were no items suggested for the June 9, 2026, meeting.

## **8.0 ADJOURNMENT**

8.1 Unless otherwise posted, the next regularly scheduled meeting will be held on June 9, 2026, at 6:30 p.m.

8.2 The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

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