

MINUTES

Board of Education Regular Meeting/Budget Work Session

April 14, 2026 4:00 PM

MCS Administrative Offices

<p>CALL TO ORDER Procedural Item Present: Mr. Butch Campbell, Ms. Karen Dodd, Ms. Barbara Long, Ms. Amanda Moore, Mrs. Jeanette Price, Mr. Jimmy Richardson III, Absent: Mr. David Settles.</p> <p>In attendance: Dr. Trey Duke, Sheri Arnette, Daniel Owens, Lisa Trail, Angela Fairchild, Maria Johnson, Ken Rocha, Don Bartch, Emily Spencer, Robin Newell, Maryam Hill, April Zavis, Kim Fischer, Beth Prater, Tyra Murray, Chris George, Amanda Adams, Cynthia Hopkins</p> <p>Assistant City Attorney Lauren Bush. City Liaison Bill Shacklett was absent.</p>	Chair Amanda Moore
<p>Pledge of Allegiance Procedural Item The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Ms. Robin Newell, Principal at Cason Lane PreK</p>	
<p>Moment of Silence Procedural Item</p>	
<p>APPROVAL OF AGENDA Action Item Motion to approve the agenda. This motion, made by Mr. Jimmy Richardson III and seconded by Ms. Barbara Long, passed. Yea: 6, Nay: 0, Absent: 1</p>	Chair Amanda Moore
<p>PUBLIC COMMENT Procedural Item</p>	Chair Amanda Moore
<p>CONSENT ITEMS Consent Agenda Motion to approve consent agenda. This motion, made by Mr. Butch Campbell and seconded by Mrs. Jeanette Price, passed. Yea: 6, Nay: 0, Absent: 1</p>	Chair Amanda Moore
<p>Approval of 4-7-26 Board Minutes Consent Item</p>	
<p>Approval of Purchase-Christopher Equipment Consent Item</p>	
<p>Second Reading of Board Policies Consent Item</p>	
<p>Approval of Board Policy 1.401-Public Participation in Board Meetings on Second Reading Consent Item</p>	
<p>ACTION ITEMS Action Item</p>	Chair Amanda Moore
<p>Approval of Contract-Benchmark Mulching Action Item Motion to approve Contract-Benchmark Mulching. This motion, made by Ms. Barbara Long and seconded by Ms. Karen Dodd, passed. Yea: 6, Nay: 0, Absent: 1</p>	Dr. Trey Duke
<p>Approval of Cooperative Purchasing Agreement-City Electric Supply Action Item</p>	Dr. Trey Duke

<p>Motion to approve Cooperative Purchasing Agreement–City Electric Supply. This motion, made by Mr. Jimmy Richardson III and seconded by Mrs. Jeanette Price, passed. Yea: 6, Nay: 0, Absent: 1</p>	
<p>Approval of Budget Amendment-FY26 GP Interfund Amendment Action Item Motion to approve Budget Amendment-FY26 GP Interfund Amendment. This motion, made by Ms. Barbara Long and seconded by Mr. Butch Campbell, passed. Yea: 6, Nay: 0, Absent: 1</p>	<p>Dr. Trey Duke</p>
<p>REPORTS AND INFORMATION Information Item</p>	<p>Chair Amanda Moore</p>
<p>Discussion of Federal Programs Budget Information Item 2026-2027 Federal Budgets Dr. Duke presented the proposed 2026-2027 Federal Budget to the Board. Federal Programs Coordinator, Dr. Maryam Hill, was present to address any questions from Board members. Dr. Duke reported that Congress has approved FY26 funding, which corresponds to the District’s FY27 allocation; therefore, no further federal action is required for the District to receive these funds. He noted a slight increase in funding for Title I and IDEA, while Title II, Title III, and Title IV remain level funded. Funds will be allocated to eight high-need schools. Dr. Duke also explained that the District currently operates two McKinney-Vento vans, with one driver funded through district set-aside funds and the other through general purpose funds. Dr. Duke reviewed Title II, Title III, IDEA Part B, and Pre-K budgets with the Board. He further noted that the final component of federal funding is the 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant. Ms. Hopkins reported that 381 students receive free tuition for the ESP program through this grant. Dr. Duke added that the District is currently in the fifth and final year of the grant and, due to uncertainty regarding its continuation, he will closely monitor any developments.</p>	<p>Dr. Trey Duke</p>
<p>Discussion of General Purpose Budget Information Item General Purpose Revenue Projections Dr. Duke reviewed the 2026-2027 revenue projections with the Board. He reported that projected state funding is approximately \$1.3 million less than the previous year. Dr. Duke stated that he will continue to monitor the proposed amendment to the hold harmless bill and may need to adjust the budget upon receipt of the next TISA estimate, particularly if the House version of the bill is adopted as final. Dr. Duke reviewed anticipated district donations, including the contribution from the City, which will remain at its current level after this contribution due to maintenance of effort requirements. He also asked that Board members express their appreciation to City Council members following approval of the increase in allocation. Dr. Duke reported that the District’s contribution to the Debt Service budget has increased by \$22 compared to the previous year, reflecting minimal change. He explained that this amount is associated with energy loan repayments and is calculated on a percentage basis. At the Board’s request from the April 7 meeting, Dr. Duke reviewed the Board’s budget line item to determine if any reductions could be made. He noted that the budget is already very tight, as Board members do not attend national conferences, with the primary expense being attendance at the TSBA Summer Law Conference in Gatlinburg. Following questions raised by the Board at the April 7 meeting, Dr. Duke reviewed the Differentiated Pay Plan, including potential options related to sixth grade positions. Board member Barbara Long inquired how many teachers would continue to receive the stipend if it remained in place. Dr. Duke estimated that approximately 12 current teachers</p>	<p>Dr. Trey Duke</p>

would be eligible. He noted that continuing the stipend may set a precedent, particularly as other positions may no longer qualify as hard-to-fill in the future. He also reminded the Board that the Differentiated Pay Plan is approved annually.

Board Chair Amanda Moore expressed concern regarding the accuracy of reporting to the state if the stipend continued. Board member Jimmy Richardson stated that maintaining the stipend could set a concerning precedent and lead to non-formula-based budgeting practices, emphasizing that the Differentiated Pay Plan is intended to address specific staffing needs. HR Director Maria Johnson reported that, in previous years, sixth grade teaching positions remained unfilled into July; however, she is currently seeing increased interest and is not experiencing the same level of difficulty filling those roles, indicating improvement in the teacher shortage.

Board member Karen Dodd expressed support for continuing the stipend, noting that teachers have come to expect it and suggesting it could naturally phase out over time as staff turnover occurs. The Board Vice Chair indicated support for maintaining the stipend for current sixth grade teachers as long as they remain in those roles.

Following discussion, Board Chair Amanda Moore asked Dr. Duke what direction he needed from the Board prior to budget approval on April 28. Dr. Duke stated that the Differentiated Pay Plan, as originally presented, would be included as an action item on the April 28 agenda, along with all four proposed options, allowing the Board to approve or amend as needed. Board member Barbara Long reiterated concern that any decision made would establish a precedent for future stipends and asked the Board to consider how similar stipends would be phased out for other positions, particularly those involving many employees. Board Chair Amanda Moore added that continuing a stipend for a position that is no longer hard to fill could be perceived as inconsistent.

Board member Jeanette Price suggested the possibility of implementing the stipend as a one-time measure with a clear phase-out timeline. Board member Karen Dodd asked whether formal communication had been provided to affected staff regarding stipends. Ms. Johnson indicated that communication had been informal. Dr. Duke stated that, moving forward, formal communication will be provided outlining stipend details and phase-out expectations.

Dr. Duke informed the Board that he will include an additional option for sixth grade positions that incorporates a phase-out after the 2026-2027 school year. He further stated that he will work with Human Resources to implement improved communication practices, including annual notifications to affected staff and inclusion of stipend and phase-out information in teacher contracts.

Dr. Duke recapped the previous week's budget meeting, noting that the proposed reductions at that time would have required utilizing \$5.2 million from fund balance. He reported that he subsequently implemented additional cuts which were presented to the Board, including the elimination of the 10th pay lane for classified staff. This adjustment reduced the fund balance usage to \$4.8 million. He further explained that, despite the removal of the 10th pay lane, classified staff would still receive a minimum 2% salary increase, with longevity pay applied in addition, and some employees receiving up to a 4.33% increase. This specific reduction accounted for approximately \$280,000. Dr. Duke also informed the Board that salary charts for the 2026-2027 school year will be presented for approval at the April 28 Board meeting.

Dr. Duke reviewed proposed changes to the certified staff salary scale, emphasizing that communication to staff would clearly indicate a total increase of 3.3%, inclusive of step increases with the dynamic raise. He noted that should the Board choose to do so, implementing a flat 2% raise across the board would result in an additional cost of approximately \$90,000. Board members expressed general support for the 3.3% dynamic raise as a reasonable approach.

Following the additional budget adjustments made after the April 7 meeting, Dr. Duke reported that the projected use of fund balance has been reduced to \$4.5 million, which he indicated is a more sustainable level. He also highlighted that overall expenditures are increasing by less than

\$1 million, while the cost of salary increases totals approximately \$1.8 million, reflecting significant fiscal efficiency.

Dr. Duke concluded by reviewing the impact on fund balance, stating that maintaining an unassigned fund balance of approximately \$20 million places the district in a stronger financial position that should sustain us through 2030.

Board Chair Amanda Moore said that several members of the Board received an email today asking about attendance secretary pay. We have 13 attendance secretaries in the district. They were hoping to see an increase in pay that would reflect the additional duties over the past few years that the state has added to their job to help with school funding. Dr. Duke had prepared a chart showing their hourly pay in 2024-2025, the 11% increase that they received in 2025-2026, and a chart showing what it would take to get them to bookkeeper pay in 2026-2027. He explained that attendance secretaries are compensated at less than a bookkeeper, but more than an EA. He told the Board that they work a total of 210 days, which is the same number of days as the principal. Bookkeepers work a total of 220 days. He noted that there was discussion last year during the original proposal of the budget process to move attendance secretaries to bookkeeper pay, but after realizing the restrictions to that budget, the Board settled on an 11% pay increase, while the rest of the district received a 2% increase.

Dr. Duke explained that, if the Board chose to move attendance secretaries to the bookkeeper pay scale during an already tight budget year, some employees would receive increases of approximately 20-25% while maintaining their current 210-day work schedule. He noted that 8 of the 13 attendance secretaries are currently at the top of their pay range and that the total cost of such an adjustment would be approximately \$102,000.

The Board discussed prior budget conversations, with Board Member Barbara Long recalling that while there had been discussion about potentially increasing pay for attendance secretaries, no commitments were made. She also emphasized the critical role attendance plays in securing district funding.

Dr. Duke reminded the Board of the upcoming implementation of a new Student Information System but urged consideration of the district's financial limitations. He cautioned against approving significant increases for one group while recent budget reductions included the elimination of the 10th pay lane, impacting approximately 300 employees.

Assistant Superintendent of Student Services Ken Rocha shared feedback from attendance secretaries, noting a slight increase in turnover, with some employees moving into bookkeeper or educational assistant positions, and others considering leaving the role altogether.

Dr. Duke further clarified that bookkeepers operate under an additional level of accountability, as their work is subject to external audits with publicly released reports.

Board Vice Chair Butch Campbell suggested considering a one-time bonus for attendance secretaries, with the possibility of revisiting an hourly increase in the future. Assistant City Attorney Lauren Bush encouraged the Board to carefully consider how a significant raise could be justified in a tight budget year, particularly in response to a late request.

Dr. Duke offered an alternative recommendation of a percentage-based salary increase for attendance secretaries in lieu of a bonus. Board Member Karen Dodd supported providing an increase, but not to the level of bookkeeper pay, suggesting that approximately \$50,000 be distributed proportionally among attendance secretaries. Dr. Duke noted that bringing an attendance secretary with nine years of experience to bookkeeper's pay would require an increase of approximately 25%, but a capped increase—such as up to 10%—could be considered, particularly beginning at year four of experience.

Board Chair Amanda Moore acknowledged the distinction between the roles of attendance secretaries and bookkeepers, including the higher level of financial accountability required of bookkeepers. She also recognized the evolving responsibilities of attendance secretaries and suggested considering an increase that reflects those added duties, rather than aligning pay fully with bookkeepers.

<p>The Board expressed general support for a percentage-based increase and the possibility of revisiting the issue in a future year with greater financial flexibility. Board Member Jimmy Richardson stated that he did not believe this was the appropriate year to implement such changes.</p> <p>Mr. Owens shared a neutral perspective, noting his respect for bookkeepers and cautioning against setting a precedent based on a vocal group. He recommended that the Board seek input from principals, who work closely with both attendance secretaries and bookkeepers, to inform future decisions.</p> <p>Board Chair Moore agreed that the request came late in the budget process and expressed interest in reviewing prior discussions to ensure clarity and avoid unintended commitments in future budget sessions.</p> <p>Dr. Duke summarized the discussion and asked whether the Board wished him to include both the continuation of 6th grade funding for one additional year and potential options for attendance secretary salary adjustments in the upcoming budget proposal. He explained that these items could be presented for separate consideration. Board Chair Moore indicated that, following individual discussions with Board members, if there was no support for these items, they would not be included on the April 28 agenda.</p> <p>Dr. Duke stated that he would work with Daniel Owens and Beth Prater to develop multiple budget scenarios, including the impact on fund balance, and would communicate these options to Board members prior to the April 28 meeting. Board Member Jeanette Price requested that each option clearly reflect its impact on fund balance.</p> <p>Dr. Duke concluded that, in the April 28 budget presentation, he would emphasize that this budget year focuses on maintaining current resources rather than adding new expenditures. Maria Johnson noted that information regarding hard-to-fill positions is available to employees through the State Department of Education website.</p> <p>To conclude the budget discussion, Dr. Duke reviewed each line of the budget, explaining the changes, and also presented the staffing standards document, outlining the distribution of positions across the district.</p> <p>Board Chair Amanda Moore thanked the Board for a robust and spirited discussion.</p>	
<p>Director's Update Information Item</p> <p>Dr. Duke informed the Board that second grade testing has begun across the District, with testing for grades three through six scheduled to begin on Monday, April 20. Make-up testing will continue through May 4.</p> <p>Lisa Trail invited Board members to attend the Volunteer Luncheon on Wednesday, April 22, at 12:00 p.m. at the Maintenance/Transportation Building, located at 910 Ridgely Road. She also requested that Board members notify her of any spring events they plan to attend so that appropriate preparations can be made.</p>	<p>Dr. Trey Duke</p>
<p>OTHER BUSINESS Information Item</p>	<p>Chair Amanda Moore</p>
<p>ADJOURNMENT Action Item</p> <p>Motion to adjourn. This motion, made by Mr. Jimmy Richardson III and seconded by Ms. Barbara Long, passed.</p> <p>Yea: 6, Nay: 0, Absent: 1</p> <p>The meeting adjourned at 6:56 p.m.</p>	<p>Chair Amanda Moore</p>

Director of Schools