

NORTHFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS **School Board Minutes**

January 12, 2026
District Office Board Room

1. Call to Order

School Board Chair Claudia Gonzalez-George called the regular meeting of the Board of Education of Independent School District No. 659 to order at 6:35 p.m. Present: Butler, Epstein, Goerwitz, Gonzalez-George, Miller, Nelson, and Quinnell. Absent: None. This meeting was open to the public, live-streamed and recorded, and access to the recording was posted on the school district website. *Note: There was an equipment malfunction that prevented the meeting from being video-streamed and recorded. The audio of the meeting is available on the district's website. The district apologizes for this inconvenience.*

2. Agenda Approval/Table File

On a motion by Quinnell, seconded by Epstein, the board unanimously approved the agenda.

3. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

4. Announcements and Recognitions

- Evelyn Bauer and Isaac Schleif were named Northfield High School's 2025–2026 Triple 'A' Award winners. Evelyn and Isaac will now advance to compete with other Region 1AA school winners for the opportunity to be selected as regional representatives. The Academics, Arts, and Athletics (Triple 'A') Award is sponsored by the Minnesota State High School League and honors high school seniors across the state who maintain a 3.0 or higher GPA while participating in league-sponsored athletic and fine arts activities.
- Northfield High School juniors Bella Christopherson and Ben Heinritz were selected as 2025 MSHSL ExCEL Award recipients. Bella and Ben stood out in a highly competitive field through their outstanding achievements in athletics and the fine arts, their meaningful volunteer contributions, and their exemplary leadership. The ExCEL Award — Excellence in Community, Education and Leadership — is a distinctive recognition program created exclusively for Minnesota high school juniors who are actively involved in school activities, demonstrate strong leadership, and show a deep commitment to community service.
- Bridgewater Elementary Principal Nancy Antoine was named the recipient of the City of Northfield's 2026 Human Rights Award. Ms. Antoine was selected for this award for her dedication to advancing educational equity and justice for all students, as well as her leadership, mentorship of future leaders, and her direct work to diminish persistent educational gaps within the Northfield Public Schools community. She will be honored during the City's Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration on Monday, Jan. 19 at 6:00 p.m. at Northfield High School.
- Eighty (80) high school students gathered at Carleton's Weitz Center on Dec. 11 for the 10th Youth Data Summit. Five Northfield students led this year's summit, welcoming peers from Faribault, WEM, and TCU to dive into Rice County's 2025 MnStudent Survey results. Our student leaders facilitated meaningful conversations, built connections across districts, and helped everyone learn more about their communities. The proposals the students developed will help shape real decisions that affect real students.
- The Northfield Fine Arts Booster held a fundraiser on Saturday, Jan. 10 at the Armory Square Event Center featuring Northfield musicians. Board Member Goerwitz commended musician and district staff member Ray Coudret and all those involved in the event.

5. Items for Discussion and Reports

- a. Financial Forecast and Revised 2025-2026 General Fund Budget. Director of Finance Val Mertesdorf reviewed the recommended revisions to the 2025-2026 general fund budget. The general fund budget revision accounted for legislative impacts, final audited data, settled contracts, and benefits.
- b. Stadium Naming Rights Contract. As outlined in Policy 809.1, the district requested proposals for stadium naming rights for Memorial Field. Proposals were due by Dec. 1, 2025, with a minimum bid of \$12,000 annually. Heritage Bank was the high bidder at \$18,000 annually for ten years. The field will be named

Heritage Bank Stadium at Memorial Field. This will be an item for individual action at the Jan. 26 board meeting.

- c. Special Services FTE Request. Director of Special Services Sara Pratt requested to add one Special Educational Assistant/Personal Care Assistant at Bridgewater Elementary for 6.75 hours per day and one Special Education Assistant/Personal Care Assistant at Spring Creek Elementary for 3.375 hours per day due to new and current students with significant needs who require ongoing safety support and intensive services as outlined in their Individual Education Program (IEP) plans. The total projected net cost of salary and benefits for both positions after approximately 55% of the salaries are reimbursed through special education revenue is \$23,308.

On a motion by Miller, seconded by Quinnell, the board unanimously agreed to add the special services FTE request as an item for individual action.

6. Committee Reports

- a. Communications Advisory Committee. Board Member Maggie Epstein provided an update on the Communications Advisory Committee.
- b. Automotive and Transportation CTE Committee. Board Member Jenny Nelson provided an update on the Automotive and Transportation CTE Committee.
- c. Facilities Advisory Committee. Board Member Amy Goerwitz provided an update on the Facilities Advisory Committee.

7. Consent Agenda

On a motion by Epstein, seconded by Nelson, the board unanimously approved the consent agenda.

- a. Minutes. Minutes of the regular school board meeting held on Dec. 8, 2025 and the special school board meeting held on Dec. 15, 2025.
- b. Gift Agreements. Gift agreements were included in the board packet.
- c. Overnight Field Trip Request. ALC teacher Eric Swan McDonald requested permission to take seven students to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness June 15-18, 2026 to camp at the Sawbill Outfitter National Forest campground.
- d. Personnel Items.
 - i. Appointments
 - 1. Joshua Anderson, 1.0 FTE Long-Term Substitute Special Education Teacher at Bridgewater effective 1/5/2026-6/10/2026. BA, Step 2.
 - 2. Katherine LaCanne, Instructor Lead for Community Education/Recreation effective 3/9/2026-5/31/2026. Step 3, \$16.64/hr.
 - 3. Joanna McLees, .594 FTE Long-Term Substitute Early Childhood Education Teacher at the NCEC effective 1/5/2026-3/5/2026. MA, Step 2.
 - 4. Theodore Miller, KidVentures Student Site Assistant up to 15 hours/week at Greenvale Park beginning 12/29/2025. Step 1, \$16.45/hr.
 - 5. Ella Palmquist, .568 FTE Long-Term Substitute Early Childhood Special Education Teacher effective 12/18/2025-2/6/2026. Licensed substitute rate of pay.
 - 6. Jon Rieber Paulson, Ski Club Chaperone for Community Education/Recreation effective 1/5/2026-5/31/2026. \$500 stipend.
 - 7. Stephanie Petersen, Special Education EA/PCA at Greenvale Park for 6.75 hours/day beginning 1/20/2026. Special Education, Step 1 - \$21.86/hr.
 - 8. Maia Richardson, Instructor Lead for Community Education/Recreation effective 2/7/2026-5/31/2026. Step 2, \$16.37/hr.
 - 9. Stacy Sandquist, Special Education EA/PCA at Spring Creek for 7.83 hours/day effective 1/27/2026. Special Education, Step 3 - \$22.73/hr. General Education, Step 3 - \$20.66/hr.
 - 10. Ruby Spector, Community School Club Leader at the Middle School for up to 8 hours/week effective 1/12/2026-5/14/2026. Step 1, \$20.31/hr.

11. Beau Lepper, 1.0 FTE Long-Term Substitute at Bridgewater effective 1/9/2026-2/24/2026. Daily licensed substitute rate of pay.
12. Joseph Udelhofen, Event Worker at the High School beginning 1/12/2026. \$45/77 event(s).

ii. Increase/Decrease/Changes in Assignment

1. Shane Baier, Interim Principal at Bridgewater as needed, change to .75 FTE Instructional Systems: MTSS Coach for the District effective 1/5/2026-6/30/2026. MA40, Step 10.
2. Sean DuBe, .4 FTE English Teacher and .6 FTE Dean of Students at the High School, change to 1.0 FTE Dean of Students effective 1/26/2026.
3. Becky Gainey, Retired Teacher, change to Winter Screening Proctor for the District for up to 40 hours effective 1/5/2026-1/22/2026. Licensed substitute rate of pay.
4. Gail Kohl, Licensed Substitute Teacher for the District, change to Winter Screening Proctor for the District for up to 40 hours effective 1/5/2026-1/22/2026. Licensed substitute rate of pay.
5. Hope Langston, Interim Principal at Bridgewater, change to Winter Screening Proctor for the District for up to 40 hours effective 1/5/2026-1/22/2026. Licensed substitute rate of pay.
6. Hope Langston, Winter Screening Proctor for the District, add .25 FTE Instructional Systems: Data Coach effective 1/5/2026-6/30/2026. MA40, Step 10.
7. Connie Nelson, Retired Teacher, change to SWARM Assessor for the District for up to 40 hours effective 1/5/2026-1/22/2026. Licensed substitute rate of pay.
8. Nicole Papke, .5 FTE Title I Teacher at Greenvale Park, change to 1.0 FTE effective 1/5/2026-1/22/2026.
9. Anya Rene, Early Ventures Teacher for up to 40 hours/week at the NCEC, change to on-call, as needed effective 1/12/2026.
10. Deborah Russell, Teacher at Spring Creek, add Speech Judge as needed effective 1/12/2026. \$100/event.
11. Victoria Swedin, General Education EA for 5.75 hours/week, change to 6 hours/week effective 1/5/2026.
12. Gina Swenson, 1.0 FTE Teacher at Greenvale Park, add Community School Licensed Teacher up to 8 hours/week effective 1/5/2026-5/14/2026. \$40/hr.
13. Madison Warner, Long-Term Substitute Special Education Teacher at Bridgewater, change to Early Ventures Teacher for up to 40 hours/week at the NCEC effective 1/5/2026. Step 1, \$20.03/hr.
14. Sarah Wolfe, General Education EA for 9 hours/week, change to 13 hours/week effective 1/5/2026.
15. Paul Bernhard, .8 FTE Assistant Alpine Ski Coach at the High School, change to 1.0 FTE effective 11/17/2025.
16. Amelia Brandt, Kid Ventures Site Assistant for 21 hrs/week at Bridgewater, change to up to 28.5 hrs/week effective 1/12/2026.
17. Michael Shaeffer, .1 FTE English Teacher and Special Education EA/PCA at the High School, change to .3 FTE English Teacher and Special Education EA/PCA effective 1/26/2026-6/10/2026.
18. Victoria Swedin, ECFE EA for 6 hrs/week at the NCEC, change to 7.75 hrs/week effective 1/9/2026.
19. Karl Viesselman, 1.0 FTE Assistant Track & Field Coach, change to .5 FTE effective 3/9/2026.

iii. Leave of Absences

1. Nancy Fox, Teacher at Spring Creek, FMLA leave of absence beginning 1/5/2026 and continuing on an intermittent basis for up to 60 work days.
2. Brenda Hand, EL Specialist at Bridgewater, FMLA leave of absence beginning 1/5/2026 and continuing through 2/24/2026.
3. Craig Johnson, Teacher at the High School, FMLA leave of absence beginning 1/28/2026 and continuing through approximately 4/22/2026.
4. Meghan Karsky, Speech & Language Pathologist at the NCEC, FMLA leave of absence beginning approximately 6/4/2026 and continuing through 10/19/2026.
5. Brenda Lau Toilolo, CNA I at the High School, leave of absence beginning 12/1/2025 and continuing through 1/13/2026.
6. Sophia Ranslow, Special Education EA/PCA at Greenvale Park, extend leave of absence through the end of the 25-26 school year.

iv. Retirements/Resignations/Terminations

1. Amy Allin, Teacher at the Middle School, retirement effective at the end of the 25-26 school year.
2. Carrie Duba, Instructional Services Systems Specialist for the District, resignation effective 1/15/2026.
3. Peter Freeman, KidVentures Site Assistant at Greenvale Park, termination effective 12/19/2025.
4. Sara Pratt, Director of Special Services for the District, retirement effective 6/30/2026.
5. Natalie Amy, Head Girls Golf Coach at the Middle School, resignation effective 1/8/2026.
6. Kathleen Beck, Substitute Educational Assistant for the District, resignation effective 1/12/2026.
7. Jasmine Celis, Kid Ventures Site Assistant at Spring Creek, resignation effective 1/19/2026.
8. Stacy Sandquist, EA at Spring Creek, declined offer of employment effective 1/8/2026.
9. Fabiola Valbuena, Custodian at the High School, resignation effective 1/7/2026.

8. Items for Individual Action

- a. Fiscal Year 2025-2026 General Fund Budget Revision. On a motion by Butler, seconded by Goerwitz, the board unanimously approved the revisions to the FY25 general fund budget as presented. The adopted

general fund revenue and expenditure budget for FY25 was \$69,163,802 and \$67,854,324, respectively. The recommended revised budget for FY25 includes revenues of \$70,171,484 and expenditures of \$68,208,704. The major factors contributing to these changes were the final audited data from FY25, updated enrollment estimates, finalized employment agreements, and benefits.

- b. Policy Committee Recommendations. On a motion by Goerwitz, seconded by Epstein, the board unanimously approved the policy committee's recommended updates to policies 203, 306, 519, 712, and 722.
- c. Special Services FTE Request. On a motion by Miller, seconded by Butler, the board unanimously approved the request to add one Special Educational Assistant/Personal Care Assistant at Bridgewater Elementary for 6.75 hours per day and one Special Education Assistant/Personal Care Assistant at Spring Creek Elementary for 3.375 hours per day.

9. Items for Information

- a. Enrollment Report. Superintendent Hillmann reviewed the January 2026 enrollment report.
- b. Construction Update No. 21. Superintendent Hillmann provided an update on the NHS construction project.

10. Future Meetings

- a. Monday, January 26, 2026, 6:00 p.m., Regular Board Meeting, Northfield DO Boardroom
- b. Thursday, January 29, 2026, 5:00 p.m., Board Work Session, Northfield DO Boardroom (Topic: Later School Start Times)
- c. Monday, February 9, 2026, 6:00 p.m., Regular Board Meeting, Northfield DO Boardroom
- d. Monday, February 23, 2026, 6:00 p.m., Regular Board Meeting, Northfield DO Boardroom

11. Adjournment

On a motion by Quinnell, seconded by Epstein, the board unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 7:49 p.m.



Maggie Epstein
School Board Clerk