

# NORTHFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## School Board Minutes

February 9, 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 6:00 p.m. Present: Butler, Goerwitz, Gonzalez-George, and Quinnell. Absent: Epstein, Miller, and Nelson. This meeting was open to the public, live-streamed and recorded, and access to the recording was posted on the school district website.

2. Agenda Approval/Table File

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

3. Public Comment

There was one public comment.

4. Announcements and Recognitions

- Hand in Hand Preschool, Early Ventures Learning Center, and Early Childhood Family Education will hold an open house on Thursday, February 26 at the Northfield Community Education Center. From 5:45-7:15 p.m., families can tour the building, see classrooms and meet staff. Fall registration for new families begins on March 5.
- On January 21, Greenvale Park staff held an All School Read event. Students in all classrooms read the book, *Lubna and Pebble*, by Wendy Meddour. The award-winning book has a powerful message of friendship, kindness, courage, loss, displacement, immigration, and emotional resilience. Classrooms then partnered with cross-grade Buddy Classrooms to decorate rocks with a connection to the powerful messages in the story. These are on display for conferences as an art installation in the display case. The Greenvale Park PTO supported books for the school event. The concept of the All School Read was learned from Prairie Creek staff. The All School Read was organized by Greenvale Park teachers who participated in the Open Windows Books Cohort Workshop. Teachers include Kimbra Dimick, Betsy McLaughlin, Pam Charlton and Kate Carlson.
- Congratulations to Bode Bulfer, Tommy Cahoon, and Maddie Loritz, who have qualified for the Alpine Ski State Tournament at Giants Ridge on Tuesday, Feb. 10.
- Congratulations to the following athletes for qualifying for the Nordic Ski State Tournament at Giants Ridge Feb. 11-12: Andy Amundson, Max Beckman, Thisbe Jothen, Anne Demas, Makayah Petricka, Allia Doherty, Eliza O'Cooper, Karmen Jagiela, and Mackenzie McQuiston. Alternates are Eva Damm and Mariana Cruz.
- Northfield Middle School was recently recognized by the Minnesota Department of Education for excelling in academic performance and making significant strides in closing achievement gaps. NMS was one of eight schools in Minnesota to receive this honor and only one of four schools to receive recognition in both categories: Exemplary High Performing School and Exemplary Closing the Gaps School. The program was previously the National Blue Ribbon School program, however the U.S. Department of Education ended the program in August. Very few schools receive this award, and even fewer earn recognition in both categories. This honor reflects the dedication of our staff, the hard work of our students, and the support of our families and community.

5. Items for Discussion and Reports

- a. Prairie Creek Community School and Arcadia Charter School Annual Reports. Simon Tyler, Director of Prairie Creek Community School, and Laura Stelter, Director of Arcadia Charter School, reported on the programming at their two charter schools. Prairie Creek is in its 23rd year of operation as a charter school and Arcadia is in its 22nd year of operation under the sponsorship of Northfield Public Schools. These reviews and written reports fulfilled state requirements for annual reporting as well as our district's request that each charter school authorized by Northfield Public Schools present an annual report to the school board.
- b. Prairie Creek and Arcadia Site Visits. Superintendent Hillmann and ALC Director Daryl Kehler visited Prairie Creek Charter School on Dec. 9, 2025, and Arcadia Charter School on Jan. 30, 2026. Director Kehler provided a brief report regarding both visits.

- c. Indigenous (American Indian) Parent Meeting, Service Update, and Vote of Concurrence. Director Kehler shared the activities associated with improving services to Indigenous students and families. The American Indian Parent Advisory Committee (AIPAC) met on Oct. 8, 2025, Nov. 22, 2025, and Jan. 29, 2026. During the Jan. 29, 2026 meeting, the committee held a vote of concurrence to approve the 2025-2026 American Indian Education Aid Program results and develop the program's 2026-2027 goals.
- d. Financial Forecast Follow Up.
  - i. Board Renewal of Operating Levy Timeline. Director of Finance Val Mertesdorf and Superintendent Hillmann presented a timeline for board renewal of the 2017 operating levy as part of the FY27 budgeting process. Board renewal of an operating levy, using the same conditions as originally approved by the voters, is permitted by Minnesota Statute 126C.17.
  - ii. Potential Budget Restorations. Director Mertesdorf and Superintendent Hillmann discussed the potential of restoring targeted items identified in the 2025 priority based budget reduction process due to the stabilized financial forecast.
- e. Proposed 2026-2027 Operating Capital and Long-Term Facilities Maintenance Budget. Director Mertesdorf presented the 2026-2027 Operating Capital Budget and Long-Term Facilities Maintenance Plan. The board will be asked to adopt the budget at the Feb. 23, 2026 board meeting.
- f. Long-Term Facilities Maintenance Ten Year and Indoor Air Quality Management Plan. Director Mertesdorf reviewed the Long-Term Facilities Maintenance ten year revenue and expenditure plan. She also reviewed the indoor air quality management plan. The board will be asked to approve the ten year plan, including the air quality management component, at the Feb. 23, 2026 board meeting. The approved plans must be submitted to the Department of Education.
- g. Policy Committee Recommendations. Superintendent Hillmann presented the policy committee's recommended changes to policies 410.1, 426, 502, 527, and 528. This will be an item for individual action at the Feb. 23, 2026 board meeting.

6. Consent Agenda

On a motion by Goerwitz, seconded by Butler, the board unanimously approved the consent agenda.

- a. Minutes. Minutes of the regular school board meeting held on Jan. 26, 2026.
- b. Gift Agreements. Gift agreements were included in the board packet.
- c. Financial Reports.
  - i. Financial Reports - July 2025. Director Mertesdorf requested the board approve paid bills totaling \$4,336,657.52, payroll checks totaling \$3,425,210.78, bond payments in the amount of \$729,429.38, a wire transfer totaling \$300,000.00 from Frandsen General to Frandsen Sweep, a wire transfer totaling \$350,000.00 from Frandsen Sweep to Frandsen General, and the financial reports for July 2025. At the end of July 2025, total cash and investments amounted to \$70,579,908.52.
  - ii. Financial Reports - August 2025. Director Mertesdorf requested the board approve paid bills totaling \$2,466,582.47, payroll checks totaling \$3,489,978.29, a wire transfer totaling \$450,000.00 from Frandsen General to Frandsen Sweep, a wire transfer totaling \$100,000.00 from Frandsen Sweep to Frandsen General, and the financial reports for August 2025. No bond payments were paid in August. At the end of August 2025, total cash and investments amounted to \$71,060,474.35.
  - iii. Financial Reports - September 2025. Director Mertesdorf requested the board approve paid bills totaling \$2,877,668.38, payroll checks totaling \$3,664,133.11, a wire transfer totaling \$250,000.00 from Frandsen General to Frandsen Sweep, a wire transfer totaling \$150,000.00 from Frandsen Sweep to Frandsen General, and the financial reports for September 2025. No bond payments were paid in September. At the end of September 2025, total cash and investments amounted to \$70,813,565.57.
- d. Personnel Items.
  - i. Appointments

1. Kari Adelman, Long-Term Substitute Special Education EA/PCA for 6.5 hrs/day plus .25 hrs/day supervisory at Spring Creek effective 2/2/2026-4/3/2026. General Ed - Step 4, \$21.44/hr. Special Ed - Step 4, \$23.51/hr.
  2. Jennifer Bowens, Special Education EA/PCA for 6.75 hrs/day at the Middle School beginning 2/2/2026. Step 4, \$23.51/hr.
  3. Alaia Douah, Instructor Assistant for Community Education/Recreation effective 2/7/2026-5/31/2026. Step 2, \$15.29/hr.
  4. Barry Hayes, .3 FTE Assistant Girls Golf Coach at the High School beginning 3/16/2026. 1,357.20 stipend.
  5. Kristin Johnson, 1.0 FTE Long-Term Substitute EL Teacher at Greenvale Park effective 2/9/2026-4/17/2026. MA, Step 10.
  6. Steve Mathre, .5 FTE Assistant Track & Field Coach at the High School beginning 3/9/2026. \$2,832,50 stipend.
  7. Zachariah Simmons, Instructor Lead for Community Education/Recreation effective 2/7/2026-5/31/2026. Step 6, \$17.45/hr.
  8. Natalia Trevino-Avila, Assistant Girls Lacrosse Coach at the High School beginning 3/30/2026. \$4,524 stipend.
- ii. Increase/Decrease/Changes in Assignment
1. Shari Bridley, General Education EA for 17.5 hrs/week at the NCEC, add Special Education EA for 15.5 hrs/week for a total of 33 hrs/week effective 2/2/2026-6/10/2026.
  2. Kahlil Brown, Community School Club Leader at the Middle School, add Instructor Assistant & Instructor Lead for Community Education/Recreation effective 2/7/2026-5/31/2026. Instructor Assistant Step 4, \$15.83/hr. Instructor Lead Step 4, \$16.91/hr.
  3. Tammy McDonough, Substitute Teacher for the District, change to 1.0 FTE LTS Science Teacher at the High School effective 1/28/2026-2/13/2026.
  4. Gabriela Nieves, Early Childhood Outreach Specialist for 40 hrs/week at the NCEC, change to 36.5 hrs/week effective 2/2/2026.
  5. David Pennock, KidVentures Site Assistant for 7.5 hrs/week at Greenvale Park, change to Substitute KidVentures Site Assistant on call, as needed effective 1/30/2026.
  6. Zachariah Simmons, Instructor Lead for Community Education/Recreation, add Instructor Assistant effective 2/7/2026-5/31/2026. \$16.37/hr.
  7. Michele Cruz, CNA I at the Middle School, add Special Education EA/PCA - Bus Duty for 5.83 hours/week at Spring Creek effective 2/9/2026-6/10/2026.
  8. Christine Peterson, Special Education Teacher at the High School, add Homebound Instruction for up to 7 hours/week effective 2/23/2026-3/27/2026.
- iii. Leave of Absences
1. Margaret Christensen, CNA I at Bridgewater, leave of absence beginning 1/9/2026 through 2/13/2026.
  2. Peter Weeks, Teacher at the High School, FMLA Leave of Absence beginning approximately 5/8/2026 and continuing for up to 10 work days.
  3. Amanda Schrader, EL Specialist at Spring Creek, FMLA Leave of Absence beginning 4/29/2026 and continuing through 5/20/2026.
- iv. Retirements/Resignations/Terminations
1. Vicky Chlan, Teacher at the High School, retirement effective 6/10/2026.
  2. Ethan Freier, Teacher at the Middle School, retirement effective 6/10/2026.
  3. Ann Jerdee, Teacher at the Middle School, resignation effective 1/21/2026.
  4. Michelle Sonnega, Teacher at the High School, retirement effective 6/10/2026.
  5. Updated: Tammy Iszler-Johnson, Occupational Therapist, resignation effective 9/22/2025.
  6. Randy Blood Jr., Custodian at Greenvale Park, termination effective 2/9/2026.
  7. Karrie Vogel, Substitute EA for the District, resignation effective 2/5/2026.
  8. Dan Warner, Head Custodian at Spring Creek, retirement effective 2/28/2026.
  9. Tania Will, Principal at Spring Creek, retirement effective 6/30/2026.

## 7. Items for Individual Action

- a. Resolution Requiring Administration to Make Recommendations Regarding Programming and Staffing for Next Year. On a motion by Butler, seconded by Goerwitz, the board unanimously authorized the administration to make recommendations for additions and reductions in programs and for adding or discontinuing positions. On a roll call vote, voting 'yes' were Butler, Goerwitz, Quinnell, and Gonzalez-George. No one voted 'no'.
- b. Board Committee Assignments. On a motion by Quinnell, seconded by Butler the board unanimously approved board member committee appointments and representation to various organizations and school liaisons for calendar year 2026.

- c. Policy Committee Recommendations. On a motion by Gonzalez-George, seconded by Goerwitz, the board unanimously approved the policy committee's recommended updates to policies 443, 505, 507, and 520.1.

8. Items for Information

- a. Later School Start Times Work Session Recap. Superintendent Hillmann gave a recap of the Jan. 29, 2026 later school start times work session.
- b. Enrollment Report. Superintendent Hillmann reviewed the February 2026 enrollment report.
- c. Construction Update No. 22. Superintendent Hillmann provided an update on the NHS construction project.

9. Future Meetings

- a. Monday, February 23, 2026, 6:00 p.m., Regular Board Meeting, Northfield DO Boardroom
- b. Monday, March 2, 2026, 6:00 p.m., District Committee Meetings, Northfield DO Gymnasium
- c. Monday, March 9, 2026, 6:00 p.m., Regular Board Meeting, Northfield DO Boardroom
- d. Thursday, March 19, 2026, 6:00-8:00 p.m., Operating Levy Renewal Public Hearing, ALC/DO Gymnasium
- e. Thursday, April 2, 2026, 5:00 p.m., Board Work Session, Northfield DO Boardroom  
(Topic: Later School Start Times)

10. Adjournment

On a motion by Quinnell, seconded by Butler, the board unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 8:23 p.m.



Maggie Epstein  
School Board Clerk