

NORTHFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

School Board Minutes

April 13, 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, 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.

2. Agenda Approval/Table File

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

3. Public Comment

There were two public comments.

4. Announcements and Recognitions

- Congratulations to Northfield High School's knowledge bowl teams, who competed in the state AAA meet last week, placing two teams in the top six. The Northfield "Gold" team won the state championship in Class AAA and the "Maroon" team finished sixth of 18 teams.
- The Northfield School District has been selected to receive the FY27 Grow Your Own - Adult Pathway grant. This grant is intended to continue the Northfield Teaching Fellows program that supports diversifying our teaching staff.
- After winning the championship at the state wrestling meet and earning her third state title, Caley Graber was named Ms. Minnesota Wrestler of the Year by the Minnesota Wrestling Coaches Association.
- Congratulations to the Northfield High School Boys Basketball team for placing fourth in the Class AAA State Tournament. Congratulations to Kayden Oakland for being named to the 2026 Class AAA Boys Basketball All-Tournament Team, and to Head Coach Matt Christensen, who was named Minnesota Basketball Coaches Association Class AAA Boys Basketball Coach of the Year.
- Congratulations to Northfield Middle School sixth grade choir students Ava Reisetter, Willa Rieland, Adele Holz, Ella Banon and Zoe Palm, who participated in the ACDA-MN- 4-5-6 Honor Choir, and to Northfield Middle School seventh and eighth grade choir students Colton Woodland, Robert Steed, Virginia Page, Damaria Hutchinson, Nora Flannery, Gabbie Buesgens, Noelle Berger, and Every Findlay, who participated in the ACDA-MN- 7-8 Honor Choir.
- A printed annual report will be mailed to all district residents and should arrive in mailboxes later this week or early next week.
- Join us for Arts à la Carte on Friday, April 17 from 5:30-9:00 p.m. at Northfield High School. Admission is \$5 per person and includes a variety of hands-on activities, student art displays, and more.
- Congratulations to NHS Raider Speech Team members Rylie Schock and Elizabeth McCormick, who qualified for the state speech tournament. Rylie will compete in Discussion, and Elizabeth will compete in Great Speeches.

5. Items for Discussion and Reports

- a. Proposed 2026-27 Child Nutrition Fund Budgets. Director of Child Nutrition Stephany Stromme presented the proposed 2026-27 Child Nutrition Fund Budget. This fund is used to record the finances used to provide nutrition services to students, including the preparation and service of milk, meals, and snacks in connection with school and community services activities. This will be an item for individual action at the May 11, 2026 meeting.
- b. Revised 2025-26 and Proposed 2026-27 Community Education Fund Budgets. Director of Community Education Erin Bailey presented a revised 2025-26 Community Education Budget and the proposed 2026-27 Community Education Budget. The 2026-27 proposed budget has been developed with input from each program coordinator and the Community Education Advisory Council. This will be an item for individual action at the May 11, 2026 meeting.

c. Financial Forecast Follow Up.

- i. Potential Budget Restorations. Superintendent Hillmann and Director of Finance Mertesdorf facilitated a discussion about the proposed budget restorations and administrative restructuring for the 2026-27 school year, which was presented at the April 6 special board meeting. This proposal will be an item for individual action at the April 27, 2026 regular board meeting.

On a motion by Goerwitz, seconded by Miller, the board unanimously approved amending the agenda by advancing Item 7.a to the next order of business.

- d. Review of Operating Levy Public Hearing Feedback. The board reviewed and discussed the feedback received at the March 19, 2026 public hearing about the board renewal of the 2017 operating levy. Board renewal of an operating levy, using the same conditions as originally approved by the voters, is permitted by Minnesota Statute 126C.17. This operating levy renewal will be an item for individual action at the April 27, 2026 regular board meeting.
- e. Raider Image Proposal Discussion. Superintendent Hillmann facilitated a discussion about the Raider images proposed by RALIE at the March 9, 2026 board meeting and the public feedback received so far. This proposal will be an item for individual action at the April 27, 2026 regular board meeting.
- f. Policy 802 Disposition of Obsolete Equipment and Material. Superintendent Hillmann presented proposed changes to Policy 802 to require advance payment before transferring obsolete equipment and material. This will be an item for individual action at the April 27, 2026, board meeting.
- g. Later School Start Times Discussion. The board reviewed the later school start times discussion timeline and evaluated next steps based on competing board priorities.

On a motion by Butler, seconded by Goerwitz, the board unanimously approved to extend the meeting past 9:00 p.m

6. 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 March 9, 2026 and the special school board meeting held April 6, 2026.
- b. Gift Agreements. Gift agreements included in the board packet.
- c. Grant Application. Community Education Director Erin Bailey requested board approval for a grant to relaunch evening and family programming at all Northfield Community School sites for \$8,000 for each year of the two-year grant from Rice County United Way for the time period July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2028.
- d. Overnight Field Trip Request. Business Professionals of America (BPA) Advisor Theresa Wilson requested board permission to take six students to Nashville, TN May 6-10, 2026 for the BPA National Leadership Conference and Competition.
- e. Financial Reports - December 2025. Director Mertesdorf requested the board approve paid bills totaling \$1,826,387.29, payroll checks totaling \$3,769,129.89, a wire transfer totaling \$350,000.00 from Frandsen General to Frandsen Sweep, a wire transfer totaling \$50,000.00 from Frandsen Sweep to Frandsen General, and the financial reports for December 2025. At the end of December 2025, total cash and investments amounted to \$74,575,850.65. No bond payments were paid in December.
- f. Personnel Items.
- i. Appointments
1. Ivy Ainsworth, AP Proctor at the High School beginning 5/1/2026-5/15/2026. Licensed substitute rate of pay.
 2. Ashley Benhart, 1.0 FTE Principal at Bridgewater beginning 7/1/2026. Step 4, \$172,971/year - Subject to change upon the settlement of the 2026-28 Northfield Principals Association Agreement.
 3. Douglas Bengtson, AP Proctor at the High School beginning 5/1/2026-5/15/2026. Licensed substitute rate of pay.

4. Nicholas Benson, 1.0 FTE Custodian at Greenvale Park beginning 3/19/2026. Step 1, \$21.76/hr. plus \$0.30/hr. Night Lead stipend.
 5. Shirley Bock, AP Proctor at the High School beginning 5/1/2026-5/15/2026. Licensed substitute rate of pay.
 6. Katherine Boyum-Hill, AP Proctor at the High School beginning 5/1/2026-5/15/2026. Licensed substitute rate of pay.
 7. Nicole Carel, 1.0 FTE Special Education Teacher for the District beginning 8/27/2026. MA, Step 6.
 8. Kathleen Clark, AP Proctor at the High School beginning 5/1/2026-5/15/2026. Licensed substitute rate of pay.
 9. Dylan Dietz, Assistant Boys Lacrosse Coach at the High School beginning 3/30/2026. \$3,000 stipend provided by the Northfield Booster Club.
 10. Jeffrey Eckhoff, AP Proctor at the High School beginning 5/1/2026-5/15/2026. Licensed substitute rate of pay.
 11. Jeanne Estrem, AP Proctor at the High School beginning 5/1/2026-5/15/2026. Licensed substitute rate of pay.
 12. Rosemary Fink, AP Proctor at the High School beginning 5/1/2026-5/15/2026. Licensed substitute rate of pay.
 13. Soren Floden, Instructor Lead for Community Education/Recreation beginning 4/11/2026-5/31/2026. Step 4, \$16.91/hr.
 14. Ruth Hoekstra, AP Proctor at the High School beginning 5/1/2026-5/15/2026. Licensed substitute rate of pay.
 15. Felicity Hohndorf, Special Education EA/PCA for 3.5 hours/day plus .5 hours/day supervisory beginning 4/14/2026-6/10/2026. Special Education, Step 1 - \$21.86/hr. General Education, Step 1 - \$19.79/hr.
 16. Noah Holt, Assistant Boys Lacrosse Coach at the High School beginning 4/13/2026. \$2,000 stipend provided by the Northfield Booster Club.
 17. Ava Kallop, Instructor Assistant for Community Education/Recreation beginning 4/6/2026-5/31/2026. Step 3, \$15.54/hr.
 18. Joshua Kerber, Instructor Lead for Community Education/Recreation beginning 4/11/2026-5/31/2026. Step 4, \$16.91/hr.
 19. Daniel Kust, 1.0 FTE Long-Term Substitute Grade 6 Science Teacher beginning 3/17/2026-4/15/2026. MA+10, Step 10.
 20. Roman Lozano, 1.0 FTE Special Education Teacher for the District beginning 8/27/2026. BA+40, Step 8.
 21. Carey Lynn, 1.0 FTE Special Education Teacher for the District beginning 8/27/2026. BA+30, Step 10.
 22. Alvaro Martinez Ramirez, 1.0 FTE Custodian at Spring Creek beginning 3/20/2026. Step 3, \$22.78/hr.
 23. Lynda Maus, AP Proctor at the High School beginning 5/1/2026-5/15/2026. Licensed substitute rate of pay.
 24. Rebecca Messer, AP Proctor at the High School beginning 5/1/2026-5/15/2026. Licensed substitute rate of pay.
 25. Ford Peterson, Instructor Lead for Community Education/Recreation beginning 4/11/2026-5/31/2026. Step 4, \$16.91/hr.
 26. Mikayla Sannes, 1.0 FTE Special Education Teacher for the District beginning 8/27/2026. MA, Step 7.
 27. Thomas Staples, Instructor Lead for Community Education/Recreation beginning 4/11/2026-5/31/2026. Step 4, \$16.91/hr.
 28. Richard Torres Jr., 1.0 FTE Principal at Spring Creek beginning 7/1/2026. Step 1, \$166,471/year - Subject to change upon the settlement of the 2026-28 Northfield Principals Association Agreement.
 29. Nancy Veverka, AP Proctor at the High School beginning 5/1/2026-5/15/2026. Licensed substitute rate of pay.
 30. Earl Weinmann, AP Proctor at the High School beginning 5/1/2026-5/15/2026. Licensed substitute rate of pay.
 31. Sarah Welander, 1.0 FTE Special Education Teacher for the District beginning 8/27/2026. MA, Step 9.
 32. Margaret Witt, 1.0 FTE Long-Term Substitute EL Teacher at Spring Creek beginning 4/29/2026-5/19/2026. MA, Step 10.
 33. Regina Zakrajsek, AP Proctor at the High School beginning 5/1/2026-5/15/2026. Licensed substitute rate of pay.
 34. Northfield Community Education Summer 2026 Brochure Instructors - See attached.
 35. Jade Olson, Special Education EA/PCA for 6.75 hours/day and General Education EA for .25 hours/day at the NCEC/Greenvale Park beginning 4/17/2026-6/10/2026. General Education - Step 4, \$21.44/hr. Special Education - Step 4, \$23.51/hr.
- ii. Increase/Decrease/Changes in Assignment
1. Mark Auge, Teacher at the High School, add Summer School Teacher for up to 50 hours/session at the ALC effective 6/15/2026-7/23/2026. Lane/step.
 2. Shane Baier, .75 FTE Instructional Systems Specialist for the District, change to Interim Principal at the High School effective 7/1/2026-6/30/2027.
 3. Michelle Bauer, K-12 Systems and Instructional Coach for the District, add Summer School Teacher for up to 50 hours/session at the ALC effective 6/15/2026-7/23/2026. Lane/step.
 4. Ashly Blatti, Long-Term Substitute Grade 1 Teacher at Bridgewater, change end date from 4/13/2026 to 6/10/2026.

5. Ashly Blatti, Teacher at Bridgewater, add Summer Targeted Services Teacher for 6.25 hours/day at Greenvale Park effective 6/17/2026-7/30/2026. \$40/hr.
6. Mairin Born, Teacher at Spring Creek, add Summer Targeted Services Teacher for 6.25 hours/day at Greenvale Park effective 6/17/2026-7/30/2026. \$40/hr.
7. Brittany Braucher, CNA II at the Middle School, add Summer Child Nutrition Associate for up to 5 hours/day at the Middle School effective 6/17/2026-7/30/2026. \$23.06/hr. - subject to change upon the settlement of the 2026-28 Child Nutrition Employees Agreement.
8. Caleb Davidson, Assistant Director of Special Services for the District, change to Director of Special Services for the District effective 7/1/2026.
9. Claudia Dreyer, .7 FTE Art Specialist at Spring Creek and ABE Teacher at the NCEC, change to ABE Teacher for up to 550 hours/year in addition to her current ABE hours effective 8/10/2026.
10. Rebekkah Flickinger, Teacher at Spring Creek, add Summer Targeted Services Teacher for 6.25 hours/day at the Greenvale Park effective 6/17/2026-7/30/2026. \$40/hr.
11. Brianna Grabinger, ECFE EA for 23.75 hours/week at the NCEC, change to 24.5 hours/week effective 4/6/2026.
12. Amanda Hallet, Community School Site Assistant for up to 8 hours/week at Bridgewater, add Community School Club Leader as assigned effective 3/30/2026-5/14/2026. Step 1, \$20.31/hr.
13. Mary Hotz Zenk, Teacher at the High School, add Summer Targeted Services Teacher for 6.25 hours/day at the Middle School effective 6/17/2026-7/30/2026. \$40/hr.
14. Ava Kallop, Instructor Assistant for Community Education/Recreation, add Lifeguard effective 4/11/2026-5/31/2026. \$16.10/hr.
15. Kristin Johnson, 1.0 FTE Long-Term Substitute EL Teacher at Greenvale Park, change to 1.0 FTE Long-Term Substitute Grade 3 Teacher effective 4/20/2026-5/21/2026. Lane/step.
16. Jill Lauritzen-Kohel, Teacher at the High School, add Summer School Teacher for up to 50 hours/session at the ALC effective 6/15/2026-7/23/2026. Lane/step.
17. Hildeliza Lopez, CNA II at the Middle School, add Summer Child Nutrition Associate for up to 5 hours/day at Greenvale Park effective 6/17/2026-7/30/2026. \$23.06/hr. - subject to change upon the settlement of the 2026-28 Child Nutrition Employees Agreement.
18. Updated: Vicki McKay, Child Nutrition Manager II at the Middle School, add Summer Child Nutrition Lead for up to 6 hours/day at Greenvale Park effective 6/17/2026-7/30/2026. \$27.71/hr. - subject to change upon the settlement of the 2026-28 Child Nutrition Employees Agreement.
19. Deborah Russell, Teacher at Spring Creek, add Summer Targeted Services Teacher for 6.25 hours/day at Greenvale Park effective 6/17/2026-7/30/2026. \$40/hr.
20. Darrell Sawyer, Teacher at the Middle School, add Summer School Teacher for up to 50 hours/session at the ALC effective 6/15/2026-7/23/2026. Lane/step.
21. Angela Schock, Teacher at the Middle School, add Summer Targeted Services Teacher for 6.25 hours/day at the Middle School effective 6/17/2026-7/30/2026. \$40/hr.
22. Eric Swan McDonald, Teacher at the ALC, add Summer School Teacher for up to 50 hours/session at the ALC effective 6/15/2026-7/23/2026. Lane/step.
23. Sarah Swan McDonald, Teacher at the High School, add Summer School Teacher for up to 50 hours/session at the ALC effective 6/15/2026-7/23/2026. Lane/step.
24. Victoria Swedin, ECFE EA/Sibling Care Provider for 7.75 hours/week at the NCEC, change to 6 hours/week effective 4/6/2026-5/15/2026.
25. Laura Talbot Peterson, Teacher at the Middle School, add Summer School Teacher for up to 50 hours/session at the ALC effective 6/15/2026-7/23/2026. Lane/step.
26. Ellen Trotman, Teacher at the Middle School, add Summer Targeted Services Substitute Teacher for 6.25 hours/day at the Middle School/Greenvale Park effective 7/13/2026-7/30/2026. \$40/hr.
27. Deborah Wagner, Building Supervisor for Community Education, add Site Supervisor as needed effective 3/28/2026-5/31/2026. \$17.97/hr.
28. Lisa Weis, Teacher at the Middle School, add Summer Targeted Services Teacher for 6.25 hours/day at the Middle School effective 6/17/2026-7/30/2026. \$40/hr.
29. Natalie Amy, Middle School Fitness Center Coach (3/5 stipend), change to Middle School Fitness Center Coach (2/5 stipend) effective 4/13/2026.
30. Rachael Langer, 1.0 FTE Long-Term Substitute Grade 7 Math Teacher at the Middle School, change to 1.0 FTE Grade 7 Math Teacher effective 8/27/2026.
31. Sarah Wolfe, ECFE EA for 13 hours/week at the NCEC, change to 16.75 hours/week effective 4/10/2026-5/15/2026.

iii. Leave of Absences

1. Pamela Bennowitz, EL Educational Assistant at Greenvale Park, leave of absence beginning 9/8/2026 and continuing through 1/1/2027.
2. Stacey Garry, Special Education EA at Spring Creek, extend leave of absence through 5/15/2026.
3. Kelly Johnson, Teacher at Greenvale Park, FMLA leave of absence beginning 4/12/2026 and continuing through 5/21/2026.
4. Jennifer Jones, Special Education Teacher at the Middle School, FMLA leave of absence beginning 4/28/2026 and continuing through 5/5/2026.

5. Ulrika Peterson, General Education EA at Spring Creek, leave of absence beginning 5/28/2026 and continuing through 6/10/2026.
 6. Heather Pudas, Special Education Teacher at Spring Creek, FMLA leave of absence beginning 5/14/2026 and continuing through 6/10/2026.
 7. Emily Shaft, Class III Office Specialist at Greenvale Park, FMLA leave of absence beginning approximately 9/15/2026 and continuing through 2/2/2027.
 8. Rebecca Glassing, K-12 Media Specialist for the District, FMLA leave of absence beginning 4/17/2026 and continuing through 5/29/2026.
- iv. Retirements/Resignations/Terminations
1. Diana Camargo, Educational Assistant at Greenvale Park and the NCEC, resignation effective 4/17/2026.
 2. Hannah Carlson, Educational Assistant at Spring Creek, resignation effective 6/10/2026.
 3. Christopher Dibble, Principal at the High School, resignation effective 6/30/2026.
 4. Claudia Dreyer, Art Specialist at Spring Creek, resignation effective 6/10/2026.
 5. Brandon Foster, Assistant Boys Lacrosse Coach, resignation effective 3/12/2026.
 6. Joseph Greenwood, Custodian Engineer at the High School, retirement effective 6/30/2026.
 7. Kimberly Medin, Special Education Teacher at Bridgewater, resignation effective 3/27/2026.
 8. Heather Rose, Teacher at the Middle School, resignation effective 3/23/2026.
 9. Lillian Tharp, Special Education Teacher at the NCEC, resignation effective 6/10/2026.
 10. Steven Kovach, Educational Assistant at the High School, resignation effective 6/10/2026.
 11. Ellen Mucha, Teacher at the High School, retirement effective 6/10/2026.
 12. Darrell Sawyer, Assistant Girls Basketball Coach, resignation effective 4/10/2026.
 13. Ann Schmidt, Child Nutrition Associate II/III at the High School, resignation effective 5/1/2026.
- v. District Administration recommended approval of the following employment agreements covering the period of July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2028:
1. Technology Employees
 2. Grounds, Maintenance, Electrical Employees
 3. Other Staff
 4. Building Nurses

7. Items for Individual Action

- a. Bids for NHS Reimagine Project. On a motion by Butler, seconded by Goerwitz, the board unanimously approved four trade package contracts for the NHS Reimagine Project at a total contract award of \$19,884,288.00 as follows:

Low Bid Contracts:

21A - Fire Suppression, Frontier Fire Protection Inc., in the amount of \$1,639,000.00

22B - Geothermal Wells, Midwest Mechanical Solutions, in the amount of \$4,796,000.00

Best Value Contracts:

8B - Aluminum Systems and Glazing, Envision Glass, Inc., in the amount of \$3,229,288.00

26A - Electrical, Laketown Electric Corporation, in the amount of \$10,220,000.00
- b. Sale of District Property Contract Cancellation. On a motion by Miller, seconded by Quinnell, the board unanimously approved the cancellation of the contract with Lance and Megan Manty for the purchase of district property parcel #17.11.3.75.021, located in Dundas.
- c. Livestreaming and Recording Special School Board Meetings for Superintendent Search. On a motion by Butler, seconded by Epstein, the board approved not livestreaming the special board meetings to be held on April 16, April 24, April 25, and April 29, 2026 for the purpose of determining and interviewing superintendent candidates. All meetings will be open to the public and still available to be attended in-person. By not livestreaming the April 16 meeting, the board prevents accidentally providing any identifiable information about a candidate. Not livestreaming the interviews will help to ensure there are no unfair advantages for candidates who may be interviewing later in the schedule.

8. Items for Information

- a. Enrollment Report. Superintendent Hillmann reviewed the April 2026 enrollment report.

b. Superintendent Search Update. Board Clerk Maggie Epstein gave an update on the superintendent search.

9. Future Meetings

- a. Thursday, April 16, 2026, 6:00 p.m., Special Board Meeting, determine superintendent finalists, Northfield DO Boardroom
- b. Friday, April 24, 2026, 4:00 p.m., and Saturday, April 25, 2026, 3:00 p.m., Special Board Meeting, superintendent first round interviews, Northfield DO Boardroom
- c. Monday, April 27, 2026, 6:00 p.m., Regular Board Meeting, Northfield DO Boardroom
- d. Wednesday, April 29, 2026, 4:00 p.m., Special Board Meeting, superintendent final round interviews, Northfield DO Boardroom
- e. Monday, May 4, 5:15 p.m., Special Board Meeting, approve superintendent's contract, Northfield DO Boardroom

10. Adjournment

On a motion by Quinnell, seconded by Nelson, the board unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 9:18 p.m.



Maggie Epstein
School Board Clerk