

NORTHFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

School Board Minutes

November 24, 2025
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 Quinnell, seconded by Nelson, the board unanimously approved the agenda.

3. Public Comment

There was one public comment.

4. Announcements and Recognitions

- The Minnesota School Board Association has released its MSBA Honor Roll for the 2026 Leadership Conference scheduled in January 2026:
 - Congratulations to Corey Butler, who will receive the Directors' Award. This award is presented to members who have attained 100 or more points of attendance at MSBA training programs within the past four years of their term(s).
 - Congratulations to Maggie Epstein who will receive a Leadership Development Certificate for completing the Phase I, Phase II, Phase III, and Phase IV workshops.
- It is with great sorrow that we acknowledge the passing of legendary Northfield School Board Member Noel Stratmoen. Noel was first elected to the Northfield School Board in 1980 and was re-elected 11 times. He concluded his service to the board in December 2024. He was an exemplary public servant, a model of civility and decency, and a dedicated advocate for public education. You cannot talk about Noel without talking about his wife, Lois. Lois has made an equally significant difference in our community. They were a remarkable team. Please hold Lois and the rest of the Stratmoen family in your hearts as they adjust to life without Noel's presence. As one former board member stated, "It is hard to imagine Northfield without Noel."
- Board Member Jenny Nelson reported she recently attended an FFA meeting where 47 members were present. She was able to participate in a breakout session in which the officers were educating the attendees on the committees they have. She commended their dedication and ambition and encouraged the community to continue supporting the Northfield FFA.

5. Items for Discussion and Reports

- a. 2026-2027 School Calendar. Superintendent Hillmann presented the 2026-2027 school year calendar. This will be an item for individual action at the Dec. 8, 2025 board meeting.
- b. High School FTE Request. Administration requested to add 0.40 FTE at the high school for the second semester of the 2025-2026 school year only. The 0.40 FTE would be used to hire a teacher for two English courses, allowing Dr. Sean DuBé to serve as a full-time dean of students instead of 0.60 dean of students/0.40 English teacher for the remainder of the 2025-26 school year. The anticipated cost of this addition is \$7,582. This will be an item for individual action at the Dec. 8, 2025 board meeting.
- c. Lease-Purchase Agreement for Loader. Director of Finance Val Mertesdorf requested board approval of the lease-purchase agreement for a 2026 Case 621G2 Wheel Loader with AMI SB5200 4 in 1 Plow for \$226,895 at an interest rate of 5.99% for eight years. This purchase was included as part of the capital budget.

On a motion by Miller, seconded by Butler, the lease-purchase agreement for the loader was added as an item for individual action.

6. Committee Reports

- a. Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources CTE Committee. Board Member Jenny Nelson provided an update on the Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources CTE Committee.

7. Consent Agenda

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

- a. Minutes. Minutes of the regular school board meeting and the public hearing held on November 11, 2025.
- b. Gift Agreements. Gift agreements included in the board packet.
- c. Overnight Field Trip Requests.
 - i. Northfield Wrestling Head Coach Geoff Staab requested board approval to take 16 students to Rochester, MN Dec. 19-20, 2025 for the Matboss Minnesota Christmas Tournament.
 - ii. Northfield Wrestling Head Coach Geoff Staab requested board approval to take 35-45 students to Rogers, MN Jan. 2-3, 2026 for a two-day wrestling tournament.
- d. Northfield Swim Club Agreement. The school board was asked to approve the enclosed agreement with the Northfield Swim Club. This agreement is for the time period Nov. 24, 2025 - Nov. 23, 2026. Updates to the agreement include removing language around locker use, as the swim club has not been using lockers.
- e. Personnel Items.
 - i. Appointments
 1. Wendy Apitz, KidVentures Site Assistant for up to 10 hours/week at Greenvale Park beginning 11/27/2025. Step 1, \$18.71/hr.
 2. Misty Cady, Child Nutrition Associate I for 3.25 hours/day at Spring Creek beginning 12/8/2025. \$23.06/hr.
 3. Wendi DeGroot, 1.0 FTE Special Education Teacher at the Middle School beginning 1/23/2026. BA, Step 1.
 4. Michael Engelmann, Assistant Wrestling Coach at the Middle School beginning 11/17/2025. \$2,772 stipend.
 5. Trey Gaytan, Softball/Basketball Official for Community Education/Recreation effective 11/16/2025-5/31/2026. \$30/game.
 6. Bailey Harris, 1.0 FTE Long-term Substitute Kindergarten Teacher at Bridgewater effective 12/1/2025-2/16/2026. BA, Step 1.
 7. Grant Hemmingsen, Assistant Boys Basketball Coach at the High School beginning 11/17/2025. \$5,544 stipend paid by the booster club.
 8. Lydia Hershberger, Instructor Lead & Swim Lead for Community Education/Recreation effective 11/18/2025-5/31/2026. Step 3, \$16.64/hr.
 9. Brent Kivell, Rock and Roll Revival-Set Builder at the High School beginning 12/1/2025. \$4,000 stipend.
 10. Gabriel Meerts, .8 FTE Long-term Substitute Special Education Teacher at the Middle School effective 11/24/2025-1/22/2026. MA, Step 10.
 11. Larissa Ripley, Rock and Roll Revival-Lead Costumer at the High School beginning 12/1/2025. \$4,000 stipend.
 12. Ryland Updike, Instructor Lead & Swim Lead for Community Education/Recreation effective 11/18/2025-5/31/2026. Step 3, \$16.64/hr.
 13. Kahlil Brown, Community School Club Leader for 8 hours/week at the Middle School effective 1/5/2026-5/14/2026. Step 2, \$20.73/hr.
 14. Dillon Hachfeld, General Education EA - Lunchroom Supervisor for 1.75 hours/day at Bridgewater beginning 11/21/2025. Step 1, \$19.79/hr.
 - ii. Increase/Decrease/Change in Assignment
 1. Correction: Theresa Bauman, .5 FTE Reading Corps Internal Coach, add Early Learning Corps Internal Coach up to 9 hours/month effective 10/20/2026-6/10/2026.
 2. Robyn Dietz, Long-term Substitute Educational Assistant at Greenvale Park, change start date from 11/17/2025 to 11/11/2025.
 3. Lydia Hershberger, Swim Instructor for Community Education/Recreation, add Community School Student Site Assistant Substitute up to 10 hours/week effective 11/22/2025-5/14/2026. \$16.45/hr.
 4. Gabriela Nieves, Early Childhood Outreach Specialist for 33.5 hours/week at the NCEC, change to 37.5 hours/week effective 11/17/2025.
 5. Taite Raasch, Instructor Lead as needed with Community Education/Recreation, add Official effective 11/16/2025-5/31/2026. \$30/game.
 6. Lauren Salmon, Special Education EA/PCA for 6.5 hours/day plus 0.5 hours/day supervisory at the High School, change to Special Education EA/PCA for 3.5 hours/day BEST program and 3.5 hours/day RISE program plus .25 hours/day supervisory for a total of 7.25 hours/day at Greenvale Park effective 11/19/2025.
 7. Kaycee Welch, General Education EA for 34 hours/week at the NCEC, change to 19 hours per week effective 11/17/2025.

8. Ashley Blatti, Teacher at Bridgewater on an unpaid leave of absence, change to 1.0 FTE Long-term substitute Kindergarten Teacher beginning approximately 12/1/2025 through 12/12/2025. BA, Step 5.
 9. Noreen Cooney, 1.0 FTE School Social Worker at Spring Creek, add Supervision of LICSW hours for a minimum of 50 hours effective 9/2/2025-6/10/2026. \$2,500 stipend.
 10. Jacob Gonnerman, Community School Site Leader for up to 20 hours/week at the Middle School, change to up to 30 hours/week effective 11/20/2025-5/14/2026.
 11. Bailey Harris, 1.0 FTE Long-term substitute Kindergarten Teacher at Bridgewater, change start date from 12/1/2025 to approximately 12/15/2025.
 12. Lori Warner, .5 FTE Occupational Therapist/Assistive Technology Specialist for the District, add staff onboarding support for new OT up to 30 hours for the remainder of the 25-26 school year.
- iii. Leave of Absence
1. Sarah Marohl, Educational Assistant at Greenvale Park, change leave of absence start date from 11/17/2025 to 11/11/2025.
 2. Katrina Meehan, Teacher at the Middle School, FMLA leave of absence beginning 11/10/2025 and continuing for up to 60 work days on an intermittent basis.
 3. Rebekah Patterson, Special Education Teacher at Bridgewater, leave of absence extended through the 2025-26 school year.
 4. Lynsi Sherry, School Psychologist at Greenvale Park, FMLA leave of absence beginning approximately 8/24/2026 and continuing through 10/30/2026.
 5. Guillermina Velasquez Herrera, Custodian at the High School, FMLA leave of absence beginning 11/6/2025 and continuing through 11/30/2025.
- iv. Retirements/Resignations/Terminations
1. Ashley Opatrny, Special Education Teacher at the Middle School, resignation effective 11/21/2025.

8. Items for Individual Action

- a. Policy Committee Recommendations. On a motion by Butler, seconded by Epstein, the board unanimously approved the policy committee's recommended changes to policies 513, 513.1, 513.2, 513.3, and 514.
- b. Ratification of Employment Action. On a motion by Gonzalez-George, seconded by Epstein, the board unanimously ratified the employment action recommendation.
- c. Lease-Purchase Agreement for Loader. On a motion by Miller, seconded by Goerwitz, the board approved the lease-purchase agreement for the 2026 Case 621G2 Wheel Loader with AMI SB5200 4 in 1 Plow by roll call vote. Voting "yes" was Butler, Epstein, Goerwitz, Miller, Nelson, Quinnell, and Gonzalez-George. No one voted "no."

9. Items for Information

- a. Construction Update No. 19. Superintendent Hillmann provided an update on the NHS construction project.

10. Future Meetings

- a. Monday, December 8, 2025, 6:00 p.m., Regular Board Meeting, Northfield DO Boardroom
- b. Monday, December 15, 2025, 5:00 p.m., Board Work Session, Northfield DO Boardroom
- c. Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 p.m., Organizational Board Meeting followed by the Regular Board Meeting, Northfield DO Boardroom
- d. Monday, January 26, 2026, 6:00 p.m., Regular Board Meeting, Northfield DO Boardroom

11. Closed Session: Labor Negotiations Strategy

On a motion by Miller, seconded by Goerwitz, the board moved to close the meeting as permitted by Minnesota Statute 13D.03 to discuss labor negotiations.

12. Adjournment

On a motion by Butler, seconded by Miller, the board unanimously approved to adjourn the closed session at 7:20 p.m.

On a motion by Quinnell, seconded by Goerwitz, the board unanimously approved to adjourn the regular board meeting at 7:21 p.m.



Amy Goerwitz
School Board Clerk