

**Minutes of Gurnee School District 56
Board of Education Meeting
May 27, 2026**

The following Board members were in attendance: Odie Pahl, Mark Pos, Cesar Garcia, Jim Blockinger, Becky Kotsinis, Mandi Florip, and Germain Castellanos

Also in attendance:

Luis Correa, Superintendent
Martin Da Costa, Director of Business | CSBO
Eric Esteban, Director of Technology
Pete Helfers, Director of Curriculum & Instruction
Sean Smith, Director of Facilities & Grounds
Rachel Solomon, Director of Student Services
Principals: Dominique Geocaris, Jen Glickley, and Allison Waller
Aurora Orozco, Board Clerk

Board President Pos called the regular meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. and asked that everyone join him in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Rachel Solomon, Director of Student Services, recognized a Laremont School graduating student and presented information regarding the student's accomplishments. The student was unable to attend the meeting.

At this time, recognition was given to the following District track students for qualifying for the State competition: **Girls Team** - Anna Sorge, Diamond Wilson, Sophia Torres, Olivia Wilson, Addison Dearth, and Malaya Frazier. **Boys Team** - Gavi Arispe, Kayden Hudgins, KeSean Brown, Yayra Kuma, Haddin English, Eli Egar, Eli Parrish, G'Yanni Zell, Jacob McBride, Tristan Hood. Board President Mark Pos congratulated the students on their accomplishments and thanked them for representing Gurnee School District 56 at the State competition.

Dr. Glickey presented the Teacher of the Year Award to Betsy Sincora and the Support Staff of the Year Award to Miriam Yaquian. Both recipients are from River Trail School. Board President Mark Pos congratulated them on their achievements and thanked them for their dedication and service to the students and families of Gurnee School District 56.

Rachel Solomon, Director of Student Services, presented the Verna Rocheleau Service Award to David Schopf in recognition of his dedication, service, and contributions to the students. Board President Mark Pos congratulated Mr. Schopf and thanked him for his commitment to serving the students of Gurnee School District 56.

Board Member Blockinger made a motion, seconded by Board Member Pahl, to accept the minutes from the regular meeting on April 22, 2026, as presented. Motion carried

on a roll call vote. Roll Call: Ayes: Becky Kotsinis, Cesar Garcia, Mark Pos, Jim Blockinger, Germain Castellanos, Mandi Florip, and Odie Pahl.

The regular April 30, 2026, Treasurer's Report identified cash and investments of \$20,204,018.09. The Revenue Report identified receipts of \$1,218,941.17, and the Expenditure Report identified expenses totaling \$2,854,098.88. The cash balance in the Activity Fund for April was \$126,283.86. The Financial Reports, plus the Revised April (\$1,571,228.14) and Regular May (\$1,894,967.79) Bills for Payment Reports, were approved on a motion by Board Member Pahl and seconded by President Pos. Motion carried on a roll call vote. Roll Call: Ayes: Becky Kotsinis, Cesar Garcia, Mark Pos, Jim Blockinger, Germain Castellanos, Mandi Florip, and Odie Pahl.

During the *Public Participation* portion of the meeting: During the *Public Participation* portion of the hearing, no one wished to address the Board of Education.

Dr. Correa requested that each building principal provide the Board of Education with highlights that had occurred at their building since the previous Board of Education meeting. This included pictures from:

Viking: Mrs. Dominique Geocaris, Principal of Viking Middle School, presented the Viking District Highlights. Through a slideshow presentation, she shared examples of student learning, school activities, special events, and student accomplishments. Highlights included the collaboration between Viking and Spaulding students, student participation in the annual 5K and one-mile run, student artwork and classroom projects, the American Asian Pacific Islander Heritage Night, science and engineering activities, and end-of-year celebrations.

River Trail: Dr. Glickley, Principal of River Trail School, presented the River Trail District Highlights through a slideshow presentation showcasing student achievements, service projects, and school activities. Highlights included the Great Americans recognition program, choir performances, the Gardening Club's community service project with Gurnee Community Church, free student haircuts provided through a community partnership, student recognition assemblies, perfect attendance and reading awards, a student-led cereal box drive benefiting the Warren Township Food Pantry, and other end-of-year celebrations.

Spaulding: Mrs. Sara Rosheger, Principal of Spaulding School, presented the Spaulding District Highlights through a slideshow presentation showcasing student learning and school activities. Highlights included the Reading Power Celebration of Writers, where students shared fiction and nonfiction writing projects developed with their Reading Power tutors, the collaboration between Viking and Spaulding students through a student-created book reading project, and classroom learning experiences focused on science and nature. Mrs. Rosheger shared examples of students observing plant life cycles and studying the metamorphosis of caterpillars into butterflies. The Board thanked Mrs. Rosheger for her presentation and recognized the accomplishments of Spaulding students and staff.

Prairie Trail: Mrs. Allison Waller, Principal of Prairie Trail School, presented the Prairie Trail District Highlights through a slideshow presentation showcasing student achievements, staff recognitions, and school activities. Highlights included student learning experiences involving butterfly life cycles, the Great Americans Assembly, classroom presentations focused on community improvement and leadership, staff recognition events, Teacher Appreciation Week activities, and ongoing school improvement initiatives related to Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Mrs. Waller also highlighted the fifth-grade band concert and shared updates on Prairie Trail's annual duck nesting project, which provides students with opportunities to observe wildlife and learn about nature.

Mrs. Rachel Solomon, Director of Student Services, presented the Student Services District Highlights through a slideshow presentation. Highlights included recognition of the District's school nurses during National School Nurse Day, Laremont School's designation as an official MOVE Model School, and the celebration of student achievements and accomplishments. Mrs. Solomon shared photos from Laremont School's MOVE recognition event and highlighted the inclusive opportunities provided to students with diverse abilities. She also recognized a graduating Laremont School student and shared highlights from the student's graduation ceremony.

In the absence of Mrs. Miriam Torres, Director of Multilingual Programs, Mrs. Rachel Solomon, Director of Student Services, presented the Multilingual Programs District Highlights through a slideshow presentation. Highlights included the District's celebration of El Día del Niño, which recognized the joy, culture, and talents of students and families through a variety of activities and community engagement opportunities. Mrs. Solomon also shared information regarding a transition meeting for eighth-grade multilingual learners and their families in partnership with Warren Township High School to support a successful transition to high school. In addition, she highlighted the second annual Mother's Day Celebration, which was attended by approximately 350 family members, students, and staff and featured student performances, poetry, dances, and special presentations honoring mothers and caregivers. During the event, the District also recognized Lissette Quiñones for her many years of dedicated service as she prepares for retirement.

Dr. Luis Correa presented additional District Highlights through a slideshow presentation. He shared photos from the District's end-of-year staff celebration, where retirees were recognized and the Verna Rocheleau Service Award recipient was honored. Dr. Correa thanked the planning committee for organizing the event and highlighted the opportunity for staff to celebrate together.

Dr. Correa also shared photos from a visit by Mayor Tom Hood and Village Trustee Kevin Woodside to the Boys & Girls Club program at Viking Middle School. During the visit, Village representatives interacted with students and learned more about the program and its impact on participants.

In addition, Dr. Correa recognized Mrs. Rachel Solomon for her presentation to the Gurnee Exchange Club regarding the District's Team Lead program. He noted that the Exchange Club continues to support the program and recently presented the District with an award recognizing the partnership.

Board President Mark Pos thanked the principals, administrators, and staff for their presentations and for their dedication throughout the school year. He commended their leadership and commitment to students, noting that their efforts are evident both within the schools and throughout the community. President Pos expressed appreciation for the positive impact they have on students and families and thanked them for their outstanding work.

Representatives from the Boys & Girls Club of Lake County, Cindy Apuli, Chief Program Officer, and J.P, Director of Operations, provided an update on the District's partnership with the organization. The presenters shared enrollment, attendance, and survey data from the Viking Middle School and Spaulding School sites and highlighted the positive impact of the after-school program on students and families. The presenters reviewed family engagement activities, holiday celebrations, cultural events, student enrichment clubs, and community partnerships that took place throughout the school year. They also shared feedback from students, parents, and District partners regarding the program's success in providing a safe, supportive, and engaging environment for students. In addition, the Boys & Girls Club representatives provided an overview of the upcoming summer program, which will be hosted at Viking Middle School and is expected to serve approximately 160 students. The Board thanked the presenters for their partnership and continued support of District 56 students and families.

At this time, Dr. Correa requested that each administrator report on department projects/tasks that they were currently focused on:

Mr. Da Costa: Mr. Martin da Costa, Chief School Business Official, provided a Business Office update. He reported that teacher salary notices, support staff salary notices, and reasonable assurance letters had been distributed. Mr. da Costa also shared that the District's annual benefits open enrollment period is underway and will continue through May 29, 2026. In addition, he noted that the Business Office is supporting employee retirements and onboarding efforts for the 2026–2027 school year and thanked the principals for their work in recruiting and hiring staff.

Mr. Helpers: Mr. Pete Helpers, Director for Curriculum and Instruction, provided a department update. He reported that planning for summer curriculum work is underway, including English Language Arts initiatives for grades K–2 and 3–5. Dr. Helpers also shared that curriculum and instructional materials are being ordered for the 2026–2027 school year and noted that he is preparing for the transition of responsibilities and information to Dr. Lisa West as she assumes her new role with the District.

Mrs. Solomon: Mrs. Rachel Solomon, Director of Student Services, provided a department update. She reported attending graduation ceremonies and celebrations for District students enrolled in public and private therapeutic day schools. Mrs. Solomon also shared that she participated in a legal learning session focused on the education of students with disabilities. In addition, she reported that special education staff participated in Institute Day professional development focused on writing instruction. Mrs. Solomon concluded by announcing that the District's schools have been designated as Heart Safe Schools through Project ADAM.

Mr. Smith: Mr. Sean Smith, Director of Buildings and Grounds, provided a department update. He reported that planning for the Prairie Trail Central Kitchen project is progressing well and that preparations are underway for summer construction activities. Mr. Smith also shared that annual state inspections for District facilities are being scheduled and that he is working on a transition plan to support the incoming Director of Buildings and Grounds.

Mr. Esteban: Mr. Eric Esteban, Director of Technology, provided a department update. He reported that the Village has approved the permit for the fiber construction project connecting the Transportation Department to the District network, with work expected to begin in the coming weeks. Mr. Esteban also shared that planning continues for the District's network switch upgrade project and that preparations are underway to improve network security, redundancy, and operations. In addition, he noted that summer technology staff will be assisting with device inspections, cleaning, upgrades, and the renewal of District technology systems and software.

Dr. Correa followed up with the Board regarding participation in the Gurnee Days Parade scheduled for August 8, 2026. He shared that the District's PTO has secured a place in the parade and invited Board members to participate. Dr. Correa noted that the event will be held as part of the revised two-day Gurnee Days celebration and opened the discussion to gather Board member interest and coordinate participation. The Board discussed the opportunity and expressed interest in participating in the event.

The Board held discussion as to whether they wanted to attend the Triple I Conference this year that was being held on November 20 - 22, 2026.

Dr. Correa requested that the Board of Education make the Professional Leave and Conferences report a matter of record of the minutes of the regular May 27, 2026, Board of Education meeting.

A Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request was received by Dr. Correa from Catherine Merrill (databranchusa.com), via email on May 4, 2026 requesting all executed contracts, agreements, purchase orders, and related procurement documents for products or services purchased from any of the following vendors or their authorized resellers, for the period January 1, 2021, to the present: All products from: Primex, American Time, and/or Sapling.

Mrs. Orozco sent the information request via email to Avah Norton on May 6, 2026, as requested in the FOIA request.

A Second Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request was received by Dr. Luis Correa on May 4, 2026, from Jayden Swan (databranchusa.com) via email requesting all executed contracts, agreements, purchase orders, and related procurement documents for products or services purchased from any of the following vendors or their authorized resellers, for the period January 1, 2021, to the present: All products from: Blackboard Inc, Finalsite, DMX, Funds for Learning, E-Rate Consulting, N-Able, Raptor Technologies, and/or CSM Consulting. Mrs. Orozco responded on May 6, 2025, via email with the requested information to Angela Capone as requested in the FOIA.

A third Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request was received by Dr. Luis Correa on May 6, 2026, from Ms. Sophia Price (databranchusa.com) via email requesting all executed contracts, agreements, purchase orders, and related procurement documents for products or services purchased from any of the following vendors or their authorized resellers, for the period January 1, 2021, to the present: All products from Absolute Software, Incident IQ, Hazel Health, Brandon Industries, CSM Consulting, and Funds for Learning. Mrs. Orozco responded on May 6, 2026, via email with the requested information to Kendrick Shaw as requested in the FOIA.

A fourth Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request was received by Mr. Martin Da Costa on May 15, 2026, from Mr. Mark Chlebowki (Sheet Metal Workers Local 73) requesting records and information regarding any new construction, renovation, maintenance, repair, replacement, and/or capital improvement work planned, currently out for bid, awarded, and/or scheduled for 2026 for school district 56. This request includes, but is not limited to, records relating to the following scopes of work: HVAC (Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning, Exhaust Systems), Architectural sheet metal and/or architectural metals, Roofing, Gutters, Downspouts, flashing, coping, and metal wall panels, Kitchen renovations, Toilet partition replacement and/or installation, Locker replacement and/or installation, Mechanical renovations, Energy efficiency upgrades, Maintenance contracts related to HVAC and/or sheet metal systems. Any additions, remodels, buildouts, or facility upgrades involving the above scopes. For any projects identified, please provide, if available: Proposed project designation/name, Scope of work, Bid documents/specifications, Bid results/tabulations, Awarded contractor(s), Awarded subcontractor(s), if known, Contact information for contractors and/or construction managers. Project timelines or anticipated start dates, and current HVAC maintenance contract information. Mrs. Orozco responded to Mr. Mark Chlebowki via email on May 19, 2026, with the requested information.

A fifth Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request was received by Dr. Correa on May 21, 2026, from Carla Carlos (Employee Research Data LLC) requesting information for district employees: first and last names, job titles/positions, work email addresses, and primary campus or department. Mrs. Orozco responded to Mrs. Carla Carlos via email on May 21, 2026, with the requested information.

Board Member Odie Pahl left the meeting at 5:48 p.m. and was absent for the remainder of the meeting.

On a motion from Board Member Florip with a second from Board Member Castellanos, the Board voted to approve Board policies under review (Policies 7:260, 7:270, 7:275, 7:280, 7:285, 7:290, and 7:300) and to adopt those policies as presented by the administration. Motion carried on a roll call vote. Roll Call: Ayes: Becky Kotsinis, Cesar Garcia, Mark Pos, Jim Blockinger, Germain Castellanos, Mandi Florip, and Odie Pahl (absent).

Dr. Correa provided the Board of Education with a group of policies to review to ensure that those policies reflected the intent of the Board. This was a goal of the Board made during training provided by the Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB). Ultimately, all Board policies would be reviewed during a three-year cycle. Current policies for review are 7:305 and 7:310. The Board would officially approve the recommended changes at the next Board of Education meeting.

Dr. Correa presented to the Board of Education for first reading the recommended new policies, Issue 121, March 2026, from the Illinois Association of School Boards. No Board action on these policies was necessary at this time.

Board Member Pahl made a motion to approve the Consolidated District Plan as presented by the administration. Board President Pos seconded the motion. Motion carried on a roll call vote. Roll Call: Ayes: Becky Kotsinis, Cesar Garcia, Mark Pos, Jim Blockinger, Mandi Florip, Germain Castellano, and Odie Pahl (absent).

Mr. Da Costa shared with the Board of Education the 2025 levy and tax extension information provided by the Lake County Clerk's Office. The maximum capped levy available to the District was \$27,902,400.32. The tax rate for all levies was set at 4.085569 per \$100 of EAV (Equalized Assessed Valuation).

On a motion from Board Member Blockinger with a second from Board Member Kotsinis, the Board voted to make the Post-Issuance Tax Compliance Report a part of the minutes of the May 27, 2026, meeting of the Board of Education. Motion carried on a roll call vote. Roll Call: Ayes: Odie Pahl, Becky Kotsinis, Cesar Garcia, Mark Pos, Jim Blockinger, Germain Castellanos, and Mandi Florip, and Odie Pahl (absent).

Due to the huge success, this proposal is for the Boys & Girls Club of Lake County (BGCLC) to continue operating the Great Futures Academy at Viking Middle School and Spaulding School for students in grades K-8 from July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027. Upon mutual written agreement between both parties, the term may be extended. This proposal outlines the roles, responsibilities, and collaborative planning efforts of BGCLC and Gurnee District 56. On a motion from Board President Pos with a second from Board Member Blockinger, the Board voted to accept the proposal to operate a Great Futures Academy at both Viking Middle School and Spaulding School for District 56 students as presented by the administration. Motion carried on a roll call vote.

Roll Call: Ayes: Becky Kotsinis, Cesar Garcia, Mark Pos, Jim Blockinger, Mandi Florip, Germain Castellano, and Odie Pahl (absent).

Dr. Correa will provide the Board with information regarding the proposed Lake County School Facility Occupation Tax (CSFT), a potential 1% sales tax on specific retail purchases within Lake County that would require voter approval in the November elections.

Dr. Correa will present a potential partnership with the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) to develop the District's Strategic Plan next school year. Dr. Correa presented information regarding a potential partnership with the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) to support the District's next strategic planning process. He explained that the work would align the District's strategic plan with AASA's Public Education Promise framework while building upon the District's Portrait of a Graduate and Learning Framework. Dr. Correa stated that a formal proposal and timeline would be presented to the Board in June. If approved, stakeholder recruitment and planning activities would begin in July, followed by community engagement opportunities, surveys, and leadership discussions. The goal is to present a final strategic plan for Board consideration in spring 2027.

Board members asked questions regarding the timeline and framework. No formal action was taken.

Mrs. Solomon reported to the Board details from the meeting that she attended with Ms. Rebecca Chorazy, special education teacher at St. Patrick School, and the Occupational Therapist at St. Patrick School, on May 21, 2026, to discuss the utilization of proportionate share funds. The preliminary allocation amount was unknown at the time of the meeting. Ms. Vitulli, Principal at St. Patrick School, proposed that the money be used to support speech-language, occupational therapy, and physical therapy services for eligible students attending the school. Ms. Vitulli also requested that a portion of the funds be allocated toward funding the services provided by the school counselor, Ms. Bridget McKinnon. On a motion from Board Member Kotsinis with a second from Board President Pos, the Board of Education voted to approve the use of the proportionate share monies to provide speech and language services, occupational therapy services, and physical therapy services for eligible students at St. Patrick School along with the salary for their school counselor. Motion carried on a roll call vote. . Roll Call: Ayes: Becky Kotsinis, Cesar Garcia, Mark Pos, Jim Blockinger, Mandi Florip, Germain Castellano, and Odie Pahl (absent).

Mrs. Solomon presented the updated Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Gurnee School District 56 and the Lake County Sheriff's Department. The agreement outlines procedures for communication regarding serious student safety concerns,

including incidents involving weapons, drugs, and assaults, while maintaining student confidentiality as required by law.

On a motion from Board Member Blockinger with a second from Board President Pos, the Board voted to approve the Reciprocal Reporting System Agreement between the Lake County Sheriff's Department and Gurnee School District 56, as presented by the administration. Motion carried on a roll call vote. Roll Call: Ayes: Odie Pahl, Becky Kotsinis, Cesar Garcia, Mark Pos, Jim Blockinger, Germain Castellanos, and Mandi Florip, and Odie Pahl (absent).

During the *Public Comment* portion of the meeting, no one wished to address the Board of Education.

Board President Mark Pos recognized Dr. Pete Helfers during his final Board meeting in his administrative role. Mr. Pos thanked Dr. Helfers for his leadership, service, and dedication to Gurnee School District 56 and expressed appreciation for his continued commitment to students as he returns to the classroom. The Board wished Dr. Helfer success in his new role.

On a motion by Board Member Kotsinis and seconded by Board Member Castellanos, the Board voted to adjourn open session at 7:07 p.m. The Board went into closed session at 7:12 p.m. to discuss the following items on a roll call vote:

- The appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees of the District or legal counsel for the District, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee or against legal counsel for the District, to determine its validity. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1), as amended by P.A. 93-0057.
- Student disciplinary cases. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(9).
- The placement of individual students in special education programs and other matters relating to individual students. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(10).
- Litigation, when an action against, affecting or on behalf of the particular District has been filed and is pending before a court or administrative tribunal, or when the District finds that an action is probable or imminent, in which case the basis for the finding shall be recorded and entered into the closed meeting minutes. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(11).
- Discussion of lawfully closed meeting minutes, whether for purposes of approval by the body of the minutes or semi-annual review of the minutes as mandated by Section 2.06. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(21).

Motion carried on a roll call vote. Roll Call: Ayes: Odie Pahl, Becky Kotsinis, Cesar Garcia, Mark Pos, Jim Blockinger, Germain Castellanos, and Mandi Florip, and Odie Pahl (absent).

The Board of Education came out of closed session at 8:02 p.m on a motion from Board Member Blockinger and seconded by Board Member Kotsinis. Motion carried on a roll

call vote. Roll Call: Ayes: Odie Pahl, Becky Kotsinis, Cesar Garcia, Mark Pos, Jim Blockinger, Germain Castellanos, and Mandi Florip (absent), and Odie Pahl (absent).

On a motion from Board Member Blockinger, with a second from Board Member Kotsinis, the Board voted to approve the personnel recommendations as presented by the Superintendent. Roll Call: Ayes: Odie Pahl, Becky Kotsinis, Cesar Garcia, Mark Pos, Jim Blockinger, Germain Castellanos, and Mandi Florip (absent), and Odie Pahl (absent).

On a motion from Board Member Kotsinis with a second from Board President Pos, the Board voted to approve closed session minutes for the meeting on April 22, 2026, as presented. Roll Call: Ayes: Odie Pahl, Becky Kotsinis, Cesar Garcia, Mark Pos, Jim Blockinger, Germain Castellanos, and Mandi Florip (absent), and Odie Pahl (absent).

A motion was made by Board Member Kotsinis and seconded by Board Member Garcia to adjourn the meeting at 8:02 p.m. Motion carried on a roll call vote. Roll Call: Ayes: Odie Pahl, Becky Kotsinis, Cesar Garcia, Mark Pos, Jim Blockinger, Germain Castellanos, and Mandi Florip (absent), and Odie Pahl (absent).

Respectfully submitted:

Mark Pos, President

Odie Pahl, Secretary
Board of Education, District #56
Lake County, IL