

MINUTES OF THE
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING
Of the Board of Education
Riverside School District No. 96
Held on Wednesday, March 4, 2026
Ames Elementary School

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD

20-597 A. President Wesley Muirheid called the Committee of the Whole Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., and on roll call, the following members were recorded as being present:

Ms. Kachlic
Mr. Olech
Mr. Barsotti
Mr. Hunt
Mr. Muirheid
Absent: Ms. Claps
Ms. Gunn

Also in attendance were Superintendent Martha Ryan-Toye, Director of Teaching and Learning Angela Dolezal, Director of Special Education Nora Geraghty, Blythe Park Principal Casimira Gorman, Hauser Principal Chris Harvalis, Hauser Assistant Principal Katie Kayastha, Elementary Intervention & Support Coordinator Nikki Mazza, the Board of Education recording clerk, a Riverside TV videographer, a staff member, and community member.

B. Welcome to Ames School.

Principal Todd Gierman could not be with us tonight. However, we were pleased to introduce Nikki Mazza, the incoming principal of Ames School, shared a warm welcome to the board ahead of her official start on July 1. She shared highlights of the happenings at Ames School.

C. Public Comment/Response.

There were no public comments.

D. Committee Reports

1. Education Committee - Mr. Hunt.

- a. Student Engagement and Social Emotional Learning Overview.
 - Director of Special Education Nora Geraghty, Blythe Park Principal Casimira Gorman, Hauser Principal Chris Harvalis, Hauser Assistant Principal Katie Kayastha, and Elementary Intervention & Support Coordinator Nikki Mazza presented on this topic.
 - This presentation outlined strategies the district uses to boost student engagement by fostering a sense of belonging and using data-driven, multidimensional approaches (behavioral, cognitive, emotional). The CASEL framework, student clubs & activities, the educator's handbook, and a newly added position, the intervention support coordinator, were a few examples of the resources and supports available. It covers implementing Social Emotional Learning (SEL) to improve mental well-being,

enhancing teacher-student relationships, and developing student ownership of learning to combat disengagement.

- Overview of SEL Tiered Services
 - Tier 1 Services - SEL services provided to all students in the general education environment
 - Tier II Services - Targeted, small-group interventions—such as social skills circles or "Check-In/Check-Out" systems—designed to provide extra support for the 10–15% of students who need more focused skill-building than universal classroom instruction alone
 - Tier III Services - Intensive, individualized targeted support—such as one-on-one counseling or customized behavior intervention plans—tailored to the specific, complex needs of the 1–5% of students who require the most frequent and specialized social-emotional assistance
 - D96's SEL framework is not a standalone program but a robust system that is integrated into all aspects of our students' school experience.
 - Explanation of CASEL Framework
 - Social and emotional learning (SEL) is an integral part of education and human development. SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.
 - The guiding principles of the Responsive Classroom Approach are: teaching social and emotional skills is as important as teaching the academic content, how we teach is as important as what we teach, great cognitive growth occurs through social interaction, how we work together as adults to create a safe, joyful, and inclusive school environment is as important as our individual contribution or competence, what we know and believe about our students — individually, culturally, developmentally which informs our expectations, reactions, and attitudes about those students, and partnering with families — knowing them and valuing their contributions — is as important as knowing the children we teach.
 - The board appreciated this impressive presentation, which covered all the resources available to the schools, especially Hauser.
 - Parents are encouraged to contact their children's principal or the Director of Special Education/Student Services with any questions or concerns. They are here to help.
- b. Committee Updates.
- Director of Teaching and Learning Angela Dolezal shared updates on advanced learning, standards-based grading and reporting, and middle school mathematics.
 - Advanced Learning Committee
 - The Advanced Learning Committee met in the fall and identified three priorities for this year's work: 1. Defining advanced learning within Riverside District 96 2. Improving program transparency and communication, and 3. Refining identification for services. A fourth area

- was also identified: in response to current challenges, particularly in grades 4-5 ELA, the committee will begin reviewing program delivery.
- A full-day working session with consultants from the Northwest Center for Talent and Development was held on February 5. During this meeting, the committee reviewed identification and achievement data, examined alignment between student needs and services, explored potential service continuums, and began developing an updated identification profile.
 - Next Steps
 - Finalize placement profile for use at May MTSS Data Meetings to determine placement for 2026-2027 school year
 - Confirm service structures at each building, including staffing and scheduling logistics
 - Select and align curriculum resources for Advanced ELA
 - Determine a communication plan for families
 - Determine a professional learning plan for staff
 - Determine priorities for the 2027-2028 school year
 - *Ongoing*: Implementation check-ins after each benchmark assessment
 - Standards-Based Grading and Reporting (SBG)
 - SBG is a way of measuring student learning based on how well they understand specific concepts and standards, rather than averaging scores or assigning letter grades for an entire assignment, assessment, or subject.
 - Provides a clearer picture of what each student is working on and what they know.
 - Old Way
 - Report cards didn't always reflect what students actually learned in class
 - New Way
 - Teachers identified the most important standards per grade.
 - Report cards will reflect the priority standards and give an accurate picture of students' knowledge
 - Remaining 2025-2026
 - Grade-level small groups finalize math proficiency scales
 - Share finished proficiency scales with full district team and conduct grading calibration session
 - Completing the parent and teacher FAQ document will be crucial. The administration will look at how this information will be shared at Open Houses. The board suggested sharing the neighboring districts that are using or switching to this type of report cards.
 - It was suggested to schedule a specific parent information night where only this topic is discussed. It was also suggested to post a video that parents can view.
 - Next Steps (2026-27 and Beyond)
 - Implementation of Standards-Based Report Card for Math, Science, and Learning Behaviors
 - Begin Social Studies curriculum resource review
 - ELA and Social Studies proficiency scale development

- Continued family education and staff professional learning
- Full Standards-Based Report Card in 2027-2028
- It was noted that Hauser will continue using letter grades while tightening standards-based instruction and aligning them with the standards they assess
- Middle School Mathematics Review
- Gathered input from math teams on current resource effectiveness
- Reviewed 5 potential math resources
- Visited Hinsdale Middle School to observe EdGems instruction and speak with teachers
- Teams piloted an EdGems unit and shared feedback with administration
- Teams are sharing feedback, which has been positive. Professional learning on EdGems in the spring and pilot throughout next year.
- Final determination in spring 2027.
- The Board thanked Angela for his presentations.

2. Family Engagement Committee - Ms. Kachlic.

- a. Parent Leadership Team - February 20.
 - Ms. Kachlic shared that Diane Silva volunteers on a "community" committee at Share Food Share Love Food pantry in Brookfield and attended this PLT meeting to share how D96 PTO/PTAs can get involved with the pantry. Needing things in addition to food, i.e., baby supplies, dog food, laundry detergent. Hollywood PTA is creating a rotation matrix, and PLT was very excited about the interest. More information to be forthcoming.
 - District-wide fifth-grade game night has been canceled. This was a PTO/PTA-run event. Nice transition events have been added, e.g., Pasta Night and Step Up Days.
 - Discussion around Parks & Rec's involvement in the upcoming half days for next school year.
 - A reminder was shared for the D96 community to take the Strategic Plan survey.
 - Mark your calendar for April 13 at 6:30 pm to hear Doug Bolton's Presentation.

3. Facilities Committee - Mr. Olech.

- a. Approval of Blythe Park Playground Equipment - Action Item.
A motion was made by Mr. Hunt and supported by Mr. Barsotti to approve the quote to Imagine Nation, LLC in the amount of \$263,200.

This matter was discussed at a prior board meeting, but the board sought clarification on this quote.

The motion carried on the following roll call vote:

Ayes:	Mr. Barsotti
	Mr. Hunt
	Mr. Olech
	Ms. Kachlic
	Mr. Muirheid

Absent: Ms. Claps
Ms. Gunn
Nays: None

- b. Facility Advisory Committee Update.
 - Member Olech shared updates from the January 15th meeting. The new Director of Facilities and Maintenance is transitioning well.
4. Policy Committee - Ms. Gunn.
 - Nothing to report tonight.
5. Personnel Committee - Mr. Barsotti.
 - a. Superintendent Search Committee Process Update.
 - Member Barsotti shared that the Board will evaluate two executive search firms at the March Regular Business Meeting, BWP Associates, Ltd. (BWP) and Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA), to lead the recruitment of a new Superintendent for District 96.
 - Each firm has been allotted 40 minutes: 20 minutes for their formal presentation and 20 minutes for a Q&A session with the Board.
6. Finance Committee - Ms. Claps.
 - Nothing to report tonight.

E. Public Comment/Response.

There were no public comments.

F. Future Meeting Dates.

1. March 18, 2026 - Regular Business Meeting, 7:00 p.m. in the LRC at Hauser. (The Board will enter into Closed Session at 6:15 p.m., if necessary, and return to Open Session at 7:00 p.m.).
2. April 1, 2026 - Cancelled.
3. April 15, 2026 - Regular Business Meeting, 7:00 p.m. in the LRC at Hauser. (The Board will enter into Closed Session at 6:15 p.m., if necessary, and return to Open Session at 7:00 p.m.).
4. May 6, 2026 - Committee of the Whole Meeting, 7:00 p.m., multi-purpose room at Central Elementary School.
5. May 20, 2026 - Regular Business Meeting, 7:00 p.m. in the Auditorium at Hauser. (The Board will enter into Closed Session at 6:15 p.m., if necessary, and return to Open Session at 7:00 p.m.).

20-598 G. A motion was made by Mr. Barsotti and supported by Mr. Olech to adjourn to Closed Session for the following reasons:

- 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).

- Any matter involving an individual student. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(10).

The motion carried on the following roll call vote:

Ayes:	Ms. Kachlic Mr. Olech Mr. Hunt Mr. Barsotti Mr. Muirheid
Absent:	Ms. Claps Ms. Gunn
Nays:	None

The board went into closed session at 9:05 p.m.

H. Return to Open Session.

I. Adjournment.

The meeting adjourned at 10:35 p.m.

March 4, 2026
Date Recorded

Date Approved

President, Board of Education

Secretary, Board of Education