

MINUTES OF THE
REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING
Of the Board of Education
School District No. 96
Held on Wednesday, August 19, 2026
Hauser Jr. High School
Riverside, IL

REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING

20-600 A. President Wesley Muirheid called the Regular Business Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and on roll call, the following members were recorded as being present:

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

Absent: None

Superintendent Martha Ryan-Toye, Director of Technology Molly Marquardt, Director of Teaching and Learning Casimira Gorman, Director of Special Education Nora Geraghty, Director of Finance Steve Wilder, Director of Facilities and Maintenance Zachary Pros, community members, staff members, community members, BWP & Associates, the Board of Education recording clerk, and a Riverside TV videographer were also in attendance.

B. Public Comment/Response.

The following Riverside for Balanced Learning, a growing group of over 90 D96 parents, spoke to the board.

- Karla Altmayer, co-organizer of this group and a Blythe Park parent, reiterated the group's desire to collaborate with the district to increase classroom transparency, implement evidence-based technology, and deepen parent-district collaboration. While acknowledging recent district measures, she noted they only address surface-level concerns and shared an example of a peer district that has successfully implemented meaningful solutions. Ms. Altmayer expressed gratitude for the ongoing dialogue and hopes that D96 will lead the way toward more intentional technology use in the classroom.
- Natalia Water, a D96 parent and member of this group, focuses on the gamification of learning and the use of A1 platforms within our educational programs. She thanked the board and asked what role technology should play in our children's educational and developmental experience. She echoed that D96 has taken positive steps. She shared research to emphasize her point. She believes increased screen exposure diminishes attention, self-regulation, and social-emotional development.
- David Oppenheimer and his son, Apollo, an incoming Central School kindergartener, shared that they are a low-screen family and emphasized that schools should focus on fostering meaningful, face-to-face connections between students and teachers. To support this, he cited a recent Senate hearing linking 1:1 screen use to a decrease in overall academic performance. They concluded by thanking the board members for their time.

- Emily Bittner Diette, parent of a student at Central School. She is here tonight to ensure the district balances digital and traditional learning. She is increasingly concerned about how much classroom time is being handed over to screens, particularly where traditional pen-and-paper methods have historically yielded better results. D96 classrooms should prioritize paper, pencils, and books—especially for foundational reading, mathematics, and our youngest learners. She shared that she is concerned about preserving our children’s essential human skills, specifically their ability to build face-to-face connections, develop emotional resilience, and engage in deep, critical thinking. These skills are fostered through human interaction, not digital interfaces. She looks forward to a continued partnership with the district as we work together to find the right balance for our children’s future.
- Central parent Meghan Bode thanked the Board for the opportunity to address classroom technology. She clarified that she is not anti-technology; Ms. Bode emphasized that digital tools have an important and valuable place in education. Ms. Bode advocated for greater transparency around daily classroom device use and proposed surveying students to better understand how they interact with these tools. Noting that every minute of the school day is highly valuable, she supported the district’s formation of a technology committee that includes parents and staff. To further strengthen this collaboration, she requested that a school board member also be present on the committee.
- April Schweitzer, a Hollywood parent, delivered an impassioned statement outlining her concerns regarding her fifth-grade daughter’s Hollywood school experience.

C. Changes to the Agenda.

The board made no changes to the agenda.

D. Superintendent Search Update.

- Mark Friedman, Sheila Williams-Harrison, and Victoria Hansen of BWP & Associates updated the board on the superintendent search.
- The search firm shared a tentative timeline with the board and established September 8 as the date for community engagement. On this date, the district will convene stakeholder focus groups and launch the leadership profile survey. The district will share information about these engagement opportunities with D96 staff, families, and community members in the coming days.

E. Superintendent’s Report.

1. Summer School Thank You.

Superintendent Ryan-Toye thanked everyone involved in this year’s summer school.

2. Summer Construction Update.

- Mr. Pros updated the Board on the summer construction projects, highlighting several key facility improvements. At Hauser, workers replaced the windows and installed a new boiler, and completed minor tuckpointing and field landscaping. At Blythe Park, construction of the new playground is underway and on track for completion in mid-September. Thanks to our custodial team’s hard work, deep cleaning at every school is complete, ensuring our facilities are clean, safe, and ready for opening day.

3. 2026-2027 School Year

1. Enrollment Report

- Superintendent Ryan-Toye shared highlights of the student enrollment for the 2026-2027 school year.

2. Teacher Institute Days.
 - Riverside School District 96 will begin the new school year with a professional learning collaboration and gathering of all staff on August 25 and 26. D96 will again meet at the Brookfield Zoo Discovery Center on Tuesday, August 25.
 - All board members are invited.
 - Institute day agendas were shared with the Board.
3. New Teacher Mentoring
 - New teacher mentoring will take place August 18-20 this year. The Board received the new teacher mentoring agendas.
4. Half-day professional learning.
 - When we approved our 2026-27 calendar in February, we adjusted our professional learning days. We added three half-day institute days on October 30, January 28, and May 14, along with the established April 23 half-day, allowing staff to collaborate and plan ahead while maintaining a student instruction day. Riverside Parks and Recreation will provide free childcare on these dates. Riverside Parks and Recreation provides before/after and Half-Day enrollment information.
5. Panorama Survey
 - At the June regular business meeting, the board approved transitioning from the 5Essentials survey to the Panorama Survey platform beginning in the 2026-2027 school year and concurrently discontinuing our membership with EAB. This is a one-year decision, so the district can always revert to 5Essentials if needed.
 - D96 submitted its letter of intent to change from 5Essentials to the Panorama Survey, and it has been approved.
4. Board/New Teacher Dinner - September 16.
 - New staff will again be introduced at the September 16th board meeting.
 - The board / new teacher dinner has been canceled.
5. Fall Social - October 8, 2026.
 - Superintendent Ryan Toye shared that, by popular demand, a Fall Social is scheduled for the day before the district's Teacher Institute Day on Thursday, October 8. This is an opportunity for staff to connect as one team. Last year's event was a huge success.
 - Please mark your calendars for October 8.

20-601 F. Approval of Consent Agenda.

The Secretary to the Board of Education read the Consent Agenda items aloud.

A motion was made by Mr. Hunt and supported by Mr. Barsotti to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

The motion carried the following roll call vote:

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

Nays: None
Abstain: None

G. Riverside Education Council.

The Riverside Education Council made no comments.

H. Board member comments.

Board President Muirheid thanked Vice-President Barsotti and Secretary Stephanie Gunn for handling a few meetings for him. It has been a busy summer.

I. Old Business.

1. FY 27 Budget.

- The Board discussed the initial FY 27 budget at the August 5th Special Board meeting. Board members were asked to direct any questions to either Superintendent Ryan-Toye or Mr. Wilder.

2. Annual Review of Intergovernmental Agreements.

- The board reviews its intergovernmental agreements (IGA) annually. This is a board request and a good practice.
- These agreements are in effect until terminated.
- The board questioned the Intergovernmental Agreement Between the Village of Riverside and the Board of Education of Riverside School District 96 Regarding the Employment of Crossing Guards. The board requested information on the district's current payment and clarification of the costs. The IGA states not to exceed \$30,000 (and then states \$35,000 in written-out form).

J. New Business/Discussion.

There was no new business.

K. Public Comment/Response.

There was no public comment.

L. Future Meeting Dates.

- September 2, 2026 - Board Self-Assessment, 6:00 p.m. in the Hauser Learning Resource Center.
- September 16, 2026 - Regular Business Meeting, 7:00 p.m. in the Hauser Learning Resource Center. (The Board will enter into Closed Session at 6:15 p.m., if necessary, and return to Open Session at 7:00 p.m.).
- October 7, 2026 - Committee of the Whole Meeting, 7:00 pm in the library at Blythe Park School.
- October 21, 2026 - Regular Business Meeting, 7:00 p.m. in the Hauser Learning Resource Center. (The Board will enter into Closed Session at 6:15 p.m., if necessary, and return to Open Session at 7:00 p.m.).

M. Information Items.

The Board received updates and information on the following monthly reports:

1. FOIA Responses.
2. Financial Statements.
3. Legal Bills.

N. Adjournment.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

August 19, 2026

Date Recorded

Date Approved

President, Board of Education

Secretary, Board of Education