

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF
THE BOARD OF EDUCATION (1st Thursday)
SCHOOL DISTRICT 33, DUPAGE COUNTY, WEST CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
October 1, 2026

President Rita Balgeman called the regular meeting of the Board of Education to order at 7:01 p.m. at Lemman Middle School, 238 E. Hazel St., West Chicago, Illinois. On roll call, the following members were present: Mrs. Rita Balgeman, Mrs. Morgan Banasiak, Mrs. Sandra Garcia, Mr. Chad McLean, Mrs. Molly Denton, and Mrs. Kari McCue. Absent: Mrs. Janette Hernandez.

ALSO PRESENT

Kristina Davis, Superintendent; Lea Pizinger, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning; Karen Apostoli, Executive Director of Business and Operations; Sarah Burnett, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources; Fred Cadena, Director of Facilities and Grounds; Cathy Park, Director of Assessment and Accountability; Sarah Norton, Director of Partnerships; Janet Ayala, Director of Multilingual Learners; and Niko Bubaris, Director of Technology.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Rita Balgeman led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States of America.

ADDITIONS/CHANGES

Item IXV. Close Session Reason 3 Discussion/review of previous closed session minutes was moved to the October 15, 2026 board meeting.

SHARED AGREEMENTS

Make decisions according to what is best for ALL District 33 students.

1. *Respect staff and other board members and their opinions.*
2. *Be willing to see things from the eyes of seven (7) people, not just one (1).*
3. *Allow everyone to complete their thoughts.*
4. *Commit to shared leadership.*
5. *Respect confidentiality.*
6. *Adhere to our belief in our students' full potential and successful future.*

Strategic Plan Goals

Goal #1 – Student Achievement

Goal #2 – Engaged Learning

Goal #3 – Strong Teams

Goal #4 – Family & Community Partnerships

Goal #5 - Smart Resources

SHARED AGREEMENTS
REFLECTION

At the July 18, 2013, meeting, the Board of Education finalized its “shared agreements” and agreed to begin each regular board meeting by reflecting on one agreement. The Board revised the shared agreements on November 6, 2014. The agreement's purpose is to help maintain a positive environment for conducting board work.

Board member Molly Denton shared her statement: “This past weekend, I took my two oldest kids to the 75th anniversary celebration of a camp that is near and dear to our hearts. We spent the weekend doing all the things you would expect at camp—fishing, riding bikes and horses, playing games, and enjoying the crisp fall weather and changing leaves. But while I was there, I was also reminded of something I learned long ago about the philosophy of the camp’s founder. He believed that every activity the kids and leaders experienced should contain a little bit of tension. The camp wasn’t just about having fun. It was about growth. I know firsthand how powerful that philosophy can be. As a child, I learned that I could do hard things. And later, as a young adult working at the camp, I continued to learn, grow, and discover what I was capable of when I pushed through something difficult. That idea also reminds me of something I’ve experienced over the past couple of years in one of our kindergarten classrooms. I’ve had the privilege of helping hatch chicken eggs in a kindergarten class. When a chick begins to hatch, it is an all-day affair. It starts with a tiny hole in the shell, and then comes the slow, laborious process of breaking free. It can be almost painful to watch. The children—and, if I’m being honest, sometimes even I—want to reach in and help. We want to make it easier. We want to remove the shell and let the chick out. But the chick needs to do the hard work itself. That struggle is what strengthens it enough to survive outside the shell. So, what does all of this have to do with our school board and District 33? I believe it is a reminder that we need to embrace the hard things and lean into the tension.

Our students will experience it when they struggle with a difficult concept and have to stretch their minds. Our teachers will experience it on the hard days when they are tired, frustrated, or facing challenges with their students—and choose to keep going and not give up. And we, as board members, will experience it when we have difficult conversations, navigate disagreements, or make decisions that are uncomfortable. All of us will encounter tension and difficulty. It may come through relationships, logistics, change, uncertainty, or simply the challenge of doing something new. But tension, when

handled well, can lead to growth. It can make us stronger. It can teach us what we are capable of. So I want to encourage all of us—students, teachers, administrators, parents, and board members—to resist the urge to pursue what's easy. Let's lean into the tension. Let's embrace the difficult conversations, the challenges, and the moments when growth feels uncomfortable. Because sometimes, just like that little chick working its way out of its shell, the struggle itself is what makes us strong enough for what comes next. And for the sake of our children and their futures, let's remember: We can do hard things."

RECOGNITION/SHOWCASE PRESENTATION

Board Salutes

The Board Salutes will be a standing item on the agenda starting with the February 3, 2022, board meeting. The Board of Education would like to recognize individuals from the District 33 community, including staff members, students, bus drivers, parents, and guardians, for actions that contribute to a positive culture and climate in District 33. This "shout-out" will become part of the official Board minutes under Board Salutes on the bi-weekly agendas.

Salute to: JoAnn Nelson - Leman Middle School LBS1

Submitted by: Karen Apostoli, Executive Director of B&O

JoAnn Nelson shows up — not just for her students, but for every family, every colleague, and every moment that matters in this community. As an LBS1, JoAnn Nelson has dedicated herself to students who need a steady, caring presence — and that is exactly what she provides every single day. She understands that special education is not just about instruction; it is about belonging, trust, and possibility. Her students don't just learn in her classroom — they grow. JoAnn builds deep, genuine relationships with the families she serves. Parents and guardians know they have a true partner in her — someone who listens, communicates, and advocates tirelessly for their children. That partnership makes all the difference.

Her collaborative spirit extends well beyond her own classroom. JoAnn works hand in hand with colleagues across the building, sharing her expertise and lifting up those around her. She makes the entire team stronger. And if you've ever attended a school event — a concert, a game, a celebration — chances are you've seen JoAnn there. She shows up. Every time. Her presence sends a clear message to students: you matter to me outside of this classroom too.

Congratulations on demonstrating these Portrait of a Teacher traits: Reflective, Effective Communicator, Lifelong Learner, Dedicated Professional.

Salute to: Bethany Chun - Leman Middle School Substitute

Submitted by: Kyle Casper, Leman Teacher

Bethany goes above and beyond her role as a building sub to support students and teachers. She is a tireless worker who is always seeking out opportunities to enrich the learning environment or interactions with students and staff.

She is extraordinarily kind, patient, understanding, and demonstrates professionalism to the highest degree. She is a welcome addition to any team or class. For going way above her job description on a daily basis, Bethany deserves to be recognized for the work she puts forth.

Congratulations on demonstrating these Portrait of a Support Staff traits: Patient, Team Player, Flexible, Understanding, Dedicated Professional.

Salute to: Stephen Rogers - Leman Middle School Dean

Submitted by: Kala Barzda, Leman Teacher

He consistently makes a positive difference in our school community through his passion, strong work ethic, and genuine commitment to supporting both staff and students. He gives his full effort to everything he does and goes above and beyond to make sure people feel supported, heard, and valued.

One of the ways he makes a significant impact is through his communication with staff. He is knowledgeable, approachable, and communicates clearly and respectfully. He creates an environment where staff feel comfortable going to him with any need, question, or concern. Staff know that they can count on him to listen, provide guidance, and help find a solution without judgment. This accessibility and support help build trust and make staff feel valued and respected.

He also consistently puts the best interests of both students and staff at the forefront of his decisions. When challenges arise, he works to find solutions that are thoughtful, fair, and focused on what will ultimately benefit the school community. His willingness to step in, help, and give every effort has a direct impact on creating a supportive and positive school environment. His passion for education and his commitment to doing what is best for others are evident in his everyday actions. He leads by example, encourages collaboration, and demonstrates that strong leadership is about supporting others and helping them succeed. His knowledge, compassion, accessibility, and work ethic have made a meaningful

difference in the lives of both staff and students. Congratulations on demonstrating these Portrait of an Administrator traits: Creative Visionary, Effective Communicator, Dedicated Professional, Lifelong Learner, Inspiring Catalyst.

Presentation

26-27 Building Goals

Cathy Park, Director of Assessment and Accountability, and Building Principals presented the district's goals and action plans for the 26/27 school year. This year marks the start of the new 2026-2031 Strategic Plan. Principals set SMART goals and action plans during the summer and are currently in the implementation phase of the plan-do-study-act cycle. The fall MAP testing cycle was just completed; each grade level set its goals, and PLC meetings have started as they begin implementing the action plans. Principals shared their goals for the coming school year, aligned with district goals, and the specific strategies they will implement to carry out their action plans. Birth to 3 will continue to focus on reaching the most vulnerable children and families in West Chicago, working with parents to increase the number of books, supporting parents in reading or sharing 1,000 books before they start preschool, and labeling/naming items. Preschool will focus on preparing 4- and 5-year-olds entering kindergarten, closing the achievement gap, increasing the number of students who previously did not qualify for the program, and setting literacy, math, and SEL goals. Each school has set ambitious goals for the 26/27 school year, working to increase the percentage of students performing at or above the 65th percentile in MAP English reading by spring 2027. Schools have also established REACH action plans to ensure they reach their rigorous goals. Student have also established individual goals based on their results. Building culture goals have also been set based on the 5 essentials survey. Principals will return in the winter to update the Board on their progress.

E.T.A.W.C. STATEMENT

Kerry Duffey, Deb Taylor, and Marilyn Jursich: "Good evening. Today, we would like to bring forward three concerns on behalf of our membership. We recognize the Board's policy to take no action tonight, so we plan to return on October 15 and future meetings until the issues are resolved. First, district administrators were unaware of a change to the Illinois School Code that restricts the type of coursework that may be accepted for salary advancement. It was passed on August 7 and applies to certain classwork completed after July

1, 2026. At least 6 staff members were denied the salary advancement they were expecting after completing classes that were approved by HR. We don't know how many others will be impacted. While we appreciate the thorough review and effort of the HR department to communicate with those affected, we are concerned that the district was not prepared for these adjustments sooner, especially as many staff members have pre-approved courses that now may not count for salary advancement. The amendment was first proposed to the House of Representatives in February and was passed by both the House and Senate in May. It is our understanding that ISBE tracks legislation related to education and disseminates information through the Regional Office of Education. It is unfortunate that there are financial consequences for our members, but no accountability for those responsible for staying up to date and compliant with IL School Code. We are continuing to work with IEA legal counsel and Sarah Burnett about how this legislation is interpreted and enforced in D33. Secondly, we would like to present the initial thoughts of our members about cameras in classrooms. As you continue your discussion tonight, please take into consideration that our members and the members of the SSA and SSPA overwhelmingly oppose installing cameras in the classroom. Through our survey we learned about the most pressing concerns for ETAWC members that we will discuss with District leaders at an upcoming meeting. And finally, across the district, staff feel overburdened by responsibilities expected this school year. It is typical that the first two or three weeks of school are busy and stressful as everyone adjusts to the school routine. But today was our 31st day of school, almost one-fifth of our academic year. We agree with the statement in our current collective bargaining agreement that reads, "*We believe teachers are expected to ensure high levels of student engagement and learning which may involve time beyond the instructional day for preparation and collaboration.*" However, we have found that significant time during and beyond the instructional day is needed for the multitude of smaller tasks required by the district that are *not* directly related to student engagement and learning. Cumbersome and redundant documentation and communication about student achievement or behavior; navigating new procedures, tools, and resources; or managing how other staff should push-in to support students are just some of the tasks that strain energy and attention. 55% of respondents report that they are working more than 8 hours outside of contract time per week. Staff have described their

workload as: **overwhelming, unrealistic, intense, grueling, stressful, and suffocating.** The cognitive load for balancing everything is actually leaving teachers mentally exhausted and stressed about compliance, rather than focused on providing quality instruction. Here are some direct quotes from our members:

- I've been here a long time. Workload has majorly increased and I can no longer effectively do my job, and my personal health has gone down.
- I am coming to class drained, with very little energy to give my best self to our kids.
- Work has become very hard to WANT to come to this year.
- I don't feel accomplished because I'm doing too many things in a mediocre manner instead of fewer things really well.
- Every day I try 100%, and I will never stop, but I feel like I'm drowning way too early in the year.
- I almost quit after the second week of school.
- It's a lot to keep up with and I constantly feel like I'm trying to catch up instead of ever feeling caught up.
- It feels like tasks/responsibilities just continue to be added, with no regard for how they will actually be completed/achieved. We are simply told to "do it," and then are expected to figure it out, often going above and beyond what is outlined under our job description.
- It's taking time away from my family and personal life where I feel anxiety that participating in family and friend get-togethers won't allow me to be prepared for school.
- Had I known the expectations would be this intense I would have resigned.
- District 33 has amazing teachers that care very much about student success — with that being said, the careers we have should not have negative impact on her personal lives, physical, and mental health.
- I have never felt this continuous amount of stress in all my years of teaching.
- I've been at this for a long time, and have never felt so incompetent and unprepared as I do this year.
- After 20 years of teaching, I should not have to feel an overwhelming sense of self-doubt as an educator. Daily I feel like what I am doing is never enough, and I feel exhausted and anxious that I cannot complete my work.
- The amount of seemingly little things that we have to do/remember has become daunting and degrading.
- The message "it's not about the test scores" is misleading with all the testing and focus on test scores.

It is our belief that teachers would be better able to ensure high levels of engagement and learning if they were less stressed by the 1,000 papercuts of all the small yet demanding tasks. We hope to work with the Department of Teaching & Learning to support teachers and mitigate the factors that will strain our teachers to the point of burnout or resignation.

Thank you for taking these concerns into consideration as well as for your unwavering dedication to the students in West Chicago. While we would like to stay for the rest of your discussion, we still have work to finish tonight for our D33 kids.”

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment at this time.

No follow-up comment at this time.

APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA

Motion by Banasiak, seconded by McLean, to approve the consent agenda as follows:

Approve Current Expenditures

...approved the list of bills dated September 21, 2026, through October 2, 2026, in the amount of \$885,437.41;

Approve Imprest

...approved Imprest account from September 10, 2026, to September 23, 2026, in the amount of \$235;

Approve Personnel Items

... approved the following personnel report:

0 Administration:

0 Certified:

5 Classified: Ivan Pani, Head Custodian at Turner, effective October 1, 2026; Maria Cuautle, Lunch Supervisor at Pioneer, effective October 1, 2026; Dora Escobar, Lunch Supervisor at Pioneer, effective October 1, 2026; Courtney Jeffery, Library Aide at Currier, effective October 2, 2026; Bengu Aybaraz, Paraprofessional at Indian Knoll, effective October 13, 2026;

1 Resignation: Katherine Fortuna, Library Aide at Currier, effective September 24, 2026;

1 Retirement: Federico Cadena, Director of Facilities and Grounds at ESC, effective January 1, 2027;

On roll call, the following members voted aye: Banasiak, McLean, Denton, McCue, Balgeman, and Garcia. Nays: None. Motion carried: 6 ayes, 0 nays.

DISCUSSION OF NEW / ONGOING BUSINESS WITH POSSIBLE ACTION

Presentation Follow-up

No presentation follow-up at this time.

Bushue Background Screening System	The Board will review the Bushue Background Screening (BBS) information, which provides fingerprinting and background screening services for all industries. The Board will vote at the October 15, 2026 board meeting.
Server Quotes	Karen Apostoli, Executive Director of Business and Operations, informed the board of the ongoing data collection and the need for additional time to bring quotes. Karen will bring quotes and further information at the October 15, 2026 board meeting.
Finance/Facilities	The Board of Education received a financial report from Karen Apostoli, Executive Director of Business and Operations, stating that the district had received \$1,212,423.00 in Evidence-Based Founding, \$2,461.03 in Special Ed-private Facility Tuition, \$72,745.54 in the National School Lunch Program, \$25,338.77 in the School Breakfast Program, and \$25,681.00 in Title I Low Income since the last meeting.
Insurance Renewal	The Board will review the intent to renew the contract with Collective Insurance Cooperative (CLIC) as the insurance carrier for the 2027-2028 school year. The Board will vote at the October 15, 2026 board meeting.
Proposed Illinois Association of School Boards Resolutions for Consideration at the 2026 IASB Delegate Assembly	Kristina Davis, Superintendent, and the Board of Education discussed a portion of the resolutions that will be voted on during the Delegate Assembly. They will continue discussing additional resolutions at the following board meetings and vote at the November 5, 2026 board meeting.

ACTION ITEMS

St. Andrew's Art Donation

Motioned by McLean, seconded by Banasiak, to approve the donation from St. Andrew's of \$2,500 (\$500 for each elementary school) for art supplies. On roll call, the following members voted aye: McLean, Banasiak, Balgeman, Garcia, Denton, and McCue. Nays: None. Motion carried: 6 ayes, 0 nays.

INFORMATION ITEMS

Curriculum Night Recap

The Board received a recap of its annual Curriculum Nights at each school.

Bullying Prevention Month	The Board received the highlights of the activities and events held at each school for National Bullying Prevention Month in October.
Current Job Listing	The Board received the most recent posting of available job positions in School District 33.
School Newsletters	The Board reviewed the School newsletters.
Suggested Agenda Items for Next Board Meeting	No suggested items at this time.
Board Outreach	No Board outreach at this time.
Parking Lot	No parking lot items at this time.

REPORT OF DISTRICT COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Committee Updates	Board members were provided with the committee update slideshow.
Calendar Committee	Calendar committee information was shared.
Open Comments	The board discussed dates for their upcoming IASB board training.

REVIEW OF UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS

The Board of Education members reviewed upcoming meetings and events.

CLOSED SESSION

Motion by McLean, second by Banasiak, to go into closed session at 8:02 p.m. to discuss **(1)** the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of a specific employee(s), specific independent contractors, specific volunteers, or District legal counsel: however, a meeting to consider an increase in compensation to a specific employee of a public body that is subject to the Local Government Wage Increase Transparency Act may not be closed and shall be open to the public and posted and held in accordance with the Open Meetings Act 5 ILCS 120/2c) (1), amended by P.A. 101-459. **(2)** Student disciplinary cases. Any matter involving an individual student. 5ILCS 120/2(c)(10). Minutes of meetings held for this reason shall never be released to protect the individual

student's privacy. On roll call, the following members voted aye: McLean, Banasiak, Garcia, Denton, Balgeman, and McCue. Nays: None. Motion carried: 6 ayes, 0 nays.

ROLL CALL

On roll call at 8:16 p.m., the following members were present: Balgeman, Banasiak, Garcia, McLean, Denton, and McCue.

Absentees: Hernandez.

ALSO PRESENT

Kristina Davis, Superintendent; Sarah Burnett, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources; and Lea Pizinger, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning.

Out of Closed Session

Motion by McLean, seconded by Banasiak, to reconvene to open session at 9:46 p.m. The President took a voice vote and declared the motion passed.

ACTION ITEMS FOLLOWING CLOSED SESSION

Approve Closed Session Minutes

Motion by McLean, seconded by Banasiak, to approve closed session minutes of September 17, 2026, as read. The President took a voice vote and declared the motion passed.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by McLean, seconded by Banasiak, to adjourn the meeting at 9:47 p.m. The President took a voice vote and declared the motion passed.

President, Rita Balgeman

Secretary, Sandra Garcia