

Minutes of Workshop Meeting

The Board of Education Jenison Public Schools

The Board of Education of Jenison Public Schools held a workshop meeting on Monday, October 27, 2025, beginning at 6:00 pm in the Jenison Center for the Arts Boardroom.

Call to Order:

President of the Board of Education, Dr. Hartman, called the Jenison Public Schools Board of Education Workshop meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

Members Present:

Eric Hartman, D.C.,
President

William Waalkes,
Vice President

Chris Reed, Ph.D.,
Treasurer

Jen Postema,
Secretary

Jennifer Griffin, DPM
Trustee

Shannon Hogan,
Trustee

Donna Mooney
Trustee

Others Present:

Brandon Graham, Ph.D.,
Superintendent

Leslie Philipps,
Assistant Superintendent /
Title IX Coordinator

Christine Marcy,
Director of Finance and
Operations

Rebekkah Redmer, Ph.D.,
JIA Executive Director of
Innovative Programming

Krista Osterberg,
Director of JIA

Cameron Kuiper,
JIA Dean of Faculty and
Student Success

Kari Blanchett,
PFM Financial Advisor

Aaron Wright,
PFM Financial Advisor

Katie Moy,
Chief of Staff

Public Comment:

Jason Lerg (3502 Tearose Dr, Hudsonville) - He shared two comments. First, he expressed appreciation for the Marching Band, noting their outstanding and entertaining performance over the weekend despite the cold weather. The band scored very well, comparable to Carmel and Avon (usually top Marching Band programs, and one of which he wouldn't mind outscoring at the National competition). His second comment was regarding the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education. He mentioned that his daughter would have another test graded by AI and plans to share the results. While he recognizes the potential benefits, still has concerns with use of AI in schools and how the district will use it. He ended by stating that he is looking forward to the band's upcoming performances

Jennifer Gray (Jenison; address not given): She shared that she attended the MASB Delegate Assembly and expressed disappointment that Mrs. Mooney made voted on a resolution on behalf of the Jenison Board of Education regarding the removal of books from schools. She stated that she believes students should have access to all literature. She noted that video footage of the Delegate Assembly

should include the resolutions and statements made. She asked if the District and Board could clarify their stance on inclusive literature.

Approval of Agenda:

Mrs. Postema motioned to approve the agenda as prepared. Dr. Griffin seconded the motion. The Board of Education voted to approve the agenda as presented with a vote of 7-0.

Action Items:

1. Approval of Minutes:

Dr. Reed motioned to approve the meeting minutes from the October 13, 2025, Board of Education Closed Session and Regular Meeting as presented. Mr. Waalkes seconded the motion. The Board of Education voted to approve the meeting minutes from the October 13, 2025, Board of Education Closed Session and Regular Meeting as presented with a vote of 7-0.

Discussion Items:

1. Bond Sale Update

Ms. Marcy reminded the Board of Education of the 2024 bond sale and noted that additional bond sales are planned for 2026 and 2028. She asked to have a PFM Financial review with the board about bond options. She introduced Ms. Keri Blanchett and Mr. Aaron Wright, PFM Financial Advisors. PFM shared about bond refunding, why to consider it, how it works, the district's current refunding of 2016 bonds, the process of refunding, timeline, and the next steps related to the sale and the management of bond funds.

They explained bond refunding, which is similar to refinancing a home mortgage, replacing older, higher-interest bonds with new ones at lower rates. This does not extend the existing debt term approved by voters. They shared with the board why consider a bond refunding? It locks in lower interest rates on bonds; enables the district to save money on its debt payments; allows the District the opportunity to optimize its overall debt payments and projected millage rates. How Refunding benefits the Community? 1. No New Taxes (refunding does not create new debt but saves money on existing obligations that voters have already approved); 2. Long-Term Savings (refunding allows for an accelerated reduction in borrowing principal); 3. Responsible Stewardship (demonstrates the district's unwavering commitment to managing taxpayer funds wisely and efficiently); and, 4. Transparency and Trust (By communicating these steps clearly, it shows that the district continually looks for ways to be efficient and fiscally responsible).

The District is considering a current refunding of callable 2016 bonds in February 2026, which could result in significant savings based on current interest rates. If rates rise, the District can delay refunding until more favorable conditions.

The Refunding Process: 1. Board Authorization (approval by resolution allowing the District to proceed with refunding); 2. Drafting Financial Documents (Municipal advisor, underwriter, and counsel prepare the Preliminary Official Statement (POS) outlining the District finances and debt plans); 3. Due Diligence & Rating Review (the District participates in a comprehensive financial review of the POS and a call with the rating agency. A strong credit rating can significantly lower interest costs.); 4. Market Monitoring and Finalize Structure (municipal advisor and underwriter track market rates continuously and identify the optimal time to refinance for maximum savings, and finalize structure); 5. Sale & Closing (bonds are sold, interest rates are locked in, numbers are finalized, closing documents are prepared, bonds are closed, escrow is funded, and the District begins realizing substantial savings immediately); and, 6. Old bonds paid off (refunded bonds are paid off within 90 days). In summary, refinancing is a fiscally responsible step, and does not increase debt, but rather lowers the cost of exiting obligations and positions the District for continued success.

The summary includes: Significant Savings (bond refunding can save taxpayer dollars through lower interest rates on existing debt obligations); Financial Stability (improves our financial position and allows the District to optimize the District's overall debt structure); and Prudent Management (demonstrates the District's commitment to responsible stewardship of community resources).

2. Jenison Innovation Academy (JIA) Presentation:

Dr. Graham expressed gratitude for the program and the excellence in education it provides. Dr. Becky Redmer, Mr. Cam Kuiper, and Mrs. Krista Osterberg presented an update on Jenison Innovation Academy (JIA) to the Board of Education. JIA was established in 2010, and operates across two dedicated district buildings (JIA Elementary and JIA Secondary) which serve as central hubs for virtual and hybrid learning. JIA reaches students through distance education across throughout West Michigan, across the nation, and internationally.

For the 2025–2026 school year, JIA enrolled 1,313 students. Now in its 15th year, JIA offers seven program options, more than 100 digital courses, with a 100% graduation rate, and a 95% course completion and passing rate. Guided by a student-first philosophy and a “think outside the box” approach, JIA embodies the district's Wildcat Way across grades K–12, providing flexible, high-quality programming tailored to each student's needs.

Dr. Redmer reviewed the program's growth from its beginnings as a pilot in 2009 to its current structure, which includes seven program options, over 100 digital courses, and a broad range of learning models such as hybrid, homeschool, and tuition-based programming.

Mr. Kuiper shared the history of the enrollment and Dr. Redmer followed up on how JIA was started from its beginnings as a pilot in 2009 to its current structure. Her involvement began with her willingness to volunteer to do some research. She stated that a lot of the research and learning came from higher education models that was adapted for K-12 learning. She shared that her mom was an example of online learning when she was younger. She watched her mom study, which helped shape Dr. Redmer's online education philosophy. Later, her husband also played an impact when he also got involved with online schooling through another online platform. Drawing inspiration from her family's experiences with online education and higher education models, she adapted those concepts for K–12 learning. Dr. Redmer did a lot of the investigation while she was an Assistant Principal at the High School, and in 2009 much of the research led to a pilot year, and has progressively grown since with over 1,300 students enrolled in the current year. The program began as a pilot in 2009 and officially launched in 2010 as Jenison Cyber School for 9th-grade students. In 2011, JIA (at that time known as Jenison International Academy) was established as a new school with the Michigan Department of Education, serving grades 7–10. Over the years, JIA expanded its offerings. In 2012, JIA introduced blended learning options to Jenison high school students (split-schedules began), launched the international F-1 Visa program, and expanded to grades 6-11. In 2013, JIA developed online course design, added summer enhancement programs, and expanded its programming to grades 6–12. In 2014, JIA established the JIA Elementary (K–5) and relocated to its first dedicated building on Church Street (it was working through the high school building). In 2016, the JIA Homeschool Partnership program was established. In 2018, JIA moved teaching and learning to Connie Street (JIA Center for Learning and formerly Maplewood Elementary School) and expanded hybrid offerings. In 2023, JIA had a name change from Jenison International Academy to Jenison Innovation Academy. From 2024 to present, JIA introduced tuition-based programming through U-Tech Prep, and established institutional partnerships. Offering an program for outside of the state learners, helps bring in revenue for the district and provides a lot more opportunities. JIA has been applying to provide online programming in a variety of states across the nation including Utah. The JIA Center for Learning provides weekly hybrid learning, on-campus learning center, community days (K-12), student clubs and activities, a community garden, and opportunities for professional collaboration.

Dr. Redmer highlighted the JIA employees throughout her presentation, giving them praise and recognizing and commending the team for their dedication, collaboration, and innovation, which have contributed significantly to the program's success. Krista Osterberg, Director of JIA, was one of the first

people to help Dr. Redmer explore the online learning programming and an ongoing program leader. She has been an asset every since. Cameron Kuiper, Dean of Faculty and Student Success, has played many vital roles throughout the growth of JIA, and plays an instrumental role in program development. Emily Kaminski, Director of International Student Programs, has helped lead the international programming for over 11 years. James Mueller, JIA K-12 Principal, helped start the homeschool programming, and is now the K-12 Principal. Kristin Cox, Director of School Partnerships, now oversees the homeschool programs and community partnerships. Tahira Copland, Director of Admissions and Strategic Communication, oversees U-Tech Prep, tuition-based programming, institution partnerships, and family support. Kyle Cox, Assistant Principal, was one of the first employees at JIA and now serves the K-5 Academic Guidance. Jenna Schreur, Admissions Coordinator and Registrar, helps with local enrollment, record keeping, and communication. Steve Jonker, Technology Coordinator, helps with technology management and family support. Marissa Ortiz, Honors Program Director, has helped develop the online honors program (no other online program offers). Joslyn Ashcraft, Executive Manager, assists the Executive Director, people operations, and communications.

Mrs. Osterberg highlighted some stories of former JIA students and the impact JIA had on their educations.

Dr. Redmer shared that the JIA team is embarking on a new strategic planning process, with the goal of completing the plan by June 2026. The process will include evaluating stakeholder input, enrollment trends, and facility needs. The plan will continue elevating online and hybrid instructional design, and hopes to add accreditation by June 2026. It plans to grow institutional partnerships and explore new opportunities through tuition-based programs.

Dr. Redmer also continues to engage with lawmakers to advocate for online education, working to increase awareness, recognition, and support for innovative virtual learning models that serve students across the state and beyond.

Dr. Graham expressed appreciation for the JIA team and their dedication to providing innovative learning experiences. He shared his enthusiasm for the future of JIA and the unique opportunities it offers students, emphasizing confidence that the program will continue to thrive and expand.

3. Round Table:

- **31aa Grant Funding:** Mrs. Philipps shared an update on the State's 31aa Grant funding, which is intended to support schools for safety and mental health. The State has changed some of the rules about how this money can be used, and imposes several conditions on districts that opt in to receive 31aa Funding. Recipient districts must agree with the conditions in the event of a "mass casualty event." The funding can be used for things like hiring mental health staff, training, or safety equipment (like cameras or door locks). However, it can't be used for things the district already has (for example, resource officers or support dogs). The opt-in deadline is November 12, 2025, and districts that join will receive payments by the end of the year. The amount per student could be around \$140, but it depends on how many districts choose to participate. Districts that take this funding must agree to the agreements if a mass casualty event happens. These new rules could have legal and privacy impacts, so Thrun Law Firm advises schools to be cautious. It could mean loss of the Attorney-Client privilege, could be a FOIA issue, could impact the Open Meetings Act, and more. Dr. Graham and Mrs. Philipps would like more time to review the details and will share more information with the Board as soon as possible. Other districts are also unsure about whether to opt in. If the District chooses to receive funding, the Board of Education would need to call a special meeting since the November regular meeting is scheduled later than the opt-in deadline.
- **Marching Band:** Mr. Waalkes echoed the praises from Mr. Lerg regarding the Marching Band, and is excited for the next two performances (States championships in Detroit and Nationals in Indianapolis).
- **MASB Delegate Assembly:** Mrs. Mooney served as the JPS Board of Education delegate to the MASB Delegate Assembly. She shared that she received the meeting agenda only a few

days before the event, leaving little time to review the materials or discuss them with the Board. During the meeting, Mrs. Mooney supported a proposal from another district regarding the removal of sexually explicit materials or books from libraries and schools. Some board members expressed disappointment that Mrs. Mooney spoke and voted on behalf of the Board without prior discussion or direction from the Board.

- Board members discussed that individual members should not speak or vote on behalf of the full Board without prior discussion and approval. Typically, the Board President serves as the spokesperson for the Board unless authorization is given otherwise.
 - The Board agreed that, before future Delegate Assemblies or similar meetings, they will try to get the agenda in advance and review any items or issues so that the designated representative will be prepared for the meeting and can vote according to the Board's position on any issues or voting items.
- **Fall Season:** It's been a great fall season! Our students are achieving incredible success across many activities. Not only does the Marching Band continue to perform well, but the football team is in the playoffs (first time in years), Water Polo is ranked first in the state, Cross Country holds both number 1 and 2 in the state, and the Girls Volleyball Team is competing in a tournament with the four best teams in the state. What an exciting time to celebrate our students' hard work and accomplishments!
- **Condolences and Gift for Dr. Griffin:** The Board and Administration expressed their condolences to Dr. G, who recently lost her husband. A gift was presented to her on behalf of the Board and Administration. A celebration of life will be held at a later date. The Board extends its deepest sympathy and prayers to Dr. G and her family during this difficult time.

Adjournment:

The President of the Board of Education, Dr. Hartman, adjourned the Jenison Public Schools Board of Education meeting at 7:55 pm with acclamation.

Respectfully submitted,

Jen Postema, Secretary
Jenison Public Schools Board of Education

Future Meetings:

Month:	Regular Meeting (held at 6:30 pm):	Workshop (held at 6:00 pm)
November 2025	Mon, Nov 17	
December 2025	Mon, Dec 8	
January 2026	Mon, Jan 12	Mon, Jan 26
February 2026	Mon, Feb 16	
March 2026	Mon, Mar 9	Mon, Mar 23
April 2026	Mon, Apr 20	
May 2026	Mon, May 11	
June 2026	Mon, Jun 8	
July 2026	Mon, Jul 13	