

MINGUS UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
1801 East Fir, Cottonwood, AZ 86326

GOVERNING BOARD
MINUTES OF MEETING

Mingus Union High School Library
Thursday, September 25, 2025 5:00 PM

Governing Board:

Ms. Taylor Bell
Ms. Ashley Koepnick
Mr. Austin Babcock
Mr. Frank Nevarez
Mr. Will David

Also Present:

Superintendent Herne
Dean of Students Forbes
Director Elmer
A.P. Monical

Note Start Time 5:00PM

I. OPENING

1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call

Roll Call and Attendance

Board President Taylor Bell here
Vice President Ashley Koepnick here
Mr. Austin Babcock here
Mr. Frank Nevarez here
Mr. Will David here

3. Pledge of Allegiance

4. Moment of Silence

5. Adoption of Agenda

Motion to accept the agenda made by Vice President Koepnick

Second by Board Member Nevarez

Vote

Board President Taylor Bell Aye
Vice President Ashley Koepnick Aye
Mr. Austin Babcock Yes
Mr. Frank Nevarez Yes
Mr. Will David Yes
Passed 5-0

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS

At the conclusion of the call to the public, Board members may respond to any criticism made by an individual who addressed the Board. Board members may also direct staff to review the concern or request the item be discussed at a future meeting. Board members may not discuss or take legal action on matters raised during this open call to the public. If you have submitted a Request to Speak form, the Board President will call upon you and ask that you **please identify yourself by clearly stating for the record your name and address.** Citizens are asked to restrict their comments to three (3) minutes. Groups wishing to speak should select a spokesperson to represent the view of the group. **(Board President may refrain from reciting this section if no RTS forms have been submitted).**

No request to speak

III. Reports

The Superintendent and Board Member(s) reports will consist of brief summaries. These reports will be without any discussion or feedback.

Board Member and Superintendent Report(s)

Board Members will report/give feedback on the Superintendent's Board Relationship and Governance Team collegiality.

Board Member Babcock—Ya, thank you. I want to take a moment before the Board and Superintendent Herne to take responsibility for an outburst at the last Board meeting. Emotions are powerful things that sometimes get the best of us, not just kids, that's what happened. I would, like students I take control of a way that was disrupted. I regret the discomfort or confusion that I may have caused. I could have handled the situation better. As I said I let my emotions get the best of me. For over two and half years, I've done my best to try to make Mingus Union High School a better place. A school where students can come, learn, grow, and leave prepared to face the challenges of life. I look forward to continuing that work with Superintendent Herne and this Board as we continue to focus on the pressing needs of improving our proficiencies, developing a more concrete curriculum, and implementing a strategic plan. Again, I apologize for my outburst and the obstruction that it has caused.

Board Member David—I've made a prepared statement as the new guy, I've got to write things down. I read a lot, but generally I avoid books that claim to distill success, health, well-being or any other desirable outcome into a convenient set of discreet characteristics/habits. Yet I found myself drawn to an insight offered by Steven Covey in the Seven Habits of Effective People. He wrote, "Trust is glue of life. It's the most essential ingredient in effective communities. It's the fundamental principle that holds all relationships." In my military career trust is what allowed soldiers to get must needed sleep in dangerous conditions, knowing that others were prepared and on watch. We aren't in combat, but trust still plays an essential role in our governance team and with the community. What happened at Board Meeting was wrong; I do appreciate the apology we heard. We let our Superintendent down and even in the aftermath of the event, members continued to let her down. The apology is a welcomed first step in rebuilding trust within the team, and between us and the district and the public. But trust lost is not quickly re-established. The apology is a first step on a long path to building a governance team that's bonded by trust. This will take time, hard work and dedication all while we'll deal with issues and opportunities. Since time is pressing, we will literally have to rebuild our plane while in flight. We must get on with the business of the district. We must accelerate the pace of constructive change that advances our emerging strategic plan. The status quo isn't good enough, because change is coming. While most of the issues that degrade academic readiness and graduation rates are tied to factors that we cannot control such as state education budget, we still must do better. Which means innovate, adapt, and work together to find solutions. Trust is essential to that process. Trust includes confidence that colleagues are well prepared. Preparation for this team translates into weekly one-to-ones with the superintendent, multi-day professional development and informational conferences where we hear from experts and collaborate with colleagues from across the state facing similar challenges. We consult with education experts sharing their insights with the rest of the team via reports to the Superintendent. And we read. We do lots of reading. Not focused on a single book, article, or website, but a breadth of peer reviewed expert material that offers

different perspectives grounded in sound research methodology and evidence. Attending events, especially related to academics, is also important. For example, the Superintendent invited us to an in-class teacher peer evaluation last week. I saw a teacher using a cutting-edge strategy from Harvard's Right Question Institute that advances students' critical thinking, synthesis and application. I teach graduate students this stuff so I was pleased to see a tailored approach for high school students. I also saw teachers gathering feedback from their colleagues' performance using the WICOR Framework, a key enabler of the strategies used here. While collegiality will help, it alone will not solve our problems. I support my Superintendent that doesn't mean we always agree. Our one-to-ones are full of respectful debate on issues drawing on deep preparation and experiences. The entire Board must do the same. For that would be to better prepare, research, to analyze and draft policies. While the sacrifice required for this position is far more modest than expected in military service; it will take more of our time. Including time taken away from jobs, families, and friends. Such is the expectation of those who entrusted us with the offices we hold. Thank You

Board Member Nevarez—I too would like to address the issue that took place. Unfortunately, I was not hear that night. But let me begin by thanking you, Board Member Babcock, for the statement you made. I do believe we need teamwork. Teamwork is the glue, I believe, for us to go forward and get done for this district what needs to get done. Primarily to ensure that our students meet the requirements if not exceed to prepare themselves for the future. I also want to take the opportunity to express my support for you, Superintendent Herne. For your work with our students here at Mingus Union. Your leadership is not only marked by vision but also by deep care for our students and families. The dedication you show in guiding our school inspires confidence and hope for the future of our students. Your commitment reflects strength of character and heart of service. You create an environment where students feel seen and our community feels united. I'm grateful for your courage, resilience, and tireless work in helping shape broader opportunities for every student. Know that you are valued, appreciated and supported. Not only as a leader but also as a person who is making a lasting difference. And I may also add that I do support this entire Board. I think we have something that can really produce some incredible results. We may disagree and I think it's ok if we disagree, but we need to go forward. Thank You

Vice President Koepnick — As a Board Member I believe it is essential that everyone connected to our district is treated with respect and professionalism. I have full confidence in the Leadership that we have here at Mingus and the job that is being carried out on behalf of our students, staff, and families. Mingus is an incredibly fortunate school to have a leader who is dedicated, hardworking, and truly cares for the success and well-being of our students. Her leadership is invaluable, and I stand firmly in support of the work that she is doing to drive this district in the direction that our Board sees fit. Moving forward it is important that we maintain a culture of respect and collaboration so that our district and our students can continue to thrive. I want to thank every Board Member moving forward I hope that we can make good strides for our community and school.

Board President Bell—Well we almost went down as the perfect Board, just this close. But, I think that, I mimic a lot of what everybody had said; I think it's stressful and tiring Superintendent Herne knows better than anybody what it takes to pour yourself into a school and your students, your staff and your teachers. And so I think that the important thing is again that this Board is united in the most important ways of what we want to do for our students and our teachers in supporting each other. Obviously, we don't always, you know, go about things in the best way. I think that at some point we have all, possibly offended one another or disagreed. I think at the end of the day we have a team that is very capable of making very good changes here. I think the focus is continued support and moving forward in all that we do. Thank You Board

Superintendent Herne—Thank you Board Member Babcock for your apology I do appreciate that. Know that in my heart I had already forgiven you that's just the Christian in me, so God Bless you, you know I love you. I do also want to recognize however, Vice President, you called me the next day and apologized on behalf of this Board. I love you for that, that was incredible, and it was very heartfelt. Board Member Nevarez, you called me as well and apologized. Your words were beautiful, and I appreciate that. I want to give a special thank you to Board Member Dr. Will David. Who, that night, stayed with me, walked me out to my car, made sure that I was ok. Your

kindness and professionalism really means a lot to me and I thank you so much. And we are tough military birds, so I am going to pull myself together as I finish going through this. I think Board the greater side of this, it really is that we need to be an effective governance team. We need to be able to make decisions that go towards the quality education we want to give to our students. Trust has been broken; trust has been lost but we need to build that trust back so we can continue to move our organization forward. Our goal, you know my goal, my hope is that we do come together as that amazing professional team that we are. That we are capable of leading and making change and in order to do that we do need to be invested in the task at hand, committed to the professional development, all of the continuous improvement that we do, adhering to our policies, and abiding by our protocols and procedures that we have in place that guide our work. Governing Board thank you so much for this public display of your support of me as a Superintendent. I want to thank my staff who also have been amazing over these past couple of weeks. I look forward to the things that we can do to make the Powerhouse in the Verde Valley truly what it needs to be. Thank you Board

IV. ACTION ITEMS- CONSENT

1. **Approval of Routine Vouchers**
2. **Expense**-- Vouchers 1009 and 1010
3. **Payroll** --Voucher #8
4. **Donation**
Flag Football- Herradura Gold
Girls' Soccer -- Shirley McNulty
5. **Personnel** -HR Report
6. **Agreements**

Intergovernmental Agreement for Algebra 1 Credit Agreement between Clarkdale-Jerome Elementary School District and Mingus Union High School District.

The FY2026 per student amount is \$400.54 not the \$381.47 reflected in the attached documents.

Vice President Koepnick—motion to approve Consent Agenda
Second made by President Bell
Vote

Board President Taylor Bell Aye
Vice President Ashley Koepnick Aye
Mr. Austin Babcock Yes
Mr. Frank Nevarez Yes
Mr. Will David Yes
Passed 5-0

V. ACTION ITEMS - DISTRICT BUSINESS

V.1 **CTE program "Outdoor Education & Conservation"** -- creation of a detailed course description and standards. The course has been prepared to be submitted to the state as a LOP (Local Occupational Program). (CTE Director Elmer)

Superintendent Herne clarified the needed motion being sought at the end of the presentation: Approve the inclusion of the CTE Course Outdoor Education and Conservation for FY2027

Presentiaton By Mr. Bicolis --See PowerPower in BoardBook Agenda

Three components of the Education and Conservation Course –

Natural Resource Literacy – Gain apreciation of the area

Outdoor Skills Proficiency

Environmental Leadershp Capacity

Three industry backed certifications and Industry Support.

Opportunities for Students—the outdoor is imporant, students can do this five minutes away. Opportunity for our school to be a leader The first program of its kind in Arizona

Content Standards and Crosswalk Standards backed this course up to National Standards and ACT Connect inclass concepts with opportuities outside.

Discussion

Board Member Babcock—Is this a one year class

Mr. Bicolis—Four Year. We start with Education One students and then move up. There is an age requiremnt on some of the certications

Board Member Babocck—12-16 Differet Standards divided up over four years

Mr. Bicolis—yes this is over the four years. Provide scaffolding

Board Member Babcock—Likes this kind of stuff; where will the people who lead this come from and what safety items

Mr. Bicolis—Most important is the safety, opportunity for scaffolding, The activities we take 14 years old on vs. Seniors who are 17. **Repelling** down a mountain can bring trepidations. Mike Rielly (Prescott College) willing to come to Mingus and facilitate our students on safety. Bicolis will get Safety Certified as well. Inspired by Mr. Bicolis experience on a trail where he met kids. There is a lot of safety. Waivers, requirements

Board Member Babcock—Where do you get the gear? Some of these things are expensive

Mr. Bicolis—Industry Partnerships. None of these businesses have been asked to support students in a program like this. We will rack up a lot of donations. There may need to be a student funded component.

Board President Bell: Will you do fundraising like sports? I know people in the Community will support. Commend you for putting in the effort

Vice President Koepnick—Thank you for doing the cross walk and tying in the ACT. How will mastery be measured

Mr. Bicolis—Mastery can be assessed based on physical observation. Can kids measure out proper food rations, take care of first aid items. Certification will take a large part of this. Intense 80-hour certification

Vice President Koepnick—Will good portion of this class be done outdoors

Mr. Bicolis—yes

Vice President Koepnick—Do you plan to reach out to other Universities

Mr. Bicolis—open to everything. This is just preliminary Need as much help as we can get

Vice President Koepnick—You have a great community.

Board Member Nevarez—Question concerning Safety. We get hurt when we go campings. First Aid, are we teaching our students first aid? What can we do to have safety issues in place

Mr. Bicolis—critical to what we have in place. Intense Safety prior to doing anything. Multiple layers of safety checks. Waiver to parents about the type of course this is for parent awareness. Instructor certification.

Board Member David—Four Years, what is your capacity for number of students and staff.

Mr. Bicolis—We need Ag class to be connected to Science to keep Ag in place. I am not sure if having 40 kids in a class is safe. The upper class will be a class of 20 students. Tons of demand for this with the students. Capacity wise we can fill four classes. As they work up through the systems, the funnel of losing kids

Board Member Babcock—Have we looked at the master schedule; I apologize Board Member David, I just thought this went with your question

Mr. Bicolis—I would love to be in a place where we need to build a bigger program. We met with Director Wesbrock and there will be no problem fitting this into the Master Schedule

Board Member David—How do you count a four year program. Is the Freshman locked in for the remaining four years

Mr. Bicolis—CTE is a central component of graduation credits. There could be overlap.

Director Elmer—Just like Agriculture it is a three year Carnegie Unit course.

Board Member David—My son has attended Outward Bound. Training and Leadership component is important. How might we consider this

Mr. Bicolis—Knolls and Flagstaff partner together to do these leadership components.

Board Member David---National Center for Outdoor

Board Member Babcock- I like this stuff ;what about insurance for the school Will this cost the school more. Is this covered?

Mr. Bicolis—We will need to research the specifics, In Ag we take kids off site where they work in areas that may cause harm we were still covered. Parent could opt- Kids out. My experience I did not encounter anything different See other high schools that are doing this One in Aspen CO and see how they implement.

Superintendent Herne—The course must meet and will need approval from Arizona Department of Education

Board Member Babcock—Backpacking—does this happen over the weekend

Mr. Bicolis—Will Freshman go on a 5-day probably not, that would be older students. Leverage, weekends, breaks, a lot of opportunity. Not doing this in downtown Phoenix.. we can back pack right out that window. Figure out things in writing.

[Vice President Koepnick--- Motion to approve the inclusion of the CTE Course Outdoor Education and Conservation for FY2027](#)

[Second -Board President Bell](#)

Vote

Board President Taylor Bell Aye

Vice President Ashley Koepnick Aye

Mr. Austin Babcock Yes

Mr. Frank Nevarez Yes

Mr. Will David Yes

Passed 5-0

V.2 Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy The Board will discuss and possibly approve a Policy specific to Artificial Intelligence in the academic setting and an Honor Code.

Board President Bell —What thoughts do the Board Members have

Vice President Koepnick—Like the way the AI Policy reads currently. Like the consequences. Ok for moving forward with how it is written

Board Member Babcock- Like pretty much everything “Learning Support” might be too broad, What if teacher wants students to brainstorm? Consequences—need to be stronger. If not allowed to use AI then you cheated

Board Member David—Throw a wrench. I re-wrote it, there is a version in the file that is the re-write that incorporates your concerns. Emphasis on teacher choice

Vice President Koepnick —We go through and draft it into what looks like our Policy.

Board Member David –Formatting, more work to be done. Added one point on Policy Review, this will need to be reviewed in a timeline we set now. We will learn as we go through this. We are one of the few school Districts moving on AI. We will mandate a review

Board Member Nevarez- Looking at the discussion you had a couple weeks ago. I would like to see unacceptable uses of AI to add definite language i.e. bullying. Kids creating pictures of others without their permission or bullying others, we need to make the verbiage specific. Like to make sure this is not acceptable.

Board President Bell—clarified where to place this. Do you suggest incorporating language that is specific to bullying.

Board Member Nevarez—use picture and create meme, sexual issue that may occur if this is done

Board Member David- We will be chasing a long list of items. Treat people with dignity and respect. If we delimit with a list, students may do other items not on the list.

Board Member Nevarez—Fluid

Board President Bell-- Cyberbullying in our handbook. Using language that already exists to incorporate. Under acceptable uses we still need with teacher approval.

Board Member Babcock—Consequences. Failing Grade included. Using AI is cheating

Vice President Koepnick—Read the wording in the Handbook which states zero grade.

Board Member David—refer directly to the handbook

Board President Bell—I would be fine with zero grade We refer to the Discipline Matrix.

Vice President Koepnick—Page 2 of the Handbook. Cyberbullying on page 12 of the handbook

Board Member David—Refer to the common document

Board President Bell—Are we including the language or referencing

Vice President Koepnick—We reference the page

Board President Bell—Best way to have parents/care-takers -- we add it to the Handbook

Dean of Students Forbes—Acceptable use of Technology form we can place language and adjust for AI

Board Member David—I think that is a great recommendation. I pulled up, using AI a day in the life , AI is pervasive in everything we do. Give teachers discretion where Generative AI is being used. I think it is spot on to have it on the Acceptable use of Technology

Board Member Babcock-- Classes which are specific. Would it be reasonable that during the year we will be using AI

Board Member David—Like to hear from teachers. The train has left the station. Our kids, Teachers, I had to make myself AI Literate. It is a tool, like using calculators in class. Syllabus can be written

Director Elmer—AI Literacy, past two years we go to ADE Trainings we utilize AI

Vice President Koepnick—We don't want to put a document up and have people think this is set in stone

Ms. Badger—I am AI illiterate, not sure what to add

Board President Bell—Mr. Elmer did a good PD, there can be co-learning with the more AI Literate teachers.

Director Elmer—I am speaking from the CTE world

A.P. Monical--- Need to look at this from a broader stroke. The Acceptable/ unacceptable and Management. Adding a policy specific to the teacher is easy. How we manage and train our staff and students good sound policy and practice so we are not violating people's privacy. From the managerial side these are my concerns.

Board Member David—This stuff is pervasive. It is already part of your life you don't connect AI to it. AI algorithms are designed to show you which headlines you receive on your phone. Curried to capture your attention. Email filters are AI, Search engines are AI, productivity tools, video platforms with blurred backgrounds, Adaptive testing, navigation apps, credit cards and warnings you get. Don't want us to get obsessed with what is already there. Back to the teachers, I took a free 2-hour course yesterday to get certified Grow with Google. This might be a good way for those not AI Literate to get updated. Yavapai College has four year computer program degree

Board Member Nevarez—Some will be learning with AI and some will be learning about AI. When do we come together and come up with a software approval process. There will be apps we may not want

Superintendent Herne--- Policy vs. Operational

A.P. Monical—Organizations we use to vet applications

Board President Bell—Board is worried we have the appropriate safeguards in place. We need to approach carefully. With the edits we can suggest. We get feedback

Mr. Teague—You as the Board are moving in the right direction. From the teacher perspective A) what is the student use of AI B) what are your expectations of how the teachers are going to use AI we can not take the critical thinking away from the students

Board Member David—leverage AI for critical thinking and time management. We don't want to go down the negative side. Teacher need the option to turn it off. Understand the limits and strenghts of AI— inherently biased and limited to those who feed into it. Our job as educators/Board Members is to become AI Literate. We don't see AI, because it is running in the background of other apps.

Mr. Teague—Crux of conversation how do we educate our studuents to use AI in a way of what is good for and what it is not good for

Board Member David- Used appropriately like any other tool.

Vice President Koepnick—W eare not doing the operational thing. Trust the teacher to make the decision on how to use the AI Tool.

Mr. Teague—English teachers loading papers in an AI program and seeking feedback

Board Member Nevarez—The interaction between teacher and student.

Mr. Teague—Encourage the Board to think of Student Use, Teacher Use Student learning leave the managerial side

Vice President Koepnick—This is why having non-secific language is important; agrees with Dr. David

Board President Bell—in the draft it is written this way

Dean of Students Forbes —Academic Integrety and Technology Agreement.

Vice President Koepnick—Take the one that Dr. David sent and someone try to add. I will add the comments and draft the same way our policy is written

V.3 Cell Phone Policy The Board will discuss and possibly approve updated/specific language for technology use in the classroom, to include guidance on cell phone usage. Policy IJNBD-R (pages 9, 10, 11 from Policy Advisory Volume 37 No 6)

Discussion

Board President Bell—Cell phone Policy before we get in the weeds of a policy we need to decide if we will have a bell to bell

Superintendent Herne—Yondr—\$30.00 per student we are looking at \$36, 000

Board Member David—\$8-12K per year in continuing cost. Magnets, pouches Decide where you want the stations. How many stations do you need depending on the size of your campus. Cost trade offs.

Board President Bell—do not want to diminish the cost of \$36K do not want to diminish the benefits to our school. Did research on schools in other states and gave benefits. Better attention in classroom, engagement between students, mental health concerns. Cannot do a bell to bell systems without a system like this. We cannot create a policy that creates grey area

Board Member David—What are we trying to solve with the cell phone ban. We want the to be engaged in class. We are not going to solve world hunger with a cell phone ban. Correlation and Causation (Haidt's work and Duckworth's research). Don't have causative data do have correlectio data. This will not fix mental health. Zip code matters. I agree 100% get them out of the classroom unless the teacher is using the. If the cell phone goes off in class, you run down the hallway to unlock the pouch. We can always make the policy stronger as we go along. We can tighten the current pocedure I loath to committ to something based on anecdotal findings from schools that do not have our demographics. How do we deal with it in the classrooms. Not worried about lunch, yes it would be better to have the engagment

Vice President Koepnick—Amen as I went though this policy I though of why did I run for the Board--wanted the best for our students and school. I wrestle with the fact that once they leave Mingus they are adults. We need to treat them like the grown ups they are going to be. Teaching to make appropriate choices. School is there job. In classroom should not have cell phone. Leway in the hallway. Not in favor of bell to bell huge cost aid \$36K is a lot of money.

Board Member Nevarez—I am in the middle. May be leaning towards bell to bell. I am not looking to take away the ills of the world; I want to see our kids engaged. Maybe we need to go bell to bell.

Board Member Babcock—I like the word engaged. The hinderance is the phone. When you take the phones away you see a different thing

Board President Bell—doesn't sound like we are ready to make a vote

Superintendent Herne—Clarification on what voting would be if the Board is ready to vote. The vote would be to decide on bell to bell

Board Member David—would like to hear from teachers

VI. INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION

VI.1 **Mandatory Reporting**-- Board Member training on FY2026 Mandatory Reporting
Superintendent Herne reviewed the Mandatory Reporting updates to the Governing Board

VII. REQUEST FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Items:

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Vice President Koepnic Motioned to adjourn the meeting
Board Member Nevarez Second

Vote

Board President Taylor Bell Aye
Vice President Ashley Koepnick Aye
Mr. Austin Babcock Yes
Mr. Frank Nevarez Yes
Mr. Will David Yes
Passed 5-0

End Time 7:02PM

Board President

Vice President