

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

GOVERNING BOARD MINUTES OF MEETING  
Mingus Union High School Library  
Thursday, February 26, 2026, 5:00 PM

**Governing Board:**

**Ms. Taylor Bell  
Mr. Frank Nevarez  
Mr. Austin Babcock  
Mr. Will David  
Mr. Matthew Chavez**

**Also Present:**

**Superintendent Melody Herne  
Board Secretary Tari Garrison**

**Start Time: 5:00 pm**

**I. Opening**

**I.1. Call to Order**

**I.2. Roll Call**

President Bell – Here  
Vice President Nevarez – Here  
Member Babcock – Here  
Member David – Here  
Member Chavez – Here

**I.3. Pledge of Allegiance**

**I.4. Moment of Silence**

**I.5. Adoption of Agenda**

**Motion to adopt the agenda as presented by Vice President Nevarez and seconded by Member Chavez.**

President Bell – Aye  
Vice President Nevarez – Aye  
Member Babcock – Yes  
Member David – Yes  
Member Chavez – Yes

---

GOVERNING BOARD MINUTES OF MEETING  
Mingus Union High School Library  
Thursday, February 26, 2026, 5:00 PM

**II. BOARD MEETING MINUTES NOT PREVIOUSLY APPROVED**

**II.1. Minutes — January 8, 2026 Regular Meeting**

**Motion to approve minutes as presented by President Bell and seconded by Member Babcock.**

President Bell – Aye  
Vice President Nevarez – Aye  
Member Babcock – Yes  
Member David – Yes  
Member Chavez – Yes  
**Vote Passes 5–0**

---

**III. 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).

- **Paula Herald:**

---

**IV. ACTION ITEMS – CONSENT**

**IV.1. Policy Second Read**

Volume 38 Number 1 — First Read Feb. 12, 2026

Attachments: (1)

**IV.2. Approval of Routine Vouchers**

**IV.2.1. Expense**

- Vouchers
  - Voucher 1029
  - Voucher 1030

**IV.3. Donations**

**IV.3.1. Donation — Sound System Donation**

Attachments: (1)

**IV.4. Agreements**

**IV.4.1. Resolution 12-2026: Renewing the Intergovernmental Agreement Between the YAN and Mingus Union High School District #4 for Counseling/Tutoring/Outreach.**

Attachments: (1)

**IV.5. Human Resources**

- PA-1
- HR Report

**IV.6. Strategic Plan — Approval of Strategic Plan Focus Areas 1 (Student Achievement) & 2 (Climate and Culture)**

Attachments: (1)

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

GOVERNING BOARD MINUTES OF MEETING  
Mingus Union High School Library  
Thursday, February 26, 2026, 5:00 PM

---

**Member David moved to remove Item 6–4.6 from the Consent Agenda.**

**President Bell: Motioned to approve the consent agenda excluding item number 6 “The Strategic Plan.” Seconded by Member David.**

President Bell – Aye  
Vice President Nevarez – Aye  
Member Babcock – Yes  
Member David – Yes  
Member Chavez – Yes  
**Vote Passes 5–1**

**Member David:** commended the Superintendent and staff for developing a strategic plan and stated that it should also serve as a communication and marketing tool to support enrollment and address declines in student population. They referenced the Portrait of a Graduate, emphasizing that while character traits are important and supported by the broader community, the District holds primary responsibility for academic readiness and should identify it as a top priority within the portrait and the strategic plan. The speaker expressed concern that the current vision statement is not sufficiently aspirational or future-focused and recommended adopting stronger language to position the District as a leader in academic excellence in the Verde Valley to remain competitive with other educational options.

**Superintendent Herne:** invited the Board to continue the discussion regarding Member David’s concerns.

**President Bell:** affirmed that student achievement remains the top priority in the strategic plan, noted the vision statement was recently revised, and emphasized focusing on implementation and results rather than additional revisions.

**Member Babcock:** needed clarification from Member David on what he would like to see added about student achievement.

**Superintendent Herne:** clarified that the concern raised was related to academic readiness within the Portrait of a Graduate rather than student achievement.

**Member David:** emphasized the need for clear, concise messaging to promote the District’s vision and strategic priorities to the community and suggested future marketing efforts to strengthen competitiveness and enrollment, and noted that draft language (he submitted) had been shared for feedback.

**President Bell:** asked whether the intent was to revise the vision statement or incorporate additional language into the strategic plan.

**Superintendent Herne:** outlined the process required to revise the vision statement, noting it would involve additional Board work sessions, re-engagement with the core team, and stakeholder input consistent with the original development process, emphasizing this approach as best practice.

**Vice President Nevarez:** supported maintaining the current vision statement to honor stakeholder and core teamwork, recommended focusing on implementation, and suggested revisiting the vision in the future if necessary.

It was noted that project team members and stakeholders were present to provide feedback.

**Member Chavez:** stated that the strategic plan is a living document that can be revised in the future if needed.

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

GOVERNING BOARD MINUTES OF MEETING  
Mingus Union High School Library  
Thursday, February 26, 2026, 5:00 PM

**Core and Project Team Input:** Ms. Badger and Ms. Edward stated that the vision statement was intentionally written to be concise so that staff, students, and the community can easily remember and align to it. They noted this approach was supported by stakeholder feedback and emphasized that academic readiness, collaboration, and career preparation are reflected in the Portrait of a Graduate through its identified skills and traits. They also stated that families often rely on school performance data and community feedback when evaluating educational options.

**Member David:** echoed the importance of community messaging and academic readiness as the District's core responsibility.

**Superintendent Herne:** pointed out that a stakeholder participant was in the audience and if they would like to be a part of the discussion.

**President Bell:** emphasized focusing on measurable outcomes.

**Member David:** stressed that student outcomes are influenced by demographic and socioeconomic factors and noted the District serves a diverse community with varying levels of family educational background. He expressed concern about enrollment trends and local demographics and advocated for a more aggressive marketing plan.

**Stakeholder participant, Paula Herald:** expressed support for a shorter vision statement and stated that parents are key to student growth and should be reflected in the strategic plan.

**Vice President Nevarez:** stated the big issue is the terminology.

Discussion occurred regarding a motion to whether the language should be incorporated into an existing strategy or added as a separate strategy.

---

**ASBA presenters Julie Bacon and Sarah James:** provided draft language addressing the accountability component discussed by the Board. They explained that multiple options were provided, including incorporating accountability into an existing objective or adding a new objective with suggested strategies and tactics. The presenters noted that redlined text reflected proposed additions and that the Board's first decision would be whether to embed the language within the current framework or adopt a separate objective.

**President Bell:** requested Board input on whether to incorporate accountability language into an existing objective or create a separate objective.

**The Board and ASBA:** discussed placement of proposed language related to staff accountability and workplace culture. Members agreed that the content of draft items 2.2.4 and 2.2.5 aligned with Focus Area 2, Objective 2.2 (Professional Growth) and should remain within that objective rather than creating a new objective. It was noted that Objective 2.2 currently emphasizes professional development aligned to instructional needs, and additional language was needed to reflect staff accountability and a positive work environment.

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

GOVERNING BOARD MINUTES OF MEETING

Mingus Union High School Library  
Thursday, February 26, 2026, 5:00 PM

Discussion included incorporating language from the draft Objective 2.4 to strengthen Objective 2.2 by adding expectations that staff will model professionalism, reinforce trust-building practices, and be held accountable for workplace standards and organizational effectiveness. The Board indicated support for embedding this language within Objective 2.2 and adding corresponding strategies and tactics rather than establishing a separate objective. Additionally, revising the strategy language from “promote a positive work environment” to language reflecting “embodying and promoting Mingus pride in daily work.”

- A key concern raised was ensuring consistency with other tactics by including measurable components. It was noted that most existing tactics contain quantifiable actions, while the proposed language appeared more qualitative. The Board emphasized the importance of identifying ways to measure effectiveness—such as retention data, surveys, or other accountability indicators—even if the measures differ from traditional academic metrics.

Discussion also included whether adding a new objective would require re-engagement with stakeholders in alignment with prior best practices. It was suggested that measurable language could be aligned to existing staff evaluation tools.

**ASBA:** outlined options for incorporating accountability language into Objective 2.2 using existing redlined text rather than creating a new objective. It was noted that embedding the language could save time compared to sending the item back through the full stakeholder and core team process.

**Superintendent Herne and Board:** project team meetings were proposed for two consecutive Mondays, with March 2 unavailable due to Board training. A potential project team meeting on March 9 was discussed, though staff availability may be limited. Staff indicated the work could be completed and brought back to the Board for consideration at a subsequent meeting. There was discussion regarding the overall timeline for adoption of the strategic plan, with June identified as a likely final approval timeframe, though some members suggested work could be completed earlier depending on Board direction.

- A key focus was ensuring any added tactics include measurable components, such as retention data, satisfaction surveys, and communication protocols, while acknowledging that some cultural strategies may not yield precise quantitative data.

**President Bell:** moved to make motion that the strategic plan focus areas one and two with the change in incorporating language as presented by the ASBA into Objective 2.2 and 2.4–2.5 so that it includes the language as presented.

**Superintendent Herne:** Governing Board, based on your motion you will not have a standalone objective.

**Motion to approve the strategic plan focus areas one and two with the change in incorporating language as presented by the ASBA into Objective 2.2 and 2.4–2.5 so that it includes the language as presented, presented by President Bell and seconded by Member Chavez.**

President Bell – Aye

Vice President Nevarez – Aye

Member Babcock – Yes

Member David – No

Member Chavez – Yes

**Vote Passes 4–1**

GOVERNING BOARD MINUTES OF MEETING  
Mingus Union High School Library  
Thursday, February 26, 2026, 5:00 PM

**V. STRATEGIC PLAN — FOCUS AREAS 3 AND 4**

**ASBA Presenters (Julie Bacon and Sarah James):** reviewed Strategic Plan Focus Areas 3 and 4.

**ASBA Presenters:** Objective 3.1, 3.1.2, and 3.1.3 indicated in red what changes they made from the feedback they received from the Board and asked if there were any discussion needed.

**Member Babcock:** expressed concern that parent and family engagement and accountability were not clearly included.

**ASBA:** responded that these elements are reflected in the partnerships section.

**Member Babcock:** students whose families take an active role tend to perform better and asked whether there is a way to include a measure that reflects shared responsibility and promotes collective engagement between the school and families.

**The Board:** discussed measuring the impact of family and community partnerships and referenced existing strategies within Goal 3 related to family engagement, including documented communication between teachers and guardians and targeted outreach efforts. It was noted that engagement measures may include multiple communication methods rather than solely parent-teacher conference attendance. Discussion included the potential development of additional action steps or a framework to strengthen family engagement and track participation. Members emphasized the importance of measurable indicators while acknowledging that participation is voluntary and may vary.

- **Core Team member (Ms. Edwards):** stated that a parent's level of formal education does not determine a student's ability to succeed and stressed the need to avoid language that could discourage family participation.
- 

**ASBA Reviewed**

- **Objective 3.3:** language was revised to establish a measurable target of providing key communications in languages that represent at least 95% of identified home languages. The focus was narrowed to essential communications (e.g., newsletters, principal updates, district information) rather than all communications, to ensure feasibility while supporting access for multilingual families.
- **Objective 3.4:** language was clarified to reference parent/guardian meetings more broadly and to ensure inclusive terminology. Translation services for events and meetings were discussed as an action step to improve access for families.
- **Objective 4.1:** just condense that into a more concise language. In response to a clarifying question, the Board discussed identifying district-funded programs (e.g., AVID) within the plan to show resource investment and student impact.
- **Objective 4.3:** was presented as having received feedback recommending it be removed.
  - **The Board:** discussed strategies for enrollment, communications, and resource stability. Members emphasized that increasing enrollment cannot be achieved through marketing alone and should focus on internal program strengths, student outcomes, and identifying what differentiates the District from competitors.
  - **Member David:** highlighted demographic challenges, noting an aging community, limited local employment and housing options for families, and increasing competition from alternative education providers. The member described enrollment as a "shrinking pie," stating the District cannot control external factors but must compete effectively for a smaller student population.

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

GOVERNING BOARD MINUTES OF MEETING  
Mingus Union High School Library  
Thursday, February 26, 2026, 5:00 PM

- Further discussion also focused on stabilizing enrollment and staffing, including identifying reasons for student withdrawal, promoting high-performing programs, improving social media and communications, and targeting outreach to prospective families.
- It was clarified that communications and marketing are one tool among several and should be aligned with measurable results and program strengths.

**President Bell and the Board:** agreed to remove Area 4.3. The Board confirmed that marketing efforts and celebrating Mingus successes are addressed elsewhere in the Strategic Plan.

**ASBA:** clarified that incorporating those elements into Focus Area 3 would be the responsibility of the project team.

---

**VI. REQUEST FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

None offered.

---

**VII. ADJOURNMENT**

Motion to approve adjournment as presented by Member Chavez and seconded by Vice President Nevarez.

**Vote:**

- President Bell – Aye
- Vice President Nevarez – Aye
- Member Babcock – Yes
- Member David – Yes
- Member Chavez – Yes

**End Time: 7:00 pm**

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

GOVERNING BOARD MINUTES OF MEETING  
Mingus Union High School Library  
Thursday, February 26, 2026, 5:00 PM

DRAFT