

# UNITED INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Bill Johnson Student Activity Complex, Auditorium, 5208 Santa Claudia Lane, Laredo, Texas 78043

## MINUTES – REGULAR BOARD MEETING

Wednesday, February 18, 2026

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** *Aliza F. Oliveros, Javier Montemayor, and Rudy Gonzalez. Michelle Dianelle Martinez and Gilbert Aguilar arrived during Recognitions. Molina arrived during Public Comments.*

**DISTRICT STAFF:** *Dr. Gerardo Cruz, Rebecca Morales, David Canales, Laida Benavidez, Mike Garza*

### AGENDA ITEM 1: ROLL CALL, ESTABLISH QUORUM, CALL TO ORDER

*Board President calls roll. Quorum is established at 6:16 PM*

### AGENDA ITEM 2:

- A. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/HONOR THE TEXAS FLAG

### AGENDA ITEM 3: Recognitions

- A. United ISD MVP Parents
- B. John B. Alexander High School Band
  - TMEA All-State Musician
- C. United High School Band
  - TMEA All-State Musician
- D. United South High School Cheer Team
  - 2026 NCA High School National Champions
  - 1st Place Advanced Non-Tumbling Coed Varsity Crowd Leading
- E. Lyndon B. Johnson High School Cheer Team
  - 2026 NCA Intermediate Non-Tumbling Coed Varsity Crowd Leading National Champions

### AGENDA ITEM 4: Public Comments

*JANICE ESPINOZA: Ms. Espinoza spoke about consolidation of schools for special needs students. She asks for more transparency as to where these students will be placed. Her son attended Newman before and was moved due to issues and she wants to know where he will now be placed.*

*IMELDA DE LA ROSA: Ms. De La Rosa is a parent at Matias de Llano Elementary. She states that her son has thrived there and that his success is due to the staff that works with him and fosters a state of*

*belonging for him. Ms. De La Rosa stated that the district should look into consolidating administrative buildings instead of schools.*

*CRISTINA CRUZ BARRON: Ms. Barron spoke on the hiring of the Special Education Executive Director. She stated that the new director should have experience working with special needs students. She also referenced an incident with her special needs child that took place at United High School.*

*JAIME CORTAZO: Mr. Cortazo spoke on Agenda Item V.C. He stated that this is the second time he comes before the board to ask for a better plan for the consolidation of schools. He suggests that the district look into closing the new Child Nutrition Building instead of the schools. Lastly Mr. Cortazo addressed the safety concerns at Finley Elementary.*

*VERONICA CORTAZO: Ms. Cortazo spoke mainly about child safety. Asks the Board to look at all the entrances and exits at Kazen and Finley. She also suggests to stop changing principals at schools.*

*MARY LOU ABREGO: Ms. Abrego spoke on demographic study. She states that school closures will affect the most vulnerable student populations. Additionally, she asks the Board Members to ask the hard questions before closing the schools. Has the Board requested measurable data on school closure impacts? She also questions salary raise, convocation and budget and states that reductions should not fall on schools or students.*

*MARIA DEL CARMEN GARZA: Ms. De la Garza spoke on demographic study. Stating that she is there again because of lack of information. She states that all of this is affecting the children and that it is all due to mismanagement. Ms. De la Garza said that the Zonda Demographic Study only looks into statistics but not into the wellbeing if the students. If there is no other solution, she wants TEA to come and investigate the school district. Lastly, she states that the district should spend money on campus upgrades instead of on demographic studies.*

*CLARISSA FRAGA: Ms. Fraga spoke on demographic study. She states that there was a time when schools were overcrowded, which made it difficult to educate such large groups. Board Members decided to overbuild schools to alleviate other schools and now the district faces a problem of low enrollment. Consolidating schools will only set you back again to overcrowded campuses and putting students/teachers in portables is not safe.*

*LIZZY GOMEZ: Ms. Gomes spoke on demographic study. She states that studies like the Zonda Demographic Study are only projections, not facts. They are based on assumptions on housing, migration, and future growth that can ultimately change overnight. They do not reflect the reality of the students, teachers and enrollment that the district has today. Changes like these should be based on current data, transparency and community input, not Board casts. She also mentioned safety with portables as well as all the principals that have been at Finley. She goes on to thank Dr. Cruz for the last change that was made.*

## **AGENDA ITEM 5: Informational Items**

### **A. Superintendent's Report**

*Dr. Cruz begins his report by stating that United ISD remains committed to providing an outstanding instructional environment that ensures the academic success of every student. He mentions that the Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR) showcases the positive student outcomes that reflect the hard*

*work of educators and the resilience of all students. United ISD continues to outperform the state and region in most STAAR categories while maintaining a high graduation rate.*

*Additionally, the Superintendent mentions that as the district celebrates these milestones, the district's financial responsibilities and the evolving budget landscape must also be discussed. Dr. Cruz states that as the district moves forward into the 2026 – 2027 academic year, it is his responsibility to provide an overview of the fiscal challenges facing UISD. By streamlining administrative costs and optimizing facility use, the district can ensure that every school remains a strong, high performing campus.*

*Lastly, Dr. Cruz expresses his sincere gratitude to the parents and community members who have participated in the district's meetings. He states that the district remains committed to the data driven, empathic process that ensures outcomes that prioritize the safety, well-being, and academic success of all United ISD students.*

- B. Presentation on an analysis to determine the number of employees projected to retire within the 2025-26 and 2026–27 school years, employees that currently qualify for retirement, and an approximation of associated payroll impact

*David Canales discussed and presented on the topic.*

*Javier Montemayor asks if numbers increased because of exit incentives offered in the past?*

*David Canales will research the information and provide it.*

- C. Presentation of Preliminary Findings of Demographic Study

*Laida Benavidez along with Mr. Gardier from Zonda Education discussed and presented the Demographic Study.*

*Michelle Molina mentions that her districts are growing and are not mentioned in the current study. She strongly suggests to remove Finely Elementary from the list of schools being considered. She also mentioned future growth in several subdivisions that would increase enrollment. The district could be hindered by the opening of Charter Schools if it consolidates schools. She also requests to start a Community Advisory Committee to help gather more information,*

*Dianelle Martinez also requests that Matias de Llano be removed from the consolidation list since it shows an enrollment increase. She asks that other schools with lower enrollment and that don't have a projected increase be considered instead.*

## **AGENDA ITEM 6: Consent Agenda**

- A. Monthly Disbursements
- B. Awarding Bids, Proposals, Qualifications, and Extensions
- C. First and Final Reading of CH Local Policy
- D. Resolution for the State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program (SLCGP) — Mitigation Projects FY2027

- E. Resolution for the State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program (SLCGP) — Assessment and Evaluation Projects FY2027
- F. Resolution for the Active Attack Response Equipment Grant Program, FY2027
- G. Resolution for employee compensation due to inclement weather on January 26 and 27, 2026, resulting in a two-hour delayed start for the entire school district
- H. Low Attendance Day Waiver for the United Independent School District for January 26, 2026
- I. Discussion of Disposition of Technology Equipment
- J. Discussion of Disposition of Mobile Learning Devices (MLD) to December 2025 Graduating Students at United High School (UHS), United South High School (USHS), and John B. Alexander High School (AHS)

*Motion to approve the Consent Agenda items A-J made by Rudy Gonzalez*

*Second: Javier Montemayor*

*Discussion: Daniele Martinez questioned events held in September and December by Facilities Department, and an expense by the Police Department*

*Mr. Alfonso Pena responded to the questions by stating that the Facilities Department held its Safety and Security Meetings with its staff and paid a TASB subscription for the Environmental Department.*

*Police Department held its Lunch with a Cop Program.*

*In favor: 5 – Dianelle Martinez, Javier Montemayor, Michelle Molina, Gilbert Aguilar, Rudy Gonzalez*

*Opposed: None*

*Motion Passes*

**AGENDA ITEM 7: Items for Individual Consideration**

**A. Approval of Donations**

*Motion to approve made by Michelle Molina*

*Second: Gilbert Aguilar*

*Discussion: None*

*In favor: 5 – Dianelle Martinez, Javier Montemayor, Michelle Molina, Gilbert Aguilar, Rudy Gonzalez*

*Opposed: None*

*Motion Passes*

**B. Request from Board Members in re: Use of Board of Trustees Discretionary Funds for various campuses and departments**

*Motion to approve made by Rudy Gonzalez*

*Second: Michelle Molina*

*Discussion: None*

*In favor: 5 – Dianelle Martinez, Javier Montemayor, Michelle Molina, Gilbert Aguilar, Rudy Gonzalez*

*Opposed: None*

*Motion Passes*

**C. Discussion and possible action regarding Board Policy DC (Local) and matters incidental thereto**

*Motion for discussion made by Gilbert Aguilar*

*Second: Rudy Gonzalez*

*Discussion: Gilbert Aguilar proposes that the Board sign a resolution for an early exit incentive. Javier Montemayor agrees to look for more incentives/cost saving measures.*

*David Canales advises the Board that according to TASB, there can't be two resolutions in place at the same time. The resolution would have to be revised by legal and presented and discussed at the next board meeting.*

*In favor: 5 – Dianelle Martinez, Javier Montemayor, Michelle Molina, Gilbert Aguilar, Rudy Gonzalez*

*Opposed: None*

*Motion Passes*

**AGENDA ITEM 8: The Board will adjourn into Closed Session pursuant to the following sections of the Texas Open Meetings Act**

*The Board adjourned into Closed Session at 8:09 PM*

**A. TGC 551.071 Consultation with Board's Attorney; Closed Meeting**

1. Superintendent's Duties and Responsibilities
2. Discussion, including consultation with legal counsel, on a possible resolution adopting a policy designating time for prayer and religious text readings as required by Senate Bill 11 and Texas Education Code Section 25.0823

**B. TGC 551.071 Consultation with Board's Attorney; Closed Meeting  
TGC 551.074 Personnel Matters; Closed Meeting**

1. Discussion regarding appointment of Executive Director of Special Education

C. TGC 551.071 Consultation with Board's Attorney; Closed Meeting  
TGC 551.076 Deliberation Regarding Security Devices or Security Audits

1. Discussion, including consultation with legal counsel, regarding the Intruder Detection Audit (IDA) Report

**AGENDA ITEM 9: Reconvened from Closed Session, the Board will take appropriate action on items, if necessary, as discussed in Closed Session**

*The Board reconvened from Closed Session at 8:34 PM.  
For the record, no action was taken during Closed Session.*

**AGENDA ITEM 9A: Possible action regarding appointment of Executive Director of Special Education**

*Superintendent, Dr. Gerardo Cruz recommends Ms. Claudia Dovalina-Guzman*

*Motion to approve made by Rudy Gonzalez*

*Second: Gilbert Aguilar*

*Discussion: None*

*In favor: 4 – Dianelle Martinez, Javier Montemayor, Gilbert Aguilar, Rudy Gonzalez*

*Opposed: None*

*Motion Passes*

**AGENDA ITEM 9B: Discussion regarding the Intruder Detection Audit (IDA) Report**

*Agenda Item was read into the record by Mike Garza.*

**AGENDA ITEM 9C: Discussion and possible action on a resolution adopting a policy designating time for prayer and religious text readings as required by Senate Bill 11 and Texas Education Code Section 25.0823**

*The recommendation is to not approve the resolution adopting a policy designating time for prayer and religious text readings as required by Senate Bill 11 and Texas Education Code Section 25.0823*

*Motion to not approve (dismiss) made by Dianelle Martinez*

*Second: Gilbert Aguilar*

*Discussion: Dianelle Martinez mentioned that the District already provides a moment of silence for students to practice their choice of prayer, manifestation or whatever they wish.*

*In favor: 4 – Dianelle Martinez, Javier Montemayor, Gilbert Aguilar, Rudy Gonzalez*

*Opposed: None*

*Motion Passes*

**AGENDA ITEM 10: Adjournment**

*Motion to adjourn made by Javier Montemayor at 8:37 PM*

*Second: Rudy Gonzalez*

*Discussion: None*

*In favor: 4 – Dianelle Martinez, Javier Montemayor, Gilbert Aguilar, Rudy Gonzalez*

*Opposed: None*

*Motion Passes*

*There being no further business before the Board of Trustees, the Regular Board Meeting of February 18, 2026 was adjourned at 8:38 P.M.*

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Javier Montemayor, Jr., President

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Michelle Molina, Secretary

*Amended Board Minutes presented for approval on 06/17/2026.*

*Minutes submitted by: Maribel Vazquez, Secretary to Superintendent*