

CORDOVA SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF EDUCATION

REGULAR MEETING: August 13, 2025

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CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Glasen called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm in the CHS Multipurpose Room.
The Pledge of Allegiance followed.

Members Present: Mr. Glasen, Mr. Kruithof, Ms. Merritt, Mr. Hoepfner

Members Present via Zoom: Ms. Trudeau

Quorum: Established 5-0

Staff Present: Activities Director Seth Balint, Principal Dawn Gonzalez, Principal Paul Tancrede, Technology Director Jason Fastenau, Maintenance Director Chris Moreno, Budget & Finance Director Ann Linville, Superintendent Alex Russin, Secretary Kristie Beckett.

Staff Unavailable: Food Service Director Sandie Ponte.

Student Council Rep: None

CEA Rep: Sara Hottinger

City Council Rep: None

Visitors: None

CORRESPONDENCE: Emails to the School Board were included.

APPROVAL OF REGULAR AGENDA:

Ms. Merritt moved to approve the August 13, 2025 regular meeting agenda, as presented in the Board Packet. Mr. Hoepfner seconded.

Discussion: None

Roll Call Vote: Ms. Trudeau: Yes; Mr. Hoepfner: Yes; Ms. Merritt: Yes; Mr. Kruithof: Yes; Mr. Glasen: Yes

Motion: PASSED 5-0

AUDIENCE COMMENTS REGARDING AGENDA ITEMS: None

CONSENT AGENDA:

Mr. Hoepfner moved to approve the Consent Agenda for August 13, 2025, as presented in the Board Packet. Ms. Merritt seconded.

Discussion: None.

Roll Call Vote: Ms. Trudeau: Yes; Mr. Hoepfner: Yes; Ms. Merritt: Yes; Mr. Kruithof: Yes; Mr. Glasen: Yes

Motion: PASSED 5-0

REPORTS:

Student Council: None

CEA: None

City Council: None

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

AASB Liaison: (Mr. Glasen / Mr. Hoepfner) No information noted.

Jr./Sr. HS Site Council: (Mr. Glasen / Ms. Merritt) No new meeting and none scheduled yet for new school year.

Elementary Site Council: (Ms. Merritt / Ms. Trudeau) No new meeting and none scheduled yet for new school year.

Safety-Facility Committee: (Mr. Hoepfner & Mr. Glasen) Next scheduled for September 30, 2025.

Curriculum Committee: (Mr. Kruithof & Ms. Trudeau) Next scheduled for September 9, 2025.

Policy Committee: (Mr. Hoepfner & Mr. Glasen) Next scheduled for August 26, 2025.

Negotiations Committee: (Mr. Hoepfner & Mr. Kruithof) No meetings currently scheduled.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS:

Activities Director - Mr. Balint

Mr. Balint included a written report in the Board Packet and was busy contacting schools to ensure game schedules were still agreed upon, as activities begins. Mr. Balint updated the Board on the high school banner project for the gym, noting many had faded and fallen apart over the years. He added that the old banners could be auctioned off to recoup costs of the new banners, as well as getting the recently won banners added to the gym walls of all the same type with consistent colors. Mr. Balint was also going through old team uniforms and jerseys that he would continue to partner with the Booster Club to sell during home games. Mr. Russin noted the reinvigorated Booster Club was now a school board recognized club via a resolution. Mr. Balint shared that he appreciated the Booster Club's assistance throughout the school year.

Ms. Merritt appreciated Mr. Balint's schedule noting which trip was covered by the district and which trips the team was fundraising toward. She wanted to know how teams were doing with receiving the message of district funding one regular, regional and state trip and what the teams feedback was on their ability to raise funds for any additional trips.

Mr. Balint explained that coaches knew CHSSA funds would be needed to fund upcoming additional trips with the budget deficit situation and noted teams were willing to do the work to fundraise. He noted the bigger issue was being without the ferry for three and half months, which greatly impacted teams fundraising goals for additional trips.

Ms. Merritt appreciated seeing the number of students participating in each activity, to which Mr. Balint stated that he would continue to report participation numbers for the Board. Mr. Hoepfner would look forward to seeing the creativity of the teams to raise funds. Ms. Merritt wanted to explore how to make district trip funding in the future budget development equitable knowing that volleyball, wrestling, and swimming were without ferry transportation for a majority of their seasons compared to the other sports.

There were no further comments.

Mt. Eccles Elementary School - Ms. Gonzalez

Ms. Gonzalez included a written report in the Board Packet and caught the Board up on all the back-to-school activities. She noted having the Really Great Reading trainers coming to Cordova to teach teachers intervention skills on Monday August 18th. She commented about using the CLSD grant to fund additional training, noting the grant could not supplant the current program but could supplement.

Ms. Merritt inquired if Ms. Gonzalez would have any new academic data since the Board last reviewed elementary academic data in June. Ms. Merritt wondered what Ms. Gonzalez's plan was for the older grades to achieve a higher benchmark compared to the lower grades. Ms. Gonzalez explained that schools were required to add a certain amount of tier 1 & 2 support time for K-3 grades when the Alaska Reads Act was first implemented, noting the Alaska state goal was to have students reading on grade level by 3rd grade. Ms. Gonzalez noted the elementary team added as much intervention support as staffing allowed for grades 4,5,6. Ms. Gonzalez noted this year the addition of student enrichment time around the specials schedule to lend intervention times to support each grade level.

Mr. Russin highlighted that staff had not yet had a chance to review the student academic data that was presented to the Board in June, noting that staff would review the student academic data as part of their in service scheduled time to make student intervention plans.

Mr. Hoepfner wished Ms. Gonzales and her staff a good first day.

There were no further comments.

Jr./Sr. High School - Mr. Tancrede

Mr. Tancrede included a written report in the Board Packet and noted he would continue with tutorials on Fridays with new materials from HD Word along with a vocabulary program to work on Language Arts interventions. He explained how math tutorials were a focus this year and new materials arrived for staff to be trained on Monday [8/18] during in-service. He noted with the largest 7th grade class coming in this year, his staff made schedule changes to break language arts time into two groups to allow high quality instruction. He broke up Algebra 1 so advanced 8th graders and 9th graders were not in the same class and the teacher could accommodate the different learning needs to address math scores deficits. Mr. Tancrede noted the library had been moved closer to the language arts teacher and Mrs. Pearson would facilitate access and use. He explained how the multipurpose room, formerly known as the media center, would be made available with wrestling mats for cheerleaders and wrestlers along with Mr. Fry's PE classes. CHS staff built and were in the process of placing trophies on the new trophy shelf in the multipurpose room which allows space for student desks when down time and break out space was needed. Mr. Tancrede also noted that he was pursuing grants for the Native Arts class.

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Ms. Merritt inquired about teacher training on the new curriculum and Mr. Tancrede noted the new material was specifically for interventions during study skills to fill in gaps in student learning which included the new vocab material. He noted teacher training would be established during in-service days, with a dedicated 8-hour training on Monday August 18th.

Mr. Kruithof inquired how staff would determine which level of reading or math classes students would enter and Mr. Tancrede noted student AK Star test scores determined the level needed and intervention level required but wanted to remain flexible.

Mr. Hoepfner inquired if there was a best practice for determining class break up of blended versus like distribution. Mr. Tancrede felt using teacher strength to align with student groups was a better method to align with student needs and follow up assessments to show achievement progression.

Ms. Merritt inquired what metric Mr. Tancrede used for gauging his goals for the new school year. Mr. Tancrede was leery to assign a percentage point metric to any goal, knowing the science behind his goals and preferred to aim for an upward trend of overall student success. He noted the many issues with state testing and assigning the growth measure metric, so he explained his goals required having similar student assessment for growth and achievement results year over year. Mr. Hoepfner agreed that was disappointing to hear the challenges with the state's implementation of testing year after year.

There were no further Board comments.

Food Service - Ms. Ponte

Ms. Ponte included a written report in the Board Packet and was unavailable for Board questions.

There were no Board comments.

Mr. Balint departed the meeting at 7:35 pm.

Technology Department - Mr. Fastenau

Mr. Fastenau included a written report and noted the core systems on the network had been updated over the summer. He added that he was busy preparing student computers and teacher carts for the start of the school year next Wednesday.

Mr. Hoepfner offered his appreciation of the work done on finding and being awarded the grant for the needed learning materials. Mr. Fastenau noted it was very much a team effort with the principals when planning began at the end of the last school year.

The Board extended their appreciation to Mr. Fastenau's his grant writing skills and passion for researching and finding grants knowing they were becoming harder to find ones available.

There were no further Board comments.

Maintenance Department - Mr. Moreno

Mr. Moreno included a written report in the Board Packet and noted his team had accomplished the majority of its summer objectives. He shared that he had hoped to remove the last outbuilding behind CHS but knew over the fall once time allowed to review what lingered in the aging building, staff could make plans for demolition.

The Board extended its thanks for the work that had been done over the summer, as could be seen in the hallways and building, overall.

Ms. Merritt inquired about the gate installation at the elementary playground area and Mr. Moreno noted the Amazon ordered item never shipped, so Mr. Russin had brought one back from Anchorage with plans in the works for installation. Ms. Merritt added her observation that the retaining wall allowed students to jump over the side and Mr. Moreno had noted that in his long-term plans but short term the plan was to help ensure that students were not slipping past staff.

There were no further Board comments.

Budget & Finance Office - Ms. Linville

Ms. Linville included a written report in the Board Packet and explained she was very new and was learning the position.

Mr. Hoepfner hoped she embraced the lifelong learning opportunity, to which Mr. Russin added that he was happy to begin working with Ms. Linville on the Admin Team.

Ms. Trudeau thanked Ms. Linville for being willing to do the job, and the the Board had no further questions.

Superintendent Report - Mr. Russin

Mr. Russin included a written report and was available for questions.

Ms. Merritt inquired about staffing and Mr. Russin noted there was one special education aide position added with the increased state BSA funding. Mr. Russin noted for Ms. Merritt the only open position was the part-time kitchen position, but he had a substitute lined up to fill in in the meantime.

Mr. Kruithof inquired if the district had the question answered about the allowable more than 10% of the fund balance. Mr. Russin asked if he could answer that question during the budget new business item.

The Board appreciated the work done by the Admin Team on receiving grant funds. Mr. Russin reflected back on his time with the District, noting one of the priorities of the Board upon his hire was for the superintendent to seek alternate sources of funding. He felt his team and he did a good job on filling the gaps on a year-to-year basis, while even expanding some programs. Mr. Hoepfner appreciated the resourcefulness in these difficult times.

The Board had no further questions for the Superintendent.

Mr. Moreno departed the meeting at 7:47 pm.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

Ms. Stow prepared the June 2025 Financial Reports in the Board Packet and Ms. Linville was available for questions.

Ms. Merritt confirmed these financials were essentially the year-end report of how the District spent the budget compared to actual expenses. Mr. Russin noted that was true, pending the final audit, which was currently underway.

Mr. Hoepfner inquired how the District ended the year in getting the fund balance under the 10% allowable in the general fund and Ms. Merritt felt that was the Board's job to help determine how to advocate and ensure funds were spent as the budget determined. Mr. Russin further added that the Board and District were always advocating on what they knew in the moment and acknowledged the District could work harder to forecast unused expenditures, such as vacant positions, before the year's end, to discuss ending balances. Ms. Merritt felt knowing fund balances were on the Board to have a financial plan in place, should there be a deficit or excess of funds on how to direct them to dedicated fund balances such as capital improvements or follow back to what budget items the superintendent had proposed reducing previously as the fiscal mediators. Mr. Hoepfner agreed but knew there were occurrences that happened throughout the year which left additional funds such as when positions remained vacant.

Ms. Merritt inquired how the capital projects funds for instance had been planned and what were the upcoming projects that should be prioritized knowing there was an available balance in the fund. She knew the Board had previously earmarked funds for high school building improvement via new construction or renovation of the existing building. She hoped to see a detailed list of future capital fund projects so the Board had an idea of how those funds were projected to be spent.

Mr. Russin noted that capital funds were created with Board action and felt the fund balances had been spent down as appropriated on things such as the curriculum and student technology refresh cycle, vehicle replacements, and building improvements. He explained how the superintendent had Board authority to spend up to \$10,000 without board action and noted anything the District needed above \$10,000 went to the Board for approval, no matter where the funds resided. He used the examples of needing to purchase a gate for the playground or replacing a window that had been broken during homes games as those items had not been budgeted for but the District could tap into the appropriate fund balance to pay for those items without depleting the general fund.

The Board had a good discussion around fund balances and finances along with District plans for those funds. There was additional discussion about involving the City for building improvements and ensuring the high school was on the official capital improvement project plan. Mr. Russin commented not every fund balance had a specific plan at the current moment, but the fund balances were for District use for unplanned or future longevity planned District needs. Mr. Hoepfner added comments around other examples of reasons for saving in fund balances noting the balances were small unlike the state capital improvement project list. Mr. Russin answered if unplanned expenses were needed per Mr. Kruithof's example of needing a new van and the planned fund did not have enough funds the superintendent would come to the board with a quote for Board approval above \$10,000. Ms. Merritt felt like she understood the process and uses of the fund balances to be fiscally responsible for the District. The Board decided to withhold further budget discussion until new business action item.

INFORMATION ITEMS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

1. AASB Call for Resolutions.

Discussion: Mr. Russin explained resolutions were added to the agenda to begin a conversation with the Board to see if it want him to work on writing any resolutions to propose to them at the September regular meeting.

Ms. Trudeau had to depart the meeting at 8:08 pm.

Ms. Glasen proposed adding \$800 to the BSA to make up for what was cut by the legislators and increase the general fund allowable balance to be greater than 10% knowing the fiscal landscape at the state funding level.

Mr. Russin recommended board members think about what they would propose and email him their thoughts or ideas directly.

Mr. Hoepfner recommended reviewing what AASB had on their currently proposed list of resolutions to see if Cordova wanted to add any additional resolutions to the list. He had plans to attend the resolutions session during the AASB annual meeting to see which resolutions would be added to the legislative priority list.

Mr. Glasen recommended members email Mr. Russin any ideas for resolutions. Mr. Russin stated that he felt the increase to the general fund balance was a relevant topic to move up to AASB level advocacy.

Mr. Kruithof wanted to add kindergarten as a required statute.

Ms. Merritt wanted to add early education funding for pre-K with her focus on Cordova issues for proposed resolutions.

Mr. Russin noted Cordova could and has written their own resolutions that could be sent directly to state legislators for consideration.

There were no further comments.

2. AR 6145.21 Sportsmanship (First Read).

Ms. Merritt moved to approve AR 6145.21 Sportsmanship (First Read), as presented in the Board Packet. Mr. Kruithof seconded the motion.

Discussion: Ms. Russin noted this policy was reviewed by the policy committee in the spring after being worked on further by Mr. Russin. There were no comments.

Motion: PASSED 4-0

3. Superintendent Retirement Notification Following 25-26 School Year.

Ms. Merritt moved to approve the Superintendent Retirement Notification following 25-26 School Year, as presented in the Board Packet. Mr. Hoepfner seconded the motion.

Discussion: The Board supported his decision and there were no comments.

Motion: PASSED 4-0

4. FY26 Budget Revision.

Mr. Hoepfner moved to approve the FY26 Budget Revision, as presented in the Board Packet. Ms. Merritt seconded the motion.

Discussion: Mr. Russin noted additional BSA funds were expected from the state after the state legislators over rode the governor's line item partial BSA funding veto. He then explained the notes on the proposed budget revision as outlined in the packet (page 160) which would get the District under 9% for the fund balance at the end of FY26.

Mr. Kruithof inquired if the District under spent funds like what happened in FY25 due to staff positions going unfilled, how would the District determine which fund balances to transfer any to when budgeting time came such as capital funds. Mr. Russin agreed he would work with his budget director on where to propose directing general funds prior to the year ending.

There were no further comments.

Motion: PASSED 4-0

CONTRACTS AND MEMORANDUMS OF AGREEMENT: None

PERSONNEL: None

PENDING AGENDA:

1. Teacher and staff lunch with the Board during back-to-school In-Service (August 14, 15, 18, 19).
Note: The Board was invited to attend the all-staff breakfast on the first day of in-service August 14, 2025 as their opportunity to mix and mingle with staff.
2. Add discussion item to September regular meeting for making recorded meetings available for the public.

AUDIENCE COMMENTS: None

BOARD COMMENTS:

- Mr. Hoepfner
 - Congratulated everyone and wished staff a good first day of school.
 - Thanked Mr. Russin for his hard work developing the superintendent search timeline and was sad to see him move on. He greatly appreciated all the things done and brought along by Mr. Russin for the District during his time.
 - Thanked the secretary for sending the committee meeting invites on the calendar.
 - Reminded Board members to complete their self-evaluation for the upcoming work shop.
- Mr. Glasen
 - Thanked staff for preparing reports and reporting details to the Board.
 - He appreciated hearing about the back-to-school preparations.
 - Welcomed Ms. Linville to the team.
- Mr. Kruithof thanked fellow Board members for being able to have difficult conversations while remaining civil and amicable before making difficult decisions. He was excited for his grandkids to go back to school.
- Ms. Merritt
 - Glad to see the Board make movements toward making meetings more accessible to the community. She felt the Board would benefit from the public hearing the discussions for those wanting to be involved and in the know.
 - She was conscious of conflicting narratives in the community around public perception and wanted the Board to consider what the benefit was to saving funds. She felt there were only a few ways that was beneficial for the Board such as in case of emergency, an upcoming capital project earmarked, and annual unstable funding; knowing the state statue of having too much was a 10% cap to ensure Boards were using funds appropriately when working with the superintendent while knowing the Board's role in budgeting. She wanted to prioritize district funds being spent on student education.
 - Thanked everyone for a good meeting.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

1. Superintendent Contract for the 25-26 School Year

Ms. Merritt moved that the Board go into Executive Session to discuss a person and/or a subject that may tend to prejudice the reputation or character of a person, provided the person may request a public discussion. Mr. Kruithof seconded the motion.

Motion: PASSED 4-0

Adjourned for Executive Session at 8:35 pm.
Reconvened at 8:59 pm.

ADJOURNMENT:

Ms. Merritt moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Kruithof seconded.

Discussion: None

Motion: PASSED 4-0

Meeting Adjourned at 8:59 pm.

ATTEST:

President

Clerk

Date

Date

DRAFT