

Belton Independent School District

Board Meeting Minutes

Regular Board Meeting, May 18, 2026 - 6:15 p.m.

Pittenger Fine Arts Center, 400 N. Wall Street, Belton, TX 76513

Board Members Present:

Manuel Alcozer
Rucker Preston
Jeff Norwood
Chris Flor

Brandon Bozon
Riley Beck
Erin Bass

Board Members Absent:

1. Call to Order, Moment of Silence, and Pledge of Allegiance

Manuel Alcozer, Board President, called the regular meeting of the Belton Independent School District Board of Trustees to order at 6:15pm. He stated that a quorum of Board Members was present, that the meeting had been duly called, and notice of the meeting had been posted in accordance with the Texas Open Meetings Act, Texas Government Code Chapter 551.

2. Administer Oath of Office to Board Members Elected on May 2, 2026

The Oath of Office was Administered to Brandon Bozon and Rucker Preston, Trustees At-Large.

3. Recognitions

Student Pledges – Belton Early Childhood School

This evening, the pledges were led by students Kobe Bailey and Hadleigh Brewer from Belton Early Childhood School.

Student Showcase – Penguin Project

The student showcase featured Belton ISD's Penguin Project, which recently brought Madagascar–A Musical Adventure Jr. to the stage for its fourth annual production. With more than 90 student performers, this year's production marked the largest cast in program history. The Penguin Project provides students with special needs the opportunity to perform in a fully staged musical alongside peer mentors, building confidence and celebrating the unique talents of each and every student while highlighting the power of inclusion and belonging.

VEX Robotics World Qualifiers

Belton ISD proudly recognized the Belton New Tech @Waskow robotics team for qualifying for the VEX Robotics World Championship, earning a second consecutive trip to compete on the global stage. Through the VEX Robotics program, students design, build and program robots to solve complex engineering challenges while developing skills in coding, teamwork and real-world problem-solving. These students are supported by their teacher, Stephen Tysor.

VEX Robotics State Qualifiers

Tonight, we recognize the Belton New Tech @Waskow and Lake Belton High School robotics teams for qualifying for the VEX Robotics State competition. These students are supported by their teacher, Stephen Tysor.

SkillsUSA District 10 State Qualifiers

The Board celebrated Belton High School student Carson Cheatham for qualifying for the SkillsUSA District 10 State competition in Brakes and Maintenance and Light Repair, earning bronze in both events. Carson's achievement reflects his dedication to mastering industry skills and preparing for future career success. He is supported by his teacher, Jared Bouchie.

Texas High School Coaches Association Academic All-State - Boys Soccer

Belton ISD celebrated student-athletes named to the Texas High School Coaches Association Academic All-State teams for soccer, swimming and tennis. From Belton High School, Corin Ramesar and Valentin Villanueva were named second team, and Daniel Arroyo earned honorable mention under the leadership of Coach Carlo Mosnia. From Lake Belton High School, Zane Fitzwater was named second team, and Jacob Boone and Jordan Tuggle earned honorable mention, coached by Andrew Kirshner.

Texas High School Coaches Association Academic All-State - Girls Soccer

Belton ISD is proud to recognize student-athletes who earned Academic All-State honors in girls soccer from the Texas High School Coaches Association. From Belton High School, Abby Idoux was named first team, and Grace Landen and Mya Williams earned honorable mention under the leadership of Coach Oscar Bersosa. From Lake Belton High School, Clara Hill and Kate Henn were named first team, and Mikaela Ebberts earned second team, coached by Jamie Tibbetts.

Texas High School Coaches Association Academic All-State - Swimming

Belton ISD recognized five student-athletes from Belton New Tech @Waskow and Lake Belton High School who earned Academic All-State honors in swimming through the Texas High School Coaches Association. Under the direction of Coach Jaynie Ferguson at Lake Belton High School, Christine Kim and David Stewart were named to the second team, and Elizabeth Simeroth received honorable mention. Under the direction of Coach Jordan Wedemeyer at Belton New Tech @Waskow, Leland Moore and Samantha McKenzie were named to the first team.

Texas High School Coaches Association Academic All-State - Tennis

The Board recognized Lake Belton High School student-athletes who earned Academic All-State honors in tennis through the Texas High School Coaches Association. Ari Schanzmeyer and Shreya Bhat were named to the elite team, while Claire Linzy, Arina Kutova and Diego Olvera earned second team honors under the leadership of Coach Corey Smith.

UIL Orchestra Solo & Ensemble State Qualifiers

Belton ISD proudly recognized Amelia Hadsall and Hannah Kim for qualifying for the UIL State Solo and Ensemble Contest. They earned this distinction by performing the most challenging level of music literature from memory and receiving a superior rating at the regional contest. Amelia and Hannah will compete at the state level at the University of Texas at Austin at the end of May. These students are supported by their director, Jenna Burchell.

Texas Dance Educators Association All-State Qualifiers

The Board celebrated two Belton ISD student dancers who were selected as Texas Dance Educators Association All-State performers. This distinction places them among just 250 dancers statewide chosen to participate in master classes and perform at the Texas Dance Educators Association Convention, reflecting exceptional talent, dedication and commitment to their craft. From Belton High School, Payten McNeely earned this honor, and from Lake Belton High School, Rivers Mahler was selected. These students are supported by their coaches, Rachel Hill and McKenzie Urteaga, and Emma Marsland and Haley Billasano.

Ascension National Qualifiers

The Board recognized the Lake Belton High School Varsity Silver Spurs for their success at the Ascension National Competition. The team earned second place in the Large Team division and captured first-place finishes in both Kick and Hip Hop, highlighting their talent, precision and strong teamwork on a national stage. Kennedy Ptaszek also represented the program as a soloist, earning first place in the 10th-grade division. These students are supported by their coaches, Emma Marsland and Haley Billasano.

American Dance/Drill Team National Qualifiers

Belton ISD recognized the Belton High School Magic Belles for placing fourth at the American Dance/Drill Team National Competition, earning a national championship title in Jazz. These students are supported by their coaches, Rachel Hill and McKenzie Urteaga.

Color Guard State Qualifiers

The Belton High School color guard advanced to the state-level competition in the Texas Color Guard Circuit. This achievement reflects the team's dedication, precision and commitment throughout the season as they competed at a high level. These students are under the leadership of Director Briana Merritt.

VASE State Qualifiers

The Board celebrated Ethan Cohen, Samira Cruz, Mariel Kacal and Sylas Lopez, who advanced to the State Visual Art Scholastic Event through the Visual Arts Scholastic Event program. These students earned area medals to qualify for state. They are supported by their teachers, Jannet Alardin and Emily Simeroth. Congratulations to all!

Jr. VASE Regional Qualifiers

The Board celebrated middle school artists who earned top honors at the Jr. Visual Art Scholastic Event. Katelynn Mitchell, a seventh-grade student, earned a double medal with gold and platinum recognition. Eighth-grade students Thi Dao, Hailey Jeong and Madeline Poulton each earned Gold and Platinum, representing the highest rating at the regional competition. Madison Saldana, a seventh-grade student, also earned Gold and Platinum honors. These students are supported by their teachers, Shannan Swanson-Bryan, Robyn Jackson and Stephen Steger.

UIL Theatrical Design State Qualifiers

Belton ISD students Emilee Whitt, Paloma Carmona-Ortiz, and Ashley McDonald qualified for the UIL State Theatrical Design competition. Emilee qualified in both costuming and marketing, Paloma qualified in costume design, and Ashley qualified in marketing in the 5A state contest. These students were supported by their teachers, Marie Phillips and Shelby Cozart.

Texas Elementary Art Meet - Top of TEAM

Belton ISD students Camila Munoz, a third-grade student from Southwest Elementary, and Eleanor Neal, a fifth-grade student from Chisholm Trail Elementary, earned Top of TEAM honors at the Texas Elementary Art Meet, the highest level of recognition at the elementary level. They were supported by their teachers, Kristi Bernstein and Amber Gabriel.

Texas Choral Directors Association Honor Choir

Leon Heights Elementary students Carolina Cook and Abbey Erskine earned a place in the Texas Choral Directors Association Elementary Honor Choir. Selected from hundreds of auditions submitted by students across the state, Carolina and Abbey were chosen among the top sopranos and altos to represent Texas. Abbey earned this distinction for the second consecutive year. They were supported by their director, Debra Jackson.

Superintendent Student Advisory Council

The Board recognized students serving on the Superintendent's Student Advisory Council, representing all Belton ISD high schools. These students provided a direct voice in district leadership by sharing feedback and perspectives on topics important to their peers and school communities. The district appreciated their leadership, advocacy, and commitment to making a meaningful impact.

Texas Association of Basketball 2026 Girls Middle School Coach of the Year

Katyanna "Kat" Colburn of Belton Middle School was named the Texas Association of Basketball Coaches 2026 Girls Middle School Coach of the Year.

In her two years with Belton ISD, Coach Colburn built a strong program rooted in discipline, teamwork, and growth, demonstrating a commitment to her student-athletes' development.

New Administrator Introduction

Neill Plemons, Belton New Tech @Waskow Principal

Neill Plemons was named principal of Belton New Tech @Waskow. With nearly a decade of education experience, he served as a teacher, assistant principal, and interim principal. Plemons joined Belton New Tech @Waskow in 2021, serving as an English I teacher and CTE government program lead before becoming assistant principal in March 2024. He was recognized for his focus on student ownership, collaboration, and project-based learning, and he held a bachelor's degree in English and a master's in educational leadership.

Temple Rotary Educator of the Month

Shelby Cozart and Ty Carter were recognized as the March Temple Rotary Club's Educators of the Month for their impact at Lake Belton High School. As theater directors, they fostered a culture of belonging and helped students build confidence. Their collaborative leadership and dedication created meaningful opportunities for students.

Temple Rotary Educator of the Month

Marjorie Trehern was recognized as the April Temple Rotary Club's Educator of the Month for her impact at Lake Belton High School. A resource social studies teacher, she supported programs including Hope Squad, Spirit Team, and Unified Robotics, fostering a strong sense of belonging on campus.

Temple Rotary Educator of the Month

Jennifer Hoelscher was recognized as the May Temple Rotary Club Educator of the Month for her impact at Sparta Elementary. With over 20 years of service in a special education resource and inclusion role, she ensured every student felt supported and empowered. Her dedication made her highly deserving of this honor.

Belton Rotary Educator of the Quarter

Rebecca Tome was recognized as the Belton Rotary Educator of the Quarter for her impact at James L. Burrell Elementary. As a music teacher, she created engaging learning experiences that inspired a love of music and provided meaningful opportunities for students and families.

Department Showcase - Human Resources

The department showcase highlighted the Belton ISD Human Resources team, which supported more than 2,000 employees and hundreds of substitutes. By recruiting and retaining high-quality staff and ensuring compliance, the team played an essential role in district success, welcoming 412 new hires since May 1, 2025.

Community Partner – Johnnie's Cleaning & Tailoring

Johnnie's Cleaning & Tailoring was recognized as a valued community partner. Since 1949, this family-owned business provided high-quality services and consistently supported the community. The district expressed gratitude for their ongoing partnership, notably their complimentary gown pressing for students and staff during graduation season.

3. Public Comments Regarding Items on the Agenda

None.

4. Reports:

A. Superintendent Student Advisory Council Report

Gabi Nino, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching & Learning, introduced the Superintendent Student Advisory Council Report. This council provides a platform for student voice and collaboration, allowing students to directly impact district leadership and policies. This year's focus was "Life After High School" and "Financial Literacy". In addition, the council helped define and build out a "Student Leader Profile" that aligns with the district's broader leadership

definitions. During the presentation, students expressed that serving on the SSAC was highly impactful, noting that their research and voices are genuinely heard and translated into actual district policy. Students pointed to the previous council's recommendation of the "Hope Squad" (a peer-to-peer suicide prevention program) as proof that their solutions save lives and improve school morale.

B. Goal 4 Update - Hope Squad

Dr. Cassandra Spearman, Assistant Superintendent of Operations, provided an overview of Hope Squad and the successful completion of the Phase One district-wide expansion this year to foster a culture of student support. The peer-nominated program focuses on kindness in elementary schools, anti-bullying in middle schools, and connection in high schools. Campus squads led impactful initiatives, including a district-wide "we missed you" postcard campaign to reduce absenteeism, self-care bingo, and community service drives. Having met its milestones, the district is now designing Phase Two for the upcoming school year.

C. Virtual School Pilot Report

Shad McGaha, Chief Technology Officer, informed the Board about the plans around launching a Virtual School Pilot this fall for up to 75 high school students, offering both full-time and hybrid learning models. A unique advantage of the program is that students remain connected to their home campuses, allowing them to continue participating in UIL activities, fine arts, and Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. The curriculum will be 100% TEKS-aligned and taught by Texas-certified teachers, requiring students to log in for a minimum of four hours daily and engage with direct instruction. Because the program demands strict adherence to academic and attendance standards, the district is hiring a dedicated program coordinator to monitor student success. By providing a flexible option that recaptures enrollment from outside sources.

The Board responded to the Virtual School Pilot report with strong support, asking detailed logistical questions to ensure clear boundaries and accountability for the program.

D. Board Committee Reports

1. Policy Committee

Erin Bass reported on Facilities Naming Process (CW LOCAL) ahead of potential discussions regarding the renaming of Tiger Stadium. This consideration involves the possibility of an individual or organization making a significant financial contribution to help cover the stadium's upkeep costs. She also reported on the following update 126 policies: Board Meeting Logistics (BE LOCAL), Public Comments (BED LOCAL) and Wellness and Health Services (FFAC LOCAL).

2. Budget Committee

Chris Flor reported on reviewing standard budget update, financial implications of the newly proposed Virtual School Pilot, and four preliminary staff compensation plans (Scenarios A, B, C, and D) based on recent market studies

3. Facilities Committee

Jeff Norwood reported that they reviewed a timeline for real property appraisals ahead of potential sale of property, a substantial summer projects list, a storm damage update, and upcoming procurement items.

E. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Malinda Golden celebrated a successful end to the school year, highlighting the recent Teacher of the Year dinner and the upcoming Class of 2026 graduation, which includes a notably large group of students earning associate degrees through a partnership with Temple College. Dr. Golden praised numerous student events across the district, such as the Hope Squad activities with early learners at BECS, BECS Cinco de Mayo celebration, the Little Red Relays, middle school fine arts showcases, the expanded Penguin Project, and the Night of Champions. Looking ahead, the district is actively refining its five-year strategic plan through unprecedented cross-departmental collaboration, with new branding and updates coming soon

to the district website. Finally, the report thanked campus PTAs and volunteers for their ongoing support, specifically honoring the Burrell family for continuing their father's legacy by sponsoring a recent teacher appreciation event at their namesake campus.

F. Board Highlights

During Board Highlights, trustees celebrated major end-of-year events, including the Teacher of the Year dinner, the Belton Education Foundation awarding \$320,000 in scholarships, and a joint Project Celebration for seniors. They praised widespread student achievements across fine arts and athletics, noting various banquets, the Penguin Project, art exhibits, and a track state champion. Finally, the board commended the profound impact of community and staff support, highlighting parent booster clubs, dedicated educators like coaches Smith and Tidwell, and partnerships like the Belton Church of Christ's block party

6. Consent Agenda: Consider and Take Appropriate Action

- A. Minutes of Previous Meetings:
 - 1. April 8, 2026 - Special Meeting
 - 2. April 20, 2026 - Workshop Meeting
 - 3. April 20, 2026 - Regular Meeting
- B. Unaudited Financial Report for the Month Ending April 30, 2026
- C. Gifts, Grants, and Bequests
- D. Budget Amendment #8 for 2025-2026
- E. Expenditures over \$50,000
 - 1. Secured Mobility for Smart Tag Hardware 2022 Bond Project
 - 2. Renewal of Secured Mobility for Smart Tag License and Supplies
 - 3. Automated Logic for Direct Digital Controls System Upgrade 2022 Bond Project
 - 4. Renewal of NCS Pearson for Digital Assessment Library for Schools
 - 5. Facility Solutions Group for Classroom Lighting Replacement at Lakewood Elementary and Belton Middle School 2022 Bond Project
- F. Supply, Equipment, and Service Bids
 - 1. RCSP #2604-475-407 Transportation Center and DAEP Facility Roof Replacement Projects
 - 2. RFP #2603-275-401 Fine Arts Contracted Services
 - 3. RFCQ #2604-750-417 Surplus Technology Buy-Back
- G. Policy Update 126 - 2nd Reading
 - 1. BE(LOCAL) Board Meetings
 - 2. BED(LOCAL) Board Meetings
 - 3. FFAC(LOCAL) Wellness & Health Svcs: Medical Treatment
- H. Staff Development Minutes Waiver for the 2026-2027 School Year

Riley Beck made a motion, seconded by Rucker Preston, to approve the consent agenda, as presented. The motion passed unanimously (7-0).

7. Public Comments Regarding Non-Agenda Items

None.

8. Closed Session (Texas Government Code, Subchapters D and E)

The Board convened in closed session at 8:24 p.m.

- A. Student Disciplinary Matter - Texas Government Code, Section 551.082
- B. Personnel - Texas Government Code, Section 551.074
- C. Consultation with Attorney - Texas Government Code, Section 551.071
- D. Deliberate the Appointment and Duties of Public Officers – Texas Government Code, Section 551.074
- E. Discussion of Districtwide Intruder Detection Audit Report Finding - Texas Government Code, Section 551.076

9. Reconvene in Open Session and Take Action, if any, on Items Discussed in Closed Session

The Board reconvened in open session at 9:08 p.m.

A. Consider, Discuss, and Take Appropriate Action Regarding Reorganization of the Board of Trustees

Jeff Norwood made a motion, seconded by Riley Beck, to appoint Chris Flor as President, Erin Bass as Vice President, and Rucker Preston as Secretary, of the Board of Trustees. The motion passed unanimously (7-0).

B. Consider, Discuss, and Take Appropriate Action Regarding Appointment of Board Committees

Chris Flor made a motion, seconded by Brandon Bozon, to appoint Erin Bass and Riley Beck to the Policy Committee, Manuel Alcozer and Jeff Norwood to the Facilities Committee, Rucker Preston and Brandon Bozon to the Budget Committee, and Chris Flor, Rucker Preston, and Jeff Norwood to the District Safety & Security Committee. The motion passed unanimously (7-0).

10. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:13 p.m.

Manuel Alcozer, President

Erin Bass, Secretary