

MINUTES OF THE  
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING  
Of the Board of Education  
Riverside School District No. 96  
Held on Wednesday, November 5, 2025  
Ames Elementary School

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING

20-570 A. President Wesley Muirheid called the Regular Business Meeting to order at 6:15 p.m., and on roll call the following members were recorded as being present:

	Ms. Gunn
	Ms. Kachlic
	Mr. Olech
	Mr. Hunt
	Ms. Claps
	Mr. Muirheid
Absent:	Mr. Barsotti

Also in attendance were Superintendent Martha Ryan-Toye, Director of Teaching and Learning Angela Dolezal, Director of Special Education & Student Services Nora Geraghty, Interim Director of Finance Mark Kuzniewski, Director of Technology Molly Marquardt, Hauser Principal Chris Harvalis, Hauser Assistant Principal Katie Kayastha, Blythe Park Principal Casimira Gorman, Central Principal Pete Gatz, Hollywood Principal Erin Dwyer, Elementary Intervention & Support Coordinator Nicole Mazza, Ryan Kelley DLA Architects, Jason Green WT Engineering Group, staff members, the recording clerk to the Board of Education, and a videographer from Riverside TV.

20-571 B. A motion was made by Ms. Gunn and supported by Mr. Olech to adjourn to Closed Session for the following reasons:

- Any matter involving an individual student. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(10).
- The appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees of the District or legal counsel for the District, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee or against legal counsel for the District to determine its validity. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1)

The motion carried on the following roll call vote:

Ayes:	Mr. Olech
	Ms. Claps
	Ms. Gunn
	Mr. Hunt
	Ms. Kachlic
	Mr. Muirheid
Absent:	Mr. Barsotti
Nays:	None

C. Return to Open Session.

The board returned to open session at 7:05 pm.

#### D. Welcome to Ames Elementary School.

Principal Gierman welcomed the Board to Ames School and shared highlights of the happenings at Ames School.

#### E. Public Comment/Response.

Joel Marhoul, a former board member, addressed the discussion concerning the Blythe Park Playground and fence project. He emphasized that erosion and drainage concerns should not be the determining factor in deciding whether to install a fence for the project. He reminded all parties that the park is a shared green space between the Village and the School District, stating that a fence would be detrimental to this shared use.

#### F. Changes to the Agenda.

There were no changes to the agenda.

#### G. Committee Reports

##### 1. Facility Committee - Mr. Olech.

###### a. Blythe Park Playground-continued discussion.

- The board held its October meeting and reviewed two design options from DLA Architects for the Blythe Park playground project, ultimately recommending the second option. This expanded design notably features a fully fenced playground, a detail that had been a key point of discussion across multiple village advisory groups and commissions.
- Ryan Kelley of DLA Architects and Jason Green of WT Engineering Group explained that the fence, not included in the original plan, was added to mitigate erosion and drainage issues.
- Three alternatives were presented for the fence structure: a retaining wall, steps within the playground area, or a seating wall. A significant modification following consultation with the Village Forester involves changes to the overall site grading.
- DLA thanked the board for placing them on the agenda to provide this update and appreciated the consideration given to what is possible, as well as the requirements that must be met.
- The board thanked them for the comprehensive update. As the project progresses, additional input is needed from several November village meetings. After a thorough discussion, the board reaffirmed its decision to proceed with the project and continue with community feedback.

###### b. School Maintenance Grant.

- Mark Kuzniewski shared that the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) offers funding for the School Maintenance Project Grant. This grant will match up to \$50,000 for qualified projects, but funding is contingent on the State funding the grant. At this time, the Grant application is open for Districts to submit a grant with a January due date; funding is yet to be determined. To be eligible for any funding, we must submit the grant now.
- The grant application has been completed and is ready for submission. The project assigned to the grant is the already-approved tuckpointing project at Hauser Junior High School for next summer, as it meets all the requirements outlined in the grant. However, the board must authorize the grant before submission.

- The grant application was shared with the Board, and they will be asked to authorize the grant at the November 19 Regular Business Meeting. This matter will be placed under the consent agenda.

## 2. Education Committee - Mr. Hunt.

- a. Student Achievement Overview.
  - Dr. Angela Dolezal, Director of Teaching and Learning, presented the 2025 Student Achievement Report. The leadership team was acknowledged and are also in attendance. The report presents information on how District 96 students performed on spring assessments compared with their grade-level peers and students across Illinois. This year's report shared updates to the state school report card, celebrated D96 successes, and focus areas.
  - It was shared that this is a team effort.
  - MAP Growth and Achievement
    - Results from the following areas were shared: Fall to Spring Reading Growth (By Grade), Fall to Spring Math Growth (By Grade), Spring Reading Achievement (By Grade), Spring Math Achievement (By Grade), Fall Reading Achievement (By Cohort), and Fall Math Achievement (By Cohort).
    - Growth this year is lower than the past two years and the rationale was shared.
  - IAR Achievement results were shared.
  - Equity Journey Continuum
    - This category tracks progress in closing equity gaps in student achievement, opportunities, and resources across three key areas: Student Learning, Learning Conditions, and Elevating Educators.
    - The district is showing a slight decrease, and the rationale was shared.
  - State Report Card
    - Riverside D96 noted several progress points as the Illinois State Board of Education released the 2025 Illinois Report Card, a detailed look at student performance data from the 2024-25 school year.
    - Please visit [Illinoisreportcard.com](https://illinoisreportcard.com) to learn more.
    - All five schools received a rating of Exemplary or Commendable from the Illinois State Board of Education. To be classified as exemplary by the Illinois State Board of Education, a school must rank in the top 10% of public schools in the state on a complex metric that considers multiple factors. Blythe Park and Hauser Junior High School were ranked exemplary.
    - Chronic absenteeism has increased, and the administration continues to explore ways to address it.
  - Celebrate Successes
    - All five schools received a rating of Exemplary or Commendable from the Illinois State Board of Education.
    - Reading and math achievement remain well above national norms, with most grade levels scoring in the 85th-95th percentile range.
    - For three consecutive years, all grades have exceeded the national median growth percentile in both reading and math.
    - Cohorts maintain or improve their achievement as they progress through grade levels, showing instructional stability.
    - Continued recovery and rebound in math and reading performance demonstrate strong tiered support systems

- Areas for Continued Focus
    - While still above national norms, districtwide median growth percentiles in Reading declined across all grade levels in 2024-25 compared to 2023-24.
    - Some grade spans showed lower median growth compared to prior years
    - Equity gaps persist, with a small but consistent disparity remaining between demographics
    - The year-over-year decline suggests the need to ensure consistent Tier 1 instruction and intervention coherence across schools.
    - Chronic absenteeism remains challenging post-COVID, and the district continues to prioritize this area.
    - The impressive ELA proficiency rates drew praise from the Board, who acknowledged the hard work of our teachers and school leadership teams.
    - These scores are a testament to the collaborative efforts of our families, staff, and students.
    - The Board of Education thanked Dr. Dolezal for her presentation.
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3. Finance Committee - Ms. Claps.
- a. Tax Levy - Initial Discussion.
    - Finance Chair Ms. Chaps introduced Interim Director of Finance Mark Kuzniewski and shared that annually, School Boards approve the Tax Levy. This levy instructs the County Assessor on how tax collections should be allocated by fund and to what extent (i.e., which tax rate should be applied to each fund).
    - District 96's Tax Levy is very straightforward because there is no significant new construction or growth each year. As a point of reference, the "new property" from 2023 to 2024 was \$394,503. The new property for the 2025 levy is not yet known, so we do calculations to ensure we do not leave any new property unaccounted for.
    - The following represents the key points of the 2025 Levy:
      - The CPI is 2.9%, which is the limit as to what can be added to the previous levy amounts for existing property.
      - The Levy proposal has a limiting factor (AKA a tax increase) of 4.849%, which is below the 5% threshold required by Truth in Taxation laws. The difference between the 2.9% CPI cap and the 4.849% is the amount that is built in to capture any new growth. This will allow up to \$25 million in new growth to be captured into the total EAV moving forward.
      - Note that the additional tax rate applies only to New Property; existing property is subject to the 2.9% CPI limit.
    - The current levy increases the transportation fund's levy to cover increased expenditures and avoid requiring the Board to make annual fund transfers.
    - This matter will be moved to the November 19th Regular Business Meeting for approval.
    - Mark Kuzniewski was thanked for his presentation.

The Board President noted that, due to time constraints, the committee will proceed to #5: Family Engagement Committee.

4. Family Engagement Committee - Ms. Kachlic.

a. Family and Community Partnership Meeting - October 30, 2025.

- Ms. Kachlic shared highlights from the October 17th Parent Leadership Team (PLT) meeting.
- She then shared highlights from the October 30th Family and Community Partnership meeting. The action team is focused on improving trust, communication, confidence, and capacity between the school and the family.
- This work remains focused on parent connections, two-way communication, community outreach, and student leadership.
- The team determined that we would not administer an updated family engagement survey in November 2025 as previously determined. It was determined that the new strategic plan process, scheduled to begin in 2026, would provide ample opportunity to connect with families and gather the feedback and insights needed on their perspectives on District 96.

The Hauser window replacement project this summer necessitates a temporary relocation for the Hauser transition program. This class will again be housed at Ames School, led by Mr. Mason. A core aspect of the curriculum will be developing students' executive functioning skills necessary for middle school success, such as managing transitions between classrooms. We are committed to ensuring students continue to receive this vital experience, and we will send specific communications to all affected families with logistics details.

5. Policy Committee - Ms. Gunn

a. IASB 2025 Delegate Appointment for Joint Meeting.

Ms. Gunn shared that at this time, no one is available to attend the conference; therefore, there is no need to appoint a delegate.

b. IASB Joint Annual Conference and Resolutions for Consideration - November 21-23, 2025.

- Because there are no key delegate issues, there is no need to discuss these resolutions. Members were asked to contact Cathy Perino regarding conference attendance.

Ms. Gunn shared that the IASB's PRESS #120 policy issues will be forthcoming and added to a future board meeting for first reading.

6. Personnel Committee - Mr. Barsotti.

a. Staff Morale Survey (Fall 2025).

- The survey results are attached for the board's review. The board wants to give this information ample time, so it was decided to table this matter for a future board meeting.

H. Future Meeting Dates.

1. November 19, 2025 – Regular Business Meeting, 7:00 p.m. in the LRC at Hauser.
2. December 3, 2025 – Committee of the Whole Meeting, 7:00 p.m. in the library at Blythe Park School.

3. December 17, 2024 - Regular Business Meeting, 7:00 p.m. in the LRC at Hauser. (The Board will enter into Closed Session at 6:15 p.m., if necessary, and return to Open Session at 7:00 p.m.).
4. January 7, 2026 - Committee of the Whole. This meeting is usually cancelled, but it was discussed as a possible meeting date.

I. Adjournment.

The meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

November 5, 2025

Date Recorded

Date Approved

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President, Board of Education

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Secretary, Board of Education