

Agenda of Workshop Meeting

The Board of Trustees Abilene Independent School District

A Workshop Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Abilene Independent School District will be held Thursday, February 5, 2026, beginning at 5:00 PM in the Boardroom, One AISD Center 241 Pine Street, Abilene, Texas 79601.

The subjects to be discussed or considered or upon which any formal action may be taken are listed below. Items do not have to be taken in the same order as shown on this meeting notice. Unless removed from the consent agenda, items identified within the consent agenda will be acted on at one time.

- I. Call to Order
- II. Oral Communication from the Public
- III. Center for Innovation
- IV. Adjournment to Closed Session:
 - A. Pursuant to Texas Government Code § 551.071, to consult with the District's attorney, in person or by phone, on a matter in which the duty of the attorney to the District under the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct of the State Bar of Texas clearly conflicts with Chapter 551 of the Texas Local Government Code.
 - B. Pursuant to Texas Government Code § 551.074 for the purpose of considering the appointment, employment, evaluation, reassignment, duties, discipline, or dismissal of a public officer, employee, or to hear complaints or charges against a public officer or employee.
 - I. Superintendent Performance Evaluation and Contract Considerations
- V. Reconvene from Closed Session
- VI. Adjournment

Abilene Independent School District Board Document - Agenda Item

Meeting Date: February 5, 2026

Meeting Type: Workshop

Item Type: Program Update Future Action Required: No If Yes, Month:

Subject: Center for Innovation (CFI) - Opportunity for a New Focus

Background Information:

The AISD Center for Innovation program, in partnership with McMurry University, consists of two fifth grade classes housed on the McMurry campus. Currently, AISD teachers provide instruction to 50 students consisting of core content and enhanced instruction and opportunities in the areas of Math and Science. The program has had a STEM focus since its inception in 2008.

As part of the Building Brighter Futures initiative and in an effort to offer more variety to elementary students, AISD and McMurry are collaborating to change the focus of the CFI to Fine Arts, including music, art, dance, and theater. This will be in addition to the existing academic rigor and collaborative opportunities that are currently in place.

Different Fine Arts activities will occur each day, with additional opportunities for students to choose a Fine Arts area of interest to further explore. Additional Fine Arts field trips and experiences will also be offered. Instruction will be provided by AISD and McMurry instructors.

Attached Supporting Documents:

Presentation slidedeck: [CFI - Fine Arts](#)

Fiscal Implications:

No large costs expected

Administrative Recommendation:

Informational only

Contact Person:

Clay Johnson, Executive Director for Fine Arts

Keri Thornburg, Executive Director for Elementary Education

Patti Blue, Associate Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction



Board of Trustees Meeting

February 5, 2026



AISD Center for Innovation - Opportunity for a New Focus

Clay Johnson, Executive Director for Fine Arts

Keri Thornburg - Executive Director for Elementary Education



Abilene ISD Center For Innovation

- Partnership with Abilene ISD and McMurry University
 - Began in 2008-2009 with one 5th grade class (referred to as “McMagnet”)
 - A second 5th grade class was added in the 2017-18 school year
- Currently a STEM focused model
 - Comprised of high-achieving 5th grade students from all Abilene ISD campuses
 - Selected through application process
 - The current STEM model focus has stayed in place since it began in 2008
- Housed on the McMurry Campus
 - 50 students (two classes)
 - Taught by Abilene ISD Educators
 - Supplemented lessons, experiences, activities provided by McMurry faculty and students



Opportunity for a New Focus

- Building Brighter Futures District Initiative
 - Addition of STEM/STEAM focused campuses in Abilene ISD, including two at elementary
 - Parents have expressed interested in options other than STEM
 - Looking for additional options to broaden the opportunities for elementary students



Abilene Center for Innovation and Fine Arts

- Continue high rigor with all core subject areas in current format
- Continue to be housed at McMurry University
- Addition of Fine Arts focused scheduling and curriculum
- Application process modified to include fine arts interests
- Opportunity to rebrand and bring positive attention to Abilene ISD & McMurry University!



Program Overview

Daily Fine Arts Instruction

- Art - McMurry Art Education
- Music - AISD Music Educator
- Theatre - McMurry Theatre Education
- Dance - AISD Dance Educator
- Small Group Choice Study
 - Students pick an area of specialization and participate in an intensified studio class for the 5th day of the week

On Site Experiences

- Young Audiences of Abilene
- The Grace Museum ArtReach
- Opportunities for guest artists/performers



Program Overview

Field Experiences

- Attend the Philharmonic
- Attend the Nutcracker
- Attend the ACU Opera
- Attend the Friday evening performances of the AISD high school musicals
- Grace Museum Field Trip
- Annual Distance Fine Art Field Trip (Dallas Symphony, Meow Wolf, etc)

Home Campus & EOY

- Students have the opportunity to participate with their home campus for special events and programs including:
 - Honor Choir, Visual Arts TEAM program, other special campus fine arts events!
- The year culminates in a fine arts collage showcase featuring artworks and performances by CFI Fine Arts Students!



Program Oversight

- Quarterly meetings
 - All instructors and Abilene ISD C&I / Fine Arts
 - Calendar, special events, field trips, programs, etc.
 - TEKS compliance
 - Vertical alignment



Questions?