

**COOLIDGE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 21**  
**Governing Board of Education Regular Meeting Minutes**  
**December 11, 2024**

**REGULAR MEETING**

**Date, Time, Place of Meeting**

The Governing Board of Education held a Regular Meeting on Wednesday, December 11, 2024, at 6:00 PM, 450 N. Arizona Boulevard Coolidge Arizona.

**ROUTINE BUSINESS**

**Call to Order and Roll Call**

*Present at this meeting was President Michael Flores, II, Vice-President Linda Heath, Member Kris Gillespie, Member Diana Guerrero and member George Arredondo.*

**Approval of Agenda**

Vice President Linda Heath MOVED, SECOND by Member George Arredondo, to approve the agenda

**MOTION CARRIED: 5-0**

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There is no public participation.

**I. PRESENTATIONS**

- A. Recognition of Diana Guerrero for her service on the Coolidge Unified School District No. 21 Governing Board.

Board Member Diana Guerrero was recognized for her service and time she dedicated to CUSD from 2020 to 2024.

- B. Principals' Update - presented by Dr. Natay Ferguson, Dr. Yvette Dix, Marc Bruno, Rosanne Headley, and Kelly Ferguson.

**Coolidge High School – Updates from Principal, Dr. Natay Ferguson**

·CHS hosted Native American Heritage Night, which was a huge event. We worked together with Gila River to make this happen. The children were involved and enjoyed the immersion of the culture.

·Band and dance had amazing shows and there was a great turnout.

·Our winter sports are in full swing! Wrestling is underway, and our boys' basketball team has had an impressive start, finishing their first tournament with a 5-1 record.

·Tomorrow night (12/12) is CHS choir.

· Girls wrestling tournament this weekend on Saturday (12/14)

·The annual Boys wrestling tournament will begin over winter break (01/03)

### **Coolidge Junior High School – Updates from Principal, Dr. Yvette Dix**

· The junior high wrestling team had an outstanding season, finishing in fifth place overall. Two wrestlers, Kai Garcia and Brandon Galvez, earned first-place finishes as state finalists. Additionally, three students Morgan Lopez, Callen Garcia, and Michael Delsi who placed third at the state level. The team had dedication and hard work throughout the season, and their efforts were truly commendable.

·The seven-on-seven football passing league is doing well this season. They are advancing to the state semi-finals on Saturday (12/14) at noon in Chandler. If they win, they will compete for the championship at 4:00 PM. The team secured a dominant victory in their last game, winning 52-21. To quote Coach Chris Tapia, 'We gave them those 21 points,' they're confident going into it and it's exciting to see the work they put in.

· CJHS choir performance is Tuesday (12/17) at 6:00 PM, featuring our junior high choir. They will be joining West Schools concert that evening. Although the junior high choir is small, the students have been working diligently with Mr. Stewart at West to prepare for the performance. Despite having limited practice time to only one morning a week as part of the 21st Century Grant clubs they have shown dedication and are excited to be a part of this concert.

·CJHS dance performance is Wednesday (12/18) at 6:00 PM at the PAC. We would like to invite everyone to attend and support the performers. A total of 135 students are part of the dance program, and they have been working hard to prepare for this event.

### **Coolidge Alternative Program and Coolidge Virtual Academy – Updates from Principal, Marc Bruno**

· At the end of November, CAP completed their annual canned food drive. The students collected several hundred items to donate to local charities. The competition became quite close between one of the senior classes and the front office. According to the admin assistant, it became a bit challenging to keep track as the donations kept increasing—'We'd bring in five, and they'd bring in ten!' It was a spirited competition, but ultimately, it was all for a great cause.

· The CAP students are currently finishing their second round of benchmark assessments, along with ongoing reading assessments. This week and next, students are participating in intervention groups. I spoke with our reading interventionist, Ms. Thompson, just before the meeting, and she shared that, so far, three students have already scored two grade levels higher than their previous assessments and have successfully tested out of the program. Additionally, 95% of the readers have shown significant improvement since the first test in August. We're very excited about these results and hopeful that this progress will continue into the next semester.

·Looking ahead, CAP will be hosting its first-ever finals week, which we're very

excited about. This new initiative will include finals for our underclassmen, and there's a noticeable increase in attendance as the week approaches. The excitement is building, and while it's always a bit chaotic, with students scrambling to recover points, it's great to see their enthusiasm. We hope this energy carries over into the next semester.

### **Heartland Ranch Elementary – Updates from Principal Rosanne Headley**

· Good evening. Last week, HLR hosted its annual holiday shop, and the JAG group came over to assist our students throughout the week. They helped with budgeting and shopping, and it's always a joy to see them working with the first graders. The JAG students did an excellent job, and we truly appreciate their support.

· Last night, we hosted our holiday showcase, where kindergarten through fifth grade students performed holiday songs for the audience. Additionally, our third, fourth, and fifth graders showcased the first semester of dance they've been working on with Ms. Cordova and Ms. Harville. Ms. Cordova did an excellent job organizing the event, and there was a tremendous turnout. The PAC was so full that we had to move a few grade levels to make more seating available for the community, which is always a positive sign. We received a lot of positive feedback, and the students did a fantastic job.

· Tomorrow (12/12) we have our first semester awards ceremonies at 9 00 a.m. and 10 a.m.

· Next week (12/19) day we will have our annual jingle jog.

### **West Elementary – Updates from Principal Kelly Ferguson**

· West was presented with a wonderful opportunity through Campbell's Crew, an organization founded by a young man named Campbell, who started the group when he was just 14 years old. We were introduced to Campbell about three weeks ago by one of our long-term substitutes. Campbell had the chance to make a wish and travel internationally to visit a friend, and when he returned, he was inspired to give back to others. His organization's goal is to help 125 kids each Christmas by providing them with a full outfit—pants, top, jacket, and more. They offered us 75 spots for our students, and while we couldn't fill all 75, we took about 45 kids. Several parents accompanied their children, and I, along with Ms. Cooper and transported 15 kids to Walmart in Queen Creek for the shopping event. Each child had a personal shopper, with some students being paired with a whole family or volunteers. The children selected their own clothes and received books, blankets, and other items. It was heartwarming to see how thankful the kids were, and on the bus ride home, many of them were so excited they snuggled up with their new blankets. Some even fell asleep during the ride. We were thrilled to meet Campbell and his family, and they expressed interest in working with us on a back-to-school fund in the future. It was an amazing experience, and we are grateful to have been part of this initiative. We look forward to continuing our partnership with Campbell's Crew in the future.

· Today, we held our first school spelling bee in several years, and we were incredibly impressed with our students. Second through fifth graders competed in their

classrooms, with each class selecting a winner. In total, 11 students competed in the school-wide bee, which lasted for 11 and a half rounds (technically 12). One of our winners was Rykin Garcia, a fourth grader. He was thrilled, and his parents were in attendance to support him. Rykin had been preparing diligently, creating flashcards, and even enlisting his brother or sister to help him study. We are excited for him to represent our school at the district level! Gasket was the final winning word.

·On Monday (12/16), we will have our K-3 music performance, followed by the fourth and fifth grade band, choir, After-School Singing Tiger Choir, and dance group performance on Tuesday (12/17) We are very excited for these events and hope to see everyone there.

- C. Governing Board Outstanding Character Awards - presented by Kelly Ferguson, Rosanne Headley, Marc Bruno, Dr. Yvette Dix, and Dr. Natay Ferguson

**Governing Board Outstanding Character Awards were presented to the following students:**

- *Avianna Lamb - Kindergarten - West Elementary*
- *Evelynn Garcia - Kindergarten - Heartland Ranch Elementary*
- *Raina Pancott - 12th grade - Coolidge Alternative Program*
- *Mauricio Gutierrez - 8th grade - Coolidge Junior High*
- *Peyton Watt - 10th grade - Coolidge High School*

- D. Governing Board Outstanding Service Awards - presented by Natay Ferguson, Dr. Yvette Dix and Marc Bruno.

**Governing Board Outstanding Service Awards were presented to the following staff:**

- *Brynne Hodgson - Curriculum Department - Coolidge Alternative Program*
- *Dawna Webb - ELA Teacher - Coolidge Junior High*
- *Dr. Deepika Gupta - Science Teacher - Coolidge High School*

**II. CONSENT AGENDA**

- A. **Approval of the Auxiliary Operations and Student Activities Reports for the month of November, 2024.**
- B. **Approval of the Donations Log for November, 2024.**
- C. **Approval of the Voucher Log for November, 2024.**
- D. **Approval of the Minutes of the November 13, 2024 Meeting.**
- E. **Other Consent Items**

1. **Approval of the following personnel recommendations: Hiring, Position Changes/Transfers, Resignations/Terminations; Requests to rescind Resignation: Retirement Requests; Requests to Rescind Retirement; Request for Change of Salary of Grade; and Stipends for: Administrative, Certificated, Classified, Wage.**
2. **Annual Review of Indian Policies & Procedures, 2nd Reading.**
3. **Approval of the Intergovernmental Agreement between Coolidge Unified School District and Arizona Schools for the Deaf and the Blind.**
4. **Approval for Pinal County Technology Consortium Agreement 2024-2035.**
5. **Approval for Coolidge Unified School District Appendix A-Technology Consortium 2024-2035.**
6. **Approval for Coolidge Unified School District LOA 2024-2035.**
7. **Updated approval of overnight travel and expenses for Coolidge High School Boys Basketball Team to attend and play in a tournament in Show Low, AZ, January 2nd-4th, 2025.**
8. **Approval of release time and overnight travel and expenses for the Coolidge High School Wrestling Team (20 Students) and (5 Staff) Brenton Newton, Anthony Garcia, David Canuas, Reanna Volk and Andrea Fierro to attend Wrestling Tournament in Winslow, AZ, January 16-18, 2025.**
9. **Approval for release time and overnight travel expenses for Nicole Schmitt, Armando Pisano and 12 students to attend The AASC State Leadership Conference in Tucson, AZ, on January 23rd - 25th, 2025.**

Member Kris Gillespie MOVED, SECOND by Member Diana Guerrero, to approve the Consent Agenda

**MOTION CARRIED: 5-0**

**INSTRUCTION (Action, Discussion, and Information Items)**

- A. Discussion and possible action to approve six additional courses for the 2025-2026 school year.

Superintendent Dawn Dee Hodge:

Most of these are through CAVIT. CAVIT would like to offer Aviation Technology 1-4, Barbering 1-4, Cosmetology with a Nail Specialization, Digital Communications 1-4, Network Security, and Marine Power and Extreme Sports Technology. We're also adding an additional course to our course catalog, which is Coding 2. We offered Coding 1 this

year, so this will be the extension of that course.

Board Member Kris Gillespie: Could you explain what Marine Power and Extreme Sports Technology is?

Director of Curriculum Melanie Edwards: It's working on small motors. Such as ATVs, quads and any marine sports or propellers for a boat. They will be working using the newest industry training room and equipment, the same things that they offer in a professional environment.

Superintendent Dawn Dee Hodge: CAVIT continues to expand offerings that provide opportunities to earn industry-level certificates for completing courses through the fourth level.

Member George Arredondo: Are the students assessed fees for taking these classes?

Superintendent Dawn Dee Hodge: The fees are not for us. That's part of our IGA with CAVIT, students will be able to take those courses without fees and as a district, we are not charged.

Vice President Linda Heath MOVED, SECOND by Member Diana Guerrero, to approve six additional courses for the 2025-2026 school year.

**MOTION CARRIED: 5-0**

**BUSINESS (Action, Discussion, and Information Items)**

- A. To consider and, if deemed advisable, to adopt a resolution authorizing the issuance and sale of school improvement bonds of the district.

Superintendent Dawn Dee Hodge: I'm going to turn this over to Alyssa Garrett. We have two gentlemen from Stifel and from Gust Rosenfeld here to explain both items tonight.

Business Director Alyssa Garrett: Mike Levalle with Stifel, who are our bond underwriters, and James Keel with our attorneys Gust Rosenfeld are here. They will be representing us through this sale. They will answer any questions you have. The first item is the sale of the school improvement bonds. This is the remainder of our authorization of the 21 million that was approved by voters back in 2019. The second part, we'll talk about the refunding portion. If you have any questions on item A, on the sale of the bonds, these gentlemen will be happy to answer any questions.

Vice President Linda Heat: I just want clarification, on what a refunding bond is.

Business Director Alyssa Garrett: I'll let Mike explain that.

Michael Levalle: My name is Michael Levalle. I'm with Stifel. I've been working with you, CUSD, since the late 90s. It's a pleasure to be back before you. Even though you're entertaining the new money piece of it, the school improvement bond, your question Mrs. Heath is around a refunding, which is the next action item, but I will answer you. It's like

refinancing your home loan. You're replacing old debt at higher rates with new debt at lower rates to save the taxpayer's money. So, you're exchanging, I think it's about a 4.5% average rate with hopefully in the threes here, depending on when we lock in rates. With your action tonight, there's some more activity and steps we have to take, but then we'll go to the market for lower interest rates.

If not, if the rates for some reason go away from us, then we'll just not do the refunding.

Vice President Linda Heat: Ok, that clears it up.

Member George Arredondo: If I may ask a question, on the first set of bonds, the new bonds, those rates will be favorable as the second one is dependent on what the market is, it won't be higher than what it already is?

Michael Levali: Yes, correct. The new money will just be sold at whatever the rates are, but again the new money bonds are like 20-year, they'll be paid off over 20 years, which is very typical for a school bond. Just like mortgages are like typical for 30 years, right? Bonds are usually up to 20 years max for in Arizona. We just did a bond issue for Glendale High School District was right around 20 years, that's pretty good, and rates have been trending down a little. Not to say that they couldn't go back up, we're going to be bringing your bonds to market hopefully the first or second week of January, if everything goes well. With your action tonight, there's some steps involved, you get a rating, get your bonds are rated by the rating agencies, we get your credit rating, and then also print the securities document, and then be ready to lock in rates in mid-January.

Member George Arredondo: I have some questions for Ms. Garrett or the Superintendent. I know that these funds are going to be targeted for activities that's forthcoming based on different priorities. Can you give us a little background and remind the public where we're at and where we're going.

Superintendent Dawn Dee Hodge: Absolutely. With the sale of the two previous bonds allocations, there were a lot of things that we did with that money. We purchased several new buses. We refurbished the high school tennis courts. Alyssa, you're going to have to remind me of some of those things.

Business Director Alyssa Garrett: We resurfaced the track at Coolidge High School. We replaced the rigging, the lighting, and the curtains in the PAC. We put new marquees at West and Heartland. We remodeled the front office at Heartland with a safety storefront so that their campus wasn't accessible directly from the front doors into the campus. We finished off CAP and the Junior high with what ESSER didn't cover. Junior high received some furniture for their additional classrooms. All of this has to be summarized every year to both the school board and the community. In October, two months ago, we did the full accounting. Each individual price of those items to show the accounting of the first two sales. As we move forward the largest piece in the bond pamphlet is for school facilities and athletics. The school's facilities division will not build or maintain the athletic facilities at the level needed. The other piece to that is school safety and student transportation. On the school safety one thing that we earmarked ready to go are the bell systems at Heartland and Coolidge Junior High. Other sites already have them. They're IP based, meaning they are on the internet. They have emergency call buttons, display boards in the classroom that displays a message whether it be a happy or not so happy message. Also comes with

maps that the site administration can look at to verify, check in, and allow you to get many enhanced security features versus our old bell systems that are press and play. Those are some of the big things that we have earmarked when this sale goes through along with buses. We've gotten in a good routine with these bonds and ESSER that we have a nice fleet of busses going and haven't had to dig ourselves in high repairs or busses out of commission. Outside of that, we will come to you, we will have work sessions over the three years to determine how we want to spend it. We'll get input from the principles, kind of just our normal go-to process on spending this money.

Member George Arredondo MOVED, SECOND by Member Kris Gillespie, to approve the adoption of authorizing the issuance and sale of school improvement bonds of the district.

**MOTION CARRIED: 5-0**

- B. To consider and, if deemed advisable, to adopt a resolution authorizing the issuance and sale of refunding bonds of the district.

President Michael Flores, II: We've already asked questions and have discussed it. Any other questions?

No other questions posed.

Member George Arredondo MOVED, SECOND by Vice President Linda Heath, to approve the adoption of a resolution authorizing the issuance and sale of refunding bonds of the district.

**MOTION CARRIED: 5-0**

**HUMAN RESOURCES (Action, Discussion, and Information Items)**

- A. Discussion and possible action to approve the MOU between EdEx and Coolidge Unified School District for the 2025-2026 school year.

Superintendent Dawn Dee Hodge: I'm going to turn it over to Ben.

Director of Human Resources Ben Armstrong: We were reached out to about a month ago and asked if we had interest in pursuing international teachers. We've kind of already pursued international teachers. But what this does for us, it allows us to use an organization that will help the employee work through some of that paperwork at a quicker rate, and it does not cost them anything. We had another organization we were working with, and essentially, they went out of business. Again, it wasn't costing us anything. But this just kind of gives us opportunity or more resources for the employees that would be coming potentially across the world. I know one of the other concerns last time was, Member Arredondo asked if we were only getting people from the Philippines? And I can tell you that this organization searches for people across the globe. So not just the Philippines, I will say that the primary resource is the Philippines, and they have other places they look but and



we've had much success.

Member Kris Gillespie: I am confused. Did you say no cost to us?

Director of Human Resources Ben Armstrong: No cost to us.

Vice President Linda Heath MOVED, SECOND by Member Kris Gillespie, to approve the MOU between EdEx and Coolidge Unified School District for the 2025-2026 school year.

**MOTION CARRIED: 5-0**

- B. Discussion and possible action to approve the increase in salaries for CDL Drivers effective 1/1/25.

Discussion and possible action to approve the increase in salaries for CDL Drivers effective 1/1/25.

Superintendent Dawn Dee Hodge: Im sure you have seen the banners from schools throughout the state that are searching for bus drivers constantly and we have been lucky that we have not had to cancel routes. We've added routes and we've been very fortunate that we've hired additional people besides just our CDL drivers that can step in. Dan and our mechanics step in quite often, but there's a drastic shortage of CDL drivers specifically for school buses. In order to maintain our current drivers, we found it necessary to look at them as a separate group from our other classified individuals and develop a salary schedule that looked a little bit different that is based on their experience behind the wheel in school districts. As you look at the new schedule, drivers would receive an increase to their hourly rate for their years outside of the district but also receiving additional funding and even at a higher rate for their years with us. We would like to make those changes starting January 1st for those CDL drivers. It's a different type of position you actually have to have a certification, keep a certification, go through stringent physicals and yearly testing, and random drug screenings. Dan is there anything else that I'm missing?

Director of Transportation Dan McWilliams: Nope you're right on with it.

Member Diana Guerrero MOVED, SECOND by Member George Arredondo, to approve the increase in salaries for CDL Drivers effective 1/1/25.

**MOTION CARRIED: 5-0**

- C. Discussion and possible action to approve a one time bonus for part time (\$250) and full time (\$500) employees.

Superintendent Dawn Dee Hodge: Every year, we issue contracts and work agreements without knowing our budget, as the state often delays providing it. This uncertainty makes it difficult to determine if we can offer raises, especially since it depends on enrollment numbers. We regularly review the budget to see if raises are possible, regardless of the time of year. While we aim to give employees raises, when possible, sometimes in December, we offer a one-time increase, not written into their work agreement. If we can continue it or do more, we want to. We're also exploring other ways to increase pay. This year, after reviewing the budget and considering our average daily membership, we were able to offer this increase to all employees in the district.

Viced President Linda Heath: I wish we could give them more. This is a great, this is a great time, a great time to do some of those, just before Christmas. And yes, let's keep looking to see if we can find more money.

Superintendent Dawn Dee Hodge: Always. Yes.

Member George Arredondo: I think it's great, as well, to just make sure, you know, whether you're classified or non-classified, if you're full-time, you get the same amount.

Superintendent Dawn Dee Hodge: That is exactly right. Every employee. Full-time receive \$500 and part-time receive \$250.

Member George Arredondo MOVED, SECOND by Member Diana Guerrero, to approve a one time bonus for part time (\$250) and full time (\$500) employees.

**MOTION CARRIED: 5-0**

- D. Discussion and possible action to approve a new administrative salary schedule for FY26

Superintendent Dawn Dee Hodge: We brought this to you back in October. As we did some research on surrounding districts and their administrative salary schedules, we determined that ours was quite low as far as the ranges were considered. We talked about it back then. It was just a discussion item. I'm now bringing it to you to approve it for the next school year.

Vice President Linda Heath: Well, we want to be competitive. This is a great step in the direction.

Vice President Linda Heath MOVED, SECOND by Member Kris Gillespie, to approve the new Administrative Salary Schedule for FY26.

**MOTION CARRIED: 5-0**

**OTHER (Action, Discussion, and Information Items)**

- A. Governing Board and/or Superintendent's Report and Update.

It's hard to believe we're already halfway through the school year. Sometimes it feels like it's dragging, but now we're already thinking about next year. We're even hiring for positions for FY26. There are some amazing things happening in the district. If you haven't attended any of our performances, I encourage you to. Our students are incredible, and we have dedicated staff making sure they have great experiences. I joked about the large turnout at Heartland last night, and I want to highlight that the music teacher there is a first-year teacher. She is a CHS graduate. She stood up there and spoke to the students and audience like she was a veteran teacher. I was so proud, and it was pure joy. Programs like music, dance, band, and CTE are essential. While we know reading, writing, and math are the priorities, these extracurricular and co-curricular activities are what keep kids engaged and excited to come to school. Our community is so supportive of these programs, and it makes a huge difference. Last night, there was a young man on stage who truly stood out.

He has incredible potential and needs dance in his life. I recorded his performance and sent it to Shaylyn, our high school dance teacher, because he's amazing. He's in fourth grade now, but he's going to go far. The more we can offer kids opportunities like this, including the CAVIT courses, the more we can help them discover and develop their talents outside of what we consider to be traditional courses and classes. We have also increase our athletic opportunities; especially at the junior high. The more we engage them, the more they want to be here, and the better they do overall. So I'm grateful to you as a board for supporting these programs and grateful to our community for supporting these programs.

Vice President Linda Heath: I went to the music program the other night and it was phenomenal. They played so well, and you need to go if you haven't been.

Member Diana Guerrero: I am excited for all the free CAVIT courses and how it's free. That wonderful.

Member George Arredondo: I appreciate all the community involvement, the teachers that allow to make that happen. Happy Holidays, Merry Christmas to everybody. Looking forward to a new year.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Vice President Linda Heath MOVED, SECOND Member Kris Gillespie. To Adjourn the meeting at 6:57PM. President Michael Flores voted "yes", Vice-President Linda Heath voted "yes", Member Kris Gillespie voted "yes", Member Diana Guerrero voted "yes" and Member George Arredondo voted "yes".

## **MOTION CARRIED: 5-0**

These minutes were respectfully submitted by Andrea Felix and approved on January 15, 2025.

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Governing Board

Title

Date

Public Notice of Governing Board Meeting Procedures.

The Coolidge Unified School District Governing Board Meetings are open for members of the community/public to join in-person. We will continue to operate our livestream services through the Coolidge Schools Vimeo account with the exception of meetings during school breaks. Visit our website for direct access:

**[https://www.coolidgeschools.org/gb\\_members](https://www.coolidgeschools.org/gb_members)**