

COOLIDGE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 21
Governing Board of Education Regular Meeting Minutes
February 12, 2025

REGULAR MEETING

Date, Time, Place of Meeting

The Governing Board of Education held a Regular Meeting on Wednesday, February 12, 2025, at 6:00 PM, 450 N. Arizona Boulevard Coolidge Arizona.

ROUTINE BUSINESS

Call to Order and Roll Call

Present at this meeting was Vice-President Linda Heath, Member Kris Gillespie, Member George Arredondo and Member Victoria Quintero.

Approval of Agenda

Member George Arredondo MOVED, SECOND by Member Kris Gillespie, to approve the Board Agenda. Vice-President Linda Heath voted "yes", Member Kris Gillespie voted "yes, Member George Arredondo voted "yes", and Member Victoria Quintero voted "yes"

MOTION CARRIED: 4-0

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There is no public participation.

I. PRESENTATIONS

- A. ASBA "Total Board Boardsmanship Award" - Awarded to CUSD Governing Board presented by Dawn Dee Hodge.

Superintendent Dawn Dee Hodge presented the Governing Board with the ASBA "Total Board Boardsmanship Award". This award recognizes governing boards where at least a quorum (3 members) of members has earned the Certificate of Boardsmanship. The award is based on Continuing Education Unit (CEU) records, and it celebrates a board's collective commitment to professional development and excellence in governance.

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

Coolidge High School – Updates from Assistant Principal, Michell Gonzales Athletics

- Varsity Boys Basketball are playing tonight (2/12) post season game.
- Varsity Girls Basketball are in the playoffs and are playing tomorrow (2/13) at 7:00 PM at the Garrett Motors Roundhouse.
- Girls Wrestling: Jolene Ostrander won the Sectionals and is on to the State Championship.

Upcoming Events

- Black History Celebration February 20th, from 5:30 to 8:00 in the Garrett Motor Roundhouse.
- Student Showcase and Transition Fair March 4th, from 4:30 to 7:00 PM in the cafeteria.

Benchmark Data and State Testing Preparation

- On Friday (2/7) in our afternoon PD session, the teachers looked at the beginning of the year to end of the year benchmark data where students showed growth. The teachers took this data and created plans for preparing students for state testing.

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

PD Friday Focus:

- Reviewed end-of-year benchmark data with teachers.
- 98% completion rate for end-of-year benchmarks.
- Mr. Gonzales was instrumental in pulling kids in for testing, ensuring full participation.
- All three grade levels showed a reduction in students in the minimally proficient category for math and science.
- Celebrated progress and discussed plans to address learning gaps.

Athletics:

- Home games are well-attended, with positive energy at the high school for tackle football game.
- Flag Football: 6-1 record (won tonight).
- Tackle Football: 2-1 record.
- Girls Basketball: Two teams; Team 1 is 5-2, Team 2 is 2-3.
- Tennis: 25 students participated in intramurals, providing a strong base for future high school players.
- Cheerleading: 30 members, performing at basketball games with great enthusiasm.

Upcoming Events:

- Valentine's Dance (2/13): Junior High Dance with crowning of King and Queen. Event expected to be a big hit.
- Student Council Activities: Leadership camp on the 27th of February and a Suns game at the end of the month.

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

CAP/CVA Graduation:

- Discussed the upcoming first CAP CPA graduation. Staff played a major role in planning the event, and there will be many surprises for the students and parents.
- Invitations will be sent to staff soon. The graduation will be held on a different date, time, and location in late May.

Benchmark Testing:

- Students completed the third and final benchmark with a 100% completion rate.
- Special thanks to Mr. Anthony Gonzalez for ensuring all students were tested.

Arizona Works Program - Virtual Reality Demonstration:

- Seniors and the MFDN received a visit from the Arizona Works Program.
- The program demonstrated a new virtual reality experience, allowing students to explore careers in welding and nursing.
- The VR simulation provided an engaging and interactive experience, sparking interest among students about future career possibilities, especially in medical and technical fields.

Student Graduations:

- Seven students have graduated from CVA and fourteen from CAP.
- Three more students are expected to graduate on-demand in the next few weeks.

Sixth Annual Knight for a Knight:

- Announced the upcoming Knight for a Knight event on February 25th from 5:00 PM to 6:30 PM.
- This event involves parents swapping roles with students, where parents become the students, and students take on the role of parents.
- The event will feature a new hybrid model and a twist on the usual scheduling.
- Parents are reminded to arrive on time. Late arrivals will receive a "late pass" and must walk it out.

Heartland Ranch Elementary – Updates from Principal Rosanne Headley

Battle of the Books:

- Over 75 students are participating in Battle of the Books. The final count is 78 participants.
- Teams of three students are reading six-chapter books and competing against each other with comprehension questions.
- The school champion will go on to battle against champions from West.

Kid Wind Competition:

- The Kid Wind competition will take place next Friday the 28th.
- Our Kid Wind club team is finalizing their turbine prototypes to compete for the top spot in Pinal County based on wind speed production.

Upcoming Events:

- Student Dance: Scheduled for next Thursday, the 20th – always a fun event for the students.
- Literacy Night: Set for Wednesday, the 26th at 5:00 PM.

West Elementary – Updates from Principal Kelly Ferguson

Benchmark Data Review:

- Third Benchmark for grades 3-5 was taken in January.

- Teachers are using the benchmark data alongside weekly/bi-weekly formative assessments to focus on standards that may need reteaching before testing.
- This work is being done during Friday PD sessions and weekly team meetings to ensure effective use of data for student success.

Culture Night (January 30th):

- Great turnout for Culture Night, with every class choosing and representing a different country.
- Creative Projects: The art teacher collaborated with 3rd grade on art projects related to each country, showcasing amazing student work.
- Performances: We had folklorico dancers and a band perform, adding to the cultural experience.
- Food Trucks: The event featured food trucks, including Churrolicious, who offered a treat to students with perfect attendance for the first semester.

Upcoming Events:

- February 27th - Second Annual Westval:
 - More games and activities planned for the students, along with food trucks and vendors.
 - Co-sponsored by PTO and West Coast Student Council as a fundraiser.
 - Last year's turnout was excellent, and we're looking forward to another successful event.

- 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:

- *Emilia McAnallen – 2nd - West Elementary*
- *Alieya Carrejo Lee – Kindergarten - Heartland Ranch Elementary*
- *Dasir Harris - 10th grade - Coolidge Alternative Program*
- *Mariah Robles - 6th grade - Coolidge Junior High*
- *Saul Moreno Meraz - 11th 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:

- *Kristin Kennedy – Band Teacher – Coolidge High School*
- *Anthony Cordova – Dance Teacher – Coolidge Junior High*
- *Dorothy Ruot – Science Teacher – Coolidge Alternative Program*

II. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of the Auxiliary Operations and Student Activities Reports for the month of January, 2025.**
- B. Approval of the Donations Log for January, 2025.**
- C. Approval of the Voucher Log for January, 2025.**
- D. Approval of the Minutes of the January 15, 2025 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. Approval for overnight travel, release time and expenses for Danielle Tucker, Armando Pisano, Wyatt Carpenter and 30 CHS students to attend the FCCLA State Leadership Conference in Tucson, AZ, March 4-6, 2025.**
 - 3. Approval for overnight travel for 22 JAG Students, Catherine Sommer, JAG Coordinator and Anthony Moore Chaperon for the JAG Career Development Conference in Mesa, AZ, March 5-6, 2025.**
 - 4. Approval for overnight travel, release time and expenses for Nicole Schmitt, Wyatt Carpenter and 18 CHS students to attend the FCCLA State Leadership Conference in Tucson, AZ, April 1-3, 2025.**
 - 5. Overnight Travel for Migrant Coordinator, Veronica Chavez and Migrant Recruiter Mary Wickes to attend the National Migrant Education Conference April 12-16, 2025 in San Francisco, CA.**
 - 6. Approval for overnight travel and expenses for 33 students, Regina Jantz Kenneth Jantz and Elizabeth Criswell to attend the Annual State Convention for the Arizona Association of Junior High Student Councils at Great Wolf Lodge in Scottsdale, AZ on May 8-9, 2025.**
 - 7. Approval of expenses and overnight travel for Dan McWilliams, Director of Plant Operations, Kelly Shields, Lead Driver/Dispatch and Rhonda Mitchell, Bus Driver to attend the Transportation Administrators of Arizona (TAA) 2025 Summer Conference in Flagstaff, AZ, June 16-19, 2025.**

Member Kris Gillespie MOVED, SECOND by Member George Arredondo, to Approval of the Consent Agenda. Vice-President Linda Heath voted "yes", Member Kris Gillespie voted "yes", Member George Arredondo voted "yes", and Member Victoria Quintero voted "yes"

MOTION CARRIED: 4-0

INSTRUCTION (Action, Discussion, and Information Items)

A. Coolidge High School FBLA Presentation

The FBLA Executive Officers, Natalie Lapaglia, Emily Ledesma, and Lauren Platt, discussed FBLA Week and requested Vice President Linda Heath's signature on the Proclamation.

BUSINESS (Action, Discussion, and Information Items)

A. Discussion regarding the recommended location for the CUSD 8th Grade Promotion Exercise.

Superintendent Dawn Dee Hodge addressed several decisions and updates regarding the junior high promotion ceremony. She began by acknowledging the social media discussions surrounding these topics and emphasized the importance of providing clarity to the public about the decisions made.

When the junior high was moved back to its own campus for the 2023 fiscal year, part of the intention was to allow the school to build its unique identity. As part of this shift, the eighth-grade promotion ceremony has been held at the Performing Arts Center for the past two years. Prior to the change, the school surveyed parents about concerns such as ceremony timing, ticket availability, and family participation. Superintendent Hodge stated that the district had worked diligently to address all concerns.

Initially, the ceremony was scheduled during the day, but for this year, it has been moved to the evening to accommodate families' schedules. In previous years, due to space limitations, families were restricted to four or five tickets. However, the district has now implemented two separate ceremonies, allowing each child to receive up to eight tickets. If needed, additional tickets have been provided to ensure families can attend together. Concerns have also been raised about the ceremony being held in the Performing Arts Center instead of the football field. Superintendent Hodge acknowledged the need for improvement at the high school stadium to accommodate both sides for graduation. She explained that the district had been exploring ways to change the orientation of the stage, but due to the limitations of the sound system and the new turf field, the current stage is no longer feasible. Additionally, contracting for a new stage would be a costly undertaking for a one-evening event. Therefore, hosting the promotion ceremony on the football field is not a viable option.

Superintendent Hodge emphasized that while eighth-grade promotion is an important milestone, it no longer carries the same weight as it once did, as eighth-grade diplomas are no longer considered significant academic qualifications. Most schools now celebrate the eighth-grade promotion with smaller ceremonies or assemblies, often with limited family attendance.

Based on the positive feedback received over the past two years, Superintendent Hodge recommended continuing the eighth-grade promotion ceremony in the Performing Arts Center. She noted that the event had been well-received and that no significant complaints

had been raised. Furthermore, she mentioned that the event is live streamed for those who cannot attend in person.

Vice President Linda Heath expressed her concern about the Junior High students wanting to watch their friends promote.

Superintendent Dawn Dee Hodge stated they can look into however it is live streamed and with the ceremony being at night it may be difficult.

Member Kris Gillespie had questions about the configuration of the stage.

Superintendent Dawn Dee Hodge stated that the ceremony will be held at the west end zone of the stadium. Additionally, screens will be set up throughout the venue to ensure that families can clearly view their child's face from a distance.

B. Discussion regarding the decision to discontinue the MCJROTC program from Coolidge High School.

Superintendent Dawn Dee Hodge provided an overview of the MCJROTC program, noting that it was placed on probation in the 2016-2017 school year due to low enrollment. At that time, the district was not receiving funding for the program. The district was given a three-year window to increase the enrollment to either 100 students or 10% of the student body (about 55 students). Despite efforts to recruit, including a junior high section and community outreach, the enrollment numbers did not meet the required threshold, which was further complicated by the pandemic. By September/October, the program was told that its probationary period was over and needed to either meet enrollment goals or reduce staff. Currently, the program has 33 enrolled students, with less than 50% of junior high students continuing to high school. The recruitment efforts have not significantly improved enrollment. Superintendent Hodge mentioned that adding a second instructor for 33 students was fiscally unsustainable due to the district's budget constraints, noting that the MCJROTC instructor is currently the highest-paid teacher in the district. The district considered fundraising, but it was deemed impractical to fund an instructor's salary. The instructor's military rank contributes to their high pay, further complicating the budget.

Superintendent Hodge shared efforts to increase interest. Despite these efforts, enrollment dropped from 20 to 11 students.

Superintendent Hodge further explained the range of activities that MCJROTC students participate in, such as outdoor events, community service (e.g., Toys for Tots and parades). However, with only 44 students across five classes, the instructor's caseload is much lower compared to the average class size of 142 students at Coolidge High School. Superintendent Hodge discussed a solution with the Casa Grande Union High School District, where local students would attend a zero hour class at their facility, with transportation provided by Coolidge High School. This arrangement will continue for the next three years for students currently enrolled in the program. Superintendent Hodge is meeting with their staff to finalize the logistics and will gather information from the students to confirm their participation.

Member Kris Gillespie acknowledged the difficulty of the situation and appreciates the

effort made to make this work. Gillespie also expressed interest in working with CAVIT.

Superintendent Hodge mentioned that efforts were made to integrate with CAVIT but did not receive a response. Additionally, competition with other local Marine Corps programs complicated matters.

Member George Arredondo representing the American Legion and VFW, assured continued support for the MCJROTC program, emphasizing the importance of supporting the community and offering resources where needed.

Superintendent Hodge discussed the possibility of still having MCJROTC students attend local events here with a sponsor once logistical and details are worked out.

Member Victoria Quintero shared thoughts on the importance of MCJROTC with the Gila River Community being close and the relation to Ira Hays and expressing what a huge impact will be missed. Quintero is very thankful for the work that Superintendent Hodge has done to get the youth over to Casa Grande.

Superintendent Hodge reflected on the valuable skills learned in the MCJROTC program, expressing understanding of the community's disappointment and the program's challenges.

Vice President Linda Heath expressed relief that students would still have an opportunity to participate in the program.

Superintendent Hodge thanked the Superintendent of Casa Grande Union High School District, Jeff Lavender, for offering the opportunity to send students to their district for the zero-hour class. Committed to keeping the team informed of any final logistics and will communicate with the students to determine interest in the program.

Vice President Linda Heath reiterated the hope that local events could still be organized for the MCJROTC students, if possible.

HUMAN RESOURCES (Action, Discussion, and Information Items)

A. Approval of the 2025-2026 school year contract templates.

HR Director Ben Armstrong stated each year, we review all relevant legal documents and contracts. As part of this process, we are preparing for next month's board meeting, where we will seek approval for the list of certified and classified.

Member Kris Gillespie MOVED, SECOND by Member George Arredondo, to Approval of the 2025-2026 school year contract template. Vice-President Linda Heath voted "yes", Member Kris Gillespie voted "yes", Member George Arredondo voted "yes", and Member Victoria Quintero voted "yes"

MOTION CARRIED: 4-0

B. Discussion and approval of the recommendation to hire Tre Chapman as the new principal of CAP/CVA for the 2025-2026 school year.

Superintendent Dawn Dee Hodge stated In January, a series of interviews were conducted over several afternoons, with a dedicated committee reviewing candidates. The committee expressed their gratitude to all those who participated in the process. After careful consideration, the committee recommended the hiring of Tre Chapman as the new principal of CAP and CVA for the 2025-2026 school year. Mr. Chapman, who previously served as the principal at Coolidge High School and is currently working as a counselor there, brings many years of administrative experience. His demonstrated passion for working with students in alternative settings positions him as an excellent fit for the role. The committee is confident that he will thrive alongside the current team, contributing to the continued success of the program.

Member George Arredondo MOVED, SECOND by Victoria Quintero, to Member Kris Gillespie voted "yes, Member George Arredondo voted "yes", and Member Victoria Quintero voted "yes"

MOTION CARRIED: 3-0

- C. Approval to observe July 3rd, 2025 as Independence Day for 12 month employees.

HR Director Ben Armstrong states It was noted that the calendar, when initially approved, overlooked the fact that the 4th of July falls on a Friday this year. While this provides a long weekend for many, the district typically observes holidays on weekdays between Monday and Thursday. Given that July 3rd falls on a Thursday, it was suggested that this be recognized as the observed holiday. There are no changes to the previously approved calendar, but this serves as a clarification regarding the holiday observance

Member George Arredondo MOVED, SECOND by Member Kris Gillespie, to Approval to observe July 3rd, 2025 as Independence Day for 12 month employees. Vice-President Linda Heath voted "yes", Member Kris Gillespie voted "yes, Member George Arredondo voted "yes", and Member Victoria Quintero voted "yes"

MOTION CARRIED: 4-0

OTHER (Action, Discussion, and Information Items)

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

Superintendent Dawn Dee Hodge provided an update regarding recent developments impacting education. She noted that there have been ongoing changes, often emerging daily, from government actions that could potentially affect education. The first issue addressed was the federal pause on grants, which raised concerns about its potential impact on K-12 education.

Superintendent Hodge clarified that essential programs such as Medicaid, SNAP, Pell Grants, and Head Start were not paused, though some experienced brief disruptions. These benefits have continued without further issue. Regarding the district's budget, she emphasized that, as the majority of funding comes from property taxes, the federal pause does not impact local funding. The district does, however, receive federal funding through various grants, such as Title I, which are funded annually in July. These funds have already been received and are not impacted by the federal pause.

There are some federal funds that are disbursed monthly, such as those for food and nutrition (school lunch programs) and Impact Aid. While these have not been affected yet, there is a potential for delays or issues with these reimbursements due to the pause, but no

specific concerns have been raised at this time.

Superintendent Hodge also addressed questions about the potential elimination of the Department of Education. While this has not yet occurred, she provided some historical context, noting that the Department of Education was only established in 1979. Prior to that, its functions were handled by other agencies, such as the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, and the Department of Health and Human Services. If the Department of Education were to be eliminated, the services it facilitates would likely be transferred to other departments. Speculation suggests that civil rights might move to the Department of Justice, student loans to the Department of Treasury, the National School Lunch Program to the Department of Agriculture, and Title and IDEA programs to the Department of Health and Human Services.

While this is all speculative, Superintendent Hodge reassured the board that critical programs like Title I, IDEA, and the National School Lunch Program are essential for students and are unlikely to be eliminated. She emphasized that the situation is still developing and will be monitored closely on a day-by-day basis.

Superintendent Hodge asked Business Director Alyssa Garrett if we haven't seen anything impact our budget?

Business Director Alyssa Garrett stated no.

Vice President Linda Heath stated no news is good news. Heath shared she attended West cultural night, and it was amazing. Those children worked so hard, and they were so enthusiastic. It was just a lot of fun.

Member George Arredondo shared his appreciation to Superintendent Hodge for updating and sharing with the things that we have to be aware of. It's great to hear about the CTE programs and FBLA on what they are doing. Those programs are great. Kudos to the advisors, that make the program

ADJOURNMENT

Member Geroge Arredondo MOVED, SECOND Member Kris Gillespie. To Adjourn the meeting at 7:08PM. Vice-President Linda Heath voted "yes", Member Kris Gillespie voted "yes", Member George Arredondo voted "yes" and Member Victoria Quintero voted "yes"

MOTION CARRIED: 4-0

These minutes were respectfully submitted by Andrea Felix and approved on March 12, 2025.

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