

COOLIDGE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 21
Governing Board of Education Regular Meeting Minutes
April 9, 2025

REGULAR MEETING

Date, Time, Place of Meeting

The Governing Board of Education held a Regular Meeting on Wednesday, April 9, 2025, 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 George Arredondo and Member Victoria Quintero.

Approval of Agenda

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

MOTION CARRIED: 5-0

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There is no public participation.

I. PRESENTATIONS

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

Coolidge High School – Updates from Principal, Natay Ferguson

Academic & Testing Updates:

- Strong testing attendance at 98%, with remaining make-ups scheduled this week and next for freshmen.

Student Activities & Achievements:

- Senior Dance Showcase was a success; student-led and counts toward their graduation seal.
- FFA had a strong showing at regionals and county fair, earning multiple ribbons.
- FBLA competitors placed highly (1st, 2nd, and 3rd places); Sophia LaPaglia named State Vice President.
- FCCLA also won several awards; Molly Tucker named State Officer.

Spring Break Engagement:

- All major student groups (Dance, FFA, FBLA, FCCLA) were active with competitions and events during the break.

Upcoming April Events:

- JROTC Awards – April 14
- Athletic Signing Panel – April 16
- FBLA Job Fair – April 17
- Guitar Recital – April 17

- FFA Banquet – Date TBD

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

Testing Updates:

- AASA Writing Test deadline: April 11
- Testing completion rate is over 95%
- Make-up testing planned; all remaining student families contacted
- Strong student engagement in writing—many required extended time to complete five-paragraph essays
- Positive student reactions post-test; high energy and effort noted

Athletics & Clubs:

- Active sports: Boys Basketball, Girls Soccer, Boys Soccer, Cheerleading
- Programs tied to 21st Century Grant Clubs
- Ineligibility support system in place: tutoring followed by reinstated eligibility—effective and supportive for student-athletes

Student Events:

- Spring Dance scheduled for March 7, from 5–7 PM
- Mathletes Competition on March 22 in Florence
 - Team coached by Mr. Zen; consistent after-school prep throughout the year

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

Testing Updates:

- CAP: 100% completion rate
- CVA: Approximately 95% completion; efforts ongoing to reach final students
- Aspire Students: Testing nearly complete
- Students showed unusually high confidence post-ACT—positive feedback for the first time

Community Engagement:

- First-ever CAP Community Invite Event on April 29 from 5–6 PM
 - Open to the public, not just enrolled families
 - Purpose: showcase CAP program to the wider community
 - Features: student-led tours, classroom visits, info sessions
 - Promotion through flyers and social media

Graduation Progress:

- Graduation momentum increasing despite testing season
- Recent completions:
 - 4 graduates in last 2 days
 - Current totals: 15 at CVA, 24 at CAP
 - Approximately a dozen more expected before the next board meeting

Heartland Ranch Elementary – Updates from Principal Rosanne Headley

Testing Updates:

- 100% completion in:
 - 3rd Grade Oral Reading Fluency
 - All Writing Assessments
 - 5th Grade Science
- Currently completing Reading assessments for Grades 3–5
- 14 make-ups remaining between parts one and two, scheduled for completion by Monday

Events & Engagement:

- Kinder Donuts with Grownups event successfully hosted last week
 - Focused on engaging male role models
 - Included collaborative activities (art, physical education)
 - Strong family turnout and positive feedback

Student Achievement:

- KidWind Team competed in Regionals (February)
 - Two teams advanced to KidWind World Competition
 - Event hosted in Phoenix; includes international participants
 - Recognition of one team member happening today
 - World competition scheduled for end of May

West Elementary – Updates from Principal Kelly Ferguson

Testing Updates:

- 100% completion for:
 - 3rd Grade Oral Reading Fluency (ORF)
 - 3rd & 4th Grade Writing
- One 5th grader remains for writing due to illness
- Reading tests conducted this week; make-ups scheduled for tomorrow and next week
- Perfect Attendance Incentive:
 - Students with perfect attendance on all 8 testing days entered in a drawing
 - Winners get to push principals Ferguson and Sheridan into a pool on Olympics Day

Family Engagement:

- Parent-Teacher Conferences in early March featured student-led conferences
 - Students shared growth data with parents
 - Plans to expand student-led format next year for increased ownership and engagement

Student Recognition:

- Top Tier Tigers Program launched
 - Monthly recognition of students who consistently attend, behave, and perform well
 - First celebration included Otter Pops and student recognition presentations
 - Aimed at honoring students who "fly under the radar" but consistently do the right thing

Battle of the Books:

- Victory over Heartland Ranch by West's team of 4th grade girls
 - Students worked hard reading and preparing for two months
 - Celebrated with trophy, school wide pride, and a visit to kindergarten classrooms to share their experience
 - Noted as West's first win in this competition

- B. 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:

- *Victoria Williams – 4th - West Elementary*
- *Mason Daniels – 5th - Heartland Ranch Elementary*

- *Larry Bishop III - 12th grade - Coolidge Alternative Program*
- *Alexa Sainz - 7th grade - Coolidge Junior High*
- *Mia Bella Lemire - 9th grade - Coolidge High School*

C. Governing Board Outstanding Service Awards - presented by Rosanne Headley and Kelly Ferguson.

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

- *Marian Amper – 5th Grade Math Teacher – West Elementary*
- *Elizabeth “Cat” Morales – Food Nutrition Manager – Heartland Ranch Elementary*

II. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. **Approval of the Auxiliary Operations and Student Activities Reports for the month of March, 2025.**
- B. **Approval of the Donations Log for March, 2025.**
- C. **Approval of the Voucher Log for March, 2025.**
- D. **Approval of the Minutes of the March 12, 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 of Policy Advisory 819-862, 1st Reading.**
 - 3. **Approval of Policy Advisory 809-818, 2nd Reading.**
 - 4. **Approval of the 2021-22 IGA with the Pinal County Education Service Consortium.**
 - 5. **Approval for release time and overnight travel expenses for Marie Bresee, Wyatt Carpenter and 10 CHS students to attend the Skills USA State Conference in Phoenix, AZ, April 22-23, 2025.**

6. **Approval for overnight travel and expenses for Christi Jones, CJHS Stem Teacher, Ken Jantz CJHS Science Teacher, Rayman Zhen CJHS Math Teacher and 5 students to attend the Artemis Roads III Trip in Flagstaff, AZ, April 25 - 26, 2025.**
7. **Approval for overnight travel and expenses for Barbie Marley, CHS Tribes Club Sponsor, Romnick DelaPena, CUSD Employee, and 13 students to attend the Tribes Club Trip in Flagstaff, AZ, May 2 - 4, 2025.**
8. **Approval for out-of-state travel and expenses for Coolidge High School Boys Basketball team to attend the University of California High School Team Camp in La Jolla, CA, June 27 to June 29, 2025.**

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

MOTION CARRIED: 5-0

BUSINESS (Action, Discussion, and Information Items)

- A. Discussion and possible action to approve the FY24 audit package (roll call).

Director of Business Services Alyssa Garrett:

This is our audit package for FY24 for last year. It includes our, CAFR. It's the ACFR now. Not called the CAFR anymore. You received a few copies of that a couple months ago and it's included in this packet. That is our comprehensive financial statements, typically used by investors when we go out for bond issuances. Those are required to be uploaded and attached to any outstanding bonds.

There's some that may seem like a duplicate that are different based on the needs of the different parties. Everything's in there from Heinfeld and Meech and we submit the document to two entities GFOA and ASBO for review. For the past 11 years, we have been awarded the Certificate of Excellence for School Finance.

The other document is the Single Audit for federal programs. If the entity receives over \$500,000 in federal dollars, they are subject to a single audit. They audit the two or three top federal programs. It's typically food service and Title I for us. ESSER gets left in there in the past due to its volume. We don't have any findings there under the single audit. So that's really good. That's required to be submitted to ADE for all federal awards. We have to make sure we have that on file.

The third piece is the USFR, and that's the questionnaire that they go through hundreds of questions and kind of audit each piece of the district, the business office, payroll, human resources to their activities and I outline all of those no's that we received. Like we do every year, we'll put together some. explanations and kind of goals for ourselves on how to address those. Most of them, as they're happening, we know they're going to happen.

There's just not a way around it. So when I talked about clearing some of those cash balances, there really isn't a rule on how to do that or how to transfer money in between certain funds, but we do have to clear in some way. So while they have to write it as an audit, unfortunately that's just the way it's done. So they just have to know that.

Overall, it was a really good audit season. We've already signed the engagement letter to begin the audit of FY25 here this summer, so it just picks right back up and keeps rolling. But you have all three of those documents, and overall, everything was favorable for the district.

Governing Board Member Kris Gillespie: Thank you!

Governing Board Member George Arredondo: Yes, thank you. And just to make sure these outside auditors make sure that the item in the reviewing just meets what the state standards are saying when we provide the data.

Director of Business Services Alyssa Garrett: Correct. Every five years we go out to bid and we select an auditor. They select a sample size based on the questions that require a response. It is a lot easier now since we scan the documents to them. They take a look 50 attendance records, 50 withdrawal forms, and then they look at all of that through a secure portal. And then every year they like to add additional measures that they want you to adhere to or they'll kind of tweak it a little bit. So each summer we look for changes to the USFR and then we begin to implement them for the next year.

Vice President Linda Heath: And they choose different things to look at, it's very arbitrary, isn't it?

Director of Business Services Alyssa Garrett: Sometimes I wonder, that's an interesting one that you choose. What they'll do, especially like with my office, right, they take the entire GL, every single debit credit, they get a large Excel file with all of those. They do seem to find the peculiar ones. That's their job and they know how to find them.

Governing Board Member Kris Gillespie: Thank you and we are so lucky to have you. You do a good job!

Member George Arredondo MOVED, SECOND by Vice President Linda Heath, to Motion to approve the FY24 audit package. Michael Flores, II votes "yes", Vice-President Linda Heath voted "yes", Member Kris Gillespie voted "yes", Member George Arredondo voted "yes", and Member Victoria Quintero voted "yes"

MOTION CARRIED: 5-0

HUMAN RESOURCES (Action, Discussion, and Information Items)

- A. Discussion and possible action to formally approve the administrative contracts for the 2025/2026 school year.

Superintendent Dawn Dee Hodge: Earlier in this fiscal year, you approved a new salary schedule for administrators that was more aligned with districts and surrounding communities. So based on that, there wasn't a standard raise like we did for everybody else at 2%. For some individuals, it was just 2% from others because they were lower. We had to raise them a little bit more so that they were more aligned with others that have kind of the same type of job that they have, so looking at still surrounding districts within our county specifically, we're still a little low, unfortunately, but it allowed us to make some increases that were made for teachers over the last five years. I believe the decisions were fair as we start looking at those positions and kind of just where we go from there. Are there any questions about that?

Governing Board Member George Arredondo: Mr. President, I have a few comments. I hope I don't put my foot in my mouth, but we'll see how it comes out. It's important to outline, and you obviously looked at some of the things that we get more competitive not

lose people and hopefully being able to maintain as well as provide opportunities for those to move up. My challenge to those of you in your current positions to continue to strive to maintain your credentials and continue to make that extra charge so that when we look at these salaries were comfortable to support those. Secondly, we as an administration will try to find funds to help. At the same time, those that are getting these rates don't become complacent. There's always somebody else that can fill in and do your job the expectations of their position.

Vice President Linda Heath MOVED, SECOND by Victoria Quintero, to Motion to approve the administrative contracts for the 2025/2026 school year. Michael Flores, II votes "yes", Vice-President Linda Heath voted "yes", Member Kris Gillespie voted "yes", Member George Arredondo voted "yes", and Member Victoria Quintero voted "yes"

MOTION CARRIED: 5-0

- B. Approval and possible discussion on the recommendation of the employee insurance benefits package for the 2025-2026 school year.

Discussion and possible action to approve the recommendations for employee benefits for the 2025-2026 school year. - Presented by Lisa Weston with Gallagher

HR Director Ben Armstrong: There is very little... change in what we've done. There is some movement in some of the plans that they've made, but I'll let Lisa speak to that.

Employee Benefits Renewal Presentation

Presenter: Lisa Weston, Account Executive, Gallagher

Lisa Weston opened by thanking President Flores, Superintendent Hodge, members of the board, and administrators for the opportunity to present the 2024–2025 benefits renewal. As Gallagher's primary consultant to the district, Lisa works closely with leadership and HR throughout the year.

Medical Plan Renewal

- The district will experience a **3.7% premium increase** (approximately **\$84,000**), which is a relatively modest adjustment compared to prior years, especially considering previous **high claims loss ratios** of up to **137%** (target is 85%).
- Gallagher advised against going to market due to the claims history; an estimated **25% increase** would likely result if switching plans.
- The **deductible** increased by **\$300** and the **out-of-pocket maximum** by **\$600** for employee-only coverage.
- A **\$30 increase** in all co-pays was also applied.
- These adjustments affect mostly **employee-only** coverage (220 out of 224 enrollees) and were implemented **across all trust members**, not just Coolidge Unified.
- The plan administrator emphasized that these changes were made to realign plan offerings with market standards and to preserve the trust's financial sustainability after more than a decade with no plan design changes.

Voluntary Benefit – International Medical Solutions (IMS)

- The district has the opportunity to offer **IMS**, a **voluntary \$6/month** benefit allowing

employees and their dependents to access lower-cost care and prescriptions in Mexico.

- The benefit links to the existing NASB medical plan, enhancing affordability for border-area services.
- **No cost to the district**, and **no penalty** if unused. Employees can opt in individually.

Dental and Vision Plan Updates

- The district marketed both **dental** and **vision** plans to evaluate cost and provider options.
- **Dental**: An **8.9% increase**; retained with **Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona**. Employees will not experience any disruption to network or plan design.
- **Vision**: No rate change; **VSP** retained.
- The **prepaid dental plan (Employers Dental Services)** was **discontinued** due to low utilization and the provider's market exit.

Telemedicine Enhancements

- Maritain expanded telemedicine offerings to include **Primary360** and **behavioral health** services via **Teladoc**.
- This provides greater access to care, particularly for those unable to visit a doctor in person.

Other Benefits

- No changes or rate increases to:
 - **Basic life and voluntary life**
 - **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)**
 - **Disability**
 - **HSA, FSA, COBRA**, and other voluntary benefits

Lisa paused throughout the presentation to address questions from board members.

Notable discussion points included:

- **Claims Processing Concerns**: The district uses a benefits advocacy team to assist with claims issues. Very few complaints have been reported over the past three years.
- **Take-Home Pay Impact**: Despite the medical increase, take-home pay should still increase due to salary adjustments.
- **Marketplace Coverage**: Employees with dependents are encouraged to consider the federal **Health Insurance Marketplace** as an alternative for family coverage due to affordability concerns.
- **District Contributions**: The district remains among the **top contributors** toward employee insurance despite rising costs driven by high claims and post-COVID health challenges.

Lisa concluded by reaffirming Gallagher's commitment to supporting the district through strategic guidance and advocacy.

Member George Arredondo MOVED, SECOND by Victoria Qintero, to Motion to approve the recommendation of the employee insurance benefits package for 2025-2026 school year.. Michael Flores, II votes "yes", Vice-President Linda Heath voted "yes", Member Kris Gillespie voted "yes", Member George Arredondo voted "yes", and Member Victoria

Quintero voted "yes"

MOTION CARRIED: 5-0

OTHER (Action, Discussion, and Information Items)

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

Dawn Dee Hodge, Superintendent

Superintendent Hodge opened her report with an update on legislative and budgetary matters affecting public education:

Legislative and Budget Updates

- The Arizona state budget remains unresolved, with no finalization expected until May at the earliest.
- Proposition 123, which impacts school funding, continues to be a focal point. Advocates are lobbying to ensure public school interests are protected, as there is current legislative pushback to include private schools in its scope.
- It is expected that Prop 123 will go to the voters in 2026 for renewal or revision.
- Although Prop 123 is set to expire, the state has indicated it will backfill funding in the interim to avoid immediate financial shortfalls.

Federal Grant Funding and Assurances

- The deadline for submitting federal grant assurances has been extended from April 14th to April 24th.
- Superintendent Hodge emphasized the importance of submitting on time to avoid loss of federal funds.
- Current grant allocations are approximately \$270,000 less than the previous year, with Title I alone down by \$400,000 over the past two years.
- These reductions challenge the district's ability to:
 - Raise salaries,
 - Maintain student services, and
 - Sustain existing programs and staffing levels.
- If cuts continue, the district may need to restructure or eliminate certain staff or programs unless enrollment significantly increases.
- Hodge reiterated that student enrollment is a key driver of funding, and emphasized the need to market the district to retain and attract students.

Early Childhood Education Showcase

- Superintendent Hodge highlighted a display at the board meeting from early childhood education students.
- As part of their early literacy unit, students:
 - Researched various types of children's books,
 - Selected a target age group (birth to third grade),
 - Created original books including text, story concept, and illustrations.
- Additionally, first-year students designed and built developmentally appropriate toys, including felt boxes and interactive items.

- Each toy was crafted based on developmental research and designed with safety, engagement, and educational value in mind.
- One student earned first place with a perfect score at the FCCLA state competition in the *Toys That Teach* category.
- Special recognition was given to Danielle Tucker, the program's instructor, and her students for their impressive work.

Superintendent Hodge closed by encouraging board members to take time after the meeting to view the students' creative work.

Vice President Linda Heath:

I've looked at the projects. I can't wait to see what these students do.

I wanted to mention. First, to our administrators, I am so pleased to be able to give you a well-deserved raise. We want to keep our excellent administrative team, so keep doing it.

I went to see the Mr. Bear competition. It was fabulous. I cannot tell you how fun it was and enjoyable. I was so impressed with the performances and the personalities of these young men. Everyone needs to go and see it next year. What's the date? of the Olympics at West School?

West School Principal Kelly Ferguson: May 1st.

Board Member George Arredondo:

Just want to make sure that we're getting the graduation plans information out to the community, especially the high school.

Superintendent Dawn Dee Hodge:

We met today. Those plans are being finalized, and we will be sending out some communication, to families next week. We will post information on our social media, about that reconfiguration of the stadium and changing the orientation of the stage so we can utilize both sides. We met with grounds, maintenance, IT, and the high school administration and counselor. It was an easy meeting. I think we have a great plan in place, but we'll make sure that we communicate that. We do have that new field out there which will bring some restrictions as far as after the ceremony, but we have plans so that we still have photo opportunities galore for people to take advantage of after the ceremony.

Board Member George Arredondo:

I appreciate you sharing the information about our student success and our teachers on Facebook. It's nice to see that. Kudos to all of you and your staff and especially your students.

Superintendent Dawn Dee Hodge:

I want you to know when you guys send that stuff out, I do share that with the governing board, so they know how well our students and staff are doing and just across all facets of the district, kids are rising to the occasion.

ADJOURNMENT

Member Linda Heath MOVED, SECOND Member Kris Gillespie. To Adjourn the meeting at 6:56PM. President Michael Flores, II voted "yes", 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 May 14, 2025.

Governing Board	Title	Date
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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