

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the State Board of Education

August 20, 2026



**STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
OKLAHOMA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OLIVER HODGE BUILDING
2500 NORTH LINCOLN BOULEVARD, SUITE 500 CR-2
OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA 73105**

Meeting Minutes Thursday, August 20, 2026, 11:00 a.m.

The State Board of Education met in a regular meeting session at or about 11:00 a.m., Thursday August 20, 2026, in the Oklahoma State Department of Education Oliver Hodge Building 2500 North Lincoln Boulevard, Suite 500 CR-2 Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73105. The final agenda was posted at 10:59 a.m. on Wednesday, August 19, 2026.

The following were present:

Ms. Jacki Phelps, General Counsel to the Oklahoma State Department of Education
Mr. Ryan Leonard, General Counsel to the Oklahoma State Board of Education
Dr. Jennifer Hembree, Executive Secretary to the Oklahoma State Board of Education

Members of the State Board of Education present:

State Superintendent, Lindel Fields, Chairman of the Board
Mr. Chris VanDenhende, Tulsa
Mr. Brian Bobek, Oklahoma City
Mr. Mike Tinney, Norman
Mr. Ryan Deatherage, Kingfisher
Mr. Wes Nofire, Park Hill

Members of the State Board of Education absent:

Ms. Becky Carson, Edmond

Others in attendance are shown as an attachment.

1. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL:

State Superintendent Lindel Fields called the State Board of Education regular meeting to order on or about 11:00 a.m. Executive Secretary Jennifer Hembree called the roll and ascertained there was a quorum.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE, OKLAHOMA FLAG SALUTE, MOMENT OF SILENCE:

Superintendent Fields welcomed everyone to the meeting and led Board Members and all present in the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag, a salute to the Oklahoma Flag, and a moment of silence.

**3. BOARD – ADMINISTRATIVE: State Board of Education—Administrative (Action)
Discussion and possible action on the minutes of the July 23, 2026, Regular Meeting of the State Board of Education.**

Board Member Bobek moved to **ACCEPT** the July 23, 2026, board meeting minutes. Board Member Deatherage, seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Mr. Bobek, yes; Mr. Van Denhende, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**

4. SUPERINTENDENT REMARKS: Agency Update (No Action)

The Superintendent welcomed the Board members, agency staff, and members of the public in attendance. He acknowledged the superintendents present as part of their First-Year Superintendent training. Superintendent Fields thanked all involved for accommodating a change in the schedule. He referenced attending several back-to-school events.

5. DEPARTMENTAL UPDATES—LEGAL UPDATE – GENERAL COUNSEL PHELPS, HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATE – JESSICA ILLOUGHBY, FINANCIAL UPDATE – COMPTROLLER KATHY WALL — ADMINISTRATIVE: (No Action)

General Counsel Jacki Phelps provided a legal update. She covered details concerning the number of Awareness reports and open record requests. The turnaround for completing open record requests for the agency averages five and a half days. She also updated the board on recent revocation proceedings.

Sr. Director of Human Resources, Jessica Willoughby presented the Full-Time Employee (FTE) report, noting that the State Department of Education currently has 358 FTE. She also updated on the number of new hires and voluntary resignations.

Comptroller, Kathy Wall provided an overview of projected FY27 financials comparing the FY27 Budget for the agency versus the actual funding for the agency.

6. Contract Approval for Contracts Over \$150,000:

Discussion and possible action on contracts to be entered into by the Oklahoma State Department of Education, pursuant to the State Board of Education’s Contract Approval and Reporting Policy 2-01.

Board Member Van Denhende moved to **ACCEPT** the contracts with Oklahoma State University and Insight Public Sector to be entered into by the Oklahoma State Department of Education. Board Member Nofire seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Bobek, abstained. Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Mr. Van

Denhende, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**

7. Findings of Fact and Conclusion of Law: Impact Athletics

Discussion and possible action on findings of fact and conclusions of law regarding Impact Athletics pursuant to 75 O.S. § 311 and case number CV—2023-2387.

Board Member Tinney moved to **REJECT** the findings of fact and conclusions of law of the hearing officer, and order that the parties prepare and file exceptions that are consistent with the district court's order in case number CV-2023-2387. Exceptions shall be filed by emailing the same to the Executive Secretary of the Board on or before September 10, 2026. The Executive Secretary is hereby ordered to notify both parties of this decision. Board Member Bobek seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Bobek, yes. Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Mr. Van Denhende, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**

8. Alternative Education Cooperative Waiver:

Discussion and possible action on statutory waiver requests under 70 O.S. § 1210.568, allowing districts with fewer than ten Alternative Education students to operate their own programs rather than enter into a cooperative agreement.

Board Member Bobek moved to **ACCEPT** the requests of Binger Public Schools, Blackwell Public Schools, Buffalo Public Schools, Cameron Public Schools, Carney Public Schools, Canute Public Schools, Coyle Public Schools, Dewey Public Schools, Erick Public Schools, Fairview Public Schools, Felt Public Schools, Fort Supply Public Schools, Holdenville Public Schools, Kingfisher Public Schools, Kinta Public Schools, Laverne Public Schools, Lomega Public Schools, McCloud Public Schools, Medford Public Schools, Mountain View-Gatebo Public Schools, Nobel Public Schools, Okeene Public Schools, Pawnee Public Schools, Reydon Public Schools, Stratford Public Schools, Sweetwater Public Schools, Texhoma Public Schools, Tonkawa Public School, Tishomingo Public Schools, Turpin Public Schools, Waynoka Public School, Wilson Public Schools – Henryetta, Wilson Public Schools – Wilson, and Woodward Public Schools for the 2026 academic year only. Board Member Van Denhende seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Bobek, yes. Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Mr. Van Denhende, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**

9. Alternative Education Program Waiver K-8 Districts:

Discussion and possible action on requests from elementary school districts for a waiver from the requirement to implement and provide an alternative education program pursuant to 70 O.S. § 1210.568(F); districts may request a waiver with an assurance that they have no students in need of alternative education services, and districts granted a waiver are not eligible to receive statewide alternative education funding for that school year.

Board Member Bobek moved to **ACCEPT** the requests, as listed in the meeting agenda, of Fanshaw Public Schools, Forest Grove Public Schools, Glover Public Schools, Haywood Public Schools, Norwood Public Schools, Pretty Water Public Schools, White Rock Public Schools, Whitehead Public Schools and Whitefield Public Schools for the 2026 academic year only. Board Member Deatherage seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Bobek, yes. Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Mr. Van Denhende, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**

10. Library Media Services Deregulation:
Discussion and possible action on Library Media Services Deregulation requests under 70 O.S. § 3-126, including district requests for reduced library hours or supervision by a library aid, with services to be provided through alternative means.

Board Member Bobek moved to **ACCEPT** the requests of Belfonte Public Schools, Billing Public Schools, Boswell Public Schools, Bristow Public Schools, Carney Public Schools, Chandler Public Schools, Claremore Public Schools, Coyle Public Schools, Frontier Public Schools, Glencoe Public Schools, LeFlore Public Schools, Lexington Public Schools, Liberty Public Schools, Little Axe Public Schools, McAlester Public Schools, Wainwright Public Schools, and Washington Public Schools for the 2026 academic year only. Board Member Van Denhende seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Bobek, yes. Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Mr. Van Denhende, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**

11. Library Media Specialist Waiver:
Discussion and possible action on a request for exemption from Library Media Teacher Certification requirements pursuant to 70 O.S. § 3-126, allowing a certified teacher to serve as the librarian while pursuing Library Media certification for Mustang Public Schools.

Board Member Bobek moved to **ACCEPT** the request of Mustang Public Schools, Oologah-Talala Public Schools, Pretty Water Public Schools, and Stilwell Public schools for the 2026 academic year only. Board Member Van Denhende seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Bobek, yes. Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Mr. Van Denhende, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**

12. Flexibility of Allocated Textbook Funds Waiver:
Discussion and possible action on statutory waiver requests under 70 O.S. § 16-114a for flexibility in the use of state-appropriated textbook funds, permitting districts that demonstrate current and appropriate instructional materials to use these funds, including carryover, for purposes supporting and maintaining the district.

Board Member Bobek moved to **ACCEPT** the requests for Newkirk Public Schools for the 2026 academic year. Member Van Denhende seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Bobek, **yes**. Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Mr. Van Denhende, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**

Board Member Bobek moved to **ACCEPT** the requests for Owasso Public Schools for the 2026 academic year. Member Deatherage seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Bobek, **yes**. Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Mr. Van Denhende, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED**

13. Recommendations to Award Oklahoma Classroom Learning and School Supplies Grant:
Discussion and possible action to approve or deny recommended grant awards from the Public-School Classroom Support Revolving Fund, established under 70 O.S. § 1-123 and governed by OAC 210:40-31-1, authorizing annual grants to classroom teachers for the purchase of instructional supplies, materials, and equipment.

Board Member Bobek moved to **ACCEPT** the recommended Public-School Classroom Support Grant awardees. Member Van Denhende seconded the motion. **The motion carried**

with the following votes: Mr. Bobek, yes. Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Mr. Van Denhende, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**

14. Shared Superintendent Salary Assistance Application for Fiscal Year 2027:

Discussion and possible action on the FY 2027 Shared Superintendent Salary Assistance Application report, pursuant to 70 O.S. § 7-203 and 70 O.S. § 5-106A.

Board Member Bobek moved to **ACCEPT** the requests for shared superintendent salary assistance from Flower Mound Public Schools and Healdton Public Schools; Beaver Public Schools and Tyone Public Schools; and Hominy Public Schools and Wynona Public Schools. Board Member Van Denhende seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Bobek, yes. Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Mr. Van Denhende, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**

15. Requests for Emergency (Provisional) Teacher Certification:

Discussion and possible action on emergency (provisional) certification requests under 70 O.S. Page 3 of 4 § 6-187(G). Names are included in handouts.

Board Member Bobek moved to **ACCEPT** the requests for emergency and provisional certifications for teachers as listed in the documentation provided in agenda item 15. Board Member Nofire seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Bobek, yes. Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Mr. Van Denhende, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**

16. Legal Framework Discussion (No Action)

To ensure the State Board of Education and Oklahoma State Department of Education have appropriate access to high-quality legal counsel while maintaining clear roles, appropriate independence, and responsible stewardship of public resources.

Superintendent Fields moved discussion to take place after executive session.

17. Discussion and possible action to convene into Executive Session pursuant to 25 O.S. § 307(b)(4), (7), and (8) for the purpose of discussing possible action on the following issues: A. Appeals of Denied Transfers. Discussion and possible action on the following, consideration of transfer request denials pursuant to 70 O.S. § 8-102.2(E) and OAC 210:10-18-1.

Board Member Bobek moved to **CONVENE** into Executive Session. Board Member Van Denhende seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Bobek, yes. Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Mr. Van Denhende, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**

18. Vote to Return to Open Session:

Board Member Bobek moved to **RETURN** to open session. Board Member Tinney seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Bobek, yes. Mr. Nofire, yes; Mr. Van Denhende, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. Mr. Deatherage absent. **APPROVED.**

***Mr. Deatherage had to leave the meeting early. Quorum was maintained in his absence and the meeting continued.**

19. Discussion and possible action on matters discussed during Executive Session:

A. Appeal of Denied Transfers:

Discussion and possible action on the following, consideration of transfer request denials pursuant to 70 O.S. § 8-102.2(E) and OAC 210:10-18-1.

1. Board Member Bobek moved to **REVERSE** the Bethany Public Schools denial of transfer in the matter of Lee. Board Member Nofire seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Bobek, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Mr. Van Denhende, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**
2. Board Member Bobek moved to **UPHOLD** the Bethany Public Schools denial of transfer in the matter of Anderson. Board Member Van Denhende seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Bobek, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Mr. Van Denhende, yes; Mr. Tinney, no; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**
3. Board Member Bobek moved to **UPHOLD** the Bridge Creek Public Schools denial of transfer in the matter of Church. Board Member Nofire seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Mr. Van Denhende, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**
4. Board Member Bobek moved to **REVERSE** the Edmond Park Public Schools denial of transfer in the matter of Slaigle. Board Member Van Denhende seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Mr. Van Denhende, yes; Mr. Tinney, no; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**
5. Board Member Bobek moved to **REVERSE** the Edmond Public Schools denial of transfer in the matter of Vargas. Board Member Van Denhende seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Mr. Van Denhende, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**
6. Board Member Bobek moved to **UPHOLD** the Oak Mission Public Schools denial of transfer in the matter of Sidebottom. Board Member Van Denhende seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Mr. Van Denhende, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**

20. Legal Framework Discussion (No Action)

To ensure the State Board of Education and Oklahoma State Department of Education have appropriate access to high-quality legal counsel while maintaining clear roles, appropriate independence, and responsible stewardship of public resources.

The Superintendent opened a discussion on the Board's access to independent legal counsel, noting the conversation was not about any specific attorney, firm, or contract. He outlined the need to define roles for internal counsel, the Attorney General's office, and outside counsel, including expectations for scope, communication, cost controls, and accountability. He stated that the Board's ad hoc committee (Mr. Nofire, Mr. Tinney, and the Superintendent) will review input and bring recommendations next month.

Board Member Van Denhende asked whether the matter was urgent given the current Board counsel contract expires September 2, 2026. The Superintendent responded that there is no urgency, as the Board may extend the existing contract for 30 days if needed.

Board Member Nofire expressed his focus will be on efficiency as a member of the

ad-hoc committee.

Board Member Bobek asked if it was the intent of the committee to come back with a short list of potential outside counsel for the greater board to consider. He mentioned that is what he has gone through in the past.

Superintendent Fields stated that he envisions almost a policy document and not a short list. Just a document that would guide the board moving forward.

Board Member Tinney expressed appreciation for transparency around legal costs and noted many expenses stem from inherited litigation. He emphasized that litigation costs are difficult to control and stated the committee intends to prevent duplication of work among legal entities. He also noted the importance of having separate Board counsel due to potential conflicts of interest and stated the Board is entitled to strong legal representation.

- 21. New Business (Any business not known about which could not have been reasonably foreseen prior to the time of posting of the Agenda pursuant to Title 25 O.S. § 311.)**
None

- 22. ADJOURNMENT:**
Board Member Bobek moved to adjourn the meeting. Board Member Van Denhende seconded the motion. **The motion was approved** with all members voting in favor, none opposed, and no abstentions. **APPROVED.**

The next regular meeting of the State Board of Education will be held on Thursday, September 24, 2026, at 9:30 a.m. The meeting will convene at the State Department of Education, 2500 North Lincoln Blvd., Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Lindel Fields, Chairperson of the Board

Jennifer Hembree, Executive Secretary

