

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the State Board of Education

July 23, 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, July 23, 2026, 9:30 a.m.

The State Board of Education met in a regular meeting session at or about 9:30 a.m., Thursday July 23, 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 9:29 a.m. on Wednesday, July 22, 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

Ms. Becky Carson, Edmond

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:

Mr. Chris VanDenhende, Tulsa

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 9:30 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 June 25, 2026, Regular Meeting of the State Board of Education and the minutes of the June 8, 2026, Special Meeting of the State Board of Education.**

Board Member Bobek moved to **ACCEPT** the June 8, 2026, special board meeting minutes. Board Member Nofire, seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Mr. Bobek, yes; Ms. Carson, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**

Board Member Deatherage moved to **ACCEPT** the June 25, 2026, regular board meeting minutes. Board Member Bobek, seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Mr. Bobek, yes; Ms. Carson, 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 recognized Cathleen Skinner, who is retiring after nearly 30 years in education, including 12 years with the State Department of Education. He noted that additional information had been provided to Board members regarding the day's agenda items. The Superintendent also acknowledged Representative Dick Lowe's attendance and invited him to share an update from his recent meeting with President George Bush. Representative Lowe provided a brief update to those in attendance.

5. **DEPARTMENTAL UPDATES—DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENTS AND CHIEF OF STAFF—ADMINISTRATIVE: (No Action)**

Dr. Romel Muex-Pullen, Deputy Superintendent of Instruction, presented slides outlining current Literacy in Action initiatives across the state. Dr. Muex-Pullen highlighted the new teacher academies being developed jointly by the State Department of Education and OEQA in partnership with Oklahoma universities. She announced that the RFP for the literacy and math screener is now open. Finally, Dr. Romel provided the Board with an update on the Pages Across the Plains program.

Ms. Kristen Stephens, Deputy Superintendent of Operations, presented the Full-Time Employee (FTE) report, noting that the State Department of Education currently has 345 FTE. She explained that recent legislation and new state funding for various programs will result in an increase in the agency's FTE count. She provided a detailed overview of projected FY27 financials and outlined new funding authorized by the Legislature, including allocations for

literacy, math, school security, teacher salary, and compensation. She also reviewed anticipated federal grant revenue, along with operating and facility cost considerations.

6. **Waiver Request: Day-to-Hour Calendar (Fewer Than 166 Days for 2026–2027):**
Discussion and possible action on day-to-hour calendar waiver requests for fewer than 166 days for the 2026-2027 academic school year under 70 O.S. § 1-109 for Battiest Public Schools.
Board Member Bobek moved to **ACCEPT** the request of Battiest Public Schools to use a day-to-hour calendar of fewer than 166 days for the 2026-2027 academic school year. Board Member Deatherage seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Mr. Bobek, yes; Ms. Carson, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**
7. **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 Beggs Public Schools, Bridge Creek Public Schools, Canton Public Schools, Gracemont Public Schools, Heavener Public Schools, Keota Public Schools, Marlow Public Schools, Quapaw Public Schools, Red Oak Public Schools, Ringwood Public Schools, Stuart Public Schools, Whitesboro Public Schools for the 2026 academic year only. Board Member Deatherage seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Nofire yes; Mr. Bobek, yes; Ms. Carson, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**
8. **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 Lone Star Public Schools and Wainright Public Schools. Board Member Deatherage seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Mr. Bobek, yes; Ms. Carson, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**
9. **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 Carson moved to **ACCEPT** the requests of Bluejacket Public Schools, Cheyenne Public Schools, Cleora Public Schools, Dover Public Schools, Drumright Public Schools, Hollis Public Schools, Indianoma Public Schools, Lomega Public Schools, Marlow Public Schools, Quapaw Public Schools, Red Oak Public Schools, Skiatook Public Schools, Temple Public Schools, Waukomis Public Schools, White Rock Public Schools, Yale Public Schools for the 2026-2027 academic year only. Board Member Nofire seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Mr. Bobek, yes; Ms. Carson, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Superintendent Fields,

yes. **APPROVED.**

10. 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 for the 2026-2027 school year. Board Member Deatherage seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Mr. Bobek, yes; Ms. Carson, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**

11. Contract Approval:

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 Nofire moved to **ACCEPT** the 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 Carson seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Mr. Bobek, yes; Ms. Carson, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**

12. Teacher Certification Presentation: (No Action)

Senior Director Teacher Recruitment and Retention: Autumn Kouba w/Program Director Teacher Certification Jeff Smith

Jeff Smith outlined and answered questions about the emergency certification process. Board members requested that more information going forward with the presentation all emergency teacher certification approval. Jeff Smith also presented the number of standard certified teachers, provisionally certified teachers, and emergency certified teachers from year to year. The number of first year teachers who are emergency certified teachers has increased in recent years. The number of first year standard certified teachers is currently less than half of all first year teachers.

Autumn Kouba outlined how the Oklahoma State Department of Education is collaborating with OEQA in running the Teach Forward program. She explained why the physical education and health positions are one of the biggest areas where emergency certification is requested. She then outlined the Grow Your Own Educator Program recently updated by the legislator. The Department now provides for 100% of the cost allowing for support staff employees to get a degree in education. Finally, Ms. Kouba updated the Board on the progress and status of the statewide teacher induction program. She explained to the board why retired teachers are eligible to be mentors under the program.

13. Requests for Emergency (Provisional) Teacher Certification:

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

Board Member Bobek moved to **ACCEPT** the requests from all districts listed in the materials issued to the State Board of Education. Board Member Deatherage seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Mr. Bobek, yes; Ms. Carson, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes.

APPROVED.

14. **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, B. Applications to Suspend Teaching Certificates and Certificate Numbers and Set Matters for an Administrative Hearing, C. Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law: Teacher Revocation Matters, D. Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law: Impact Athletics, E. Child Nutrition Programs, and F. Litigation Discussion.**

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

15. **Vote to Return to Open Session:**

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

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

16. **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 Nofire moved to **REVERSE** the Academy of Seminole denial of transfer. Board Member Deatherage seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Ms. Carson, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**
2. Board Member Nofire moved to **UPHOLD** the Bethany Public Schools denial of transfer. Board Member Deatherage seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Ms. Carson, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**
3. Board Member Nofire moved to **UPHOLD** the Bethany Public Schools denial of transfer. Board Member Carson seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Ms. Carson, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**
4. Board Member Nofire moved to **REVERSE** the Choctaw-Nicoma Park Public Schools denial of transfer. Board Member Deatherage seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Ms. Carson, yes; Mr. Tinney, no; Superintendent Fields, no. **APPROVED.**
5. Board Member Nofire moved to **UPHOLD** the Jones Public Schools denial of transfer. Board Member Deatherage seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Ms. Carson, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**

B. Applications to Suspend Teaching Certificates and Certificate Numbers and Set Matters

for an Administrative Hearing:

Discussion and possible action on applications for emergency orders pursuant to OAC 210:1-5 6(d)(1) summarily suspending the teaching certificates and certificate numbers and setting the matters before a hearing officer of:

Board Member Nofire moved to **ACCEPT** the applications to suspend the certificates and certificate numbers of Edwin Turlington, Zachery Bicknell, and Tyler Shephard and to set the matters before an administrative law judge. Board Member Deatherage seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Ms. Carson, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**

C. Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law: Teacher Revocation Matters

Discussion and possible action on findings of fact and conclusions of law regarding revocations pursuant to 70 O.S. § 3-104(A)(6)(b) of the teaching certificate and certificate numbers of:

1. Board Member Nofire moved to **ACCEPT** the findings of fact and conclusions of law in the case of Kaitlyn Fultz. Board Member Deatherage seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Ms. Carson, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**
2. Board Member Nofire moved to **ACCEPT** the findings of fact and conclusions of law in the case of Carla Watteau. Board Member Carson seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Ms. Carson, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**
3. Board Member Nofire moved to **TABLE** the findings of fact and conclusions of law in the case of Cody Barlow. Board Member Deatherage seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Ms. Carson, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**

D. 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 Nofire moved to **TABLE** the findings of fact and conclusions of law in the case of Impact Athletics. Board Member Deatherage seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Ms. Carson, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**

E. Child Nutrition Programs

Discussion and possible action on the proposed denial of the renewal application for Feed the Kids, pursuant to 7 C.F.R. Part 226.

Board Member Nofire moved to **ACCEPT** the proposed denial of the renewal application for Feed the Kids. Board Member Carson seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Ms. Carson, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**

17. 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

18. ADJOURNMENT:

Board Member Nofire moved to adjourn the meeting. Board Member Deatherage 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, August 20, 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