Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the State Board of Education

September 24, 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, September 24, 2026, 9:30 a.m.

The State Board of Education met in a regular meeting session at or about 9:30 a.m., Thursday September 24, 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, September 23, 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
Ms. Becky Carson, Edmond
Mr. Brian Bobek, Oklahoma City
Mr. Mike Tinney, Norman
Mr. Ryan Deatherage, Kingfisher
Mr. Wes Nofire, Park Hill

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 August 20, 2026, Regular Meeting of the State Board of Education.

Board Member Bobek moved to **ACCEPT** the August 20, 2026, board meeting minutes. Board Member Deatherage, seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Mr. Van Denhende, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Ms. Carson, yes; Mr. Bobek, 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.

The Superintendent presented the Board updates on three initiatives currently active within the Department; teacher certification, recruitment, and retention, student literacy, and career pathways. He stated that the number of emergency certified teachers is down 703 from last year at this time. He announced the establishment of a teacher certification task force in October. He stated the task force will eliminate using the term emergency certification and replace it with the term used in statute: provisional certification. He also noted the success of the Department working with colleges and the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability in training several hundred reading specialists in the summer. He stated that 26 new literacy personnel are now employed by the Department.

5. DEPARTMENTAL UPDATES—INSTRUCTIONAL UPDATE – DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT OF INSTRUCTION – DR. ROMEL MUEX-PULLEN – FINANCIAL UPDATE – DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT OF OPERATIONS – KRISTIN STEPHENS – LEGAL UPDATE – GENERAL COUNSEL PHELPS — ADMINISTRATIVE: (No Action)

Deputy Superintendent of Instruction Dr. Romel Muex-Pullen provided an update on Oklahoma Pathways to Partnership program. She introduced two employees responsible for administering the program: Program Manager Ms. Lori Chestnut and Project Manager Miss Donna Tye-Lewis. She outlined details regarding the purpose, goals, funding, timeline, and partners of the initiative.

Deputy Superintendent of Operations Ms. Kristin Stephens provided an update of agency's financial position and Full-Time Employee (FTE) capacity rates. She presented the financial position of the agency including all grant funding. She compared the amount of funding that passes through the agency to local school districts to the amount that is used to fund the agency. She noted that as new initiatives passed by the Legislature come into effect the number of FTEs

may rise as the agency is responsible for their administration.

General Counsel Jacki Phelps provided a legal update. She provided the Board with an overview of the active cases in which the agency is a participant. She called on Senior Director of Investigations Brad DeLozier to update the Board on Awareity and Open Record Requests (Open Record Request).

Senior Director of Investigations Brad Delozier presented the successful turnaround of the ORR process over the past year. He updated the Board with specific details concerning an increase in Awareity reports. He explained how his department is administering an update to the Teachers Due Process Act requiring districts to report any recommendation for termination involving any kind of misconduct. He provided details concerning the agency's partnership with the Oklahoma Safety and Security Institute.

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 Nofire moved to **ACCEPT** the contracts with SHI International Corp. and State Auditor & Inspector to be entered into by the Oklahoma State Department of Education. Superintendent Fields seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Mr. Van Denhende, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Ms. Carson, yes; Mr. Bobek, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**

***14C. Board Counsel Contract:**
Discussion and possible action on the renewal of the board counsel contract with Leonard, Long, and Cassil.

Superintendent Fields informed the board that executive session agenda item 14C, Board Counsel Contract, would be considered in open session due to the statutory limits of what may be discussed by a public body during executive session.

Board Member Van Denhende moved to **ACCEPT** the contract with Leonard, Long, and Castle PLLC, as amended to require that the Oklahoma State Board of Education receive all notifications under the contract concerning exceedance of service limits, as well as the monthly statements. Board Member Nofire seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Mr. Van Denhende, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Ms. Carson, yes; Mr. Bobek, 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 Van Denhende moved to **ACCEPT** the requests of Agra Public Schools, Arnett Public Schools, Big Pasture Public Schools, Calvin Public Schools, Caney Public Schools, Cherokee Public Schools, Deer Creek- Lamon Public Schools, Fort Towson Public Schools, Geronimo Public Schools, Hanna Public Schools, Hydro-Eakly Public Schools, Lexington Public Schools, Millwood Public Schools, Nowata Public Schools, Okarche Public Schools, Okay Public Schools, Olive Public Schools, Paoli Public Schools,

Sequoyah Public Schools, Sharon-Mutual Public Schools, Shattuck Public Schools, Talihina Public Schools, Tupelo Public Schools, Vici Public Schools, and Wellston Public Schools for the 2026 academic year only. Board Member Deatherage seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deathe**rage**, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Mr. Van Denhende, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Ms. Carson, yes; Mr. Bobek, 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 Tinney moved to **ACCEPT** the requests of Avant Public School, Bowring Public School, Brushy Public School, Grandview Public School, Jennings Public School, Maple Public School, Monroe Public School, Oakdale Public School, Peckham Public School, Robin Hill Public School, and Zaneis Public School for the 2026 academic year only. Board Member Van Denhende seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deathe**rage**, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Mr. Van Denhende, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Ms. Carson, yes; Mr. Bobek, 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 Aline-Cleo Public Schools, Anadarko Public Schools, Asher Public Schools, Berryhill Public Schools, Bishop Public Schools, Butner Public Schools, Caddo Public Schools, Calvin Public Schools, Cameron Public Schools, Canadian Public Schools, Carnegie Public Schools, Cleveland Public Schools, Crutcho Public Schools, Deer Creek Public Schools, Dickson Public Schools, Eagletown Public Schools, Empire Public Schools, Fletcher Public Schools, Forest Grove Schools, Grandfield Public Schools, Grandview Public Schools, Harrah Public Schools, Haywood Public Schools, Healdton Public Schools, Heavener Public Schools, Hilldale Public Schools, Hobart Public Schools, Jennings Public Schools, Kansas Public Schools, Kiefer Public Schools, Maysville Public Schools, Meeker Public Schools, Moseley Public Schools, Ninnekah Public Schools, Noble Public Schools, Norwood Public Schools, Oaks Mission Public Schools, Oilton Public Schools, Okay Public Schools, Oktaha Public Schools, Osage Public Schools, Peggs Public Schools, Perry Public Schools, Poteau Public Schools, Robin Hill Public Schools, Rush Springs Public Schools, South Coffeyville Public Schools, Talihina Public Schools, Texhoma Public Schools, Tishomingo Public Schools, Tupelo Public Schools, Union Public Schools, Vian Public Schools, Warner Public Schools, Weleetka Public Schools, and Yarbrough School District for the 2026 academic year only with the warning to districts that the student impact section of the waiver form should not be left blank. Board Member Van Denhende seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Mr. Van Denhende, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Ms. Carson, yes; Mr. Bobek, 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.

Board Member Van Denhende moved to **ACCEPT** the requests of Bethel Public Schools, Guthrie Public Schools, Hulbert Public Schools, Indianola Public Schools, Lone Star Public Schools, Pocola Public Schools, Thackerville Public Schools, Union Public Schools, Woodward Public Schools, and Zion Public Schools for the 2026 academic year only. Board Member Nofire seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Mr. Van Denhende, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Ms. Carson, yes; Mr. Bobek, yes**;** Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**

11. 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 (No Action).

Superintendent Fields explained to the Board that the districts listed did not need the waiver because their specific reported uses of state-appropriated textbook funds are allowed without board approval.

12. Federal Late Claims:

Discussion and possible action on approval of a late joint federal program claim pursuant to OAC 210:25-3-7(12).

Board Member Bobek moved to **ACCEPT** the late joint federal program claim concerning school improvement funds of Gracemont Public Schools. Board Member Tinney seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Mr. Van Denhende, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Ms. Carson, yes; Mr. Bobek, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**

Board Member Nofire moved to **ACCEPT** the late joint federal program claim concerning school improvement funds of Kellyville Public Schools. Board Member Van Denhende seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Mr. Van Denhende, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Ms. Carson, abstained; Mr. Bobek, no; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**

Board Member Bobek moved to **ACCEPT** the late joint federal program claim concerning special education funds of Bristow Public Schools. Board Member Deatherage seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Mr. Van Denhende, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Ms. Carson, yes; Mr. Bobek, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**

Board Member Bobek moved to **ACCEPT** the late joint federal program claim concerning special education funds of El Reno Public Schools. Board Member Deatherage seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Mr. Van Denhende, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Ms. Carson, yes; Mr. Bobek, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**

Board Member Bobek moved to **ACCEPT** the late joint federal program claim concerning special education funds of Inola Public Schools. Board Member Deatherage seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Mr. Van Denhende, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Ms. Carson, yes; Mr. Bobek, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**

13. 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 (provisional) certifications for teachers as listed in the documentation provided in agenda item 13. Board Member Van Denhende seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Mr. Van Denhende, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Ms. Carson, yes; Mr. Bobek, 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).

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. Tinney, yes; Mr. Van Denhende, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Ms. Carson, yes; Mr. Bobek, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**

15. Vote to Return to Open Session:

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

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.

Board Member Bobek moved to **UPHOLD** the decision of Jenks Public Schools concerning the transfer appeal in the matter of Robinson, while requiring Tulsa Classical Academy, with immediate effect, begin to provide for the student's academic needs including all services outlined in his IEP and requiring Tulsa Classical Academy to present an update to the Board during the next regular meeting to be held in November 2026. Board Member Van Denhende seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Mr. Van Denhende, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Ms. Carson, yes; Mr. Bobek, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**

B. Request to Suspend Certificate:
Discussion and possible action on request to suspend teaching certificate for the remainder of the contract year pursuant to 70 O.S. § 6-101(D) for Newcastle Public Schools.

Board Member Bobek moved to **ACCEPT** the request of Newcastle Public Schools to suspend the teaching certificate of Hannah Garrison for the remainder of her contract year. Board Member Nofire seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Mr. Van Denhende, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Ms.

Carson, yes; Mr. Bobek, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**

C. Agenda Item C (executive session) was removed from executive session and taken up in open session. See Item 6 above.

D. 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 Carson moved to **ACCEPT** the applications to similarly suspend the teaching certificates and certificate numbers of Alicia Lloyd and Micharl Russell, setting the matter before a hearing officer. Board Member Bobek seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Mr. Van Denhende, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Ms. Carson, yes; Mr. Bobek, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**

E. Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law
Recommendation from the Administrative Law Judge Discussion and possible action on the proposed Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law issued by the Administrative Law Juge pursuant to OAC 210:1-5-6(g)(2) in the matter of:

General Counsel Phelps offered motion language, and Board Member Nofire moved to adopt it: Motion to **ACCEPT** the findings of fact and conclusions of law in the matters of Barlow, Flint, Haltom, and Thompson; to reject the findings of fact and conclusions of law in the matter of Mercer; and to require the parties in the Mercer matter to file exceptions on or before October 15, 2026, to be considered at the October Board meeting. Board Member Bobek seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Mr. Van Denhende, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Ms. Carson, yes; Mr. Bobek, yes; Superintendent Fields, yes. **APPROVED.**

F. Impact Athletics
Discussion and possible action to adopt exceptions to hearing officer's proposed final agency order:

Board Member Tinney moved to **ADOPT** the State Department of Education's exceptions to the hearing officer's proposed final agency order. Board Member Deatherage seconded the motion. **The motion carried** with the following votes: Mr. Deatherage, yes; Mr. Tinney, yes; Mr. Van Denhende, yes; Mr. Nofire, yes; Ms. Carson, yes; Mr. Bobek, 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 Bobek moved to adjourn the meeting. Board Member Carson 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, October 22, 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