

**University of Texas Elementary School  
Management Board  
Austin, Texas  
January 20, 2026**

**Attendees**

- Board Members:
  - Present: Dr. Bill Lasher, Kathy Armenta, Dr. Kal Kallison, Dr. Katie Tackett, Dr. Laura Estep, Starla Simmons, J E Johnson, Laura Torres, Dr. Alex Eusebi, Dr. Jennifer Smith, Dr. Yulanda McCarty-Harris
  - Absent: Eddie Lopez, Dr. Sarah Woulfin, Jolie Kinyamahanga, Mark Williams
  - Non-voting board associates present: Dr. Melissa Chavez, Dr. Nicole Whetstone, Dr. Lara Wilder
  - Non-voting board associates absent: Connor Habhab
- Guests: David Clark, David Raney
- UT-UCS Staff: Bob Micks, Jenny Davis, Sharon Yarbrough, Dr. Autumn Leal-Shopp, Giovanni Cantoran, Dr. Janina Roberts

**I. Call to Order and Establish Quorum**

*Dr. Lasher called the meeting to order at 11:31am and noted that a quorum was present.*

**II. Welcome and Recognition of Special Guests**

**III. Parent & Citizen Comments**

None at this time

**IV. Items for Consideration by Consent**

- a. Consider approval of the Consent Agenda.

*A motion that the Consent Agenda be approved was made by Kathy Armenta and seconded by Dr. Estep.*

*For – Dr. Bill Lasher, Kathy Armenta, Dr. Katie Tackett, Dr. Laura Estep, Starla Simmons, J E Johnson, Laura Torres, Dr. Alex Eusebi*

*Opposed –none*

*Abstain – none*

*Absent – Eddie Lopez, Dr. Kal Kallison, Dr. Sarah Woulfin, Jolie Kinyamahanga, Mark Williams, Dr. Yulanda McCarty-Harris, Dr. Jennifer Smith*

**V. Action Items**

- a. Consider approval of the 2024-2025 Annual Financial Report

*A motion to approve was made by Kathy Armenta and seconded by Dr. Estep.*

Guest David Raney walked the board through the audit. The auditors had no findings and are providing a letter to that fact.

*For* – Dr. Bill Lasher, Kathy Armenta, Dr. Kal Kallison, Dr. Katie Tackett, Dr. Laura Estep, Starla Simmons, J E Johnson, Laura Torres, Dr. Alex Eusebi

*Opposed* – none

*Abstain* – none

*Absent* – Eddie Lopez, Dr. Sarah Woulfin, Jolie Kinyamahanga, Mark Williams, Dr. Yulanda McCarty-Harris, Dr. Jennifer Smith

b. Consider approval of Policy Group 3 – Released Time Courses PG 3.206

*A motion to approve was made by J E Johnson and seconded by Dr. Estep.*

Dr. Whetstone explained that the law says that if we have a student who would like release time to attend religious classes, we will make a schedule for them to do so.

*For* – Dr. Bill Lasher, Kathy Armenta, Dr. Kal Kallison, Dr. Katie Tackett, Dr. Laura Estep, Starla Simmons, J E Johnson, Laura Torres, Dr. Alex Eusebi

*Opposed* – none

*Abstain* – none

*Absent* – Eddie Lopez, Dr. Sarah Woulfin, Jolie Kinyamahanga, Mark Williams, Dr. Yulanda McCarty-Harris, Dr. Jennifer Smith

c. Consider approval of a resolution to adopt a policy that would establish a voluntary prayer and Bible reading time for employees and students, including the use of a consent form.

*A motion to approve was made by Kathy Armenta and seconded by Dr. Estep.*

Dr. Chavez informed the board that the 89th Texas Legislature passed Senate Bill 11, requiring all Texas school boards to take a record vote within six months of the Act on whether to adopt a resolution allowing a period of prayer and reading of religious texts during the school day under Texas Code Section 25.08232.

If adopted, the resolution creates strict requirements including parent consent with a waiver of Establishment Clause claims, prohibits prayer or religious reading in the presence on nonconsenting students, and limiting activities to segregated areas, before the school day.

School administration (Dr. Whetstone and Dr. Chavez) Do Not Recommend adopting this resolution. Passing this resolution would create additional paperwork and bureaucratic requirements for our campuses and leaders.

Additionally, state and federal law already provides students with the right to voluntarily pray, read religious text, and express religious viewpoints, and organize religious groups, before, during, and afterschool. Students' rights to religious expression are already well established and fully supported by the K-12 Schools.

Also, UT Austin's Handbook of Operating Procedures (HOP) affirms protections for religious expression, including prayer and Bible use, through its nondiscrimination policy (3-3020), religious accommodation (3-3012), and speech policies (free speech & protection rules).

Again, we recommend that the board decline to adopt a resolution regarding a period of prayer and reading of religious text during the school day pursuant to Senate Bill 11.

*For – none*

*Opposed – Dr. Bill Lasher, Kathy Armenta, Dr. Kal Kallison, Dr. Katie Tackett, Dr. Laura Estep, Starla Simmons, J E Johnson, Laura Torres, Dr. Alex Eusebi*

*Abstain – none*

*Absent – Eddie Lopez, Dr. Sarah Woulfin, Jolie Kinyamahanga, Mark Williams, Dr. Yulanda McCarty-Harris, Dr. Jennifer Smith*

## **VI. Reports/Discussion Items**

- a. Chair's report – Dr. Bill Lasher  
Combined with Executive Officer's report.
- b. Chief Executive Officer's report – Dr. Melissa Chavez  
January is Board Appreciation Month and our Board is much appreciated.
- c. Superintendent's report – Dr. Nicole Whetstone
  - Current enrollment is 303 – still have high percentage of Special Ed students.
  - Draft 2062-2027 Calendar – Teachers voted to start school 10 minutes earlier.
  - Total minutes is 76,380 – UTES is over by 1,000 minutes
  - Science Fair last week. Six students will go on to Regionals
  - Dr. Janina Roberts provided the required Annual Special Education Report. Dr. Roberts will speak about the report that is in the board packet.
  - Notes from Dr. Roberts report:
    - 24-25 we had 71 students
    - Over the past 6 years we have seen a steady increase which is reflective of the state numbers
    - Dr. Roberts went through the numbers by demographics and provided a staffing overview and funding allotment
- d. Health & Safety/Facilities report – Dr. Katie Tackett
  - Dr. Leal reported the safety updates, discipline data, the health report for students and staff. She provided the schedule of safety drill for the entire school year and the outcomes from the weekly door checks. The Facilities

Financial Report showed that we are on average of annual costs of maintenance.

-Dr. Leal explained what social work services are provided by our school and provided data on what types of services are requested and fulfilled by our social work teams. There have been 26 social work practicum students from 4 universities and our team will be presenting at the 2026 School Social Work Conference on Internship as Partnership.

-Question on vaccinations: Dr. Leal informed the board that as of now, nothing has changed but there may be changes coming. She has been in conversations with local health officials and she will report at the next board meeting if they learn more.

- e. Strategic Planning Committee report – Mrs. Kathy Armenta  
The committee had no update.
- f. Finance Committee report – Dr. Kal Kallison  
-Jenny Davis explained that we are under a TX Depart of Ag Administrative and Procurement Review. The onsite review will be January 21.  
-Ms. Davis is in planning with the finance committee to prepare the 2026-2027 budget which will be approved at the April meeting.  
-Next, she showed and explained the budget to actuals
- g. Education and Research Committee report – Dr. Sarah Woulfin  
No report at this time
- h. Nominating Committee report – Dr. Alexandra Eusebi  
Dr. Whetstone explained that the committee met and they will have some recommendations at the next meeting.

## VII. Adjournment

Dr. Lasher adjourned the meeting at 12:27pm

## VIII. Public Hearing on the Texas Academic Performance Report

- a. 2024-2025 Texas Academic Performance Report
- b. Public comments on the Report
- c. Adjournment of Public Hearing