

MORTON UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT
May 5, 2026

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of Morton Unit School District 709 held May 5, 2026, at the Morton Education and Administration Center. The meeting included the District's goals in **Achievement, Communication, Climate, Facilities, and Finance.**

REGULAR MEETING, May 5, 2026

Call to Order, Roll Call, and Pledge President David Cross called the Regular Meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. Members recited the Pledge of Allegiance. **Members present:** Dr. David Cross, Dr. Diane Krall, Mrs. Amanda Leman, Mr. Wes Ohnesorge, Mrs. Krystiana Purdy, Mr. Andrew Roth, and Mr. Jerry Rudd.

Recognition of Excellence

The Board recognized MJHS bowling and 8th grader Drew Kominkiewicz for placing 2nd at the IESA State Tournament. Mr. Scott Hammond, A.D. and Coach Peter Burdette reflected on the season.

Organization of the Board

Election of President Pro Tempore- President Cross called for a motion to appoint Dr. Joe Sander to serve as President Pro Tempore for the purpose of conducting nominations and voting for the office of President. Mrs. Leman made the motion. Mr. Rudd seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Yea 7 Nay 0 Absent 0

The motion carried unanimously. Dr. Joe Sander was elected President Pro Tempore.

Election of President- Dr. Sander called for nominations for the office of President. Mr. Jerry Rudd was nominated for the office of president of the Morton 709 Board of Education by Dr. Cross. No additional nominations were received. Nominations were declared closed. By acclamation, Mr. Jerry Rudd was elected president of the Board of Education. President Pro Tempore Sander instructed that election by acclamation be recorded in the minutes.

Election of Vice-President- President Rudd called for nominations for the office of Vice-President. Dr. Cross nominated Mrs. Krystiana Purdy for the office of Vice-President of the Morton 709 Board of Education. No additional nominations were received. Nominations were declared closed. By acclamation, Mrs. Krystiana Purdy was elected Vice-President of the Board of Education.

Election of Secretary- President Rudd called for nominations for the office of Secretary. Mrs. Purdy nominated Mrs. Amanda Leman for the office of Secretary of the Morton 709 Board of Education. No additional nominations were received. Nominations were declared closed. By acclamation, Mrs. Amanda Leman was elected Secretary of the Board of Education.

Board Meeting Schedule- The Board agreed to hold regular Board of Education meetings for the 2026-27 school year on the first Tuesday of each month unless otherwise noted on the calendar. All meetings will begin at 5:30 p.m. at the Morton Education Administration Center unless otherwise announced.

The Board will reserve the third Tuesday of each month for special meetings and building site visits as needed.

Agenda-Related Audience Presentations Mrs. Julie Roth (cell phone policy), Mrs. April Privett (on behalf of Mr. Bryan Groth), Mr. Don Sturm (technology and cell phones), Mrs. Andrea Knepp (cell phone policy), and Mrs. Jordan Spicklemire (cell phones and technology). President Rudd thanked the presenters.

Administrative Reports

Superintendent's Report – Dr. Joseph Sander

Gratitude – Dr. Sander expressed appreciation to Morton 709 teachers and staff for their dedication to student success. Dr. Sander also thanked Mrs. Beard and Mr. Kleiber for leading the SkillsUSA program. Morton High School earned nine podium finishes (six gold, one silver, three bronze) at the state competition, with thirteen students qualifying for the National Competition in Atlanta in June. The Board expressed appreciation for both.

- **Finance** – Dr. Sander shared information looking at the instructional expense per pupil, the technology cost per pupil, and the district technology expenses in FY25. Our students perform well with a much lower cost per pupil than other comparable Districts, based on testing outcomes.
- **Facilities** – Dr. Sander shared updated pictures on the MHS project and new information on the two phase update plans for Grundy.
- **Crisis Committee Update** – Mrs. Kate Wyman, Executive Director of Curriculum, Instruction, Technology, and Safety gave updates on safety updates for the District that including Raptor across the District, creation of a District Reunification Team, updated evacuation maps. CloudPoint maps for all buildings, completion of safety drills, testing of panic buttons, and the Crisis Plan contact updates and SRP language updates. Mr. Rudd was a part of the Crisis Committee meeting.
- **Retirement Reception and Graduation** – Dr. Sander updated the Board on event details.
- **FOIA** – Administration received FOIA requests from Jules Goonewardena, Peoria Journal Star, Email Communications; Michael F. Henry, Legal Services, Agreements, & Payments; and Owen Wang, Peoria Journal Star, Ramadan Policies and Accommodations
- **Monthly Board Policy Review:** The Board reviewed the May policies (Section 6, 6:000-6:82) as part of the bi-annual review schedule.

President's Report – President Rudd President Rudd thanked Dr. David Cross for his leadership as President of the Board for two years.

Board Committee Updates:

- **Superintendent's Finance Committee** – Fees and meal prices have been set for FY27. Ms. Lisa Kowalski is preparing the FY27 budget with a focus on capital projects. The Board will act on the Bus Lease and Financing later in the meeting. Committee members: Dr. Cross and Mr. Roth.
- **Superintendent's Facilities Committee** – Updates were provided on MHS Phase III and IV projects, which will add three to four classrooms, new offices, and spaces for special services upon completion. Tennis court repairs were also discussed. Mrs. Katie Bolkema will investigate grants to help offset repair costs. Dr. Sander expressed appreciation for Mr. Kevin Miller's assistance. Committee members: Mr. Rudd and Mrs. Leman.

- **Teaching and Learning Council (TLC)** – Dr. Krall and Mrs. Purdy represent the Board on TLC. The council continues to focus on curriculum review and renewal, grading improvement, K-2 Math, and technology integration. The "Start, Stop, & Continue" survey provided valuable insights. Board representatives noted the impressive mix of disciplines and collaborative think-tank atmosphere at meetings.
- **Board Self-Evaluation** – The Board participated in a Board Self-Evaluation with the Illinois Association of School Boards on April 21, 2026. Revised Board Protocols reflecting the self-evaluation are on the agenda as an action item.

Agenda Building:

No new agenda-building items.

Discussion Item(s)

Technology and Cell Phones

Presentation: Mrs. Wyman presented information from the Tech Task Force (TTF). The TTF identified key priorities: establishing technology core values aligned with District pillars, preparing students for purposeful futures, and promoting social-emotional and mental wellness for all students and staff. The group discussed educating students, staff, and caregivers on appropriate and safe technology use.

Board Discussion: The Board expressed concerns about cell phones and technology's impact on the learning environment, including negative effects on learning and brain development. The Board balanced these concerns with the need to prepare students for post-secondary education and workforce entry. Discussion included opportunities to opt out of personal devices in lower grades. The Board noted that new state laws could impact cell phone policies in schools. The Board thanked parents, educators, and parent-educators for their input.

Next Steps: Mrs. Wyman and Mr. Sturm were thanked for their work in presenting this information. The Tech Task Force offered recommendations, including the District's AI Plan, to the Board. Continued meetings will reflect on new information as AI evolves rapidly. The Board, Administration, educators, and parents will continue exploring grade-level appropriate use and defining "screen time." All stakeholders recognize this is a complex issue requiring ongoing collaboration.

2026-27 District Handbook

Mrs. Wyman presented adjustments made to the final draft of the 2026-27 District Handbook. The Board discussed the handbook draft changes with Mrs. Wyman and will submit any feedback. The Board discussed an 8 am to 3 pm no cell phone restriction with exceptions. The 2026-27 District Handbook will be approved at the June 2, 2026, regular meeting of the Board of Education.

President Rudd declared a recess at 8:03 p.m. The meeting resumed at 8:10 p.m.

County School Facility Tax (CSFST) Allocations

Dr. Sander presented information to the Board on ways that the CSFST could be used if it passes. He suggested an approach that helps divide the funds in a way that supports student and District needs, while looking for ways to reduce the financial burden on families. Based on available data, at least 59% of retail spending in Tazewell County comes from visitors to Tazewell County.

Action Item(s)

Action on Intergovernmental Agreement Morton Public Library & Morton CUSD709

Mr. Ohnesorge moved that the Board of Education approve the Intergovernmental Agreement with Morton Public Library. Mrs. Leman supported the motion.

Roll Call: Yea 7 Nay 0 Absent 0

Motion carried. It is a three-year agreement.

Action on Intergovernmental Agreement Morton Park District & Morton CUSD709

Mrs. Purdy moved that the Board of Education approve the Intergovernmental Agreement with Morton Park District as presented. Dr. Cross supported the motion.

Roll Call: Yea 7 Nay 0 Absent 0

Motion carried

Action on the Final 2025-26 Calendar

Mr. Roth motioned for the Board of Education to approve the final 2025-26 Amended Calendar for submission to the ISBE. Dr. Krall supported the motion.

Roll Call: Yea 7 Nay 0 Absent 0

Motion carried

Action on Lease for Transportation Vehicles

Mr. Roth moved that the Board to enter into a 5-year lease agreement with Better Banks to lease two 77-passenger Thomas buses and three 29-passenger buses for an annual lease cost of \$150,079.96. Mrs. Leman supported the motion.

Roll Call: Yea 7 Nay 0 Absent 0

Motion carried

Action on Revised Board Protocols

Dr. Cross motioned for the Board of Education to adopt the agreed-upon Board Protocols. Dr. Krall supported the motion.

Roll Call: Yea 7 Nay 0 Absent 0

Motion carried

Action on Non-Resident Tuition Request for the 2026-27 School Year

Mrs. Leman moved that the Board of Education Act on the admission of the Non-Resident Tuition Request for the 2026-27 School Year as presented. Mr. Roth supported the motion.

Roll Call: Yea 7 Nay 0 Absent 0

Motion carried

Approve Consent Agenda

Mr. Roth moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Mrs. Purdy supported the motion.

Roll Call: Yea 7 Nay 0 Absent 0

Motion carried.

Consent Agenda

- Approve Personnel Report
- Approve Destruction of Verbatim Records (10/15/24 & 10/29/24) 18 months
- Approve Overnight Trip Request Approval per Board Policy 6:240 - MHS Football - July 2026
- Approve Overnight/Out-of-State Trip Request per Board Policy 6:240 - MHS SkillsUSA Nationals- Atlanta, GA- May/June 2026
- Approve Treasurers Reports - March 2026
- Approve Student, Breakfast & Lunch Fees
- Approve Building Rental Fees
- Approve Revised Board Calendar
- Approve Consolidated District Plan for 2026-27
- Approve Minutes: April 14, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes, Closed Session Minutes, Regular Meeting, 2026; April 21, 2026, Special Meeting Minutes, Closed Session Minutes
- Approve Bills & Payroll

	Bills 4-10-26 4-13-26	Bills 4-24-26 4-27-26	Bills 4-29-26	Bills 4-24-26 CIE Payment	Payroll 4-17-26	Payroll 5-1-26
Ed. Fund (10)	\$536,300.37	495,101.12	\$83,896.00	\$358,999.28	957,932.67	\$1,127,153.49
Bldg. Fund (20)	72,740.66	149,255.0			59,390.58	58,835.41
Trans. Fund (40)	29,294.15	34,550.66			17,378.55	36,970.29
IMRF (50)					39,098.29	59,288.79
Capital Projects (60)		327,684.80				
TORT (80)		109,405.16				

Non-Agenda-Related Audience Presentations

None.

Closed Session as stated in the Open Meetings Act (5 ILCS 120/2)

President Rudd called for a closed session for the purpose of Personnel 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1) and Litigation 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(11), Personnel 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1), and Review of the Prohibition of Bryan Groth from School Property and Events 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(4.5) as stated in the Open Meetings Act.

Dr. Cross made a motion to move into Closed Session for the purpose of reviewing the Prohibition of Bryan Groth from School Property and Events, Litigation, and Personnel. Mr. Roth supported the motion.

Roll Call: Yea 7 Nay 0 Absent 0

Motion carried. The Board entered closed session at 8:41 p.m.

Open Session

Dr. Krall motioned for the Board to return to Open Session. Seconded by Mr. Roth.

Roll Call: Yea 7 Nay 0 Absent 0

Motion carried. The board returned to regular session at 9:22 p.m.

Action to Repeal the Prohibition of Bryan Groth from School Property and Events

Mr. Roth moved that the Board of Education repeal the Prohibition of Bryan Groth from School Property and events. Mrs. Purdy supported the motion.

Roll Call: Yea 6 Nay 1 Absent 0

Motion carried.

Adjournment –

Dr. Cross made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Voice Vote: Yea 7 Absent 0

Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 9:23 p.m.

Recorded by,

Respectfully submitted,

Valerie Smith, Recording Secretary

Amanda Leman, Secretary

Jerry Rudd, President