



**ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

J.B Pritzker
Governor

Robert D. Vickery
Acting Director

**Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice School District #428
Board of Education Meeting Minutes
Minutes -September 19th, 2025**

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| CALL TO ORDER | 1.0 | The regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Education was called to order by Acting Director, Robert Vickery on Friday, September 19 th at 9:33 a.m. at the IDJJ Chicago Office. |
| ROLL CALL | 1.1 | <p>The following Board Members were present: President, Robert Vickery, Board Member Lamont Holifield, Board Member Briana Morales, Board Member Kristian May Stewart and Board Member David Green.</p> <p>Others present: Tresa D. Dunbar, Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Kimberly Kimbrough, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Dr. Bambi Bethel-Leitschuh, Assistant Superintendent of Extended Educational Services, Melissa Cory, Director of Special Education, Noah Boudreau, CTE Director, Dominique Newman, Chief of Communication and Michael Walter, IDJJ Attorney.</p> |
| CONSENT AGENDA | 2.0 | As follows. |
| APPROVAL OF AGENDA | 2.1 | Quorum was confirmed. Board Member Lamont Holifield motioned for approval of agenda. Board Member David Green second the motion. Motioned passed. |
| APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 2025 MEETING | 2.2 | Quorum was confirmed. Board Member Kristian May Stewart motioned for approval. Board Member David Green second the motion. Motioned passed. |
| PUBLIC PARTICIPATION | 3.0 | Ms. April M. Curtis has joined the team as the new Deputy Director of programming. |
| PRESIDENT'S REPORT | 4.0 | Over the past few months, the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ) has experienced a notable increase in its youth population. For historical context, approximately 20 years ago, more than 2,000 youth were in custody statewide on any given day. Since then, that number steadily declined due to significant improvements in the functioning of the juvenile justice system. By 2016, the population had dropped to around |

500 youth and continued to decrease in the following years. During the COVID-19 pandemic, intake was temporarily paused, and the population reached a historic low of just 97 youth. Since the end of the pandemic the numbers have been slightly increasing. However, by late 2023 and into 2024, the numbers began to rise again, reaching 170 to 180 youth. As of now, the population has grown to 225 youth across all five facilities—a significant increase that reflects a shifting trend.

This increase is placing considerable strain on all five IDJJ facilities. It's important to note that intake decisions are made by the courts, not by the department itself. As such, IDJJ must respond to the rising population by adapting its resources and operations to meet the needs of the youth in custody.

IDJJ continues to serve young adults who are in the custody of the Department of Corrections. Currently, there are 93 young adults in this category, five of whom have successfully graduated.

The department remains committed to achieving full compliance with the consent decree and remedial plan that has been in place since 2014. One of the key remaining challenges involves consistently delivering full-day educational programming—a goal that is entirely dependent on securing and retaining qualified educators.

Despite these challenges, there have been encouraging developments. Both Thurgood and Maya Angelou schools have received positive feedback from the court monitor, highlighting progress in educational quality and program delivery.

The Assistant Superintendent of Extended Educations Programs provided an update on the continued progress of the Extended Services Program. The program has now expanded to include Big Muddy Correctional Center, marking a significant step forward in its reach and impact.

Staffing Progress: Twelve teaching positions have been successfully filled. Interviews for the Special Education Resource Coordinator are currently underway, with the selected candidate expected to begin in November. Additionally, the Registrar position has been officially approved by the state.

Program Growth: The partnership between DOC (Department of Corrections) and DJJ (Department of Juvenile Justice) has been instrumental in the program's expansion. Currently, DJJ is serving over 90 students within DOC facilities, and it is anticipated that the number of students served in DOC settings will soon match—or even exceed—those in DJJ facilities.

Program Model: The instructional model within DOC is slightly different, as it serves young adults aged 18 to 22. This presents unique challenges and opportunities, making it a substantial and complex initiative.

Director emphasized the importance of board engagement in this work. As the program evolves, board members will be relied upon to provide feedback, share observations, and identify areas where additional guidance or support may be needed. It is essential for the board to remain informed and involved in its development.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S
REPORT**

5.0

As follows.

**SCHOOL
DISTRICT #428**

5.1

The Joint Annual Conference in Chicago was made available as an opportunity for board members to attend and engage in professional development.

*Joint Annual Conference
2025 (Triple I)
November 21-23, 2025*

DR. TRESA D. DUNBAR

**SCHOOL
DISTRICT #428**

5.2

The district continues to move forward with a strong commitment to fiscal responsibility, which has required us to closely examine all financial practices, including hiring and staffing decisions. As part of this effort, we are carefully evaluating each position to determine where staffing is essential and where we can responsibly hold. Our focus remains on directing resources to the areas of greatest need, particularly in schools not under the consent decree, which are making steady progress.

Human Resources Update

DR. TRESA D. DUNBAR

Throughout the past year, we have communicated with affected staff and identified instructional gaps resulting from teacher shortages. In response, we are actively working to address these gaps and enhance our hiring strategies. I want to recognize the Director for their exceptional support in identifying staffing needs to ensure we maintain adequate coverage to support student learning.

Our staffing ratios remain consistent with district standards:

- 1:10 for general education classrooms
- 1:6 for special education classrooms

These ratios are designed to uphold instructional quality and compliance. While co-teaching models are occasionally implemented, classroom sizes do not exceed three additional students under that structure.

In the last six weeks, we have successfully filled nearly nine positions, with three more currently in progress. These hires are especially important for supporting our southern region schools, including Booker T. and IYC Harrisburg, where targeted staffing will have a meaningful impact.

A significant advancement for the district is the posting of the Behavioral Interventionist position—an innovative role that few districts or private institutions offer. This position will help us proactively support student behavior and well-being.

Additionally, we have posted two Literacy Specialist positions to address instructional gaps and improve outcomes for justice-involved youth. Notably, only two other facilities serving similar populations have been identified, and neither offers both a Behavioral Interventionist and a Literacy Specialist—highlighting our district’s leadership in this area.

We appreciate your continued dedication to our students and your partnership as we navigate these important decisions with care and purpose.

SCHOOL
DISTRICT #428

5.3

*2026 Annual Professional
Development Retreat*

DR. TRESA D. DUNBAR

The school district retreat is scheduled for April 29–May 1 and is being organized by an ad hoc planning committee. This retreat serves as a time for us to come together, reflect on our shared goals and outcomes, and refocus our direction for the upcoming year. The committee has identified Bloomington and Springfield as the potential retreat locations. Board members are highly encouraged to attend and participate in this important planning event.

**ASST. SUPERINTENDENT 6.0
UPDATE**

*Transition of Duties
Blended Learning/Direct
Instructional Forward Planning*

DR. KIMBERLY KIMBROUGH

Soon, the district will be rebranding its instructional approach. While blended learning will remain a foundational component—delivered three times per week through Connexus—the model will shift to incorporate two days of direct instruction. This will allow the reintroduction of best practices commonly seen in traditional classroom settings and ensure they are reflected in the instructional framework of SD #428.

This blended model aims to enhance teaching and learning by balancing digital instruction with structured, teacher-led instruction. Recent rollouts, including the integration of Chromebooks and Google Workspace, support this transition and provide educators with the tools needed to deliver high-quality instruction.

Ultimately, the goal is to strengthen educational outcomes, and it is important that all stakeholders understand the evolving role of blended learning in supporting student success.

**DIRECTOR OF
SPECIAL
EDUCATION**

6.2

*Special Education Monthly Data
Summary/Narrative
June/July 2025*

MRS. MELISSA CORY

Recent trends in special education data indicate a decrease in the number of youth identified with emotional disabilities and an increase in those classified under Other Health Impairments (OHI). Currently, the number of students receiving special education services is in the 50s, and an increase is anticipated soon. The district is actively preparing to accommodate this shift and ensure appropriate support structures are in place.

We are also pleased to announce the appointment of a new Special Education Resource Coordinator, Ms. Alyssa Freed, who is now housed at Monarch Youth Center in Lincoln, IL. She will help strengthen our capacity to meet the evolving needs of our students and support instructional teams across the district.

**CTE/ VOCATIONAL
EDUCATION DIRECTOR**

7.0

*CTE/ Vocational
Education Summary
September 2025*

MR. NOAH BOUDREAU

The Career and Technical Education (CTE) Department continues to make progress in expanding and strengthening vocational opportunities for students.

A new cohort from Greater West Town is preparing to graduate, marking another milestone in the program's success. Meanwhile, D&D launched a new cohort in early September, with the first two cohorts currently employed with the company.

A proposal from Bronz Cutz, a new barber school with a strong record of student retention and graduation, is currently under review. If approved, this partnership would add a valuable pathway for students interested in cosmetology and barbering careers.

The Nova Driving School instructor is also under review, with plans to restart the program in northern facilities this October, followed by a rollout to southern facilities in November and December.

The department's primary focus remains on securing and managing grants through ISBE, ensuring sustainable growth and quality programming across all sites.

The Director highlighted the success of the D&D program and commended the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Director for establishing the partnership.

**BOARD DISCUSSION
ITEMS**

8.0

None.

ADJOURNMENT

9.0

A motion to adjourn was made by Board Member David Green. Board Member Lamont Holifield then followed with a second motion. The motion passed. No Objections. President Vickery concluded the meeting at 10:38 a.m