



Hernando School District

School Board Informal Meeting

Minutes - Draft

Tuesday, July 28, 2026

1:00 PM

District Office-Board Room
919 N. Broad Street
Brooksville, FL 34601

CALL TO ORDER

Present

- Board Chair Kayce Hawkins
- Vice Chair Shannon Rodriguez
- Board Member Michelle Bonczek
- Board Member Susan Duval
- Board Member Mark Johnson

This meeting was called to order at 1 P.M. Also present were Robert Meyers, School Board Attorney, and Ray Pinder, Superintendent.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

An informal meeting of the School Board has been scheduled for general discussion among Board Members on Educational Matters

Topics of Discussion:

Bonczek: NSBA Policy Leadership Cohort

Board Member Michelle Bonczek informed the Board that she had been selected through a competitive national application process to participate in the National School Boards Association (NSBA) Policy Leadership Cohort focused on special education leadership. The cohort includes four virtual meetings and one in-person presentation in Washington, D.C., where participants will develop and present a capstone project designed to influence special education policy and advocacy efforts at the national level. Board members congratulated Mrs. Bonczek and expressed support for her participation.

Rodriguez: Val/Sal and AICE/IB programs

Board Member Shannon Rodriguez initiated discussion regarding the District's valedictorian and salutatorian eligibility requirements, specifically concerning students who complete both the AICE Program and the International Baccalaureate (IB) Program. Discussion focused on students who must transfer schools to complete both rigorous academic programs and whether the current three-year attendance requirement unintentionally disadvantages those students. Board members discussed the possibility of creating an exception to the current three-year requirement for students who: Complete the AICE Program; Complete the IB Program; and Earn a grade point average qualifying them for valedictorian or salutatorian recognition. Administration was asked to develop draft language for Board consideration that would create a limited exception to the existing policy while maintaining the current three-year rule for all other students. Superintendent Ray Pinder and

staff indicated proposed language would be brought back for Board review as part of a future amendment to the Student Progression Plan.

Hawkins: School Mascots

Board Chair Kayce Hawkins requested discussion regarding the development of a School Board policy governing school mascot selection and changes. Discussion included recent mascot changes within the District and procedures used in other Florida school districts. Board members discussed: the importance of preserving school traditions and identity; ensuring Board awareness of proposed mascot changes; maintaining stakeholder involvement through students, staff, parents, and School Advisory Councils (SACs); avoiding unnecessary micromanagement of school administration; and establishing procedures for Board review prior to implementation. Consensus emerged supporting the development of policy language that would require proposed mascot changes to be submitted to the Superintendent and presented to the Board through a workshop process before implementation. Staff was directed to include proposed language in a future policy update.

Hawkins: Booster Clubs & Crowd Funding

Board Chair Kayce Hawkins requested a future workshop discussion regarding booster clubs and crowd-funding. Superintendent Ray Pinder indicated that administration would bring the topic forward for further review and discussion.

Meyers: Live Local Tax Act Exemption

Board Attorney Robert Meyers provided information regarding Florida's Live Local Act and recent statutory changes affecting property tax exemptions for affordable housing developments. Mr. Meyers explained that local governments may choose to opt out of certain tax exemptions through adoption of a resolution. Discussion included: potential revenue implications for the School District; actions taken by the Hernando County Board of County Commissioners; impacts on affordable housing providers and residents; and the need for additional research and information before any future Board consideration. Administration will continue reviewing the issue and will bring it back for future discussion.

Rodriguez: Use of Facilities

Board Member Shannon Rodriguez asked whether local athletic officials/referees could utilize District facilities, specifically Nature Coast Technical High School, for several upcoming meetings. Administration advised that facility use requests should be coordinated through the school principal and facilities staff in accordance with established procedures.

27-3995 Handouts from the Informal Meeting of July 28, 2026.

Attachments: [07-28-26 Informal Handout Item - Meyers](#)
[07-28-26 Informal Handout Item - Hawkins](#)

ADJOURNMENT

This meeting was adjourned at 1:54 P.M.

Superintendent

Board Chair

Mission Statement

The Hernando County School District Collaborates with students, parents and other community stakeholders to effectively prepare all students for a successful transition into a diverse and changing world.
