

Minutes

Special Board of Education Meeting Unified School District No. 473, Chapman, KS

March 24, 2026

Brenda Edleston, School Board President, called the Special meeting of the USD 473 Board of Education to order at 8:00 am at Rural Center Elementary, 902 1400 Ave, Abilene, KS 67410

Other Board Members Present: Jessica Murphy, Adam Elliott, Favio Garcia, Jennifer Elliott and Kyrsten Day (*Dana Obermeyer was absent*)

Also Present: Kevin Suther – Superintendent, Michele Sutter - Board Clerk

Adam Elliott made the motion to adopt the Agenda. Kyrsten Day seconded the motion; motion carried 6-0.

NEW BUSINESS:

USD 473 Board of Education School Tours:

The Board of Education began the outlying school tours at Rural Center Elementary. We were there in time to watch their morning announcements, marching around the gym to "YMCA" and "We are Family" and also listened to the fun things they do with their monthly character trait, which happens to be Cooperation.

They broke up into 6 different groups and did a hula hoop exercise to show how cooperation gets the job done. They formed a circle and had to get the hula hoop around the entire circle without breaking their arm locks. They all figured out the task while being grouped with a variety of ages from PreK to 5th grade. Principal Wilkins told the students they demonstrated how working together can reach a shared goal.

The Pledge of Allegiance was done next followed by their Rural Center Motto.

Mrs. Wilkins reminded the students that Wednesday is state testing and they need to be sure to be extra quiet in the hallways so they don't disturb the grades who are testing. She dismissed the students by class order and they went to their rooms.

The principal came to speak to the Board members and answer any questions they might have about Rural Center. She talked about the weekly schedule for Preschool and how it currently is half days which some parents believe their 3 year old may not be ready for all day school just yet.

Our next stop was the building storm shelter, which is also their music room. It is the newest section of the building and smaller than the other elementary schools but does fit all the students in the space when it comes to a tornado drill.

Sometimes they use the stage as an extra space for the counselor and other small group needs. It is not ideal, but it's a quiet and calm space to go when they need an additional room.

Mr. Suther said he is in the process of obtaining a quote to epoxy the restroom floors in the future.

Rural Center has 2 combination classrooms, 2nd/3rd and 4th/5th. Adam asked if having combination class rooms has affected the state testing scores at Rural Center and Mr. Suther said they have consistently stayed above the state average. Even though there is combination classrooms the numbers are still low and the last two years with adding the music teacher as full-time to teach other subjects students remain in only one grade level when it comes to core instruction.

Adam asked about the amount of 5th graders that continue in the district at the middle school level. Mr. Suther was going to look over the last few years to let them know the data.

Mrs. Wilkins has increased the advertisement about Rural Center when it comes to preschool, non-resident students and kindergarten for next year. This includes a flyer handed out at the Valentine's breakfast, a highlight video put on social media, and talking with the local radio station about the great opportunities offered.

The Board of Education members arrived at Enterprise Elementary at 9:20 am.

Mrs. Rutherford gave a run down to the Board about what takes place in the mornings at their school. Today involved Chapman High School athletes from the tennis and golf teams. They were there to promote their sport but also actively give elementary students a hands on approach to learning a new sport while getting excited about the possibility of playing it in the future.

The group started in the tornado shelter which is also the music room and where Central Kansas Mental Health works when they are in the building. Kerri Saum from CKMH introduced herself and explained how she helps almost all the buildings across the district with individual and small group services.

When we went into the gym, Mrs. Rutherford thanked the Board for their new sound system and projector. She said it was greatly needed and gets used every day.

We went outside and Mr. Suther showed the new fencing to help keep animals off the playground that was installed a short time ago. This was also an opportunity to show some ideas for future plans to possibly turn a storage area into a student meeting room area, update the dirt playground with some concrete and grass plus the need for a walk in freezer space.

GRADE 3:

Mrs. Hunt and Ms. Dautel were busy teaching the students how to use their devices to do state testing tomorrow. They want the students to feel comfortable with utilizing the i-pads by doing a practice test along with following the instructions so that is not a barrier when it comes to the actual test.

We went to the break room and Mrs. Rutherford showed the new mailboxes she made because she said it is very important for every one in the building to have a place for communications. She also said the building now has a washer and dryer as they do multiple loads of clothes a week for various reasons.

Jennifer Elliott asked if there was an AED machine and Mr. Suther said yes, there is one in every building, and also a couple of mobile ones. As part of the cardiac plan there are at least 4 to 5 employees in every building trained in how to use them. This also includes all coaches and administrators. This certification is for a two year period before having to retrain. In August, each building does a mock emergency so that everyone can act out a scenario besides just talking about it.

The Board of Education arrived at Blue Ridge Elementary at 10:20 am. Miss Rachel (bookmobile) was there and had a class in her bus all reading books to each other.

We went into the building to Mrs. Diehl's Preschool class. Today, all 3 and 4 year olds happened to be there at once which takes place for half a day every Tuesday and Thursday. The Board enjoyed walking around taking in all the different stations the groups were working at. They were playing with playdough, counting blocks, alphabet rainbow play and so much more.

The next classroom was Mrs. Lexow's room and her class happened to be at recess. She was busy working on things to get ready for tomorrow's state testing. She told us that she still teaches her students cursive writing and the importance of it and said how much she loves her class this year. She has 9 kids, 7 girls and 2 boys. She thanked the Board for stopping in.

We visited Mrs. Valenzuela's Resource Room which is a very calm environment. She explained some of the great improvements with students in the special education department at Blue Ridge and how proud she is of all the students. They help make it a welcoming environment and are understanding when it comes to other student's disabilities.

We stopped in to Mrs. Spellman's 4th grade class and observed the daily "Facts on Fire" the students were doing. She explained it has helped her students so much with their math fluency.

The final classroom visited was Mrs. Audy's 5th graders who were also very busy doing math with the new Envision curriculum. It requires students to think more when doing math with a lot of word problem style questions.

(Jessica Murphy had to leave at 10:47 am)

ADJOURNMENT:

Adam Elliott made the motion to adjourn; Jennifer Elliott seconded the motion; motion carried 5-0. Meeting adjourned at 10:49 am.

Brenda Edleston

Brenda Edleston, School Board President

Michele L. Sutter

Michele Sutter, Board Clerk