

The Sterling Jet Brief

February 2026

A summary of the Sterling School Board Meeting

The Sterling Jet Brief is designed to provide our community with a clear and concise summary of the key discussions and decisions made at each Sterling School Board meeting. Our goal is to keep you informed about the progress of our schools and to foster an open dialogue between the board and the public.

Next Meeting

Date: February 25, 2026
Time: ~7:00pm
Location: Sterling Public Schools Library

The Public is welcome to attend

Our Guiding Principles

Our Mission

Sterling Public Schools will educate students to excel, prepare to compete, inspire to serve, and challenge to learn.

Our Vision

All Sterling Public Schools Students will achieve their full potential.

Sterling Board of Education

Mark Horstman, President
Julie Saathoff, Vice President
Mackenzie Saathoff, Secretary
Russ Trauernicht, Treasurer
Rick Vollman, Board Member
Lauren Weyers, Board Member

Board Goals

Goal II: Communication Leadership

Objective: Strengthen school-community relations by effectively promoting the district's story, fostering engaged communication, and building strong partnerships with internal and external stakeholders.

Strategy I: Enhance community engagement by implementing clear, consistent, and communication strategies that highlight the district's achievements, priorities, mission, and vision.

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A month in review at Sterling

Poverty Simulator: SENCA visited to run their poverty simulator for grades 8-12. This activity allowed students to step into the roles of individuals navigating common life events and everyday responsibilities. During the activity, they made decisions about employment, transportation, childcare, budgeting, and accessing community resources while managing limited time and competing priorities. The experience encouraged thoughtful discussion, problem-solving, and reflection on how quickly life circumstances can change.



100th Day Celebration: The elementary students gathered to celebrate the 100th Day of School with a variety of fun games and activities. The gym was filled with excitement as students participated 100-themed activities that highlighted just how much they have learned and grown this year.



Show and Tell: Our preschool students enjoyed a very special surprise this month with a visit from Sushi, a miniature horse. The kids were delighted to meet Sushi up close and even had the chance to offer a few treats. It was a memorable hands-on experience that brought plenty of smiles. A special thank you to Ezra and his family for sharing Sushi with us through show and tell!



JETS Debit Card Program: We are grateful to the Sterling branch of First Bank Nebraska for presenting our school with a generous check for \$798 from the winter season of the Jets Debit Card Program. This partnership provides valuable support to our school through everyday community participation. We sincerely appreciate First Bank Nebraska and everyone who chooses the Jets debit card for helping make a positive impact on our students and programs.

Admin & Committee Reports

Superintendent's Report: An update was provided on LB 1038. The bill is aimed at providing property tax relief by adjusting how the state funds K-12 education and shifting a greater share of responsibility from local property taxes to state revenue sources. While the goal of tax relief is widely supported, concerns remain regarding long-term funding stability, potential limits on local control, and how changes to the state aid formula may impact individual districts. There are also questions about districts' future budget growth capacity and whether new limits could restrict their ability to respond to rising costs and enrollment changes. Additional details and implementation guidance will be necessary for districts to fully understand the long-term financial implications.

Maintenance projects this month included the replacement of a damaged oven door and repairs to a leaking gas coupler, both of which have now been completed to ensure safe and efficient kitchen operations. We are also pleased to report that the district's bond rating has been affirmed at "AA," reflecting continued financial stability. In addition, we are currently awaiting the results of an area survey in order to finalize the necessary paperwork for the partial closure of Illinois Street for the new building project.

Principal's Report: The principal's report began with details regarding the upcoming Family Fun Night scheduled for March 29. The event will feature mini golf, with holes designed and sponsored by community volunteers. The evening will serve as an elementary fundraiser and an opportunity to engage families in a fun, school-centered activity.

The report also provided an update on the community surveys currently being distributed. The first survey focuses on the school's Mission and Vision statements and seeks stakeholder feedback as part of the Rule 10 requirements. The second survey is the Parent and Community Perceptual Survey, designed to gather input regarding school culture, climate, and current practices. Both surveys are available on the school website and social media platforms.

In addition, the report highlighted ongoing efforts to strengthen reading instruction at Sterling Elementary. All K-5 teachers are participating in AIM Pathways professional development, funded through the CLSD grant, to enhance literacy practices and instructional effectiveness.

An attendance report from Parent-Teacher Conferences was also provided. The elementary school experienced nearly 100% participation, with the exception of second grade, whose teacher was unavailable during the scheduled conference time. In contrast, high school conference attendance was reported at 26% of students represented, marking a record low level of participation. The report noted a potential need to evaluate the current structure and consider more effective use of conference time moving forward.

Lastly, Mr. Davenport presented a proposed adjustment to the high school bell schedule for the upcoming school year. Rather than continuing with a rotational SOAR period, the proposal would establish fixed intervention periods dedicated specifically to mathematics and reading. The report emphasized the academic growth observed since the implementation of universal interventions, noting continued progress in student achievement.

AD/Transportation Report: The next round of vehicle inspections will begin by the end of the month. Recent transportation repairs included replacing the minivan's oil pressure housing, fixing a bus crossover mirror bracket, repairing an antifreeze leak on the white bus, and addressing an emergency brake issue on a route bus. Discussion regarding a potential minivan purchase was introduced and tabled later in the meeting.

Basketball Sub-Districts will be held over the next two weeks, with the girls traveling to Weeping Water and the boys competing at Nebraska Lutheran High School the following week. The trap season is underway, with its first competition scheduled for March 14 in Crete. High school track practice begins March 3, and the high school football schedule has been released, featuring non-district matchups against Dorchester High School, Parkview Christian School, and Riverside Public Schools. Officials have been secured for all Friday home games at 7:00 p.m.

Building & Grounds Committee: The Building and Grounds Committee reported on a meeting held earlier this month with CMBA Architects regarding upcoming building project. Discussion centered primarily on potential design concepts for the new commons area at the main entrance, as well as preliminary exterior renderings of the building. The committee reviewed layout options and aesthetic considerations as planning continues to move forward.



Action Items

Personnel: A discussion was held about the potential expanding the school psychologist position to full-time. While the position currently exists in a limited capacity, there is consideration of expanding the role to better meet student needs and provide increased support services.
NO ACTION REQUIRED

CM@R Resolution: The board reviewed and approved a resolution selecting the Construction Management at Risk contract delivery system for the upcoming bond project.
MOTION PASSED: 4-0, 2 Absent

CM@R Selection Committee: The board reviewed and approved the designation of members to serve on the Construction Manager at Risk Selection Committee.

Board Members:	Mark Horstman Julie Saathoff Rick Vollman
Administration:	Jacob Davenport Riley Armes
Architect Team:	Jim Brisnehan Matthew Kreutzer CMBA Team
Community:	Jim Jasa Christian Chadwick Kenny Wentz
Staff:	JW Kennedy

MOTION PASSED: 4-0, 2 Absent

CM@R Committee: The board approved the referral of all Construction Manager at Risk proposals to the Construction Manager at Risk Selection Committee for evaluation and recommendation.
MOTION PASSED: 4-0, 2 Absent

Request for Proposals: The board authorized the administration to prepare and publish a Notice of Request for Proposals and to develop the accompanying Request for Proposals and proposal instructions.
MOTION PASSED: 4-0, 2 Absent

Delivery Method: The board reviewed and approved all necessary actions related to the selection of the Construction Manager at Risk contract delivery system, including accepting proposals via email, mail, or hand delivery, in accordance with the Political Subdivisions Construction Alternatives Act.
MOTION PASSED: 4-0, 2 Absent

General Fund Transfers: Due to changes in the timing of school funding receipts, it was recommended in August that routine general fund transfers be delayed to allow for additional revenue collection and a clearer assessment of the current fiscal year budget. With the district in a positive financial position, the board authorized transfers of \$30,000 to the Nutrition Fund and \$30,000 to the Activities Fund.
MOTION PASSED: 4-0, 2 Absent

Tabled Actions: Several action items on the agenda were identified as matters that the board felt warranted full participation in discussion and voting. As a result, these items were tabled and will be addressed at a special board meeting following the CM@R Committee meeting scheduled for February 25 at 5:30pm. The special board meeting is tentatively set to begin at approximately 7:00pm, pending the conclusion of the committee meeting. The items to be discussed at this time are:

- Superintendent Compensation
- Principal Compensation
- Purchase of property 275 Lincoln Street
- Purchase of replacement mini-van
- General Fund transfer of \$50,000 to depreciation

ACTION TABLED

Discussion Items

Policy Review: The board conducted a policy review of policies 5045-5059, which are part of the district's 5000 Student Policies series governing various aspects of student life and rights. This group of policies includes guidelines on student fees and charges, regulation of secret organizations, emergency health responses, reporting requirements related to home schools, school wellness, students' self-management of health conditions, anti-bullying provisions, kindergarten enrollment, students' free expression rights, Title I parent and family engagement, and emergency medical treatment. These policies ensure compliance with state requirements and support student welfare, safety, and participation in school programs. Many of these policies will be revisited during a summer meeting.

Review Classified Staff Compensation: The board discussed the annual review of classified staff compensation. A new policy was adopted regarding this last year. Discussion revolved around whether compensation should be governed by policy or contracts, which was a recent recommendation from school attorneys. The decision was made to work with the Negotiations Committee to review and align policy, contracts, and the staff handbook, and work to prepare a recommendation for the board.

School Calendar Review: Discussion continued on the school calendar, focusing on simplifying days off, aligning schedules across grade levels, adjusting the Pre-K schedule, and modifying professional development days to early dismissals on Fridays to create a more consistent PK-12 calendar. A preliminary draft of the school calendar was shared.
[School Calendar Draft](#)

Next Meeting

Next Meeting: The next scheduled board meeting will be a special meeting on February 25, 2026 at the conclusion of committee meetings around 7:00pm in the Sterling High School Library.

