

# Westside Regular Board Meeting

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Agency: Board of Education for Westside Community Schools

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## **April 21: Westside Board reviews student fees increases**

At its April 21 meeting, the Westside Community Schools Board of Education held a public hearing on proposed changes to student fees for the 2025-26 school year.

Business and finance officer Brian Gabriel detailed several increases, including 10- to 15-cent rises in school breakfast and lunch prices, a \$30 fee for high school extracurriculars like soccer and tennis, and a \$50 band participation fee. Summer school tuition is also set to increase, and the district will no longer offer a three-course option. Gabriel said the district is ending its \$25 cooperative loss program, shifting to per-incident charges for lost or damaged iPads.

Superintendent Mike Lucas assured board members that financial assistance will remain available to families in need.

The board also heard updates on district finances and enrollment trends. Treasurer Kris Karnes reported that the district took in \$15.85 million in March — boosted by a delayed state aid payment and new property tax legislation — while it spent \$13.81 million. Nutrition services revenue dropped significantly year over year, supporting the need for upcoming price hikes. Director of student services Robert Aranda shared that district enrollment rose by 3.45%, continuing a five-year upward trend. English language learner enrollment nearly doubled since 2020, fueled by new arrivals from Central Asia, Venezuela and Cuba. The board also reviewed new and updated personnel policies, including language around weapons in the workplace and political activity by staff.

During public comment students advocated for various changes, from reclassifying show choir as a physical education credit to reviving the school's after-prom. Freshman Marley Helvey urged the board to implement a consistent policy on artificial intelligence in classrooms, while others called for more flexible dress code policies and work-based opportunities at the high school café. The board also received a glowing report from the Westside Community Schools Foundation, which raised a record \$330,000 at its annual fundraiser. The meeting closed with legislative updates and an announcement that U.S. Rep. Don Bacon and state education officials will visit Westside High School later this month to review career and technical education initiatives.

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