

**Stony Creek Joint Unified School District
Special Board Meeting Minutes
August 18, 2025
3430 County Road 309, Elk Creek, CA 95979**

1. Call To Order

- The Stony Creek Joint Unified School District Board of Education met in special session on August 18, 2025 at Elk Creek High School, Elk Creek, California.
- President Martin called the meeting to order at 9:32 am.

2. Roll Call

- Members of the board in attendance were: Ritta Martin, Cathie Bodeker, Delana Martin, Diana Corkill. Members of the board not in attendance were: Krystal Craven.
 - Others present: Superintendent Emily Pendell, CBO Dusty Thompson, Executive Assistant Dominique Buring, Erin Callahan, Chris Sifter, Meagan Groteguth, Susan Polk, Aaston Burrows, Kathy Landini, Jeane Whitney, Pastor Joe Levesque, and Zoe Brandenburger.

3. Pledge of Allegiance

- The Pledge of Allegiance was led by President Martin.

4. Approval on Agenda

The agenda for the meeting was approved.

- Motion: Diana Corkill, Seconded by: Cathie Bodeker.
- Voting Result: 4-0, 1 absent.

5. Comments on Agenda Items

- New Business - Multiple community members commented.

6. New Business

- Study Session
 - Current Enrollment Statistics & Trends

- A study session between the Board of Education and administration to brainstorm and discuss strategic goals for the 2025–2026 school year, prioritizing enrollment and attendance.
- Superintendent Pendle provided current enrollment data and district context.
- 2023–2024 End-of-Year Enrollment: 58 students (district-wide)
- 2025–2026 Beginning Enrollment (as of last Wednesday): 47 total
- Elementary (TK–8): 28 students
- High School (9–12): 19 students
- Breakdown (per grade):
- Elementary:
 - TK: 1; K: 3; 1st: 2; 2nd: 3; 3rd: 4; 4th: 3; 5th: 1; 6th: 1; 7th: 8; 8th: 2
 - Classes are combined appropriately (e.g., 1/2, 3/4/5)
 - Ms. Close was assigned as Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA) for intervention due to low 5th/6th enrollment.
- High School:
 - 9th: 5; 10th: 8; 11th: 4; 12th: 2
 - Four teachers serve HS: Ag Science, English, Math, Social Science
- Student Mobility Over the Summer:
- 21 students lost (breakdown):
 - 2 high schoolers—Willows (independent study)
 - 1 elementary—Willows (“better school” preference)
 - 1 elementary—Willows (siblings attending)
 - 1 high school—Willows (credit recovery)
 - 16 students—Families moved (4 families)
- 9 students added:
 - 4 newly enrolled
 - 5 returning former students
 - Note: Ongoing fluctuation during the year due to local family dynamics, frequent moves of Native American community members between Grindstone and Lake County, and overall rural transience.
- Instructional Program Adaptations:
 - Staff Assignments & Targeted Support:
 - Ms. Close (experienced, versatile) serves as TOSA, providing:
 - In-class (push-in) math for 5th grade
 - Pull-out literacy for 1st–2nd (targeted reading intervention)

- Small-group reading (3rd–5th), based on CAASPP and iReady data
 - Pull-out math and language arts for 1st/2nd three days/week
 - STEM instruction and “Genius Hour” (passion projects)
 - Arts and Tier 3 interventions (most intensive)
 - Teachers recently conducted intensive data analysis (CAASPP and iReady) to individually target learning gaps and opportunities.
- Athletic Program & Extracurriculars:
 - Athletic participation is a major factor in student retention and transfer patterns.
 - Elk Creek retains sufficient high schoolers to technically field teams (meets CIF minimums), but student interest is low in traditional sports (volleyball, basketball).
 - Exploring alternative, individualized or less conventional activities:
 - Clay target team
 - Archery (launching Fall 2025)
 - Wrestling
 - Potential for golf and cross-country highlighted by parents/community
 - FFA (Future Farmers of America) program expansion is showing remarkable success—acts as a draw and leadership incubator.
 - Barriers:
 - Difficulty sustaining teams due to low enrollment and variable student interest.
 - Academic eligibility (C average/minimums) remains a limiting factor.
 - Parental involvement and commitment cited as important; “sports as incentive” for academic focus.
- Fiscal Outlook & School Funding:
 - Dusty presented fiscal impacts and clarified funding formulas.
 - Elk Creek is a “necessary small school,” so LCFF funding is based on enrollment bands, not strict ADA (Average Daily Attendance) like larger districts.
 - Elementary (bands for 2025–2026):
 - 1–24 ADA: \$277k (for 1 teacher)
 - 25–48 ADA: \$549k (for 2+ teachers)—current target
 - High School:
 - 3+ teachers with 1+ ADA = 3rd funding band (sufficient with current staff and enrollment)

- Band Retention:
 - If average ADA for elementary schools drops below 24.5 (currently at 28 enrolled, but real ADA may be lower due to attendance patterns), districts will fall to a lower funding band. This would trigger \$272k+ loss in revenue.
 - “Safe-harbor” mechanism: funding based on highest of current, prior, or three-year average ADA, allowing a “slow drop” in apportionment rather than immediate funding cliff.
- Recent ADA data:
 - 2023–24: 53.08 ADA (K–12)
 - 2022–23: 59.14 ADA
 - 2021–22: 77.26 ADA
 - ADA dropping steadily; 48% “chronic absenteeism” reported (students missing 18+ days/year—one of highest rates in state).
- Additional Notes:
 - ADA is not the same as enrollment; based on actual days attended.
 - “Unduplicated pupil” percentage (low-income, foster, English Learner, homeless) determines supplemental funding—measured off October “Census Day” enrollment, which is fixed for the year.
- Districts preparing for October count—need highest possible reporting of unduplicated categories, despite stigma and community reluctance.
- District Initiatives on Attendance:
 - Current Focus:
 - Information campaign via district Facebook, newsletter, and direct communication.
 - Frequent reminders about both academic/financial rationale for strong attendance.
 - Example: missing two days/month = chronic absentee
 - Exploring incentives through PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) to motivate attendance.
 - Emphasizing attendance’s downstream effect on reading proficiency, graduation, and long-term student success.
 - Cultural Sensitivity:
 - Training provided by Kno’Quoti Native Wellness on the realities of Native American family traditions, ceremonies, and transitory living, which contribute to absenteeism.
 - Working to establish an MOU with Kno’Quoti for home visits/bridge-building and partnership in supporting students’ attendance.

- The meeting was opened for public comment.
Public Comment: *Susan Polk, Aaston Burrows, Kathy Landini, Jeane Whitney, Pastor Joe Leveck, and Zoe Brandenburger made comment about enrollment concerns and ideas.*
- Short-Term District Initiatives:
 - The board and administration discussed ideas, concerns, and potential steps.
 - Explore expansion of physical newsletter/mailers into Willows (3730 mailings = \$921/postage only), and “South Orland” (\$494/postage).
 - Possibility of cost-savings via postcards/simple flyers and quarterly vs. monthly larger newsletters.
 - Use of web and social media to supplement.
 - Potential for targeted PR campaign: banners/signage in Willows, on I-5, at high-traffic local businesses (e.g., Nancy's Airport Café), and regionally.
 - Previous marketing (Glenn County Shopper, \$9k/year for one ad) referenced.
 - Community Engagement:
 - More regular, visible outreach to former Elk Creek families who have left—if feasible.
 - Strong push for board members and staff to attend all school events (“be about it, not just talk about it”).
 - Greater collaboration with Kno’Quoti Native Wellness for community trust and support.
 - Attendance Campaign:
 - Maintain emphasis on attendance incentives (PBIS, education campaigns for parents on impact/importance of ADA).
 - Tie attendance efforts to both behavioral goals and financial realities.
 - Continue focused communication around October “Census Day.”
 - Extracurricular Diversification:
 - Immediate establishment of archery and clay target teams.
 - Research initiation of wrestling, golf, track, cross-country as non-traditional, individualized opportunities.
 - Continued expansion and celebration of the FFA program, STEM, and the arts.
 - Administrative Adjustments:
 - Continue pause on high school ag teacher hiring while monitoring enrollment.

- Flexibly utilize staff for student-centered interventions (e.g., TOSA role).
- Technology and Process Improvements:
 - Online enrollment (Aeries platform) being implemented, which may streamline unduplicated pupil identification and lessen paper stigma barriers.
 - Look into data-driven auto-identification of homeless/unduplicated status (e.g., based on address queries).

7. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:17 am.

Respectfully submitted by Superintendent Emily Pendell, Secretary to the Governing Board.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ritta Martin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. Below the signature is a horizontal line.

Ritta Martin, President