

Fond du Lac Ojibwe School Board
Regular Meeting
Thursday November 6, 2025, at 12:00 p.m.
Fond du Lac Ojibwe School

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Reading of Mission Statement & Vision
4. Approval of Agenda
5. Approval of Minutes
 - Regular Meeting Minutes September 4, 2025
 - Regular Meeting Minutes October 2, 2025
6. Review Ledger
7. New Business:

i. Strategic Plan-Mirja Hansen	RA	IPA	I
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8. Old Business:

i. Superintendent Updates	RA	IPA	I
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9. Supervisor Reports:
 - i. Tara Dupuis, Superintendent
 - ii. Daniel Merfeld, Principal
 - iii. Blake Ludemann, Education Grants and Accountability Manager
 - iv. Michelle Hamski, Interim Special Education Coordinator
 - v. Mace Fonoti, Kitchen
 - vi. Hailey Martin, Wellness Coordinator
 - vii. Dawn LaPrairie, Cultural Coordinator
 - viii. Barbara Francis, FACE Coordinator
 - iv. Kathy Nelson, Transportation
10. Other
11. Adjourn

**Fond du Lac Ojibwe School
Superintendent-Tara Dupuis
School Board Report
November 6, 2025**

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OJIBWE SCHOOLS MOTTO
"Anokii, Nanda-gikendan, Enigok gagwe, Gashkitoon"
"Work, study, strive, succeed"

Travel/Trainings:

- IEFA Prairie Island
- TNEC Professional Development for Metro Schools
- Budget meeting upcoming improvements (with secretary treasurer and executive director)
- Zoom Meeting with Reanna from BIE regarding upcoming audit (it has been rescheduled to spring)
- FDLTCC Accreditation public meeting

Accomplishments:

- School Based Health grant meeting @MNAW
- TNEC Meeting
- Tribal Consultation (PD) Metro Area School
- FACE Early Childhood Classroom moved to Ojibwe School
- Cognia Accreditation in progress

Challenges:

- Budget changes
- Expanding Ojibwe Language
- We need a FACE bilingual teacher (Early Childhood teacher)

Employee updates:

- Physical Education Teacher hired; FACE teacher interviewed

Goals within Department:

- Special Education teachers needed
- Licensed staff in area of licensure
- Complete 5-year strategic plan in progress
- Cognia Accreditation in progress

**Fond du Lac Ojibwe School
Principal-Daniel Merfeld
School Board Report
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Travel/Trainings:

- Several Staff completed CPR/AED Training
- Para training was offered, but no takers.
- RP Training upcoming

Student Activities:

- Past Activities:
 - Pokey Jaris Powwow
 - Family/Teacher Conferences
 - 11th-12th Grade College Visits
 - 10th-12th grade Engineering Trip
 - Volleyball completed the season well.
- Upcoming Activities:
 - Basketball practice begins in Nov.
 - Biboon Planning Beginning
 - Prom Committee Meetings
 - Starting to plan for ice fishing

Accomplishments:

- PE Teacher hired and has started!
- Safety Inspection went well; credit goes to Blake L.
- Filling Basketball Schedules
- Quarter 1 Grades due on Oct. 31st.
- The playground is open to students, waiting on final completion.

Challenges:

- Having substitute teachers available; will lose one for the winter.
- Teachers have been covering on their preps, working on getting payment into Portal
- Meeting all the needs of staff and students with fewer administrative support positions than in the past
- Extra workload for school staff due to cuts is creating burnout and animosity.

Employee updates:

- Girls Bball coach has completed training/licensure
- SPED Staff are stretched thin
- Will need another substitute teacher

Goals within Department:

- Cognia PSR Report
- Audit delayed due to govt. Shutdown
- Create more cultural field trips for students that fall within the budget
- Replace a substitute teacher who will be gone a majority of the winter.
- Improve staff culture and working environment within the school
- The front digital display needs to be fixed. Maintenance has been informed.

Fond du Lac Ojibwe School
Grants & Accountability Manager-Blake Ludemann
School Board Report
November 6, 2025

Travel/Trainings:

- Various webinars, Microsoft Teams calls with BIE staff, monthly training sessions held by BIE
- Minnesota Department of Education Business Managers Training
- Bureau of Indian Education Safety Inspection took place October 22nd, no major violations found. Ours was one of two the BIE was able to schedule during the shutdown as we are one of the few Tribally Controlled Schools within driving distances to their central office in Bloomington.

School Programs Accomplishments:

- FDLOS submitted a grant application to Farm to School SY25-26 for \$5,000.00. This is an annual grant that funds local food purchases from Minnesota farmers and ranchers. OJS Kitchen matches this grant 1:1 creating a total grant budget of up to \$10,000.00 to purchase local, culturally relevant foods.
- FDLOS was awarded the MN School-Based Health Center grant for \$187,500.00 over three years. This is a grant supporting a partnership with the Human Services Division to open a health clinic within the school. This is a three-year grant broken out into planning, implementation, and functional opening between now and the end of the grant period. As of the most recent cycle of grants, the state offers “Continuing School-Based Health Clinic” grant funding to support the continued use of a school-based health clinic.

Facilities/Operations and Maintenance/Environmental Management System

Goals of program: Protect the health and well-being of students, staff, and visitors to the school.

Provide a clean and safe environment for learning and working.

Accomplishments:

- Contract with Seon Design and Guaranteed Network Services installed CCTV systems in our newest school busses. Work was finalized in early October.
- School HVAC project has finalized. There is a short punch list that FDL Construction provided them to work through to achieve substantial completion. Project will be closed out by the end of November and my next school board report.
- Playground has also largely finalized. This project was not managed by FDL construction, though in keeping with standards set by them, we gave the contractor a final punch list of required items in need of resolution that they are working through now before final payment is made. This includes fixes to the fencing and breakaway doors as well as bringing a different fencing contractor in to install privacy slats in the playground fence. When done the fence and emergency use push doors will be signed to indicate that the OJS playground is private and for school use only.
- Contract with flooring contractor in development to repair various worn or broken tile and rubber stair tread throughout the school. Likely to be scheduled over Winter Break.

Employee Updates

- None

Challenges

- Cuts to federal agencies that support tribally run schools, such as the BIE, have had significant impacts. For example, staffing is at an all-time low at the BIE's facility management department, with whom I work closely on all facility projects. I have also been informed that unless it poses a safety risk, most facility projects will be going unfunded for the near future. This has been further cemented during our facility manager training sessions that I attended this July.
- **September** - Small update – The facility management division at the BIE has a total of 15 employees overseeing 183 tribally run schools nationwide. These are the folks required to review my work, visit our school, assist in procuring grant funding, etc. DOGE is actively reviewing their work, and mine in many cases, delaying or denying vital work orders that need to be done at Indian schools on reservations across the country. This has posed a frustrating and time-consuming challenge, taking away from the time I can spend on other duties here at the school.
- **October** - We are nearing the record for government shutdown length. While many of the Federal employees we work with as a Tribally Controlled School are continuing to work as essential employees, they will not be paid come the end of the month. While we are forward funded and will not see any breaks in funding come November, the impacts of the shutdown are weighing on us regardless.

Goals:

- Continued development and management of school program grants.
- Continued development and management of facility improvement projects.
- Continue improvement with the day-to-day operations, management, and safety of the Ojibwe School.

Fond du Lac Ojibwe School
Interim Special Education Coordinator-Michelle Hamski
School Board Report
November 6, 2025

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Travel/Trainings:

- BIE Child Count Webinar
- BIE Transfer IEP Webinar
- BIE TCS Monthly School Leader Call

Accomplishments:

- Completed file reviews for Special Education Child Count
- Completed Local School Performance Plan
- Ongoing Special Education Team Meetings and overall team collaboration are going well

Student Updates:

- Total Students Receiving Service: 38
 - DD: 3
 - SLD: 21
 - EBD: 8
 - S/L: 6
 - ISEP: 38/38

Employee Updates:

- None

Challenges:

- Budget Clarifications
- Unclear information on if a Special Education Teacher position and/or paraprofessional position will be posted
- Reduced special education staff numbers
- Increased caseload of high school special education students
- Number of students needing re-evaluations this year, scheduling challenges as students have been out absent
- Government shut down has impacted our OT being able to complete all necessary training to fully start
- Communication among administration team

Goals:

- Continue to improve on collaboration and communication between special education teachers, paraprofessionals, and classroom teachers to ensure that all the special education needs of each individual student are being met
- Hire qualified special education teacher
- Hire qualified paraprofessionals to continue to assist case managers and classroom teachers
- Being consistent and maintaining high standards within the Special Education Team

**Fond du Lac Ojibwe School
Kitchen Supervisor-Mace Fonoti
School Board Report
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Accomplishments:

- The OJS kitchen on call position is posted.
- The OJS Foodservice was contracted to prepare the feast for the annual Pokey Paro, OJS School Powwow, featuring venison and wild rice from tribal producers and local businesses. It was well attended.
- FDLCC and 13 Moons sponsored a hominy making demonstration for the OJS students. Erika Resendiz Alonzo introduced traditionally prepared hominy, which was donated to the OJS Foodservice and will be used on the school menu.
- Collaborating with community partners at Min No Aya Win's Statewide Health improvement program, the OJS Foodservice was able to obtain over \$500.00 for a snack bag for the elementary and high school students field trips. Elementary students visited Ru Ridge as a mental health field trip, and high school students visited factories.
- Coordinating with the Food Sovereignty Initiative Team and FDL's Program Accounting to spend down 2025 Blue Cross Blue Shield Funds.
- The Food Sovereignty Initiative Team has allocated funds for OJS community events for 2026.
- On October 12th, the FDL Natural Resources Division and OJS High School Fond du Lac Band Members set nets on Lake Superior and successfully netted over 300 pounds of filets. Some of that harvest was allocated to the Ojibwe School to be used on the menu and community events.
- Submitted the 2025 Farm to School and Early Care Full Tray Grant for 2026 Funds for Minnesota produced foods.
- Annual IHS/ State Kitchen and Cafeteria inspections were completed and are found to be in complete compliance with operating standards as well as safety

Challenges:

- Short staffed
- The original menu plan was created with a full staff in mind; the menu may need to be temporarily revised to suit the capacity for a smaller, limited team.
- Kitchen Supervisor is working more hours in the kitchen and less hours in the office leaving a slower response rate to emails and unable to attend other meetings.
- Preparing for Audits in the spring of 2026.

Goals Within the Department:

- To continue to maintain a smooth-running and effective School Nutrition Program through the new school year
- To continue to provide all meals within the MDE & USDA Guidelines and OJS Wellness Policy
- Continue to keep the cafeteria safe for students and staff to congregate within the E.O.C. Guidelines
- To continue resource and incorporate more Indigenous and local foods into the OJS menu. To include and introduce meats locally raised and indigenous to area like venison, moose, rabbit, fish, and buffalo.
- To continue to network with all staff and available resources within and outside of the community to provide the best meal experience at the Ojibwe School
- To add signage through the use of technology to the cafeteria for students and staff to consistently be informed about, support programs, available resources, kitchen partnerships, menus, etc.
- Obtain more funding for kitchen staff trainings, equipment, and local foods

Fond du Lac Ojibwe School
Wellness Coordinator-Hailey Dion
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Travel/Trainings:

- Restorative Practice – Reset Team.

Accomplishments:

- Collaborating with our School Linked Mental Health (SLMH) therapists to get their caseloads & schedules complete.
- Teaching our Social Emotional Learning (SEL) schedule for grades K-3.
- Robin Bellanger from Behavioral Health has started to come to our Opening Ceremonies.
 - He will be starting a drum group during our after-school program.
- Met with Tawny Savage regarding MMIR and getting connected to staff at the clinic.
- Celebrating staff & student birthdays as an extra wellness activity.
- Planned a FACE-6th grade Ru Ridge Field Trip.
- Worked the Powwow.
- Started fundraising for Prom.
 - Sweatshirts
 - Bake Sale
 - 50/50 Raffle
 - Concessions

Challenges:

- Struggling with hearing back from P&I and someone to teach smoking cessation classes to some of our students.

Goals within your departments for 2025-2026:

- More engagement with our Backpack Program.
- Short wait times for our SLMH waitlist.
- Update the Wellness Policy.

**Fond du Lac Ojibwe School
Cultural Coordinator-Dawn LaPrairie
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Travel/Trainings:

- None

Accomplishments:

- The Pokey Paro Powwow was successful, and we had 7 drums and a total of 69 registered dancers. We served about 150 meals. This event was well attended and Miigwech to RBC members who came over.
- Ojibwe Language teachers are working on introductions, covered manoominke and grammar with HS students.
- Teachers participate in Ojibwe classes weekly after dismissal.

Challenges:

- We need to find a drum person to come in for closings. We are working with someone to come in weekly.
- No new hires currently.

**Fond du Lac Ojibwe School
FACE Coordinator-Barb Francis
School Board Report
November 6, 2025**

Travel/Trainings:

- No travel/training this month

Accomplishments:

- GED student in Adult Ed passed his history portion of the test. We are setting him up for science next. Another Student schedule for Language Arts test this week.
- Adult Ed has met the 15 student expectations.
- Preschool room has 8 students.
- Tasheana has 25 families and Marella has 7.
- Conducted 4 interviews for Ealy Childhood Preschool teacher. Found our candidate that we want to hire. Just waiting for confirmation.
- Applied for FACE gas card for Tasheana Rule-Garcia.
- FACE booth was set up at Powwow for recruitment.

Challenges:

- More children in the preschool room need transportation. Working with the bus barn.
- Each Parent Educator needs a minimum of 20 families by end of December to get our full funding for rest of the year.

Employment Updates:

- Waiting on confirmation on preschool position.

Goals within Department:

- Continue to recruit new families and get the word out.

**Fond du Lac Ojibwe School
Transportation-Kathy Nelson
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Travel/Trainings:

- We conducted bus evacuation drills on October 29; this ensures the safety and well-being of the students by teaching the students how to exit the vehicle quickly and efficiently in case of an emergency. It also improves the skills of our drivers to provide safe evacuations when an emergency occurs.

Accomplishments:

- We are nearing the end of the 1st quarter of transportation without any major breakdowns or delays.

Challenges:

- Hiring is still a challenge as we are still looking for drivers and / or expedition drivers to be able to relieve our mechanic helper from driving and to cover our part time driver who will be leaving for his annual 6-week break in February.

Employee updates:

- We are currently seeking bus drivers and transportation drivers to join our team.

Goals within Department:

- Utilize correct and safe procedures when crossing railroad tracks.