

Fond du Lac Ojibwe School Board
Regular Meeting
Thursday December 4, 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 November 6, 2025

6. Review Ledger
7. New Business: RA IPA I
 - i. Strategic Plan-Mirja Hansen
8. Old Business: RA IPA I
 - i. Superintendent Updates
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
December 4, 2025**

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

Travel/Trainings:

- TNEC Professional Development
- Native Boys and Girls Club informational
- 21st Century grant meeting (increase to after school pay)
- IEFA Leadership Meeting

Accomplishments:

- Restorative Practices Community Meeting
- SPED budget meeting with Bridget
- Hired FACE Early Childhood teacher
- Fence around
- Two staff attended School Based Health training
- Vending Machine delivered but needs repair
- Boys' and girls' basketball has started
- Keith Secola presentation for all students
- T-shirt video approved by tribal council for IEFA resource

Challenges:

- Budget changes

Employee updates:

- Allydia Diver is the new FACE Early Childhood teacher
- Tyler Korby the new Physical Education teacher

Goals within Department:

- Special Education teachers needed
- Licensed staff in area of licensure
- Complete 5-year strategic plan
- Cognia Accreditation
- To Support and follow the Seven Teachings (all staff and students)

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

- No current trainings

Student Activities:

- Past Activities:
 - Girls' Basketball games
 - 2nd Quarter After School Program
- Upcoming Activities:
 - Boys' Basketball games
 - Biboon Celebration
 - Mid-quarter Grades (Dec. 12th)

Accomplishments:

- Hiring another on-call substitute.
- The School Band had several performances
 - Students in the band earned an extra field trip
 - Loads of positive feedback from the community
 - Several invites to play at various venues
- Cognia Performance Review underway and making progress
- Student numbers are on the climb

Challenges:

- Athletic Department:
 - Schedules keep changing due to various issues
 - Finding people to work the scoreboard/table
 - Wi-Fi for the scoreboard malfunctions often
 - Some jerseys are not legal and cannot be worn by players
- Principal Challenges:
 - Time needed to complete observations
 - Have had to turn students away from applying due to lack of enough SPED instructors
 - Some staff are overloaded with extra duties.

Employee updates:

- All coaches are certified and completed required trainings
- SPED Staff continue to be stretched thin.
- Interviews conducted to add to our on-call substitute pool
- Two on-call substitutes for the kitchen have been approved.

Goals within Department:

- Cognia PSR Report completion.
- Audit delayed due to govt. Shutdown
- Continue improving staff culture and working environment within the school.
- Address on-call substitute issues: Often unavailable for last-minute call-ins.
- Complete required observations/reviews of employees.
- Ensure compliance with MSHSL rules and procedures for athletic programs

**Fond du Lac Ojibwe School
Grants & Accountability Manager-Blake Ludemann
School Board Report
December 4, 2025**

Travel/Trainings:

- Various webinars, Microsoft Teams calls with BIE staff, monthly training sessions held by BIE
- Attended Minnesota School Based Health Clinic Summit in St. Paul with school nurse Tara Wolter.
- Attended School-based Emergency Management training in Willmar, Minnesota

School Programs Accomplishments:

- Grants manager and school nurse attended the SBHC Summit to meet with the granting agency and supporting non-profit. The event was the first of its kind and provided a great opportunity for both of us to see what a proper and functional school-based clinic can look like. They had several sessions throughout the day speaking on topics like parental consent, implementation processes, and what a variety of existing school-based clinics look like today.
- Working in coordination with Guidance Counselor, Superintendent, and Principal on our accreditation process in Cognia.

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:

- Playground project finalized. We have a new 6-foot chain link fence with privacy slats and emergency push doors providing a secluded and safe environment for our students. Signage will need to be installed. We are looking to improve our CCTV system for the area as the existing cameras have poor viewing angles of the playground.
- We received funding to repair the school's roof earlier this year and will be working towards a statement of work we can submit this Spring in coordination with FDL construction.
- Floor repairs to be scheduled, contract finalized.

Employee Updates:

- None

Challenges:

- Not enough time!

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
December 4, 2025

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Travel/Trainings:

- BIE Unmet Needs Webinar

Accomplishments:

- Met with Arlene Davis at BIE, to review Part B funding and Unmet Needs Application
- Completed BIE Unmet Needs Application
- Completed final draft of Missed Services Policy
- Occupational Therapist has been able to start
- Ongoing Special Education Team Meetings and overall team collaboration are going well
- Student Re-evaluations are getting completed

Student Updates:

- Total Students Receiving Service: 39
 - DD: 3
 - SLD: 21
 - EBD: 8
 - S/L: 7
 - ISEP: 39/39

Employee Updates:

- Instructional Assistant resigned from position

Challenges:

- Special education staff numbers being even further reduced due to resignation
- Still more transfer students who have interest in attending
- Budget clarifications
- Need to fill paraprofessional/instructional assistant position
- Unclear information on if a Special Education Teacher position and/or paraprofessional position will be posted
- Increased caseload of high school special education students
- Potential increase in elementary caseload with current student referrals

- Number of students needing re-evaluations this year, scheduling challenges as students have been out absent
- Communication among administration team/admissions

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
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Accomplishments:

- The OJS kitchen on call position has been filled and accepted. Start date is 12/1.
- The OJS Foodservice November menu was adjusted to suit the needs of 2 to 3 staff but was still able to highlight 8 days of local traditional indigenous meals out of 16 days of service in November.
- Collaborating with community partners at Min No Aya Win's Statewide Health Improvement Program, Minnesota Blue Cross Blue Shield, FDLTCC 13 Moons, FDL Food Sovereignty Initiative Team, to help support the 2025 Biboon Celebration at OJS in December.
- 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.
- Five deer were harvested on the Fond du Lac Reservation by the FDL Natural Resources Division. That yield was approximately 300 lbs. Of useable meat.

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 and 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 and obtain more funding for kitchen staff trainings, equipment, and local foods.
- 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.

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

- Restorative Practice – Monthly CORE Team Meeting

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.
 - Incorporating interactive activities into the lessons.
- Robin Bellanger from Behavioral Health has started to come to our Opening & Closing Ceremonies. He has been sharing his knowledge of the culture with our staff and students during this time.
- Helped plan a behavior/attendance reward trip for our K-6 students.
- Held a successful sweatshirt fundraiser for the Prom Committee. We sold 60 sweatshirts in total.
 - Our second fundraiser is underway. We have 75 blankets ordered.
 - The committee will be working Basketball games (running concessions, 50/50 raffles).
- Planning the Prom Committee's involvement for our Biboon celebration.
 - Bake sale
 - Blanket sale
- Planning various staff wellness activities such as food, massages, and Kindness Turkeys.
- Explaining my involvement with many different aspects of FDLOS to my intern Shantell Berglund.
 - Backpack Program, Restorative Practices, Reset Team, Prom Committee, Wellness Coordinator, SEL Teacher, MKV (homeless population), Etc.
- Expanding our participation in the Backpack Program.
 - There are currently 40 students signed up to receive weekly backpacks full of food.

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:

- 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:

- I have been compiling Ojibwe materials for classroom language teachers to use.
- Working on Ojibwe materials to use around the school.
- The stairs on the East are labeled in Ojibwemowin, Miigwech to Jodie and Brittany.
- We are preparing for our Biboon celebration on December 18.
- Teachers participate in Ojibwe language on Wednesday 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
December 4, 2025**

Travel/Trainings:

- No travel this month

Accomplishments:

- Adult Ed student passed his history portion of the GED test. 3 left to take.
- Adult Ed student passed her RLA portion of the GED test. 1 left to take.
- Adult Ed has 17 students.
- 22 families signed up for Parent Engagement.
- 7 families signed up at this time.

Challenges:

- Each Parent Educator must carry at least 20 families by December, or we will lose some of our funding. Working on recruiting.
- Preschool room is adapting well to being at FDLOS.

Employment Updates:

- All of our positions are filled.
- Allydia Diver was hired to be our new preschool teacher.

Goals within Department:

- Parent Educators must continue to recruit a minimum of 20 families as soon as possible or this will affect our second portion of our funding that we be granted in late January or early February.
- Continue to recruit new families and get the word out.

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

- None

Accomplishments:

- The staff at transportation have been in full attendance so far with no major pumps in our performance of transporting all students to and from school.

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, in addition we will have one driver out over and beyond Christmas break for medical reasons and another out in January for personal reasons.

Employee Updates:

- We are currently seeking bus drivers and transportation drivers to join our team to help alleviate some of the pressure that will arise with the upcoming absence of our current drivers.

Goals within Department:

- Be positive the vehicle is mechanically safe before going onto a route.
- To have all our buses ready for our yearly bus inspection coming up on December 29, 2025.