



MEETING MINUTES OF
THE GOVERNING BOARD OF
WEST40 INTERMEDIATE SERVICE CENTER #2

The West40 ISC #2 Governing Board Meeting was held on Friday, March 14, 2025 at 8:00 a.m., at 415 Lexington Street, Maywood, IL 60153. Board President Dr. Kelsall called the meeting into order at 8:03 a.m.

I. Present: Dr. Jennifer Kelsall, Dr. Ed Condon, Dr. Kirstin Kopta, Mr. Stuart Brown, Dr. Aldo Calderin, Ms. Kylie Lindquist, Ms. Elieen Piper-Simpson and Ms. Dana Wesolowski

Not Present: Dr. Leah Gauthier, Ms. Mary Rita Moore and Ms. Kathleen Tomei

President Kelsall declared a quorum for the West 40 ISC #2 Governing Board meeting at 8:04 a.m.

Also present: Ms. Suzy Dees, Ms. Lezlie Fuhr, Mr. Joe Gage, Dr. Mark Klaisner, Ms. Renee Makris, Dr. Jayme Tighe, Ms. Lefvia T. Marrero and Ms. Christi Tyler

II. Approval of March 14, 2025 Meeting Minutes: It was moved by Dr. Ed Condon and seconded by Dr. Kristin Kopta that the West40 ISC#2 Governing Board approves the minutes as presented. On call of the roll, the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Dr. Jennifer Kelsall, Dr. Ed Condon, Dr. Kirstin Kopta, Mr. Stuart Brown, Dr. Aldo Calderin, Ms. Kylie Lindquist, Ms. Elieen Piper-Simpson and Ms. Dana Wesolowski

Nays: None The motion carried without dissent.

III. Presentations:

St. Joe's Report - Ms. Lezlie Fuhr

Ms. Fuhr presented the St. Joe's initiative, beginning with the mission statement: "West40 is dedicated to meeting students where they are, providing what they need, and taking them

through every step of their journey.” She outlined the vision of transforming the former St. Joseph High School campus into a residential foster care facility specifically for adolescent males aged 11 to 18. This transformation includes major capital improvements such as the demolition of existing buildings, installation of a new cooling tower, addition of an elevator, and construction of a new entry canopy and vestibule. A total of \$10.5 million has been secured in capital grants through the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to support these efforts.

The program’s primary goal is to provide a healing and supportive environment through a residential foster care model. Services will be delivered using a trauma-responsive and holistic approach that integrates personalized education, clinical and therapeutic care, and life, career, and college readiness programming. Key methodologies guiding the program include the CARE model from Cornell University, the Circle of Courage framework which emphasizes belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity, the Six Core Strategies focused on dignity and trauma prevention, and an overarching Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) philosophy that centers on safety, trust, empowerment, and cultural responsiveness.

Youth at St. Joe’s will benefit from comprehensive and structured care, while being encouraged to engage in typical adolescent experiences in a safe environment. The program is grounded in the belief that “every child is just one caring adult away from success.” To ensure quality care, West40 is investing in ongoing staff training that includes trauma-responsive practices, positive peer culture development, and best practices in childcare. Ms. Fuhr concluded the report with a strong affirmation of West40’s commitment to youth, emphasizing that “Every kid deserves a chance for success,” achieved “One Life at a Time.”

Financial Report: Ms. Christi Tyler

Ms. Tyler reported that the Business Office current focus is on completing the transition from the Lyon’s Township Treasurer’s Office (LTTO) for both West40 and the Philip Rock Center. A new bank account has been established to ensure the Illinois School Board of Education (ISBE) and the Illinois Comptroller’s Office transfer and deposit future funds appropriately. The separation agreement from LTTO is still pending.

Ms. Tyler also reported that West40 is on track to make a payment in April to pay the \$9 million that funded the program, a year earlier than anticipated.

Assistant Executive Director Report: Dr. Jayme Tighe
Alternative Learning Opportunities Programs (ALOP)

Dr. Tighe highlighted that the March 1st enrollment had increased from 2500 in FY 2024, to 3289 in FY 2025. With the waiver to service K-3 students, West40 was able to serve 212 as of

March 1, 2025; special thanks to the leadership of Mr. Joe Gage and Ms. Renee Makris, as well as the efforts of the Area Directors, Site Coordinators and Student Advocates.

School Citizen Of The Year (SCOTY)

The SCOTY award night is scheduled for March 19th at East Leyden High School, 148 students have been nominated; a new record for West40.

Illinois Coalition for Education At-Risk Youth (ICEARY)

Over 140 West40 staff members attended the ICEARY conference this year. The keynote speakers' focus was on a series of "service and return" and best practices for classroom teachers. Day two of the conference, West40 met for dinner where a "family-style" setting allowed for the staff to fellowship as one big family.

West40 Cabinet

Ms. Maria-Elena Argela has been promoted to Director of Community and is now part of Cabinet.

Executive Director Report: Dr. Mark Klaisner

Dr. Klaisner shared updates under the theme "*Calm in the Chaos.*"

Association of Educational Service Agencies (AESA)

West40 has been invited by AESA to host two academies this spring—one focused on Leadership and another on Artificial Intelligence. Dr. Klaisner also announced plans to travel to Asia from March 31 to April 10 as part of the AESA U.S. delegation.

Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools (IARSS)

Dr. Klaisner shared that he is slated to serve as President of IARSS at the May 2025 General Assembly.

Professional Learning

The Professional Learning Team, composed of 20 members, continues to support 90% of the districts in the region and is also available to assist districts outside of West40 when needed.

Alternative Learning Opportunities Programs (ALOP)

In terms of student services, 212 students are currently being served in K–3 programs, and a visit from South Cook Intermediate Service Center occurred to observe these efforts. West40 is also mentoring 16 other Regional Offices of Education (ROEs) through the ALOP initiative, with a symposium scheduled for June 2025.

Comprehensive Educational Services (CES)

Compliance efforts continue through CES, with the team supporting districts in their compliance cycles and expanding the STAT team's capacity and scope. CES is also collaborating with outside entities such as the Illinois Veterans Affairs (IVA), construction projects, municipalities, and non-public schools, particularly around school recognition.

Statewide Systems Of Support (SSOS)

Dr. Tighe's leadership in CPS-related work has grown to include state-level initiatives.

St. Joe's

At St. Joe, a partnership with the Greater Chicago Food Depository (GCFD) for the food pantry was described as "amazing". Families look forward to the semi-private shopping experience West40 has to offer.

Strategic Plan

Strategic planning efforts remain active under the leadership of Dr. Tighe, Dr. Popp, Ms. Suzy Dees and Ms. Renee Makris, and succession planning is ongoing in every department.

IV. Public Comment:

No one chose to speak.

V. Adjourned: Member Ms. Elieen Piper-Simpson moved, seconded by Dr. Kristin Kopta. Be it resolved, the West40 ISC# 2 Governing Board hereby adjourned at 9:20 a.m.

The next West40 Governing Board Meeting will be held on Friday, May 16, 2025, at 8:00 a.m., at 415 Lexington Street, Maywood, IL 60153.