



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

The West40 ISC #2 Governing Board Meeting was held on Friday, May 16, 2025 at 8:00 a.m., at 415 Lexington Street, Maywood, IL 60153. Board President Dr. Kelsall called the meeting into order at 8:01 a.m.

I. Present: Dr. Jennifer Kelsall, Dr. Ed Condon, Dr. Kirstin Kopta, Mr. Stuart Brown, Dr. Aldo Calderin, Dr. Leah Gauthier, Ms. Kathleen Tomei, and Ms. Dana Wesolowski

Not Present: Ms. Kylie Lindquist, Ms. Mary Rita Moore, and Ms. Elieen Piper-Simpson

President Kelsall declared a quorum for the West40 ISC #2 Governing Board meeting at 8:02 a.m.

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

II. Approval of March 14, 2025 Meeting Minutes: It was moved by Dr. Ed Condon and seconded by Mr. Stuart Brown 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, Dr. Leah Gauthier, Ms. Kathleen Tomei, and Ms. Dana Wesolowski

Nays: None The motion carried without dissent.

III. Presentations:

Alternative Learning Opportunities Programs (ALOP) - Sr. Directors Mr. Joe Gage and Ms. Renee Makris

Mr. Gage and Ms. Makris reported on the current initiatives of the ALOPs as follows:

West40 has outlined several strategic goals to guide the ongoing development and success of its student programs. One major priority is the replication of existing effective programs such as Alternative Learning Opportunity Programs (ALOPs), Safe Schools, and services for pregnant and parenting teens. This includes formally documenting the policies and procedures that have made these programs successful. In addition, West40 is expanding its FY24 long-term assessment of leadership roles across all departments to ensure that the right structures and support are in place. The organization is also exploring legal avenues to provide services for K–3 students through push-in ALOP models, aiming to extend academic and behavioral support to younger learners. To strengthen instructional consistency, West40 is defining learning expectations for each department and ensuring that all advocates receive baseline training in trauma response, case documentation, and social-emotional learning (SEL). Furthermore, a standardized onboarding process is being developed to ensure all new student program staff are well-prepared for their roles.

As of May 2025, West40 employs 174 student program staff and partners with 50 schools to deliver in-person ALOP services. The programs are currently serving 5,135 students—a 51% increase from the previous academic year. Among these, 242 K–3 students are being served across 12 schools by 12 dedicated student advocates. The number of graduates has also grown, with 87 students having completed their programs as of May 12, 2025.

Several new developments are being introduced across ALOP-related programs. All programs are benefiting from enhanced data systems and the addition of a new behavioral health specialist. Within ALOP specifically, the K–3 initiative is being implemented along with the rollout of the InSights student assessment tool. The Truancy program has adopted the WELCOME consulting tool and introduced a proactive 90-day intervention approach. Remote School is expanding with the addition of an assistant principal, while the Safe School program has appointed a co-principal and is placing a stronger emphasis on employability skills.

The current student enrollment across all West40 programs stands at 3,693. Of this total, ALOP serves 3,026 students (82%), the Truancy program supports 423 students (11%), Seniors Plus ALOP includes 135 students (4%), Safe School and in-person HNALOP serve 47 students (1%), and Remote HNALOP supports 62 students (2%).

Looking ahead, West40 will host the ALOP Summit on June 27, 2025, bringing together staff, partners, and stakeholders to reflect, share, and plan for the continued success of student programs.

Financial Report: Ms. Christi Tyler

Ms. Tyler presented the updated financials through April 30, 2025. A major milestone was noted: West40 is now officially debt-free, having completed the final payments on its remaining two debt certificates. This achievement allows the organization to move forward with financial planning free of any prior liabilities to the fund balance.

Budget planning for Fiscal Year 2026 is well underway. Departments have submitted their proposed budgets and staffing plans have been finalized. Projections have been developed based on anticipated revenue changes, and two funding models have been considered: flat and prorated Evidence-Based Funding (EBF). Final figures for EBF are expected to be released in August 2025. Until then, West40 is committed to maintaining existing services and will cautiously approach any program expansions.

Another significant update was the completion of West40's separation from the Lyon's Township Treasurer's Office. Most of the organization's funds have now been transferred into accounts controlled directly by West40, marking greater financial independence and operational flexibility.

The financial summary for FY25, covering the period from July 2024 through April 2025, includes total revenues of \$34,702,788, operating expenditures of \$23,478,740, and capital expenditures amounting to \$11,929,997. The ending fund balance for April 2025 stood at \$3,659,836. It was noted that the fund balance peaked in September 2024 at over \$8 million, with a significant capital expense in October 2024 accounting for roughly \$5 million.

In closing, Ms. Tyler expressed appreciation to the board for their continued support and acknowledged the strong financial position West40 is currently in, while encouraging a prudent approach to future growth.

Assistant Executive Director Report: Dr. Jayme Tighe

Chicago Public Schools Project Update

Dr. Tighe shared the unfortunate news that the CPS project supporting 156 schools with 19 school improvement specialists had to end due to a federal freeze on ESSER funds. ISBE notified West 40 on April 23, and the team had to be let go. West40 is still owed approximately \$180,000 in unpaid invoices since February. A recent court ruling may enable the release of some funds, and they are awaiting further guidance from ISBE. Despite this setback, West40 is now an approved vendor in CPS and hopes to resume support via fee-for-service arrangements using 1003a funds.

Statewide Learning Partner Legislation

Dr. Tighe provided encouraging news that legislation is close to passing which would designate all ROEs and ISCs as perpetual Illinois-approved learning partners. This change would eliminate procurement restrictions that previously barred many ROEs from participating due to subcontracting rules. If enacted, this legislation will enable more flexibility and continued support for school improvement work statewide.

West40 Leadership Development: LEAD Program

As part of West40's strategic plan and in response to staff feedback, the organization is launching the LEAD Program (Learn. Empower. Aspire. Develop). The program has two tracks:

one for ALOP advocates to shadow site coordinators, and another open to all staff focused on leadership development in current roles. Monthly sessions will begin in August and aim to build leadership capacity across the organization.

Expansion of West40 Programs Statewide

Dr. Tighe highlighted West40's ongoing efforts to expand successful programs, such as the Regional Safe Schools Program (RSSP) and ALOP, to other ROEs. The state views West40's models as exemplary, often using them as a benchmark. Interest is growing from other regions to replicate or partner with West40's RSSP and remote school models, demonstrating the broader impact of their innovative approaches.

Cabinet Retreat and Strategic Planning

West40's cabinet retreat will take place in mid-June, focusing on finalizing Year 5 of the current strategic plan and beginning planning for Years 6–10. The retreat will include internal and external focus groups, surveys, and team-building activities to ensure a cohesive direction as the organization continues to grow. Equity work will also remain a priority during the retreat.

Lexington Summer Construction Projects

Construction at Lexington will begin June 23 and is scheduled to finish by August 8. The project includes full renovation of the parking lot, expansion of the west entrance, updates to the RSSP entrance to ensure ADA compliance, and replacement of first-floor doors with ADA-compliant hardware. This work supports accessibility and infrastructure improvements across the site.

Executive Director Report: Dr. Mark Klaisner

Dr. Klaisner opened with a note of recognition that the recently approved K-3 legislation was authored by Dr. Popp. He outlined four significant financial milestones for the summer: the state budget deadline (May 30), the fiscal year close, first Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) payment (August 10), and the close of the federal fiscal year (September 30). Planned hiring of 12–15 staff for truancy, outreach, and K3 expansion in Westchester is currently on hold pending these financial checkpoints. Though the vision remains, the approach is conservative, particularly following the April 23 layoffs of 18 staff.

The budget model (BMV), guided by Ms. Tyler, projects a \$10 million balance into FY27 if no new EBF funds are received. Should new funding materialize, program expansion will resume, driven by the identified needs of students.

Dr. Klaisner was elected President of IARSS for a two-year term, which will include collaboration with AESA at the national level. He also shared five strategic revenue-generating initiatives under consideration by BMV, inspired by the strategic plan, recent travel to Asia, and ongoing innovation at West40. These include:

1. **Global Education Exchange** – A three-part initiative involving educator exchanges, student collaboration via Zoom, and international substitute/teaching residencies. Singapore and Korea have expressed interest, with potential funding from their education ministries. A travel-agent style model could generate substantial revenue.
2. **AI Integration in Education** – A partnership with an ESA in Texas is developing an AI tool that consolidates district data systems and integrates AI-driven instruction and tutoring. West40 would provide Midwest support and profit share, with beta testing expected in Illinois by September.
3. **Microbusiness Initiatives** – Modeled after successful programs in Texas and Grand Canyon University, West40 is exploring ventures such as media services (e.g., design work and paid student internships).
4. **Custom-Built Educational App** – Developed in-house, this application arose from dissatisfaction with third-party vendors. It's already in use and in demand by 17 other ROEs. It may be ready for market by December.
5. **Microbusiness Initiatives** – Modeled after successful programs in Texas and Grand Canyon University, West40 is exploring ventures such as t-shirt printing (e.g., design work and paid student internships).

Dr. Klaisner emphasized that all five initiatives require minimal upfront investment and serve as steps toward financial sustainability and strategic diversification for West40.

Finally, Dr. Klaisner announced that a board membership confirmation email would be sent to all members to determine intent to continue. He noted the June meeting as the final session of the current year, with the August meeting marking the annual meeting. Dr. Klaisner closed by expressing gratitude for support on his succession planning goals and reiterated the need to proceed cautiously but optimistically as the summer unfolds.

IV. Public Comment:

No one chose to speak.

V. Adjourned: Member Mr. Stuart Brown moved, seconded by Dr. Kristin Kopta. Be it resolved, the West40 ISC# 2 Governing Board hereby adjourned at 9:06 a.m.

The next West40 Governing Board Meeting will be held on Friday, June 13, 2025, at 8:00 a.m., at 415 Lexington Street, Maywood, IL 60153.

The Annual West40 Governing Board meeting will be held August 15, 2025 at 8:00 a.m., at 415 Lexington Street, Maywood, IL 60153.