

# Documenters

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## Board Business Meeting

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Agency: [Cleveland Metropolitan School District](#)

Date: Sept. 24, 2024

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## Summary

- A CMSD official spoke about the district's historic 3-star rating from the state and discussed how to keep the momentum at a steady pace.
- Applications for the Get More Opportunities Fund 2.0 are open through Nov. 8.
- Community members and CMSD students and teachers spoke in public comment.

## Follow-Up Questions

- What are the terms of the board members? Can they be removed, and, if so, how? Who appoints them?
- How can the district transparently include answers to the previous meeting's community concerns?
- How can more information be included in CMSD reporting?

*[Editor's note: The mayor appoints board members. Learn more from this [Signal Cleveland explainer](#). Also, in the board's business meeting agendas, the district includes written responses from CMSD leadership to public commenters who spoke at the previous board meeting. Here are [letters to speakers at the Aug. 20 meeting](#) included in the [Sept. 24 agenda](#).]*

## Notes

**CEO REPORTING: Facilitated by CEO Warren Morgan's chief of staff, J.R. Tompkinson (Morgan was absent)**

Tompkinson first tossed it to Chief External Affairs Officer Lisa Farmer Cole:

**Highlighted historical moment:** For the first time in the district's history, CMSD has reached [a 3-star rating from Ohio](#), meaning it meets certain state standards. CMSD was also the only urban Ohio district to earn a 3-star rating. Three CMSD schools received a 5-star rating, which is the highest rating you can get on state standards.

Cole went on to share one example of CMSD parents being engaged: The Sept. 19 **Father's Walk, sponsored by the Cuyahoga County [Fatherhood Initiative](#)**. CMSD was the largest participating district in the county, Cole said. About 6,500 CMSD fathers, father figures, and caregivers participated.

On Sept. 21, CMSD held its first-ever "Step Up for Cleveland's Kids Rally," which Cole said had 792 registered families, scholars, community members and partners. Three CMSD students won a countywide contest for a creative design for a sheriff's car. The Cleveland Council of Administrators & Supervisors president was in attendance, as well as Cleveland Teachers Union President Shari Obrenski.

Cole then introduced Nick D'Amico, CMSD's executive director of school performance, to explain the state's report card in more detail.

Board Member Nigamanth Sridhar congratulated the progress and then posed a question to D'Amico: What is the most surprising thing that came out of this report card? "What struck your eyes?"

D'Amico's response: "How well we do with progress" with a focus on the increase in particular areas. The focus was on how much progress CMSD showed compared to the rest of the state.

Sridhar asked clarifying questions to D'Amico: What does the report card mean by progress?

D'Amico said CMSD is rated as exceeding student growth expectations. High school is different in that they are using historical testing data to make a prediction on student success. The high school is stated as "beating the odds" and exceeding expectations.

**CMSD Chief Financial Officer Kevin Stockdale gave updates on financials:** Stockdale reported that state auditors have been in office since July and will be there until December. Stockdale also pointed out some changes that are being implemented and said he is looking forward to working with the auditors to help improve the district's financial outlook.

**Stephen Christian, CMSD talent and human resources officer,** gave updates regarding

employee healthcare. Every three years CMSD reviews its healthcare plan.

**Updates/announcements:** Tompkinson returned to the mic to speak about the Get More Opportunities Fund. Last month, Morgan announced the Get More Opportunities Fund 2.0 and said \$4 million will be divided among all of the CMSD schools. The [application portals](#) are live as of this week and are open to parents, students, staff, community partners, etc. to submit a proposal.

**Public participation: Each person allotted 3 minutes**

A sophomore student attending Campus International High School spoke about the state of funding for the [Civics 2.0 program](#). She shared the impact that the program has had and hopes that CMSD will keep the program.

**Stacey Steggert** - Addressed what she called the inequitable [HMH English Language Arts curriculum](#), saying to the board, “Is it really the position of the school district that inequity is so benign?” Steggert said public records and other research have her questioning the district’s curriculum choice. Steggert presented some solutions, which included checking in with the Cleveland Plan and making sure what CMSD is doing is consistent with that plan and identify CMSD’s high performing schools and, in so far as the law allows, get out of their way. “A curriculum can be technically sound and still be harmful,” Steggert said. “And so I wonder why is the district so accepting of implicit bias and covert racism within the curriculum?”

**Polly Karr** - Mother of students at Campus International School, staff member and parental advocate. Karr shared concerns about district spending after carefully reviewing financial records from last year and up to five years prior. Karr said “we” spent the money because the board makes the decisions and it’s taxpayer money. Something that stood out to me was Karr saying CMSD spent \$225,000 on the Alma Advisory Group for recruiting CMSD’s leadership team and for paying Morgan and the leadership team approximately \$2 million.

**Laura Stewart** - The kindergarten teacher at Hannah Gibbons questioned why students aren’t screened before school.

*[Editor’s note: The board passed 11 resolutions authorizing CMSD to accept grants for Montessori programs, to make payments on behalf of the Davis Aerospace and Maritime Academy, and more. Find the details of each resolution -- including relevant links -- on the [agenda](#).*

**Additional resources/links**

[About the Fatherhood Initiative \(cuyahogacounty.gov\)](http://cuyahogacounty.gov)

[www.clevelandmetroschools.org/getmore](http://www.clevelandmetroschools.org/getmore)

More information on Civics 2.0: <https://www.clevelandmetroschools.org/domain/7632>

Steggert quoted a story in Forbes magazine. Here is the article:

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/nataliewexler/2024/02/22/literacy-experts-say-some-edreps-orts-ratings-are-misleading>

More information regarding the Alma Group: <https://almaadvisorygroup.com>

Laura Stewart – The kindergarten teacher at Hannah Gibbon mentioned SST procedural concerns: <https://www.clevelandmetroschools.org/domain/6230>

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