

**Fond du Lac Ojibwe School Board**

**Regular Meeting**

**Thursday January 8, 2026, 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 December 4, 2025

Executive Meeting Minutes December 4, 2025

6. Review Ledger
7. New Business:

i. Close-Up Trip	RA	IPA	I
ii. New Curriculum			X
8. Old Business:

i. None	RA	IPA	I
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9. Executive Session
10. 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	
ix. Kathy Nelson, Transportation	
11. Other
12. Adjourn

**Fond du Lac Ojibwe School  
Superintendent-Tara Dupuis  
School Board Report  
January 8, 2026**

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**OJIBWE SCHOOLS MOTTO**

“Anokii, Nanda-gikendan, Enigok gagwe, Gashkitoon”  
"Work, study, strive, succeed"

**Travel/Trainings:**

- TNEC Professional Development
- Cloquet JOM / AIPAC/ LIEC
- Cognia
- IEFA Leadership Meeting
- ISD 2142 Title VII /IPP review

**Accomplishments:**

- Restorative Practices Community Meeting
- Strategic Planning input from school board
- Elders' dinner was a success
- 3<sup>rd</sup> place Anishinaabe Quiz Bowl! Bois Fort
- Music performance by elementary school
- Biboon Celebration
- Kiosk (IEFA) will be here soon
- Interview instructional assistant
- Interview FACE Coordinator
- Meeting for Cognia Accreditation scheduled

**Budget Updates:**

- Awarded unmet needs funding for SPED

**Employee Updates:**

- Barbara Francis resigned as FACE Coordinator
- Hire 2 new transportation

**Goals within Department:**

- Special Education teachers needed
- Licensed staff in area of licensure
- Increase student enrollment
- To support and follow the Seven Teachings (all staff and students)

**Fond du Lac Ojibwe School**  
**Principal-Daniel Merfeld**  
**School Board Report**  
**January 8, 2026**

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**Travel/Trainings:**

- Restorative Practice Training at CAAEP attended by several staff.

**Student Activities:**

- Past Activities:
  - Held annual Biboon Celebration on 12/18/2025
  - Boys Basketball Holiday Tournaments at: Sebeka and Crosby/Ironton
  - Girls Basketball Holiday Tournament in Ely (Dec 30/31)
  - Juniors/Seniors attended a College Fair at FDLCC
- Upcoming Activities:
  - End of 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter coming up: Jan. 16<sup>th</sup>
  - Working on an ice fishing trip for students to Mille Lacs (Feb.?)

**Accomplishments:**

- Biboon Celebration held on school grounds.
- Both boys' and girls' basketball teams attended holiday tournaments/games
- Teachers are using the "Sub Pay" when covering due to lack of subs.
- Unmet needs grant approved. Well done Michelle H.!

**Challenges:**

- Need more adult coverage during elementary recess.
- Addressing bullying issues with students.
- Constant changes in sports schedules
- Hiring substitute teachers; last one did not pan out.
- More Paras/Instructional Assistants needed for students

**Employee updates:**

- Interviews conducted for substitute teacher (again)
- Interviews conducted for an Instructional Assistant
- Looking at hiring another SPED Instructor with the Unmet Needs Grant
- May have some staff shuffling duties due to accepting new positions
- Will need to hire a new staff should one of ours be hired for the open FACE position.

**Goals within Department:**

- Cognia PSR Report due mid-Jan.
- Ensure proper staffing with upcoming FACE position open
- Work with Natural Resources to create an ice fishing trip for students
- Check budgets: see if we can afford a Golf Team in the spring
- Complete (more) Teacher Observations/Reviews; be half done by end of Q2.
- Start creating a student cultural trip in lieu of the Washington DC trip. (Close Up)

**Fond du Lac Ojibwe School**  
**Grants & Accountability Manager-Blake Ludemann**  
**School Board Report**  
**January 8, 2026**

**Travel/Trainings:**

- Various webinars, Microsoft Teams calls with BIE staff, monthly training sessions held by BIE

**School Programs Accomplishments:**

- Work on our Cognia Accreditation has continued throughout December. We are in progress with several “term papers” that focus on the key characteristics of educational institutions. A key focus for these papers is to identify areas where we are stronger and weaker based on the data we collect throughout the years from pupils, staff, and families. Miigwech to Vicki for taking the lead on this process!
- Work continues on Native Language revitalization grant due January 12<sup>th</sup> and a BIE led Expanding Opportunities grant due Jan 31<sup>st</sup>.

**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:**

- Floor repairs will be conducted in early January to take care of deteriorating tile in several locations.
- Gym floor refinished over the holiday break
- Sidewalk roughed up for better traction in several locations to mitigate slip hazard.

**Employee Updates:**

- None

**Challenges:**

- None at this 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**  
**School Board Report**  
**Interim Special Education Coordinator-Michelle Hamski**  
**January 8, 2026**

**Travel/Trainings:**

- BIE Missed Services Webinar
- Special Education Teacher attended RP Training

**Accomplishments:**

- Received notification that we have been awarded Unmet Needs Funding
- Educational Assistant job was posted
- Ongoing Special Education Team Meetings and overall team collaboration are going well
- Student Re-evaluations are getting completed
- Special Education Case Managers are doing a great job meeting timelines for IEPs and evaluations

**Student Updates:**

- Total Students Receiving Service: 39
  - DD: 3
  - SLD: 21
  - EBD: 8
  - S/L: 7
    - ISEP: 39/39
- Referred students: 6

**Employee Updates:**

- Received Educational Assistant applicants-interviews will be scheduled

**Challenges:**

- Increase in elementary Special Education referrals
- Need to fill paraprofessional/instructional assistant position
- Unclear information on if a Special Education Teacher position and/or paraprofessional position will be posted
- Number of students needing re-evaluations this year, scheduling challenges as students have been absent
- Communication among administration team/admissions

**Goals:**

- Continue to improve 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  
January 8, 2026**

**Accomplishments:**

- Arne Selness has accepted and completed his first month for the on-call position for the FDLOS Kitchen.
- The FDLOS 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 in December.
- The collaboration and coordination with community partners was a success. The Biboon Celebration Feast Highlighted Moose Wild Rice Hot Dish and Walleye Chowder Soup, Fresh Mixed Berries, Wild Rice and Bacon, along with Frybread. Guests were excited to have moose that was provided by Natural Resources. Food that was left over from the feast was saved and served for lunch so students could have the opportunity to try wild rice moose hot dish.
- Attended an annual evaluation with the BCBS on behalf of the school. Discussing the effectiveness of the funds in the community. BCBS has supported all of the school events, has also supported Head Start Events, distributed hundreds of food boxes to the community with local and tribal producer's foods.
- The Food Sovereignty Initiative Team supports the FDLOS community events for 2026 by allocating funds to pay for local and traditional foods for those events.

**Challenges:**

- Meetings with Supervisors are needed to clarify all questions about the budget(s) for the FDLOS kitchen this year and next.
- Meeting with supervisors about summer lunch for 2026.
- Is there a charge for tribal programs that request services from the FDL LOS kitchen? FDL Vet's Powwow, Summer Lunch Program, etc.

**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 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**  
**School Board Report**  
**January 8, 2026**

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**Travel/Trainings:**

- None

**Accomplishments:**

- Working 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.
- The Prom Committee hosted a fundraiser during the Biboon celebration.
  - Bake sale
  - Blanket sale
- Planning various staff wellness activities.
  - Food
  - Massages
  - Grinch Movie in the Commons with Christmas gifts, popcorn, and hot cocoa.
- Working with Shantell Berglund, CSS Social Worker Intern.
- Expanding our participation in the Backpack Program.
  - There are currently 40 students signed up to receive weekly backpacks full of food.
- P&I will start working with 6-12<sup>th</sup> graders when we get back from break.

**Challenges:**

**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**  
**School Board Report**  
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**Travel/Trainings:**

- None

**Accomplishments:**

- The Ojibwe Quiz Bowl Students participated in two competitions, one in Mille Lacs and then in Bois Forte. We placed 3rd in Bois Fort. Awesome work and I congratulate all the students and coaches.
- Chi-Miigwech to Josh our Music Teacher for the concert. The songs and speaking in Ojibwe were right on! Giiminotaagoz FDLOS!
- We had the Biboon Celebration and the weather was bad, however we had many parents and community members show up at noon. We opened with Kwewizenz doing his blessing. A quote from him “We want to lead with the language.” Miigwech.

**Challenges:**

- We need to find a drum person to come in for closings. We are working with someone to come in weekly.

**Employee Updates:**

- No new hires currently.

**Fond du Lac Ojibwe School**  
**FACE Coordinator-Barb Francis**  
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**Travel/Trainings:**

- No travel this month

**Accomplishments:**

- FACE Family Circle this month is Biboon. All our FACE families were notified and encouraged to attend.
- Adult Ed student passed their GED Reading and Language Arts. They have the math test to take and then will have their GED.
- Adult Ed student passed their History GED test. Studying for their Science test next.
- New preschool teacher, Allydia, has been in contact with her Tech Assistance person from NCFL and is becoming familiar with our FACE criteria.
- Preschool enrollment is at 6 students.
- Adult ed enrollment is at 18 students.
- Parent Educators have a total of 33 enrolled.
- 3 seniors are on schedule to graduate.

**Challenges:**

- A Parent Educator needs 10 more families. FACE requires 20 families per educator.

**Employment Updates:**

- Barb Francis is retiring. Last day is Jan 2, 2025.

**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:**

- None

**Accomplishments:**

- Drivers are adjusting to winter driving with no incidents.

**Challenges:**

- Hiring is still a challenge currently we are down 1 driver who is out for surgery until January 18th.
- We will be down another driver from January 8th to January 20th.
- Our on-call sub driver is currently out sick so hopefully he will be available to drive in the new year.

**Employee updates:**

- We will be conducting interviews on Friday, December 19, for transportation drivers.

**Goals within Department:**

- Looking forward to next week, our biggest goal is to have our vehicles pass DOT inspections.
- Be positive the vehicle is mechanically safe before going onto a route.