Texas Education Agency

Commissioner Mike Morath

1701 North Congress Avenue • Austin, Texas 78701-1494 • 512 463-9734 • 512 463-9838 FAX • tea.texas.gov

Via E-Mail,
Certified Mail &
Regular Mail

161-921

May 6, 2026

Jill Bottelberghe, Superintendent
Steven Carter, Board President
Keith Lowrey, Board Vice President
Heather McCarty-Johnston, Board Secretary
Keith Black, Board Member
Kathy Coker, Board Member
Diane Davis, Board Member
Danny Raines, Board Member
Connally Independent School District
200 Cadet Way
Waco, Texas 76705

Re: Appointment of Board of Managers and Superintendent

Dear Superintendent Bottelberghe and Trustees:

In correspondence dated January 8, 2026, following an informal review, I notified the Connally Independent School District ("ISD" or "district") of my decision to appoint a board of managers and superintendent to the district based on the unacceptable performance of two of the district's campuses for five consecutive school years. Additionally, I appointed a conservator to the district to ensure the district supports its low-performing campuses and implements the district's turnaround plans. The correspondence also notified the district of the opportunity to request an administrative review of the appointment of a conservator and a board of managers decision to the State Office of Administrative Hearings ("SOAH").[1]

The district did not submit a petition for a SOAH review. Therefore, no further review of this determination is available under the Texas Education Code or applicable rules.

Since December, the TEA has conducted a comprehensive application, selection, and training process to identify and select qualified members to serve on the board of managers. I am hereby appointing the following three individuals to serve on the board of managers:

[1] Texas Education Code (TEC) §39A.301, and 19 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §§157.1151(7), (9), 157.1155(a) and (b).

- **Matthew Stufflebeam (recommended to serve as Board President):** Matthew Stufflebeam is a real estate broker with over 20 years of experience in real estate, business operations, and investment management. As a parent in Connally ISD, Stufflebeam is committed to supporting the success of local students and ensuring every child has access to a high-quality education. A Texas State University graduate and Midway High School alumnus, Stufflebeam also spent 11 years as an adjunct instructor at McLennan Community College and has served in numerous leadership roles, including president of the Waco Association of Realtors and the Heart of Texas Apartment Association, as well as treasurer for nonprofit organizations.

- **Linda Peoples Lindsey (recommended to serve as Board Secretary):** A graduate of Connally High School's Class of 1981, Linda Peoples Lindsey, has lifelong ties to Connally ISD dating back to 1974 when her father, Mac Peoples, became superintendent—instilling in her a deep commitment to Cadet Pride and the district's success. Earning a degree from Texas Tech University and a master's in educational administration along with principal and superintendent certifications, she spent 37 years in public education as a teacher, coach, and administrator. Lindsey remains committed to student success, strong academics, and community-focused schools, and continues to serve as a CASA advocate, Fellowship of Christian Athletes Coastal Bend board member, and community volunteer.

- **Carla Thomas:** Carla Thomas is a proud Connally ISD alumna, a lifelong community member, and the parent of a 2023 CISD graduate. With more than a decade of teaching experience in the district, she has dedicated her career to advancing student growth, academic success, and community well-being, and remains committed to improving outcomes and expanding opportunities for all Connally ISD students. Thomas holds a bachelor's degree in health services technology and master's degree in educational administration from Lamar University. She currently works as a community health and wellness coordinator and part-time adult education instructor at McLennan Community College, supporting student well-being and academic success. She is also an active servant leader in the Waco Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated.

These members of the board of managers will be responsible for governing the district, and they will provide the leadership needed to work towards positive change for all students who attend Connally ISD schools. Accordingly, with this appointment of a board of managers, the powers of the district's board of trustees are HEREBY SUSPENDED until further notice and for the duration of the tenure of the board of managers.[2]

State law also requires that I appoint a superintendent.[3] Under that authority, I hereby appoint Dr. Josie Gutierrez as the superintendent of Connally ISD, effective immediately and with the full authority, rights, and responsibilities as permitted under the Texas Education Code.[4]

Dr. Josie Gutierrez is an experienced educational leader with over 30 years of service. A former teacher and principal, she has a strong track record of leading district operations and developing leaders, including serving as Deputy Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent of Human

[2] TEC §39A.202(a)(1).
[3] TEC §39A.202(a)(2).
[4] 19 TAC §97.1073(f).

Resources at Waco ISD, where she led impactful initiatives that improved student outcomes and strengthened teacher recruitment and retention. Known for her coaching-focused leadership approach, Dr. Gutierrez's experience and proven focus on academic improvement will be a critical asset in advancing student success across Connally ISD.

I want to thank the district's former superintendent, Jill Bottelberghe, for her leadership and dedicated service to Connally ISD. Ms. Bottelberghe served the students and community of Connally ISD with integrity and a strong focus on improving student performance.

Andrew Kim will continue to serve as the appointed conservator to the district. He will assist with the board transition, while retaining his existing authority and responsibilities.

The appointment of a board of managers to a district is not permanent, and state law sets forth a timeline that governs the board's return to elected control.[5] Since the board will return to elected control, trustee elections will continue during the tenure of the board of managers. My hope is that members of the board of trustees will remain engaged in an advisory capacity so that the transition will be seamless when the time comes for the elected officials to return to the board.

I wish Superintendent Gutierrez and the board of managers all my best. It is my sincere hope that all parties work together in a cooperative and productive manner to address the current and future needs of all the district's students.

Sincerely,

Mike Morath
Commissioner of Education

MM/lm

[5] TEC §39A.208(b).