APPROVED

Excel Academy Massachusetts

Minutes

Academic Oversight Committee Meeting

Date and Time
Monday April 1, 2024 at 1:00 PM

Location
Microsoft Teams:

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Meeting ID: 274 233 206 415
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Meeting Notice Posted Publicly: 3/28/24

Please note: All items listed on the agenda are subject to a possible vote by the Board of Trustees or its subcommittees.

Committee Members Present
B. Rodriguez (remote), S. Zrike (remote)

Committee Members Absent
T. Griffith Walker

Guests Present
A. Kaynor (remote), F. Reyes (remote), N. Keough (remote), O. Stearns (remote), Shirley Verónica Cardona (remote), Tim Weller (remote)

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

S. Zrike called a meeting of the Academic Oversight Committee of Excel Academy Massachusetts to order on Monday Apr 1, 2024 at 1:04 PM.
Stearns facilitated brief introductions and noted that Verónica Cardona and Weller are participating as observers from the Friends of Excel Academy Board. Kaynor recorded the minutes of the meeting.

C. Public Comment

No members of the public provided comments.

D. Approve Minutes for 12.4.23 Committee Meeting

B. Rodriguez made a motion to approve the minutes from 12.4.23.
S. Zrike seconded the motion.
The committee **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

Roll Call	
B. Rodriguez	Aye
S. Zrike	Aye
T. Griffith Walker	Absent

II. Academic Oversight

A. Update on Academics

Keough and Reyes presented academic update slides and an updated quarterly data dashboard, which were sent to the Board via email Keough noted that we are still learning how best to use our time together in these quarterly Committee meetings, and we welcome feedback. We will also check in on the structure of these meetings during Board 1:1 check-ins in May/June and our next Committee meeting in June, as we look ahead SY24-25.

Weller asked for more information about how we think about the success of our academic program beyond standardized testing. Keough clarified our approach regarding broader academic success goals and also how we structure our Academic Oversight Committee around monitoring and responding to testing data. Keough also noted that this is our first year of trying this quarterly Committee structure and that we are open to feedback if there are other ways we would like to use this time together in the future.

Zrike asked for more information regarding the predictability of our Interim Assessments (IAs) and which assessments we use. Reyes clarified how we conduct each IA at the high school and middle school campuses.

Verónica Cardona asked a clarifying question about math performance trending. Keough commented that math is an area of concern at the high school and that Excel's leadership team is engaging directly to support the school. The head of school is leading a math intervention team, and we expect to continue with this intervention team at least into the fall until MCAS scores are released and we can assess progress. This process has also contributed to a more effective teacher-leader collaboration environment and is helping the school to do more effective screening to identify sooner where early academic intervention may be needed.

Keough noted that the Network Academic Team continues to lean in heavily to support the school-based team at the XLEB campus and is also focused on supporting hiring a new head of school at that campus for SY24-25. The XLC campus has also completed the hiring process for a new head of school, and the Board will vote to approve the hiring recommendation at its next meeting.

Zrike noted that some of the same challenges are also occurring in his district. He requested a follow-up update next quarter on the school teams efforts to improve math performance.

Zrike noted that there is a buy-back program in the state that - within certain parameters - can be used to help students recoup lost time during the school year. Reyes and Keough noted that we are on track relative to our accountability measures.

Weller asked how our performance tracks relative to peers in terms of chronic absenteeism. Reyes noted that we were roughly on par last year but that we do not have dynamic data on performance this year. New data should be released in October for the prior year, and we will review in detail at the next Academic Oversight Committee meeting when the new data is available.

Rodriguez asked for clarification on the definition of chronic absenteeism and Keough clarified that it is defined as missing 10% or more of the school year. Rodriguez also asked whether we are seeing common reasons for absenteeism. Keough noted that there are some students who are chronically absent for known reasons and others who are just generally absent more often than in previous years, which is consistent with broader trends we are seeing in the sector. Zrike shared an article in the New York Times on this topic that just came out over the weekend. Zrike also shared a link to DESE's data release in March for reference.

Keough and Reyes presented the latest data related to suspension rate and that it is an area of concern. They noted that we are considering revisiting aspects of our disciplinary

policies to see if there are ways we can bring this rate down, for example, with more proactive interventions and higher thresholds for suspensions.

Keough also noted a decline in mid-year staff attrition from 11% to 7% and that student and staff Interim Survey data is promising across other measures.

Stearns noted appreciation that we are in a much better place in terms of our transparency of data and ability to analyze it effectively and communicate a clear story.

III. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 2:02 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
S. Zrike
List of documents used in the meeting:

- 12.4.23 Academic Committee meeting minutes
- 4.1.24 & 4.4.24 Academic Update Slides & quarterly academic data dashboard

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