APPROVED

Excel Academy Massachusetts

Minutes

Board of Trustees

Academic Oversight Committee Meeting

Date and Time
Thursday September 26, 2024 at 11:00 AM

Location
Microsoft Teams
Join the meeting now
Meeting ID: 249 911 727 165
Passcode: KSwdPT

Meeting Notice Posted Publicly: 9/24/24

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), T. Griffith Walker (remote)

Committee Members Absent
None

Guests Present
A. Kaynor (remote), C. Brumme (remote), F. Reyes (remote), N. Keough (remote), O. Stearns (remote), S. Patton (remote), Tim Weller (remote)

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

B. Rodriguez called a meeting of the Academic Oversight Committee of Excel Academy Massachusetts to order on Thursday Sep 26, 2024 at 11:05 AM.

C. Public Comment

No members of the public provided comments at this meeting. A. Kaynor noted that Timothy Weller, a member of the Friends of Excel Academy Board, is present today as an oberserver of the meeting.

D. Approve Minutes for 6.10.24 Academic Committee Meeting

B. Rodriguez made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees on 06-10-24.
T. Griffith Walker seconded the motion.
The committee **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

II. Academic Oversight

A. Update on State of the Schools, Academic Data, and Priorities

N. Keough facilitated brief introductions among Committee members and staff and outlined the agenda and purpose of today's meeting.

N. Keough presented the executive summary of our end-of-year results, as captured in detail in the academic update slides and quarterly academic data dashboard that were provided to the Committee in advance.

O. Stearns asked for clarification on HS MCAS data. N. Keough clarified that we met our goal for HS students passing graduation requirements but would like to increase our Meets and Exceeds % further.

S. Zrike asked for more detail on SWD performance. N. Keough noted that, within the 5% of students who did not meet graduation requirements, there is disproportionate representation of SWDs and MLLs. F. Reyes reviewed the specific data in each content area and for each subgroup with the Board, as presented in the quarterly academic data dashboard. We have narrowed the total % of students Not Meeting, but we have more work to do to address the disproportionate representation of SWD and MLL subgroups within that 5%.

N. Keough reminded the Committee what we covered in the spring in establishing our new organizational priorities framework and elevating an overall goal of ensuring

Excellent Teaching. The team has implemented a new Instructional Observation Rubric to support this work and has also built the data infrastructure to support its implementation.

N. Keough shared a summary of the launch of the school year, which was successful. Details are summarized in the academic update slides. Each school and school leader is in a place of stability and alignment across teams. N. Keough shared that the team is publishing a weekly newsletter to lift up and highlight examples of strong leadership and celebrate the good work that is underway at each campus and at the network level. The instructional rubric has been incredibly clarifying and galvanizing for school teams. N. Keough noted that we continue to strive to strike the right balance between ambition and urgency and quality of results and sustained buy-in from the team.

T. Weller asked a clarifying question about our philosophy regarding standardized assessment. Our curriculum reflects an approach that is aligned to the standard and assessment but has a lot of space for student voice and achieving goals beyond just the limits of the tests. F. Reyes commented that we do find actionable data from our testing and assessment analysis. The skills assessed by standardized tests are skills we want to ensure students are developing, and therefore we do not think of curriculum and standardized assessments as in conflict. N. Keough noted that this is our first year implementing IAs at the middle school level, and we will learn through the course of this year a lot about how to ensure a coherent experience for staff and students. S. Patton added that we are very focused on utilizing these tools and inputs as leading indicators.

N. Keough presented the following priorities for our new instructional rubric:
- Excellence: our new rubric sets the bar for excellence and lifts up values that we care about for all classrooms and for all kids across Excel.
- Alignment: a single rubric provides common language, a shared bar of excellence, and consistent data across the network, allowing for greater support to schools.
- Development: the new rubric is a tool for teacher development and coaching in addition to evaluation, helping teachers at every level continue to grow.

N. Keough summarized the piloting and stakeholder input process to identify best practices at Excel and to codify them into clear criteria and principles that could be shared across the organization. A committee of teachers and leaders across all grades and campuses led this work.

S. Zrike asked for clarification about how the rubric connects to evaluations. N. Keough commented that we intend to improve our evaluation system and connect it to our rubric over the course of this year, to implement for next year. Because we have implemented the rubric this year and has been very positively received by teachers and leaders, the rubric is already informing our evaluations. Teachers are receiving feedback on a weekly basis that is grounded in this rubric. For this year, we are using the rubric more as a

teacher development tool than as an evaluation tool, but we look forward to expanding the use to evaluations in the next year.

T. Griffith Walker thanked the team for the excellent work.

III. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

T. Griffith Walker made a motion to adjourn the meeting.
S. Zrike seconded the motion.
The committee **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.
There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 11:45 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,
T. Griffith Walker
List of documents presented at the meeting:

- Academic update slides
- Quarterly board academic data dashboard
- 6.10.24 Meeting Minutes
- New instructional observation rubric

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