APPROVED

Excel Academy Massachusetts

Minutes

Board of Trustees - Academic Oversight Committee Meeting

Date and Time
Monday March 24, 2025 at 1:30 PM

Location
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Meeting ID: 298 467 672 770
Passcode: 9SCAx3

Meeting Notice Posted Publicly: 3/19/25

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), F. Reyes (remote), N. Keough (remote), O. Stearns (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 Mar 24, 2025 at 1:32 PM.

C. Public Comment

No members of the public provided comments at this meeting.

D. Approve Minutes for prior Academic Oversight Committee Meeting

S. Zrike made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees - Academic Oversight Committee Meeting on 12-09-24.
B. Rodriguez seconded the motion.
The committee **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

II. Academic Oversight

A. Vote to recommend Board approval of CD & Graduation Requirements Proposal

N. Keough updated the Committee on work to codify Excel's approach to local competency determinations and graduation requirements, following the November ballot initiative, as summarized in the proposal and Academic Update Slides that were provided to the Committee. N. Keough noted that we surveyed families and staff, and they are broadly supportive of this proposal – including 89% of families supporting the proposal. N. Keough also commented that a working group of staff will be convening in the coming months to develop a proposal related to alternative graduation requirements and will bring this proposal to the June 2025 Academic Committee and Board meetings.

S. Zrike asked a clarifying question regarding past students who may not have met competency determinations previously and may qualify for the new competency determinations. S. Zrike suggested reaching out to those students and also accounting for this in the policy. N. Keough noted that our first graduating class was in 2020, so there will not be many students in this category, but agreed that we will take this step in implementing the policy.

S. Zrike asked how many students are on alternative pathways, and N. Keough clarified that we do have a sub-separate program. N. Keough added that some staff were supportive of the proposal, provided that we are offering an alternative pathway to create an opportunity for all students to earn a diploma.

S. Zrike asked if there is a consideration for MLLs who may not be able to receive a diploma without an alternative pathway. N. Keough anticipates that this will be part of the scope of the working group and may be centered on Access scores.

S. Zrike and T. Griffith Walker asked the team to clarify some wording that was unclear in the proposal for the version that is presented to the full Board, which F. Reyes and N. Keough agreed to do.

T. Griffith Walker and S. Zrike proposed that the Committee recommend approval of the local competency determination proposal and of amending local graduation requirements to include MCAS, and to inform the Board that we are also developing an alternate pathway via a faculty working group, which we will bring back to the Board in June for approval.

S. Zrike asked if we can include a link to the Student & Family Handbook with our program of study, which the Board approves annually. N. Keough agreed this is a good idea.
S. Zrike made a motion to recommend that the Board of Trustees approve: (1) our proposed local competency determination, (2) our proposed amendment to Excel's local graduation requirements to include earning an MCAS score of 469 in ELA & Math and 470 in Science (Biology), and (3) creation of a faculty working group to develop an alternative graduation pathway, which the Board will consider for approval at the June meeting.
T. Griffith Walker seconded the motion.
The committee **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

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

N. Keough and F. Reyes presented updates on the school's academic program and student and staff data, as detailed in the Academic Update Slides and the latest quarterly Board data dashboard, which were provided to the Committee. Highlights include:

- Our student outcomes indicate we are largely on track to meet our goals for academics, attendance, and discipline.
- Staff retention is improved, and our team is aligned with the overall direction of the organization, and we need to address gaps in leader development and leading through change.
- Our top focuses for the spring are responding to our student data (particularly for priority courses) and leveraging the planning process for next year to engage our teams and demonstrate our learn and growth based on feedback.

S. Zrike asked whether concerns related to immigration enforcement activiities in the local community have impacted attendance. N. Keough noted that, while families are very concerned by what is happening in our community, we have not seen a notable impact on attendance. We credit our school teams for doing exceptional work to ensure that families feel supported and safe in our schools.

S. Zrike asked whether the staff data includes non-renewals, and N. Keough clarified that those are included unless the non-renewal discussion is not yet complete.

O. Stearns asked the Committee for feedback on whether the Academic Update Slides achieve the right level of detail for the full Board meeting on Friday, given that we are always trying to calibrate the level of detail appropriately. S. Zrike commented that it is all important information for the Board to have, but it would be a good idea to present the summary with the 3-4 data points we feel best about and the 2-3 we are more concerned about and working on, given how much information there is to digest. N. Keough agreed that we will start with a concise executive summary for the Board.

The Committee thanked the Academic Team for putting together a thoughtful presentation and proposal.

III. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

S. Zrike made a motion to adjourn the meeting.
T. Griffith Walker 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 2:28 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
S. Zrike
List of documents used during the meeting:
- Agenda
- Prior meeting minutes
- Academic update slides
- Quarterly Board academic data dashboard
- Competency determination and graduation requirements proposal

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