APPROVED

Excel Academy Massachusetts

Minutes

Board of Trustees Meeting

Date and Time
Friday October 3, 2025 at 8:30 AM

Location
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Meeting ID: 282 398 897 809 4
Passcode: wC6Kx6S3

Meeting Notice Posted Publicly: 9/30/25

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

Trustees Present
B. Rodriguez (remote), C. Brumme (remote), D. Petersmeyer Johnson (remote), D. Sachs (remote), D. Stolow (remote), M. Colaylat (remote), N. Castro (remote), T. Griffith Walker (remote)

Trustees Absent
R. Lytle, S. Zrike

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

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

C. Brumme called a meeting of the board of trustees of Excel Academy Massachusetts to order on Friday Oct 3, 2025 at 8:33 AM.

C. Public Comment

No members of the public provided comments at this meeting.

D. Approve Prior Meeting Minutes

D. Sachs made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees Meeting on 06-13-25.
C. Brumme seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

II. Academic Oversight

A. State of the School Update and Report from Academic Oversight Committee & NAT

Members of the Academic Team and Academic Oversight Committee presented updates on the state of the schools and School Year 24-25 academic results. Our results show the most sustained and systemic year of growth and excellence we have seen in years. Bright spots include:

- MS MCAS: Students outperformed the state on every ELA essay question and hit 70 SGP for both ELA and Math, ranking us #1 and #5 in the state.
    - The team noted that we just learned that our Rhode Island school also saw similar growth, ranking #1 in the state in ELA and Math for growth, which speaks to the systemic nature of these results across all Excel Academy campuses in both MA and RI.
- MS MCAS: Excel was one of only thirteen LEAs whose proficiency rates are equal to or above where they were in 2019 in both ELA and Math in grades 3-8.
- HS MCAS: 96% students met their graduation requirements on the first attempt, hitting an SGP of over 60 for both ELA and Math, and with Math earning the highest proficiency ever at Excel.
- AP Performance: We continue to see growth in both AP participation and pass rates, with our highest participation rate and pass rate ever. Excel students passed 57% of AP exams last year. For graduating seniors, 97% of seniors took an AP test, 72% of seniors passed at least one AP exam prior to graduation.
- MS ACESS: Students showed the most significant growth since COVID, exceeding local and state benchmarks.

- Student Culture: Chronic absenteeism rates declined across the network, and suspension rates remained stable from the previous year.

Priorities for continued work include:

- 5th Grade Math: For the third straight year, student results in 5th grade Math have shown regression from 4th grade results (except at one campus), which makes it harder to reach ambitious results by the end of 8th grade.
- Sub-group performance at the MS: There are substantial disparities in growth for 5th and 6th grade SWDs and MLLs that we want to target.
- Targeted HS Growth: As our overall program at the high school continues to improve, specific areas of focus appeared last year (Biology, AP Math courses) that we want to focus on for next year.
- ACCESS: We've made growth in the last two years, but this is an area where we are not at our pre-pandemic performance.

C. Brumme and D. Sachs congratulated the academic team on the phenomenal outcomes.

N. Keough presented on strategies and lessons that have guided our work to achieve these results, as detailed in the academic update slides provided to the Board.

D. Stolow commented that it is an honor to be associated with the amazing work being done by the academic team. D. Stolow asked for more context about the things that contribute to "stacking of good days." N. Keough affirmed that every part of the day that the student experiences impacts this. A few years ago, we leaned in very heavily on school culture, because culture challenges were impeding the day to day experience. The cultural foundation is now quite strong, which enables this deep focus on teaching and learning and ensuring consistent quality of instruction. S. Patton added that culture is not perfect day to day, but with a strong foundation, we can see quickly and effectively respond when challenges come up.

C. Brumme asked for more context about the approach to building the courage to drive continuous improvement among leadership. N. Keough shared context about grounding our mission and values work in the All Means All training we did a few years ago. N. Keough and S. Patton added that it has been very hard work, and we have invested deeply in building trust from the top down through the organization to make it possible to do this challenging work together.

The Academic Team also presented on priorities for this year. The Board and Academic Oversight Committee have been thoughtful partners in building and strengthening our priorities framework over the past couple years. The team is now leaning in this year to go deeper on strategies that have been implemented in recent years including:
- Excellent Teaching (rubric, Arc of the Year Strategy)
- School Culture through Common Systems

- Purposeful use of data and assessment
- MTSS systems

And we are adding focus to:
- Leader Development using our new framework
- Excellence in instructional coaching
- Joyful and productive adult culture

C. Brumme reechoed thanks to the team for exceptional results and a thoughtful presentation, and N. Keough thanked the Board for being tremendous champions and thought partners in this work. O. Stearns echoed these comments on three years of very challenging and successful work and encouraged the team to continue processing and celebrating the news.

III. Finance

A. Finance Committee Update

D. Stolow provided an update from the Finance Committee meeting on 9/30/25. As a Board and organization, we want to keep moving in a financial direction that aligns with continuing to produce the exceptional academic results we just reviewed. The organizational and academic leadership teams and Finance Committee are in close alignment with the current strategic financial direction. In recent years, with support of ESSER funding and other factors, staffing and salaries expanded rapidly, and we are now in the midst of multi-year effort to rebalance spending. And we are constantly managing our financial outlook in light of a highly volatile and largely discouraging macro and local economic environment. The Committee and leadership teams are closely managing and monitoring to a list of risks. We had planned for a reduction of approximately 6 positions for SY26-27, and we are now anticipating a reduction of more like 12 positions due to external economic factors and risks that have worsened in recent months. The team had a full discussion about modulating these reductions to minimize the impact on school culture, programming, and academic outcomes. Most importantly, academic leadership wants to have clarity on resources far in advance of changes, so that changes can be made deliberately and compassionately over a long lead time and largely happen between rather than during school years. The budget process will continue on the usual timeline with formal decisions in the spring, but we are getting ahead of some of these issues proactively as the macro economic outlook in Boston and Chelsea, Massachusetts, and more broadly continues to worsen.

D. Stolow emphasized that everyone on the Board is fully invited to participate in Finance Committee work at any time.

D. Sachs echoed D. Stolow's comments that we are trying to make decisions to give the team as much stability and predictability as possible, far in advance and without impacting the school's programming too negatively, while also reflecting our current

reality. We believe we have found the right balance to reflect the economic reality we are in today with relatively modest adjustments for next year, which the team is bought into. The work has been difficult but helpful and has left us with a confident path for the team to implement.

O. Stearns added that he thinks many peer schools are waiting to make similar changes. We are prioritizing giving our team early clarity with as long a runway as possible for changes. O. Stearns added that we are in a position of relative financial strength, which gives us some flexibility with how we make these decisions that other schools may not have.

C. Brumme voiced that it is prudent to be doing this hard work right now. The macro and local economic environment is very challenging. D. Sachs added that this work is likely to continue and be an iterative process, as we keep managing a broader economic environment that is sometimes evolving by the hour. O. Stearns commended the Finance Team for their deep and thoughtful work on this.

B. Approve Updated Financial Policies & Procedures

A. Kaynor summarized the process to update Excel's fiscal policies and procedures across Excel's three Boards, as detailed in the enclosed executive summary. D. Stolow commented that the Finance Team prepared excellent policies and that this Board is blessed to have such a thoughtful and detail-oriented team.
D. Stolow made a motion to approve the updated fiscal policies and procedures as presented, retroactively to July 1, 2025.
C. Brumme seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

C. FYI - Reminder about FY25 Annual Audit

A. Kaynor reminded the Board about the annual audit schedule detailed on the agenda and welcomed any Board members to participate. Ask A. Kaynor for the calendar invites. All materials are available in BoardOnTrack as well.

IV. Governance

A. Governance & Nominating Committee Update

M. Colaylat expressed gratitude for Pamela Klein's leadership and provided a report on the Governance & Nominating Committee meeting in August to kick off the new school year. The Committee is excited about a robust set of projects we plan to work on this year. We will report back periodically throughout the year.

- We will continue our work on a skills survey and improved Board self-evaluation.
- We need everyone to stay focused as a Board this year on recruitment and fundraising. Our typical recruitment cycle is: Q1 - identify needs, Q2 - recruit, Q3 -

interview, Q4 - onboard ahead of the new school year. We will distribute a Board recruitment needs summary and schedule 1:1 check-ins with Board members in October and November to discuss recruitment and fundraising. We need everyone to be focused on these priorities collectively. And we have no lack of amazing talking points about our school.

- We had a successful DESE site visit in April 2025. Many thanks to Cait, Dave, Owen, Arthur, and team for a tremendous amount of work on this site visit. The report was largely positive, and we have a few areas for improvement. We have an action plan to address these. The most substantive for the Board are improvements to our evaluation processes, which Arthur and Cait will explain.

C. Brumme added that she met with DESE over the summer, and they are pleased with our performance and our governance transition and respect that we are still in the "growing up" process as a CMO more broadly, and it is normal to have a few things to keep working on. These improvements will help us to strengthen how we conduct evaluations each year.

B. Confirm SY25-26 Committee Assignments

A. Kaynor noted that committee assignments have not changed since they were approved in June and that the committee overview is included in the Board packet only for reference.

C. Vote to Approve SY23-24 and SY24-25 Head of School Evaluations

M. Colaylat made a motion to approve SY23-24 and SY24-25 Head of School evaluations retroactively, per the Governance & Nominating Committee's recommendation on 8/15/25.
D. Sachs seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.
A. Kaynor noted that annual Head of School evaluations will be conducted similarly in SY25-26 as in prior years, but with a Board approval vote moving forward. A. Kaynor also noted that there were two instead of four Head of School evaluations in SY23-24 because the Heads of School for two campuses (Excel Chelsea and Excel East Boston) were on leave or had communicated plans to transition. A member of the Governance & Nominating Committee (Dave Sachs) participated in the hiring process for each new Head of School and captured learning about the needs and priorities for each campus through those hiring processes.

D. Votes to approve SY23-24 CEO/CMO evaluation

C. Brumme made a motion to approve the SY23-24 CEO/CMO evaluation retroactively, per the Governance & Nominating Committee's recommendation on 8/15/25.
T. Griffith Walker seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

A. Kaynor noted that, for the SY24-25 CEO/CMO evaluation, we are following the same process as last year, with one adjustment: the Board will vote to approve the evaluation rather than delegating approval to the Chair. For the SY25-26 CEO/CMO evaluation, we plan to separate the CEO and CMO evaluation processes. The Governance & Nominating Committee will conduct a CMO evaluation for SY25-26 over the summer, and then the full Board will vote to approve it in the fall. The Board's CMO evaluation will be provided as an input to the annual CEO evaluation process that is administered by the Friends of Excel Board of Directors.

E. Title IX Policy Approval and Training

A. Kaynor reviewed SY25-26 Title IX Policy updates with the Board and trained the board on its responsibilities with respect to the policy.
T. Griffith Walker made a motion to approve the SY25-26 Title IX Policy, as presented.
M. Colaylat seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

F. Ratify SY25-26 Student & Family Handbook, SY25-26 Employee Handbook, and other policy and manual updates (enclosed/linked)

A. Kaynor reviewed updates to SY25-26 school and network governing manuals, policies, and handbooks with the Board, as detailed in the Board Protocol executive summary and enclosed/linked documents.
D. Stolow made a motion to approve the SY25-26 Student & Family Handbooks, SY25-26 Employee Handbook, and all other policies, manuals, and handbooks enclosed and linked in the Board packet, as presented.
C. Brumme seconded the motion.
C. Brumme thanked the team for their continued excellent work updating all of these important policy documents each year and producing quality materials and clear, concise Board overviews.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.
O. Stearns thanked A. Kaynor for his work to organize such a wide range of complex governance items for the organization.

O. Stearns emphasized that we are in a very strong position to go out in the world and talk about the great work that Excel is doing, and we will schedule 1:1's to catch up with each Board member and plan for campus visits, fundraising efforts, and Board recruitment prospecting.

V. Board Engagement

A. Advocacy Update

O. Stearns and A. Kaynor updated the Board on advocacy efforts and the potential need for Board support in the future.

B. Upcoming Events

A. Kaynor previewed upcoming events the Board and invited Board members to attend the 2nd Annual Family Community Resource Fair, 10/25 from 12:00 PM-3:00 PM, at Excel Academy Charter High School. Please bring friends and family. Last year, 30 vendors and over 300 community members participated. We hope to exceed those numbers this year. It's a wonderful community event.

VI. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

C. Brumme made a motion to adjourn the meeting having conducted the business of the Board.
D. Stolow seconded the motion.
The board **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 9:42 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,
C. Brumme
List of documents used at this meeting:

- Agenda
- Prior meeting minutes
- Board Committee Overview
- Board Academic Data Dashboard
- Academic Update Slides
- Academic Case Studies
- Updated financial policies & procedures and executive summary of fiscal policy updates
- Year 22 DESE Site Visit Report
- Year 22 DESE Site Visit Action Plan
- SY23-24 Head of School Evaluations
- SY24-25 Head of School Evaluations
- SY23-24 CMO Evaluation
- Student & Family Handbooks (English and Spanish)
- Employee Handbook
- Title IX Policy
- Various other school and network governing policies, manuals, and handbooks enclosed and detailed in the Board Protocol executive summary

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The public is welcome to attend any meeting of the Board of Trustees or its subcommittees. If communication assistance (readers/ interpreters/captions) or any other accommodations are

needed to ensure equal participation, please contact Arthur Kaynor at akaynor@excelacademy.org at least two (2) business days prior to the meeting. Any changes in the agenda will be posted on Excel Academy Charter School's website, Excel's principal place of business, and will be electronically filed with the Secretary of State at least forty-eight (48) hours in advance of the meeting. If you would like to attend a Board meeting and provide public comment, please sign up 48 hours in advance here: https://forms.gle/7315BJ7v1bHGGh2Q9.

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