APPROVED

Excel Academy Massachusetts

Minutes

Board of Trustees Meeting

Date and Time
Friday December 12, 2025 at 8:30 AM

Location
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Meeting ID: 281 031 155 303 5
Passcode: Nb9bQ9dB

Meeting Notice Posted Publicly on 12/9/25.

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), R. Lytle (remote), S. Zrike (remote)

Trustees Absent
T. Griffith Walker

Guests Present
A. Kaynor (remote), F. Reyes (remote), Janelle Powlett (Observer) (remote), N. Keough (remote), S. Patton (remote), Y. Dubon (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 Dec 12, 2025 at 8:32 AM.

C. Public Comment

C. Brumme facilitated brief introductions. J. Powlett introduced herself, her professional and personal background as a MA native, and her potential interest in Board service.

D. Approve Prior Meeting Minutes

D. Sachs made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees Meeting on 11-07-25.
M. Colaylat seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

II. Academic Oversight

A. Approve Updated Competency Determination Policies & Guidelines

N. Keough presented updated competency determination policies and guidelines, which were provided to the Board in advance, and expressed gratitude to S. Zrike and the Academic Oversight Committee for their thorough review.

S. Zrike commented that he is grateful to serve in his capacity as Academic Oversight Committee Chair and was able to learn from Excel's guidelines and referenced them in developing related guidelines in his professional capacity as Superintendent of Schools in Salem.

S. Zrike noted that every MA high school needs to update their policy by the end of December and commented that he and the Academic Oversight Committee reviewed the policy and recommended it to the Board at their meeting earlier this month. S. Zrike noted that the team put a lot of time and energy into this policy and did a great job. S. Zrike then summarized the key updates in the policy for the Board.

D. Stolow asked whether a student has to be a member of a special population to quality for the alternative pathway. N. Keough clarified that the policy articulates the criteria by which students qualify explicitly.
R. Lytle made a motion to approve the enclosed, updated Competency Determination policies and guidelines, per the recommendation of the Academic Oversight Committee.
C. Brumme seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

B. Approve Interim HOS Hiring & Confirm Board Rep. in Hiring Process

S. Patton updated the Board on Excel Chelsea Head of School Emily Lupo's plans to step down from the Head of School role for medical reasons and expressed deep gratitude to Emily Lupo for her care, proactivity, and commitment to the school. S. Patton noted that Emily Lupo will continue in a coaching role and will still be able to provide valuable support to the team at Excel Chelsea. S. Patton updated the Board that James Seter III has already been serving in an interim role during Emily Lupo's medical leave, and we are recommending that he continues in that role for the duration of this school year. He has done an excellent job, built strong relationships with the team, is coaching and managing 9 teachers, and is leading the administrative team effectively.

The Board asked questions about the governance structure and commented that this feels like it would typically be a management rather than a governance decision and recalled that the Board's protocol delegates to the Chair, or the Chair's designee on the Board, to approve decisions like this per the Board's HOS oversight protocol. A. Kaynor clarified that we received feedback last spring during the mid-cycle DESE audit that the full Board needs to take votes on these matters, consistent with how the contract is written, regardless of the Board's HOS oversight protocol that would delegate these decisions to the Chair.
C. Brumme made a motion to approve James Seter III as the interim Head of School of the Excel Academy Chelsea campus for School Year 25-26 and to accept David Sachs as the Board's representative in the hiring process for a permanent Head of School for the Excel Academy Chelsea campus.
M. Colaylat seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

C. 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 latest student and staff data - as detailed in the enclosed materials that were provided to the Board - and took questions and comments from Board members, including the following:

D. Stolow commented on dramatic improvements in staff survey results and asked for additional context. N. Keough and F. Reyes clarified that the best comparison is from Survey 1 to Survey 1 and commented that we restart the school year every year and the start of the year is typically when we see the highest levels of optimism broadly. EOY to Q1 is not apples to apples, and Q1 to Q1 is a truer comparison. N. Keough also added that Heads of School completed very intensive listening, heavy transparency, and investment in staff engagement last spring, which has led to increased confidence in leadership. Last fall, we also implemented a lot of new initiatives, and things felt newer and more challenging as a result, and leaders were not ahead of the curve on the change

management related to these initiatives. Now leaders are much more ahead of the curve, and staff are seeing the positive outcomes of these new initiatives, which has strongly reinforced buy-in and confidence in leadership.

R. Lytle asked for more context about how the team is managing a third of a class in need of Tier 3 intervention. The Academic Team added that they are splitting ELA learning time, with one class that has more substantive needs, and there is an hour of intervention multiple days per week. Numerous strategies are in play, and we are expecting this will be a multi-year process to remediate and get this cohort ready for high school.

C. Brumme requested that we hear back from the team in future Academic Updates to follow the progress of these strategies over time and support the Academic Team as needed.

C. Brumme thanked the Academic Team for the awesome progress on staff satisfaction and sustained focus on building trust in leadership. N. Keough added that staff came into this year feeling proud of success last year and more invested in the institution and our educational practices.

C. Brumme encouraged Board members to bring these successes into their outreach efforts to attract new Board members, donors, and other supporters of the school.

O. Stearns commented on the difference between where we are today relative to a few years ago and the remarkable recovery efforts from the pandemic and ability to focus intensively as a large organization where we need to and added that some of the challenges we're managing right now are due to the intake of a cohort of new students who enter Excel via free, public, random lottery, so we need to be able to adapt our model every year.

O. Stearns also let the Board know that our successes have led to more attention on our team, including invitations to present at numerous conferences and other assemblies locally, regionally, and nationally. O. Stearns shared an anecdote from a best practices seminar on classroom observation rubric at the Celebrating Academic Success Conference in MA with MA district and charter leaders, where Darren Gray presented on our classroom observation rubric to other leaders of schools that are among the 63 schools that have met or exceeded pre-pandemic achievement levels in either Math or ELA (and the 13 that have have done so in both subjects, including Excel).

III. Board Engagement

A. Upcoming Events

A. Kaynor previewed the upcoming calendar of events with the Board.

B.

Advocacy Update

O. Stearns and A. Kaynor updated the Board on the status of relevant bills in the MA legislature and testimony given at the State House by Excel alumni.

IV. Governance

A. Governance & Nominating Committee Updates

M. Colaylat and A. Kaynor updated the Board on recruitment efforts and progress and refreshed the Board on goals for this year, as detailed in the updated recruitment overview.

A. Kaynor updated the Board on progress completing action items in response to feedback received during the site visit spring.

B. Vote to Approve CEO/CMO Evaluation

All staff and observers left the meeting at 9:45am, and M. Colaylat took the remaining meeting minutes.
Board members, without staff present, discussed the SY24-25 CEO & CMO Evaluation and draft SY25-26 goals and asked questions which M. Colaylat and C. Brumme answered. The Board agreed with the evaluation's assessment of the CEO and CMO's performance in SY24-25 and voted unanimously to approve the SY24-25 CEO & CMO Evaluation, with any necessary edits or corrections after reviewing with each of Excel's other Boards (Excel RI and Friends of Excel).
C. Brumme made a motion to approve the SY24-25 CEO & CMO Evaluation, with any necessary edits or corrections after reviewing with each of Excel's other Boards (Excel RI and Friends of Excel).
M. Colaylat seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

V. 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 9:55 AM.

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

- Meeting agenda
- Prior meeting minutes
- Competency Determination and Graduation Requirements Policies and Guidelibnes Proposal

- Excel Chelsea Head of School Memo and Recommendation
- Academic Oversight Committee Update Slides and Board Academic Data Dashboard
- Board Recruitment Overview
- DESE Site Visit Action Plan Update
- SY24-25 CEO & CMO Evaluation Report and Draft SY25-26 Goals

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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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