



The Exploris School

The Exploris School Board Regular Monthly Meeting

Date and Time

Thursday December 18, 2025 at 4:30 PM EST

Location

The Exploris School: Elementary Campus
17 S Swain St, Raleigh, NC 27601, USA
5th Grade Classroom

Agenda

	Purpose	Presenter	Time
I. Opening Items			4:30 PM
A. Record Attendance		Edward Buchan	1 m
B. Call the Meeting to Order		Steven Darroch	1 m
C. Approve Minutes	Approve Minutes	Edward Buchan	2 m
	Approve minutes for The Exploris School Board Regular Monthly Meeting on October 23, 2025		
D. Public Comment		Steven Darroch	15 m
	PUBLIC COMMENT		

Purpose	Presenter	Time
---------	-----------	------

Fifteen minutes will be allocated on the agenda for public input at each meeting. Additional time may be added at the discretion of the Chair.

Public comment may be oral, in person, or in written form to be read by the Chair. Public comment is limited to no more than 3 minutes per person. It is recommended that public comment be written out and provided to the board following the three minutes to ensure the entire message is heard by the board.

Each speaker will clearly state their full name and county of residence.

All public comment should be factual and should not include personally identifiable information of students or personnel in order to maintain confidentiality. Speakers should avoid using names of students or staff and maintain confidentiality and privacy standards.

All public comments will be taken under advisement by the Board, but will not elicit an immediate written or spoken response. The names of persons providing public comment and a brief summary of topics or input will be included in the meeting minutes published.

A response will be provided to the stakeholder within seven (7) days. Those providing public comment are asked to provide in writing (either in person or via email to board@exploris.org) their contact information including name, County of residence, and address (either email or postal, whichever is preferred).

Specific issues about a particular student or teacher should be addressed to the elementary or middle school director, rather than the Board of Directors.

E. Board Development	Steven Darroch	10 m
----------------------	----------------	------

II. Committee Reports	4:59 PM
-----------------------	---------

- The Board oversees the membership and work of each Committee.
- Committees present their latest minutes and action items to the Board. The Board makes all official decisions regarding Committee recommendations.

A. Finance	FYI	Koren Morgan	10 m
------------	-----	--------------	------

		Purpose	Presenter	Time
	• Monthly Financial Reports			
B.	Educational Excellence	FYI	Eric Grunden	10 m
C.	Governance	FYI	Lauren Collins	10 m
D.	Community & Connections	FYI	Deborah Brown	5 m
E.	Director Evaluation & Support	Discuss	Steven Darroch	5 m
F.	Facilities	FYI	Josh Corbat	10 m
	• Updates on Facilities Project • CapDev Capital Campaign Proposal			
G.	Kaizen	FYI	Mariah Perry	5 m
	• Kaizen leaders will give an update to the Board.			
III.	The Exploris Foundation			5:54 PM
	• The Exploris Foundation Board will give an update			
A.	Foundation Update	FYI	Richard Averitte	5 m
IV.	The Exploris Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO)			5:59 PM
	The Exploris PTO leadership will give an update			
A.	PTO Update	FYI	PTO President	5 m
V.	Meeting Items			6:04 PM
A.	Directors Report	Vote	Deborah Brown	20 m
	• Monthly Report & Updates (The Directors Report will not be made verbally during meetings. Please review the written report prior to the meeting. We will answer questions and provide critical updates and vote on any requested items.)			

	Purpose	Presenter	Time
	• Updated Device Damage Protection Plan (vote to implement)		
	• Remote Charter Academy Application Plan		
	• Family Feedback Report		
B. Board Business	Discuss	Steven Darroch	10 m
	• General Discussions		
VI. Closed Session			6:34 PM
A. Facilities & Legal Items	Discuss	Josh Corbat	5 m
	• Updates on Facilities		
	• Updates on Personnel		
	• Updates on any Open Legal Items		
VII. Closing Items			6:39 PM
A. Adjourn Meeting	Vote		

Coversheet

Approve Minutes

Section: I. Opening Items

Item: C. Approve Minutes

Purpose: Approve Minutes

Submitted by:

Related Material:

Minutes for The Exploris School Board Regular Monthly Meeting on October 23, 2025

APPROVED



The Exploris School

Minutes

The Exploris School Board Regular Monthly Meeting

Date and Time

Thursday October 23, 2025 at 4:30 PM

Location

The Exploris School: Elementary Campus
17 S Swain St, Raleigh, NC 27601, USA
5th Grade Classroom

Directors Present

A. Rodriguez, E. Grunden, L. Collins (remote), M. Perry (remote), P. President (remote), R. Averitte, S. Scipione

Directors Absent

E. Buchan, G. Bayo, M. Nelson, S. Darroch

Ex Officio Members Present

D. Brown, E. Burton, J. Corbat

Non Voting Members Present

D. Brown, E. Burton, J. Corbat

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

B.

Call the Meeting to Order

E. Grunden called a meeting of the board of directors of The Exploris School to order on Thursday Oct 23, 2025 at 4:41 PM.

C. Approve Minutes

E. Grunden made a motion to approve the minutes from The Exploris School Board Regular Monthly Meeting on 09-25-25.

S. Scipione seconded the motion.

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

D. Public Comment

Eric read the guidelines for public comment and invited anyone to add their comments. There were no emailed requests for public comment.

Aaron Bugher from Wake County provided public comment thanking the Board for holding a town hall and noting that he would like to have notice earlier and noting that he received an email with details a week in advance of the meeting.

E. Board Development

P. President made a motion to amend the agenda.

S. Scipione seconded the motion.

amend the agenda to call for a vote to approve Alannah Rodriguez as interim treasurer.

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

P. President made a motion to approve Alannah Rodriguez as interim treasurer.

S. Scipione seconded the motion.

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

Cory Draughn from Charter Success Partners presented to the Board. He thanked Exploris for the long standing membership with Charter Success (since 2017.) He provided an overview of CSP and their services, basic expectations/ fiduciary duties and best practices of public charter school boards, and a financial framework overview.

Cory took a few follow up questions from board members.

II. Committee Reports

A. Finance

Board members were provided with the usual monthly financial reports in the packet. There were no follow up questions.

The board welcomed Alannah back to the board and her work with finance.

Board documents like conflict of interest statements were distributed to board members, signed and collected from those in person and requested from those online.

B. Educational Excellence

Ethan made an oral report about the fall benchmark data, the process of how our teaching teams go through the data and apply strategies for intervention as needed. NC Checkins will begin next week; it's the 1st time Exploris has used this assessment school-wide

C. Governance

Governance meets bi-monthly unless there is a pressing policy issue or a board candidate to review and did not meet in October. Lauren gave an update on the policy review that the Campbell Law school group is working with us on. This is a great connection where Exploris gets the benefit of educational policy advice and at the same time is providing real-world examples to train graduate students in education law and policy.

No new resumes for board members have been received.

D. Community & Connections

A survey was sent out for school community members who had expressed an interest in this committee to determine the regular meeting schedule. The public invite will be sent out shortly once that day and time is solidified.

E. Director Evaluation & Support

Steven is the chair for this committee and was not able to be present this meeting so he will update next month.

F. Facilities

Josh presented an update, including details on the recommendations from Cap Dev about a position description for leading our capital campaign; Cap Dev is providing this guidance pro bono. Josh described the next steps in the land testing and process, including required steps for the Kindley St. property.

G. Kaizen

Shawna presented an update. Kaizen has been working on a tracker for sharing ideas and communications.

III. The Exploris Foundation

A. Foundation Update

Richard presented an update, including that the Foundation Report is ready to be submitted and they are running the first of two teacher grant cycles.

IV. The Exploris Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO)

A. PTO Update

Grace presented an update; Fall Festival is tomorrow 5pm-8pm

V. Meeting Items

A. Directors Report

Deb, Josh and Ethan presented highlights. The PGP cycle is nearly completed, Expeditions and field experiences are in full swing, our first round of using the NC Checkins assessments is starting next week. The students are looking forward to Spirit Week and we enjoyed the visit from Hiroshima University of several of their pre-service teachers who presented multiple lessons on Japanese culture to grades k-8.

A. Rodriguez made a motion to approve Stacey Kaufman as a 6th grade teaching hire. R. Averitte seconded the motion.

Stacey Kaufman has been offered the 6th grade math/science position. Stacey is a certified science teacher who previously worked for several years at Research Triangle High School and has been fitting in well with the team and completed the onboarding. The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

B. Board Business

- The recent Town Hall was successful and a wrap up and description of the discussion was shared with the Exploris community through an email
- This was the first of three Town Hall style events planned for this year; the format will alternate between fully in person and fully remote. The next meeting will be a remote format and will be in January.
- with Steven absent, we did not discuss the other two agenda items.

VI. Closed Session

A. Facilities & Legal Items

There were no items for closed session.

VII. 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 6:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

D. Brown

Coversheet

Finance

Section:	II. Committee Reports
Item:	A. Finance
Purpose:	FYI
Submitted by:	
Related Material:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">03. Board Report 2025.11 - Exploris.pdf06. Balance Sheet 2025.11 - Exploris.pdfBank Account Balances 2025.11 - Exploris.pdf05. Income Statement 2025.11 - Exploris.pdf

THE EXPLORIS SCHOOL							
Budget Analysis Report (Reconciled)							
Fiscal Year: 2026 - November							
Account	Budget	Period Activity	YTD Activity	Remaining Budget	% Used	EOY Projection	Notes
Revenues							42% of the year
► STATE REVENUE	3,462,839.00	288,843.70	1,611,054.00	1,851,785.00	46.52	3,509,403.25	
► LOCAL REVENUE	1,688,128.00	435,964.80	451,004.30	1,237,124.00	26.72	2,071,888.49	
► FEDERAL REVENUE	144,909.00	11,500.00	59,664.43	85,244.57	41.17	166,874.00	
► FOUNDATION REVENUE	20,718.60	0.00	0.00	20,718.60	0	20,718.60	
► B&A CARE REVENUE	96,000.00	0.00	250.00	95,750.00	0.26	70,000.00	
► REVENUE - ACTIVITIES	0.00	43,649.95	52,508.95	(52,509.00)	***	0.00	
Revenues	5,412,595.00	779,958.40	2,174,482.00	3,238,113.00	40.17	5,838,884.34	
Account	Budget	Period Activity	YTD Activity	Remaining Budget	% Used	EOY Projection	Notes
Expenses							
► SALARIES AND BONUSES	3,188,317.00	267,543.00	1,316,147.00	1,872,170.00	41.28	3,190,817.70	
► BENEFITS	674,566.30	55,779.50	267,983.00	406,583.30	39.73	674,757.30	
► BOOKS AND SUPPLIES	52,872.78	321.78	22,307.17	30,565.61	42.19	52,872.78	
► TECHNOLOGY	109,770.00	6,295.96	35,648.55	74,121.45	32.48	109,770.00	
► NON-CAP EQUIPMENT & LEASES	17,000.00	1,341.39	7,539.15	9,460.85	44.35	17,000.00	
► CONTRACTED STUDENT SERVICES	261,075.00	12,365.39	57,613.41	203,461.60	22.07	261,075.00	
► FIELD TRIPS/ACTIVITIES	13,150.00	2,665.77	38,933.06	(25,783.10)	296.07	13,150.00	
► STAFF DEVELOPMENT	0.00	0.00	965.00	(965.00)	***	0.00	
► ADMIN SERVICES	190,300.00	15,865.88	93,029.12	97,270.88	48.89	181,500.00	
► INSURANCES	46,342.00	0.00	35,246.00	11,096.00	76.06	46,342.00	
► FACILITIES	749,800.00	104,004.80	379,348.00	370,452.00	50.59	1,212,606.00	
► B&A CARE	60,707.50	5,938.57	15,767.08	44,940.42	25.97	60,707.50	
► CLUBS	3,066.75	0.00	0.00	3,066.75	0	3,066.75	
Expenses	5,366,968.00	472,122.00	2,270,527.00	3,096,441.00	42.31	5,823,665.03	
Surplus/(DEFICIT)	45,627.02	307,836.40	(96,044.80)	141,671.80	-2.13	15,219.31	
		0.84%				0.26%	

Balance Sheet

Fiscal Year: 2026 | Fiscal Month: November
Include Funds: All**Assets**

1X.10100.0000.00000.00000.000.0	Cash OP FCIT 6528	(85,284.39)
0.000.00000		
2X.10100.0000.00000.00000.000.0	Cash OP FCIT 6528	154,198.67
0.000.00000		
2X.10110.0000.00000.00000.000.0	Cash - Reserve 3637	2,229,616.24
0.000.00000		
2X.16110.0000.00000.00000.000.0	Security Deposit	15,658.00
0.000.00000		
36.10100.0000.00000.00000.000.000	Cash OP FCIT 6528	(90,783.45)
.000.00000		
3X.10100.0000.00000.00000.000.0	Cash OP FCIT 6528	59,673.40
0.000.00000		
5X.10100.0000.00000.00000.000.0	Cash OP FCIT 6528	497,209.70
0.000.00000		
	TOTAL Assets:	2,780,288.17

Liabilities

1X.20100.0000.00000.00000.000.0	Accounts Payable	732.14
0.000.00000		
2X.22820.0000.00000.00000.000.0	EEs' Flex Spending Deductions	(15,326.54)
0.000.00000		
3X.20100.0000.00000.00000.000.0	Accounts Payable	73.12
0.000.00000		
	TOTAL Liabilities:	(14,521.28)

Reserves and Equity

2X.29600.0000.00000.00000.000.0	Fund Equity	2,384,454.58
0.000.00000		
5X.29600.0000.00000.00000.000.0	Fund Equity	506,399.68
0.000.00000		
	TOTAL Reserves and Equity:	2,890,854.26

NET GAIN (LOSS): **(96,044.81)****TOTAL LIABILITIES / RESERVES / INCOME:** **2,780,288.17**

Fund 1X - State Funds
 Fund 2X - Local Funds
 Fund 3X - Federal Funds
 Fund 5X - Multiple Enterprise Fund (Before & After School Program)

11/30/2025 Account Balances	
Bank Account	Balance
The Exploris School Checking	\$655,070.44
The Exploris School Reserves	\$2,229,616.24
The Exploris School Foundation-Annual Fund	\$123,195.48
The Exploris School Foundation-Capital Campaign	\$227,683.53

THE EXPLORIS SCHOOL**Income Statement****Fiscal Year: 2026 Month: November****Include Fund(s): 1X, 2X, 36, 5X**

Fund	Beg. Balance	MTD Actual	YTD Actual
Fund 1X			
Revenue Total:	1,322,210.40	288,843.65	1,611,054.05
Expense Total:	1,336,073.67	360,996.91	1,697,070.58
Change in Fund 1X Balance:	(13,863.27)	(72,153.26)	(86,016.53)
Fund 2X			
Revenue Total:	18,198.35	478,954.92	497,153.27
Expense Total:	379,754.13	87,054.27	466,808.40
Change in Fund 2X Balance:	(361,555.78)	391,900.65	30,344.87
Fund 36			
Revenue Total:	48,164.43	11,500.00	59,664.43
Expense Total:	72,724.43	18,123.17	90,847.60
Change in Fund 36 Balance:	(24,560.00)	(6,623.17)	(31,183.17)
Fund 5X			
Revenue Total:	5,950.17	659.84	6,610.01
Expense Total:	9,852.36	5,947.63	15,799.99
Change in Fund 5X Balance:	(3,902.19)	(5,287.79)	(9,189.98)

Fund 1X - State Funds

Fund 2X - Local Funds

Fund 3X - Federal Funds

Fund 5X - Multiple Enterprise Fund (Before & After School Program)

Coversheet

Facilities

Section: II. Committee Reports

Item: F. Facilities

Purpose: FYI

Submitted by:

Related Material:

December 2025 BOARD_Exploris Facilities Update.pdf

Exploris - CapDev planning-early implementation extension proposal 12.17.2025.pdf



Exploris Facilities Update

December 18, 2025 | Board Update

Outline

- Monthly Updates
- Looking Ahead
 - Planned work on the Unified Campus Project





Monthly Updates

Monthly Updates

- Work has already begun on the following:
 - Revising timelines and budgets to reflect the next phases of work.
 - Coordination for upcoming Administrative Site Review (ASR) and Site Plan Review (SPR), key design and site plan review stages required to obtain a building permit.
 - *Moseley Architects have delivered their first draft of test fits. Review and revision is next.*
- Due Diligence items (ALTA, Civil, Geotech, Environmental) are being coordinated by Rosewood. These will lead us into the design and financing phases of our project.
 - *Working to secure 'reliance letters' on existing historical reports (environmental/geotech) to significantly reduce costs compared to commissioning new full reports. Reliance letter fees are estimated at ~\$500+ each, pending consultant responsiveness.*
 - *Rosewood has made recommendations for firms for due diligence items that are under review.*
 - *Geotech: Terracon flagged as recommended vendor due to affordability and site history (nearby parcels). Reviewing proposals from ECS and McAdams to confirm.*
- *The City has agreed to give conditional approval on the TIA/Traffic Management Plan. Morning and afternoon carpool details are being modified to fit their comfort level.*



Monthly Updates (continued)

- Josh is working on fleshing out a position profile for a Development Associate position, guided by CapDev's Campaign Readiness Report (delivered to us in December 2024).
 - This position would be responsible for strengthening our infrastructure for fundraising with the ultimate goal of setting us up for success with our upcoming Capital Campaign.
 - Funding for this position is being explored, as it currently cannot be supported by our operating budget.
 - *Pursuing temporary funding sources, such as grants or company sponsors, to cover this position for 1-2 years.*
 - The draft proposal was shared with CapDev and they have provided their notes.





Looking Ahead

Planned work on the Unified Campus Project

Site Review and Value Engineering

- Rosewood is coordinating with a local engineering firm to supply us with pro bono and reduced-cost work to begin the Administrative Site Review (ASR) and Site Plan Review (SPR) processes.
- Next steps:
 - Engaging an architect (Agreement is being negotiated by Rosewood and our attorney.)
 - *Architect engaged: Preliminary design review and test-fits for 450 and 670 student scenarios underway.*
 - Engaging a GC (Agreement is being negotiated by Rosewood and our attorney. *Update expected imminently.*)

Planned work on the Unified Campus Project

Site Review and Value Engineering
(cont.)

- Next steps (cont.)
 - Revising the project budget (including value engineering)
 - New 5-year Projections and Programming document created to support this.
 - *Current Total Project Budget estimated at ~\$27M (before New Markets Tax Credit offsets).*
 - *Pre-development costs estimated at \$2.7M (approx. 8% of total budget).*
 - *Team is analyzing debt capacity for both traditional and tax-exempt bond structures.*
 - *Implemented live pro-forma model tying project budget, loans (pre-dev, bridge, bond), and operating cash flow to determine equity contribution requirements.*
 - Developing a financing strategy

Planned work on the Unified Campus Project

Due Diligence and Design

- Design is scheduled to kick off in January 2026.
 - *Preliminary test-fits in progress; Deep design review scheduled for early January 2026.*
- We will work with our Architect to craft a plan for public input from our school community.
 - *Community Engagement Sessions: Targeted for December/Early January to gather input before schematic design begins.*
- Goal: Building permit granted by Feb. 2027.
 - *Construction timeline projected at 14 months (12-18 month range).*
 - *Construction financing closing targeted for Q1 2027 (requires building permit + signed contract).*
- *Strategic Risk Management*
 - *Contingency Planning: Modeling a 'Phased Approach' (450 students initially vs. 670 full capacity) to ensure project remains within debt capacity if costs escalate.*
 - *Height/Entitlement Risk: Current settlement caps height at 4 stories; Design team pursuing relief for 5-6 stories to accommodate 670 students on constrained site.*

Additional Information



Committee Member Bios

Committee Member Bios

Steve Edmundson:

Corporate Technology leader for 32 years. Certified Executive Project Manager (managed large, complex projects and contracts). Retired 2013.

Post retirement, Tech Director at Research Triangle High School. STEM focused Charter high school. Helped RTHS through construction and transition into their new facilities in 2016. After RTHS, I took on Tech support at Longleaf School of the Arts 2018-mid-2021. An arts focused Charter high school. I had planned to retire after RTHS but Longleaf needed help so I took on another school challenge. Planning to retire in 1-2 years, I ended up staying with Longleaf through COVID to help them through the tech challenges of remote instruction. Fully retired in June 2021.

Special interests include: Scouting. Scout leader for 15 years. St. Baldrick's Foundation, a non-profit focused on funding pediatric cancer research. Helping friends and neighbors with tech and house maintenance challenges.

My wife, Cindy, and I live in North Raleigh near Wake Forest. Cindy is a retired teacher. My kids both attended Charter schools.

I grew up in Kinston and Cary, NC. Graduated from Cary High School and NC State University, BSEE.



Committee Member Bios

Ryan Wehmann:

Who you are and how you're connected to Exploris: **My daughters-Natalie (2nd grade), & Elizabeth (Kindergarten) attend Exploris.**

Your profession: **Real Estate Development Program Manager**

Which skills do you have that you believe will lend most directly to our shared work on the Facilities Committee: **Real Estate entitlements, planning, design development, contract negotiations & contract management, construction management.**

Anything fun or interesting you think we should know about you: **I am a Raleigh native. I attended Douglas, Poe, & Powell Elementary, Carnage Middle, and Enloe High School. I was one of the first drivers of the Trolley Pub in Downtown Raleigh.**

Brent Francese:

1. Parent to 3 kids at Exploris (2 middle, 1 elementary) + spouse to teacher Jessie Francese (10 years at the school).
2. Creative Director, Carpenter Development Group, a small commercial and residential development company in downtown Raleigh.
3. Degree in architecture with experience in master planning and project management and design.
4. I once owned a running store, Runologie, that was underneath the middle school at 401 Hillsborough Street.



Committee Member Bios

Adam Cook

Who you are and how you're connected to Exploris: **I am a parent of an Exploris student. My son Calvin is in 3rd Grade**

Your profession: **I am a Planner for Wake County. A portion of my work entails reviewing new subdivision and development proposals for compliance with Wake County development requirements.**

Which skills do you have that you believe will lend most directly to our shared work on the Facilities Committee: **Experience working with the development community for projects in Wake County's planning jurisdiction**

Anything fun or interesting you think we should know about you: **I grew up in Kinston, went to College in Greenville (Go Pirates!) and worked for the City of Rocky Mount prior to working for Wake County**

Paul Dudzinski

Who you are and how you're connected to Exploris: **I'm a parent to three girls. My oldest daughter - Lilly is in 2nd grade at Exploris. My middle daughter Hazel will be in Kindergarten next year with my youngest Ella not too far behind.**

Your profession: **I work as a Risk Management Consultant / Forensic Accountant.**

Which skills do you have that you believe will lend most directly to our shared work on the Facilities Committee: **Background in risk management, accounting, finance and legal issues. I have previously investigated cases of fraud and corruption involving large construction projects, as well as legal disputes -- hopefully that'll be a useless skill! Also, a bit of a handyman and willing to get my hands dirty to help keep the facilities up and running.**

Anything fun or interesting you think we should know about you: **I'm originally from Wisconsin (go Packers) but have lived in many places. Had a couple years of high school in Wake Country at Athens Drive High School. Went to UNC Chapel Hill (go Tar Heels) and have lived in Atlanta, DC and Raleigh since then. My wife Annie is a school psychologist and avid Exploris volunteer. We're currently downtown Raleigh residents and you may see me biking Lilly home from school with one or more little sisters in tow!**



Keeping up with Requests

Shared Facilities Tracker

- Work is ongoing for this system.
- Using a Google Sheet to track requests and completed work.
- Shared amongst volunteers and staff members who can attend to specific tasks.

Example Tracker

1	Timestamp	Name or Email	Brief description of repair or improvement needed:	Campus:	Location:	Detailed description (optional):	Priority	Picture or other file:	Approx. Cost	Responsibility
2		Josh	Replace carpeting throughout both buildings	Middle Campus	Throughout		High			
3		Josh	Full Mold Testing	Middle Campus	Whole building	Professional mold testing needs to be done over the summer.	High			
4		Josh	Roof leak repairs	Middle Campus	Roof	We still have leaks nearly every time it rains. These need to be repaired.	High			York
5		Josh	Duct cleaning	Middle Campus	HVAC	York has told us that ductwork is cleaned regularly. We're going to verify this definitively OR get them cleaned.	High			
6		Josh	Bathroom repairs and beautification	Middle Campus	Bathrooms	Our bathrooms need some major attention.	High			Exploris
7		Josh	Water bottle filler on 1st floor	Middle Campus	1st floor		High		\$3,000.00	Exploris
8		Alexandra	White board for 8S	Middle Campus	8S	"one of the giant whiteboards in the back of 8S was removed. We would really appreciate it if the other one could be removed. These boards do not work--the markers do not erase. We need a real white board in the back of the 8S classroom. 2.5 yards wide by as large as possible height would be awesome."				Exploris



Current Leases

Staying put for the duration of our development project

- Our Elementary landlord has indicated that they are enthusiastic about us staying put until we can move into our new building.
 - I have reached out to secure a 3-year lease renewal, if the landlord is amenable to that.
- Our Middle landlord is increasing our rents considerably for the next 3 years. We were able to negotiate the lowest possible rent for the next 3 and have executed the lease renewal.



The Work of the Committee

What does the Facilities Committee do?

More than just find our new home!

- Maintain and improve our current facilities
 - Coordination work
 - On-the-ground improvement tasks
 - Fundraising efforts
- Shepherding our Unified Campus Project
 - Dreaming big, staying grounded
 - LOTS of moving parts, so staying engaged with communication (i.e., emails and possibly chats) is imperative



Rosewood's Role in our Unified Campus Project

Recognizing the Need & Finding the Right Partner

Closing the Skills Gap

- **Facing Project Complexity:** Initial efforts revealed the challenges of large-scale development in Raleigh's market.
- **Acknowledging a Skills Gap:** Real estate development requires specialized expertise beyond our internal capacity.
- **Securing Essential Expertise:** Rosewood provides the experienced representation needed to navigate this complex project effectively (since March 2023).
 - They work with urban non-profits, a niche market in the Development space.
- **Sharpening Our Focus:** This partnership allows school leadership to focus more of their attention on education, while Rosewood expertly manages the campus project.

Rosewood in Action

Driving Tangible Progress

- **Driving Kindley Street Due Diligence:** Rosewood managed complex site evaluations, traffic studies (TIA/TDM), and City coordination.
- **Strategic Site Selection:** Assessed 27 sites, recommending Kindley Street as the optimal location for our goals.
- **Proactive Coordination & Negotiation:** Coordinated with adjacent developer (CCUD) to improve our site position (height, shared plans, shared use potential).
- **Initiating Key Financial Benefits (NMTC):** Started the complex New Markets Tax Credit process to significantly reduce the project's long-term cost to the school.

Securing Our Future Campus

Rosewood's Planned Leadership

- **Comprehensive Financial Management:** Overseeing all project financing: underwriting, funding acquisition, budgeting, and updates.
- **Expert NMTC Leadership:** Leading the full NMTC process to secure tax credits and maximize financial benefits for Exploris.
- **Detailed Schedule & Project Oversight:** Developing and managing project schedules for due diligence and closing to keep us on track.
- **Optional Construction Phase Leadership:** Offers continued expert support through construction for seamless project completion, if needed.
- **Focused on Our Goal:** All efforts are dedicated to successfully delivering our Unified Campus.

Typical Costs of Development Representation

Development Firm	Monthly Cost	Cost Structure
Rosewood	\$12,000	Fixed rate, not tied to overall project budget.
Rosewood (without Exploris discount)	\$18,000	Fixed rate, not tied to overall project budget.
Previous Firm engaged by Exploris	~\$37,000	Fee tied to overall project budget. Higher rate; not charged up front. Some upfront costs would be absorbed by the firm and charged on the backend.





The use of the Capital Fund for Pre-development Work

Our Strategic Foundation

The 2017 Capital Fund

- **Building Our Foundation (2017):** A successful Capital Campaign, boosted by school contributions, created a dedicated fund of approximately \$590k.
- **A Dedicated Resource:** These funds were restricted, meaning they could only be used for costs tied directly to our Unified Campus Project.
- **Planning for Our Future Home:** This foresight provided essential capital specifically intended for finding and preparing our future school site.

Putting Funds to Work for Kindley Street

Prudent Stewardship of Funds

- **Targeted Pre-Development Spending:** Funds were carefully spent only on allowable expenses crucial for searching for and evaluating potential campus sites near Downtown.
- **Essential Groundwork:** Key investments included:
 - Development Support (site identification/assessment, NMTC start-up, sourcing expert help)
 - Traffic Site Analysis & Approval
 - Property Taxes
 - Legal Fees & Feasibility Study
- **Focusing on Our Chosen Site:** These necessary expenditures allowed us to perform vital due diligence and prepare the Kindley Street property.

Paving the Way Forward

The Impact of Our Investment

- **Critical Funding for Progress:** This Capital Account was absolutely essential, enabling us to secure, assess, and move forward with the Kindley Street lot.
- **Protecting School Resources:** Using these dedicated funds strategically meant we avoided draining daily operating budgets or taking on early project debt.
- **Strengthening Our Financial Position:** This approach preserved operational funds and put us in a stronger position for the upcoming major Bond Financing phase.
- **A Clear Path to Our Goal:** The prudent use of these 2017 funds successfully laid the necessary groundwork, creating the path forward to our unified "forever home."

Capital Fund Expenditures

- **Legal:** \$3,681.50 (the School paid all of the legal costs of the litigation and settlement for Kindley Street)
- **Traffic Site Analysis and Approval:** \$66,869.60
- **Development Support:** \$397,534.05. This includes:
 - Site identification and assessment
 - New Markets Tax Credit initiation and startup
 - Sourcing pro bono and reduced-cost pre-development engineering support (e.g., test fits and site plans)
 - Rosewood's portion over two years: \$297,200.00
- **Property Taxes:** \$74,713.21
- **Capital Campaign Feasibility Study:** \$28,000



Trusted Advisors in Philanthropy and Executive Search

The Exploris School

Proposal for Extension of Services

December 17, 2025



KNOWLEDGE • DEDICATION • RESULTS

Capital Development Services • CapDev.com • 336-747-0133

915 West Fourth Street, Suite 100, Winston-Salem, NC 27101

Powered by BoardOnTrack

46 of 67

Capital Development Services

December 17, 2025

Josh Corbat, Director of Resources
The Exploris School
401 Hillsborough St.
Raleigh, NC 27603-1791

Dear Josh:

On behalf of the staff at Capital Development Services, thank you for the opportunity to continue assisting The Exploris School with its fundraising needs. We commend the leadership for its work and vision and welcome the opportunity to further our engagement.

Capital Development Services is submitting for your consideration the following proposal to provide an extension of counsel services for the planning, preparation, and initial implementation of your capital campaign.

Please feel free to contact me directly at 336-671-7056 if you have any questions regarding this proposal. Thank you, and we look forward to further discussions.

Sincerely,



Ann Bennett Phillips
President

cc: Allan Burrows, CEO
Jennifer Sullivan, Senior Counsel

Campaign Purpose:

The Exploris School, an independent public charter institution in downtown Raleigh, has been serving students in grades K-8 for over 25 years. Our engagement aims to support the school's mission by offering strategic development and campaign guidance as it prepares for a capital campaign. The ultimate goal of this campaign is to consolidate the elementary and middle school campuses into a unified, central campus.

Partnership Recommendation:

Capital Development Services proposes that The Exploris School retain our company's services for a total of **24 days** for capital campaign guidance over the next **six months**.

- **An average of 4 days per month in January, February, March, April, May, and June 2025**

The primary focus of our services will be to guide the planning and early implementation phase of your capital campaign. Services provided will include, but are not limited to, the following:

Extension Services Overview

IMPLEMENTING ASSESSMENT RECOMMENDATIONS AND BUILDING DEVELOPMENT INFRASTRUCTURE

Capital Development Services will lead the implementation of the priority assessment recommendations, ensuring the establishment of a strong infrastructure that positions The Exploris School for long-term philanthropic success. We will ensure that all policies, procedures, databases, and campaign budgets are in place while also preparing and equipping staff and leadership to effectively manage the campaign. Additionally, Capital Development Services can assist in training staff members to support the increased workload during the campaign. A dedicated campaign staff member will be essential in managing the tasks required for the successful planning, execution, and management of the campaign.

Capital Development Services will support and guide school and volunteer leadership, as well as new hires(s), in developing the school's fundraising best practices and building a comprehensive development program.

Recognizing the intense pressures that a capital campaign will place on The Exploris School's staff and resources, it will be essential, early in the preparation process, to execute infrastructural adjustments and investments needed to support a successful capital campaign.

CASE FOR SUPPORT AND CAPITAL CAMPAIGN MARKETING MATERIALS

The importance of a case for support and marketing materials that “sell” The Exploris School’s values and impact cannot be overstated. The case for support will become the basis of all marketing materials to educate potential donors and leaders to the vision and value of your campaign and the justification of how funds raised will be spent.

Capital Development Services will support the staff, leadership, and volunteers as they update and enhance the initial case for support with the suggestions from the Campaign Readiness Assessment. Furthermore, we will work strategically with your marketing team to guide and assist you in the development of your campaign marketing and collateral materials that will be needed in the implementation phase, including campaign brochure, pledge card, naming opportunities, ways to give, presentations, and other materials such as an “FAQ” document.

CREATE A CAMPAIGN STEERING COMMITTEE

Capital Development Services recommends convening a Campaign Steering Committee, as noted in the campaign readiness assessment, from the board of directors as well as other community leaders or past board members. They will meet monthly during the capital campaign planning phase and will work closely with our team and The Exploris Schools' leadership and staff to implement the recommendations in the campaign readiness assessment report. The committee will be specifically responsible for:

- Revising the case for support and developing and approving campaign marketing materials.
- Approving a campaign budget, gift policies and timetable.
- Approving a campaign gift chart and donor naming and recognition opportunities.
- Approving the campaign leadership organizational chart and identify and enlist additional campaign leaders, including campaign chair(s).
- Identifying, rating and evaluating lead gift prospects and assigning teams responsible for lead donors.
- Developing donor cultivation and solicitation strategies for momentum and lead gifts.

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN LEADERSHIP IDENTIFICATION, EVALUATION, RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

The most critical component of any campaign is the ability and commitment of its leadership. Among all other factors, we believe that leadership will have the most significant impact on The Exploris School’s fundraising success. Your capacity to recruit committed leadership will ultimately determine the capital campaign’s schedule, goal and success.

The time devoted toward leadership identification, cultivation and enlistment in this stage of campaign planning will also prove most beneficial as a cultivation tool for leadership gifts as the campaign is launched. Capital Development Services will work with the staff and the Campaign Steering Committee to develop a comprehensive campaign leadership

structure specific to The Exploris School. Leadership candidates for key positions, including honorary and campaign chairs, within the campaign organizational model will be listed, and recruitment strategies will be outlined and implemented during the preparation phase.

In training volunteer and staff leadership, the purpose is to educate both volunteers and staff on the 'philosophy' of asking for a gift, and to increase an overall comfort level with volunteers and staff who often have a 'fear' in asking someone to give. Remember, it is a 'cultivated prospect' that is the best potential donor, so part of the training is also making solicitors aware of when to ask. Training varies from clients based upon their needs, their volunteer structure, etc., but generally, we provide training to volunteers and staff on the following:

- A. Overview of campaign goals and objectives
- B. Understanding the "art of the ask"
- C. Process of a successful solicitation
- D. Board, campaign leaders and staff roles in a campaign
- E. Q/A and follow-up

DONOR PROSPECT IDENTIFICATION, EVALUATION, CULTIVATION AND SOLICITATION STRATEGIES

There will be many donors who will participate financially in your campaign. However, less than 40-50 contributors will likely represent 80% of your goal. Consequently, the need to identify, verify and develop cultivation and solicitation strategies on the campaign's top major donor prospects will prove critical to the capital campaign's success.

Capital Development Services will work with the staff and Campaign Steering Committee to build upon the current list of lead and major donor prospects. This ongoing prospect identification and research will help identify relationships that exist between your current leadership and the prospective donors and will be the most time-consuming work of your campaign.

Capital Development Services recommends that The Exploris School provide cultivation/education opportunities for the top donor prospects to ensure they understand and appreciate the campaign vision and needs. While many of these major donor prospects know The Exploris School, one-on-one meetings will be essential for certain donor prospects, while small group events will be more effective with others to ensure donors fully understand the campaign priorities and the impact. Cultivation not only ensures a solicitor's success but increases the likelihood for larger gifts.

Capital Development Services will give guidance and support to board gift solicitations to ensure 100% board support and strong momentum in the initial campaign implementation.

OVERALL STRATEGIC CAPITAL CAMPAIGN GUIDANCE AND DIRECTION

We have recommended a "co-management system" where staff, leadership and fundraising counsel meet on a regular basis to review the capital campaign status and to discuss and develop action on critical areas to move the campaign forward. Capital Development Services will assist in organizing and conducting meetings and evaluation sessions with both staff and leadership to ensure the efficiency and productivity of each meeting. Counsel's experience and know-how is critical to this process to help anticipate issues before they become concerns and to be proactive in implementing actions to ensure continued momentum and progress.

SERVICE SUMMARY OF TIME, FEES AND CAPDEV TEAM

It is understood and agreed that Capital Development Services will provide a total of **24 days** (equal to 192 hours) of support to The Exploris School from **January 1, 2026, through June 30, 2026**. This contracted fee will be paid by The Exploris School to Capital Development Services in monthly installments of:

- **\$10,000 per month in January, February, March, April, May, and June 2025**

Expenses such as travel, telephone, printing, etc. will be billed separately each month.

In conjunction with the services of Capital Development Services, we expect The Exploris School to be directly responsible for the success of the capital campaign efforts. Staff and leadership will need to participate in regular meetings and conference calls to work through the aforementioned recommendations. ***Capital Development Services shall not, at any time, have control or custody of contributions.***

Jennifer Sullivan will serve as senior counsel, while Allan Burrows, CEO, Maggi Jackson, Director of Client Services, and I will lend time and expertise as determined by you and the senior counsel. Our team is dedicated to help ensure a strong and sustainable philanthropic program.

Capital Development Services will provide, upon request, a monthly report of time spent toward time contracted. If more or less time is deemed necessary by The Exploris School or by Capital Development Services at any time, with 30 days' notice, new arrangements can be made.

**Interest at a rate of 18% per annum will be charged on all fee balances past due more than thirty (30) days. It is agreed that The Exploris School will not employ any current or former Capital Development Services staff member or Capital Development Services contractor within 12 months of the termination of this contract agreement unless by mutual consent.*

**In the event The Exploris School defaults in the payment of any sum due here within, The Exploris School shall be responsible to reimburse Capital Development Services for any court costs and/or attorneys' fees incurred by Capital Development Services in enforcing its rights hereunder.*

If these arrangements meet with your approval, please sign below and return a copy to our office for confirmation. We remain committed to The Exploris School and look forward to our continued relationship.

Capital Development Services

Sincerely,



December 17, 2025

Date

Ann Bennett Phillips, President
Capital Development Services

Date

Josh Corbat
The Exploris School

Date

Representative
The Exploris School

FLEXIBILITY IS KEY TO GOOD RELATIONSHIPS:

AT CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT SERVICES, WE WORK IN PHASES, GIVING THE OPPORTUNITY TO ADJUST
THE AMOUNT OF COUNSEL TIME UP OR DOWN AS NEEDED EVERY 30 DAYS THROUGHOUT THE
PROCESS.

Coversheet

Directors Report

Section:	V. Meeting Items
Item:	A. Directors Report
Purpose:	Vote
Submitted by:	
Related Material:	Exploris Student Device Damage Protection Plan (1).pdf December 2025 Exploris Leadership Team Board Report (1).pdf Remote Charter Academy Application Plan_Dec. 2025.pdf December 2025 Report on Family Feedback.pdf



Introduction

Exploris students learn the skills and dispositions necessary to navigate the ever-changing digital landscape and leverage their strengths with digital tools to drive improvements in the world around them. Technology costs remain high, and we hold firmly that students should have ample access to school-provided devices whenever necessary for learning. As such, accidental damage occurs as students move around their space with technology in hand, sometimes causing us to lean on families to fund repairs and replacements.

The Student Device Damage Protection Plan is designed to provide families with an optional means to mitigate the costs associated with device repairs and replacements. The terms of the Plan are outlined below.

Cost

To opt into the Student Device Damage Protection Plan, families will make a one-time, annual donation of **\$50** directly to The Exploris School. Payments will be made via cash or check or via the school's PayPal account. Please [click here](#) to make an online payment via PayPal. [INSERT LINK]

Terms and Conditions

Upon receipt of payment, families will be notified via email that their plan has been activated. This email will come directly from Google and requires families to complete a short enrollment survey following payment. Please allow PayPal to redirect you to the survey upon payment.

Families must opt in and make the \$50 donation for each student enrolled at Exploris. The plan covers repairs and replacements for a single student during a single school year.

Repairs

Upon successful plan enrollment, repairs will be completed for student devices at no cost to families. Cumulative repairs totaling more than \$200 will require an additional **\$25** payment from the family for additional repairs in a single school year.

Replacements

Upon successful plan enrollment, a single device replacement will be covered for the current school year. Additional replacements in the same school year will require a one-time **\$150** payment, roughly half the cost of a new device.



The Exploris School

Directors Report



To: Board Members
From: Ethan, Josh, & Deb
Re: Monthly Board Report

Date: December 15th, 2025

The following information is provided to the Board of Directors:

Enrollment

Grade Level	Number for Full Enrollment	Target Crew Sizes	Current Enrollment	2026-2027 Applications (Lottery opened in late November)	2025-2026 Applications as of 12/18/24
Kindergarten	34	17	30	32	38
1 st Grade	36	18	36	2	11
2 nd Grade	38	19	33	3	3
3 rd Grade	38	19	38	3	6
4 th Grade	38	19	38	4	7
5 th Grade	38	19	35	6	10
6 th Grade	76	19	64	15	30
7 th Grade	76	19	78	2	3
8 th Grade	76	19	77	3	3
Total	450		429	70	111

Note: Although we are underenrolled, we do not anticipate being able to enroll additional students for the remainder of the year, as the first trimester has ended.

Student Support Team Report

Month	In School Suspension # students / # days	Out of School Suspension # students / # days	Major referrals that did not result in suspension # students / # referrals	Minor Behavior Referrals # students / # referrals
August	ES: 0/0 MS: 0/0	ES: 0/0 MS: 0/0	ES: 4/10 MS: 1/1	ES: 5/8 MS: 7/7
September	ES: 0/0 MS: 2/2	ES: 0/0 MS: 0/0	ES: 4/10 MS: 0/0	ES: 5/8 MS: 4/3
October	ES: 0/0 MS: 2/.5	ES: 0/0 MS: 1/2	ES: 4/10 MS: 1/1	ES: 5/8 MS: 2/2
November	combined	with	December's	totals
December	ES: 3/1.5	ES: 1/.5	ES: 6/11	ES: 21/36

	MS: 3/4	MS: 4/5	MS: 3/3	MS: 45/50
January				
February				
March				
April				
May				
June				
TOTALS				

Campus Updates

- Exploris is a finalist for a large grant from Great Schools, NC and had hosted the adjudicators for a site visit on Nov. 13th. We should learn in January if we are receiving the award.
- 3 of our teachers had spring 2025 math EOG scores high enough to receive a bonus from the state!
- Staff Professional Development: Nakama Groups. We are kicking off another round of “Nakama” groups. (Japanese for "camaraderie" or "affinity.") Staff were offered their choice of assorted topics and book studies and will have 5 sessions throughout the spring, including *AI Explorations*, *Building Thinking Classrooms*, the book *Feedback* by Jane Pollack, *Mindfulness & Active Listening*, *Modify, Motivate, and Maximize*, *Technology Superpowers*, and the book *James* by Percival Everett. All sessions are designed and led by Exploris admin, support, and teachers.
- Individual Staff Professional development: In addition to our planned PD activities for all staff, we have approved and been able to fund individual PD requests:
 - Jessica R. and Michelle D. completed a three-day Train-the-Trainer program and are now certified trainers through the Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI). They can both now lead trainings for staff on a variety of de-escalation techniques.
 - Emily completed professional development in Restorative Practices for Educators and School Leaders through Responsive Classroom.
 - Lauren attended Teaching the History of the Holocaust in Chapel Hill on 11/6
 - Paradise & Tasha attended The North Carolina Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCCTM) annual fall conference on 11/13 and 11/14
 - Deb completed the fall portfolio and attended the winter retreat for the NC Education Policy Fellowship on Dec. 4th & 5th
- On October 21st, all of our new staff participated in observation rounds, where they have scheduled and guided visits to classrooms on both campuses, followed by a debriefing with Leah and Michelle P.
- We have completed the first round of the NC Check Ins assessments and are using that data to drive updates to core instruction and determine any needed interventions for individual students.
- We have been working successfully with Canny as a feedback tool for both teachers and PTO and plan to roll out to families once we work out the kinks.
- Our first set of documents for our charter renewal, including the self-study, the charter updates, discipline policies, and Board compliance, as well as the renewal fee, have all been submitted. Next up will be coordinated site visits and focus groups.
- Leadership provided guidance and with our counseling team, also SEL support for the reported ICE activities in our area, including guidance on how to respond, if needed, and outreach for families who were afraid to attend school.

Community Events

- We have kicked off our admissions activities for the 2026-2027 school year.
 - The application is open. The deadline for applications to be included in the lottery is February 6.

- Weekly tours are being held every Wednesday at the Middle Campus and every Thursday at the Elementary Campus.
- One information session has already been held, and another is scheduled for January 6th. These are also recorded and available on the website.
- We're working with Nonprofit Megaphone to boost our website search rankings and advertise via the Google Ad Grant. NPM has also provided us with 6 months of free Visitor Tracking, which provides email addresses for all site visitors. We're using this to reach out to folks directly.
- Josh is working on a new tool to better engage with families and guide them through the application and enrollment processes. We've received feedback that families feel disengaged through the lottery and enrollment phases, so this will help us keep in touch with them.
- We're putting together a group of Family Ambassadors to help us promote our school in the new year.
- We had great participation for our fall Spirit Week and another amazing Fall festival with an impressive turnout!
- School was closed or delayed for weather on 12/5, and closed on 12/8 and 12/9. We have enough banked hours to cover those closures, and have a plan for remote learning if we exceed those banked hours. Schools can use up to 5 remote learning days provided they have an approved digital learning plan on file with DPI, which we do.
- The 3rd-grade students attended a performance of *The Nutcracker* at Meredith College, followed by a campus tour and lunch at the student dining hall.
- The elementary school will present a spring musical, *Madagascar Jr.* Auditions were held during the first two weeks of December. Rehearsals will take place primarily during Explorations in Trimesters 2 and 3, with final performances scheduled for the first or second week of May.
- UDHR: Exploris participated in our tradition of reciting the entire United Nations Declaration of Human Rights on Friday Dec. 12th at Raleigh's Freedom Park. The celebration featured each 8th grader reciting one of the articles, each 7th grader presenting a piece of original artwork that illustrated the article, a performance by the Exploris Choir, and our special guest speaker Donovan Livingston, the UNC Chapel Hill Poet Laureate and professor, and spoken word artist, who presented an original poem and offered congratulatory and celebratory remarks for our students and the gathered guests. Special shout out to the 7th and 8th grade teams and our art program for their work to bring this event to life each year.
- Exploris parent and videographer Brooke Bryant donated her services to create 3 videos for Exploris following an Instagram sensation of giving kids a microphone and asking them to say one piece of good news/one happy thing that has happened lately. The videos showcase our student's caring, connections, and diversity (and are just a lot of fun!) and will be posted on all our socials and used in our marketing campaigns.
- Winter Community Circle: Every elementary grade participated in a winter or holiday-themed performance, followed by a 3 song violin concert by Emerson (2nd Grade) and Ellis (4th Grade) Fioto.
- Expressions Day
- Deb is working on a connection with the Raleigh Chamber of Commerce that will help with community partnerships and a school-career day event.

Human Resources Update

Staff Departures		
Name	Position	Notes
None		
New Hires for Approval		
Name	Position	Notes
None		

Internal Position Changes
None

Current & Anticipated Vacancies for 25-26 School Year
None

Important Dates (Board Attendance Welcome/Requested)



Board Proposal: Application for Remote Charter Academy (RCA) - 2026-27

Executive Summary & Problem Statement

The Leadership Team requests Board approval to submit an application to the NC Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) to open a Remote Charter Academy (RCA) for the 2026-27 school year. This strategic initiative directly addresses three critical challenges facing our organization:

1. **Heightened Competition:** We are experiencing higher competition in Wake County and statewide than ever before in the school choice landscape.
2. **Evolving Family Needs:** Many families seek creative, innovative alternatives to traditional schooling. To stay competitive and responsive, we must offer a high-quality, flexible learning environment that meets these families where they are.
3. **Financial Sustainability:** Facilities costs in Downtown Raleigh are higher than ever before, with little reason to believe we'll see any reprieve soon. A remote option creates a revenue stream that allows us to upgrade our overall program (e.g., technology, software-based offerings, teacher- and student-support systems) for *all* students, not just those in the remote academy.

Application Overview

- **Submission Deadline:** Thursday, January 15, 2026, at 5:00 PM EST.
- **Submission Method:** Epicenter (Requires manual task request).
- **Core Deliverables:**
 1. Application Form (Enrollment projections, statutory compliance).
 2. RCA Budget (Must prove viability and include mandated staffing).
 3. Remote Instruction Plan (Comprehensive academic and operational guide).

Action Plan: Road to January 15th

To meet the deadline while respecting the Winter Break closure, the following work breakdown structure will be executed.

Phase 1: Initiation (Today & Tomorrow: Dec 18 - Dec 19)

- **Board of Directors:** Vote to approve the application submission (Today).
- **Leadership Team:**
 - Email Julie Whetzel (NCDPI) to request the Epicenter task immediately.
 - Submit official Board minutes confirming approval.
 - **CRITICAL:** Finalize enrollment projections (Grade levels & Total ADM) before leaving for break. *CSP cannot build the budget in January without these numbers.*



Winter Break (Dec 20 - Jan 4)

- *No work scheduled.*

Phase 2 (concurrent with Phase 3): Content Development (Jan 5 - Jan 10)

- **Leadership Team / Educational Excellence Committee:** * Deliverable: *Remote Instruction Plan (Academic Section).*
 - Define "Characteristics of a Successful Remote Learner" and admission criteria.
 - Select curriculum sources for all grades.
 - Create a sample weekly schedule for remote students.
 - Develop the Professional Development plan for remote pedagogy.
- **Director of Resources:** * Deliverable: *Technology Infrastructure Plan.*
 - Select Learning Management System (LMS) (e.g., Infinite Campus, Google Classroom).
 - Identify hardware/software packages to be provided to every student.
 - Design the technical support structure (Help desk availability).
- **Leadership Team:** * Deliverable: *Operational Compliance Plan.*
 - Draft policies for monitoring daily attendance, calendar compliance, and credit accrual.
 - Develop the parent communication plan regarding admission/requirements.

Phase 3 (concurrent with Phase 2): Financial & Staffing (Jan 5 - Jan 10)

- **Business Manager & Charter Success Partners (CSP):** * Deliverable: *RCA Budget.*
 - Collaborate to build a budget immediately upon return, using the projections finalized in Phase 1.
 - Ensure inclusion of **statutorily required** specific staff:
 - Instructional Technology Facilitator
 - School Library Media Coordinator
 - Data Manager
 - Remote Technical Support Staff

Phase 4: Review & Submission (Jan 11 - Jan 15)

- **Leadership Team:**
 - Consolidate all deliverables into the final PDF application.
 - Conduct final review of the "Remote Instruction Plan" to ensure alignment with our mission.
 - **Submission:** Upload all documents to Epicenter before 5:00 PM on Jan 15th.





Our Community, Our Vision: A Report on Family-School Engagement at Exploris

Part 1: Highlights & Summary

A. A Message of Gratitude

To our Exploris families, faculty, and board members, thank you. Your active and thoughtful participation in our recent Family-School Relationships Survey, Town Hall events, and community Focus Groups has provided us with invaluable insight. Your voices, ideas, and experiences are the foundation of our community, and we are deeply grateful for your partnership in shaping the future of our school. This report is a reflection of what we heard and a testament to our shared commitment to empowering learners to improve our world.

B. Our Key Findings at a Glance

- **Celebrating the Exploris Experience:** Our community deeply values our unique project-based learning model, global perspective, and strong teacher-student relationships.
- **Strengthening Our Partnership:** There is a strong desire for more flexible, meaningful ways for families to engage and for clearer, more centralized communication.
- **Building Our Future Home:** Securing a permanent, unified K-8 campus is a top priority, reflecting our shared commitment to creating exceptional learning spaces.
- **Living Our Mission Together:** The feedback overwhelmingly affirms our core mission and provides a clear roadmap for how we can live it more fully together.

C. The Path Forward

This collective feedback is more than just data; it is the cornerstone of our strategic direction. The insights gathered are already shaping the final drafts of our **2025-2030 Strategic Vision** and our **School Improvement Plan (SIP)**. By grounding our future plans in the authentic voice of our community, we ensure that as we grow, we do so in a way that honors our legacy, strengthens our partnership, and continues to make Exploris an exceptional place to learn and thrive.



Part 2: Introduction: Listening, Learning, and Leading Together

At Exploris, we believe that our greatest strength is our community. To ensure our path forward reflects the aspirations and needs of our families, we embarked on a comprehensive listening tour this fall. This initiative was designed to gather feedback on every aspect of the Exploris experience, from classroom instruction to long-term facility planning, reaffirming our commitment to a model of shared leadership and continuous improvement.

To hear from as many voices as possible, we utilized a multi-faceted approach. This included **This Fall's Family-School Relationships Survey**, which provided a broad quantitative and qualitative snapshot of community sentiment. We also hosted dynamic, conversational **May and October Town Hall events** to engage in real-time dialogue with families, leadership, and the board. Finally, we convened a series of **November Focus Groups** to dive deeper into key themes that emerged, allowing for candid, small-group discussions to explore challenges and co-create solutions.

The purpose of this report is to transparently share what we heard through these channels. It is an exercise in accountability and collaboration, intended to synthesize the key themes from your feedback, demonstrate how these insights are shaping our school's strategic direction, and outline the concrete next steps we will take on our collaborative journey. This process ensures our strategic plans are not just documents created by leadership, but living frameworks built with and for our community.

What follows is a detailed analysis of the four primary themes that emerged from your feedback.

Part 3: What We Heard: Key Themes from Our Community

3.1 Theme I: Academic Excellence & The Exploris Experience

Across every feedback platform, families expressed a profound appreciation for the school's unique educational philosophy. The core elements that define an Exploris education—experiential learning, global-mindedness, and deep relationships—are not only recognized but deeply cherished. This feedback affirms that our mission is alive and well in our classrooms and in the experiences of our students.

What We Celebrate

- **Project-Based and Experiential Learning:** Families consistently celebrate our commitment to hands-on learning. Town Hall discussions highlighted that Exploris is a school "built on experiential learning" that uses the "city as a classroom." This was echoed in survey responses praising the effectiveness of project-based learning in preparing students to engage with the world with confidence.
- **Strong Teacher-Student Relationships:** The power of our small, nurturing community was a constant theme. As noted in the October Town Hall, Exploris is a place "where students feel known, supported, and safe." Survey respondents lauded teachers for "knowing the name and personality of child" and for creating a welcoming environment starting at morning drop-off.



- **Global Perspective:** Our commitment to developing global citizens is a point of pride. The October Town Hall celebrated our unique international partnerships, which allow students to travel and host peers from other cultures. A note from our sister school in Japan, expressing hope that our students can be "a bridge for world peace," powerfully illustrates the impact of this work.
- **Developing "Good Humans":** Ultimately, families value that an Exploris education develops character alongside intellect. One parent's sentiment at the October Town Hall captured this perfectly, sharing that they chose our school because it develops confident students who grow into "really good humans."

Opportunities for Growth

- **Clarity on Academic Progress:** While appreciative of our relationship-based approach, some parents expressed a desire for more detailed information on academic progress. Survey feedback noted a wish for more frequent updates beyond report cards, such as "graded assessments sent home" or progress reports on academic interventions. This desire for more granular data represents an opportunity for us to better communicate the incredible academic *growth* our students achieve—a story our exemplary state growth scores tell, but one that can sometimes be obscured by traditional report cards.
- **Expanding Student Experiences:** Families see opportunities to enrich student life even further. Survey comments included suggestions for more extracurricular activities, particularly sports and clubs, to enhance student belonging and provide more avenues for social connection.
- **Maintaining the "Explore" in Exploris:** A passionate survey respondent urged us not to lose "the Explore in Exploris," emphasizing the founding philosophy of getting "kids out of the classroom" and into the world. This feedback serves as an important reminder to protect and prioritize the experiential core of our model.

Alignment with Our Vision

Your feedback provides a clear mandate for the **"Joyful Learning"** goal in our new **2025-2030 Strategic Vision**. Your celebration of project-based learning has directly shaped our strategic focus on implementing "research-backed innovative teaching methods." This is why **Target #1** of our **School Improvement Plan (SIP)**, which aims to "Improve quality and relevance of academic experiences," is a top priority. The SIP's specific action to "Track Field Experiences, Service Learning and Explorations" is a direct response to what you have told us you value most, ensuring we measure and protect the experiences that make Exploris unique.

This deep appreciation for our academic model is intrinsically linked to the partnerships that make it possible.



3.2 Theme II: Communication & Partnership

A strong, transparent partnership between home and school is critical to student success and was a significant topic of discussion across all platforms. While families appreciate the dedication of our teachers, there is a clear and consistent call to streamline communication channels and increase transparency on key operational and governance matters.

What We Celebrate

- **Effective Teacher Communication:** The vast majority of survey respondents either "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" that they receive effective communication from their student's teachers, highlighting the strength of these direct relationships.
- **Welcoming Daily Interactions:** Families appreciate the informal communication that builds community, with survey comments praising the weekly newsletters and the "energetic at morning drop off" environment where teachers "welcome my kids by name!"

Opportunities for Growth

- **Centralized Information:** The most prominent piece of feedback was a strong desire to consolidate information. A parent in a Focus Group described the ideal as a "one-stop shop," while another called for a single "digital hub" app for all communications, calendars, and sign-ups. Survey comments reinforced this, noting that information is currently spread across too many platforms, including Substack, Slack, and multiple email threads.
- **Increased Transparency:** Feedback from the May Town Hall and the survey called for greater transparency from school leadership and the board. Specific areas mentioned include the public posting of board meeting details, clear reporting on school finances (such as Fun Run funds and field trip payments), and a more open process for leadership evaluation.
- **Advance Notice for Events:** Working parents, in both the survey and focus groups, emphasized the need for more advance notice for school events and volunteer opportunities. Providing dates and details earlier allows families with less flexible schedules to plan accordingly and participate more fully.

Alignment with Our Vision

Your feedback provides a clear mandate, which is why we have made **Target #4** of our SIP, "Increase stakeholder satisfaction with school communications and engagement opportunities," a top priority. Your call for streamlined communication is being answered directly through our plan to "Analyze and Improve community outreach, access, and communication systems" and to "Conduct a communications assessment survey." These steps demonstrate that school leadership is actively working to address the exact issues raised by our community, with the goal of building a more streamlined, transparent, and effective communication ecosystem.

Improving how we communicate is the first step toward deepening how we connect as a community.



3.3 Theme III: Building a Stronger Community

The "spirit of Exploris is found in our people," a sentiment shared at the October Town Hall, was echoed in every conversation. Our community is our greatest asset, and there is a shared desire among families to find more and better ways to connect with each other, contribute their talents, and strengthen the bonds that make our school a true community.

What We Celebrate

- **A Nurturing Environment:** Families value the "wraparound" support that our small school provides, ensuring students' social and emotional needs are met. This was a key point of pride in the October Town Hall.
- **Valued Engagement Opportunities:** Existing opportunities are highly valued. Focus group participants mentioned appreciation for events like Explorations, the SPCA drive, and community cleanups as meaningful ways to get involved.
- **Fostering Student Belonging:** Survey responses highlighted that students feel a strong sense of belonging, thanks to foundational practices like crew time, the buddy system between older and younger students, and the simple but powerful act of teachers greeting them by name.

Opportunities for Growth

- **Flexible and Meaningful Volunteer Roles:** A dominant theme in the Focus Groups and survey was the need for volunteer opportunities that fit modern family life. Parents expressed a strong desire for "bite-sized tasks" and "skill-based volunteering" that allow them to contribute their unique talents without requiring large blocks of time.
- **Overcoming Barriers:** The survey clearly identified the primary barriers to family involvement. The top three were: "How busy your schedule is," the need for childcare, and transportation-related challenges. Addressing these is key to unlocking greater participation.
- **Fostering Family Connections:** Beyond volunteering for the school, families want more opportunities to connect with one another. Focus Group participants suggested more parent-centric social events like potlucks, trivia nights, and the formation of parent affinity groups to build stronger relationships.

Alignment with Our Vision

Your feedback has directly shaped the **"Community Classroom"** goal outlined in our **Strategic Vision**, which calls on us to "learn shoulder-to-shoulder with our families." Your suggestions for more flexible and accessible events are a direct catalyst for one of the vision's key strategies: to "Offer at least one community event per month...at different times...and different modalities (in person and virtual) to maximize participation for families with varying schedules." This ensures we are building a community where every family feels they can belong and contribute in a meaningful way.

A strong community deserves an inspiring physical space in which to learn and grow.



3.4 Theme IV: Caring for Our Spaces & Building Our Future

Our physical learning environment is a crucial component of the Exploris experience. Feedback across all channels made it clear that while our community is resilient, there are urgent needs in our current facilities and an overwhelming shared priority to secure a permanent, unified K-8 campus for our future, rooted in a shared belief that our learning spaces should reflect the excellence of our program and the worth of our students.

What We Heard

The detailed feedback from the May Town Hall and the Fall Survey painted a clear picture of community priorities regarding our facilities and the school's strategic response.

Community Priorities & Concerns	Our Strategic Response
An urgent need for improvements to existing facilities, including addressing issues like leaking roofs, overall cleanliness , and the general condition of the trailers.	The Board has acknowledged these issues, confirming that a new cleaning crew has been hired and that leadership is working with landlords to address repairs.
A strong desire for a clear, transparent timeline and regular progress updates on the project to build a new, unified K-8 campus.	Securing the site and funding for the new building is Year 1 Priority #1 in the Strategic Vision and the primary objective of Target #3 in the School Improvement Plan. The board has committed to regular updates via publicly posted meeting minutes.
Questions regarding financial stewardship , particularly concerning consultant costs for the new building project and the management of funds for field trips and the Fun Run.	The Board has provided a rationale for using expert consultants to manage a complex, multi-million dollar real estate project and has announced plans to launch a Capital Campaign to fund the new school, ensuring responsible financial management.

Alignment with Our Vision

There is no higher priority for our school's leadership and board than bringing our "forever home" to life. The **"Caring Spaces"** goal in the **Strategic Vision** and **Target #3 ("Transition to a permanent location for a K-8 program")** in the **SIP** were established as a direct response to this fundamental community need. Your feedback reinforces the urgency of this work and



strengthens our resolve to create "state-of-the-art facilities" that are safe, sustainable, and designed to "inspire curiosity, craftsmanship, and responsibility" for generations of Exploris learners to come.

These four themes provide a clear mandate for action as we move forward together.

Part 4: Our Path Forward: Actionable Next Steps

This comprehensive feedback process was designed not just to listen, but to act. The insights and ideas shared by our community are already being integrated into our planning and decision-making. Here are the immediate, actionable steps we are taking, grounded in your feedback and our strategic plans.

- 1. Finalizing the 2025-2030 Strategic Vision:** The themes from this report are providing the final layer of validation for our new five-year Strategic Vision. This ensures our long-term goals for academic excellence, community partnership, and facility development are deeply rooted in the expressed priorities of our families. The vision will be officially launched in the coming months to coincide with the design process for our new building.
- 2. Launching a "Communications Hub" Initiative:** In direct response to the clear feedback on communication, the school will begin exploring and planning for a single, unified platform to streamline all school-home communication. This initiative, which aligns directly with **SIP Target #4**, will aim to create the "one-stop shop" that families have requested for calendars, news, and engagement opportunities.
- 3. Redesigning Family Engagement Opportunities:** We are moving from an "ask-for-help" model to a "build-the-community-together" model. We will actively develop more flexible, "bite-sized," and skill-based volunteer roles to better match school needs with family availability and talent. As a first step, we have already begun a beta test of the Bloomerang Volunteer system, which will make it easier for families to find opportunities and track their contributions, directly addressing the call for a more organized and accessible approach.
- 4. Increasing Transparency on the Unified Campus Project:** We commit to providing our community with regular, detailed, and transparent updates on the progress of our new facility project. In line with the board's commitment and **SIP Target #3**, we will ensure that reports, timelines, and key milestones are communicated clearly and consistently as we work toward achieving our **"Caring Spaces"** goal.

Thank you once again for your invaluable partnership. Your engagement is what makes Exploris a vibrant, collaborative, and exceptional learning community. We are energized by your feedback and excited to walk this path forward together, guided by our shared vision of **empowering learners to improve our world**.

