

APPROVED



Excel Academy (CA)

Minutes

Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors

Date and Time

Thursday February 8, 2024 at 11:30 AM

Location

Excel Academy Charter School
1 Technology Drive, Ste I-811
Irvine, CA 92618

Regus- Gateway Chula Vista
333 H Street, Suite 5000
Chula Vista, CA 91910

1160 Cuyamaca Avenue
Chula Vista, CA 91911

Zoom Meeting Information:

Dial In: +1 669 444 9171

Meeting ID: 871 4325 3555

URL: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87143253555>

MISSION STATEMENT

Excel Academy will provide a flexible, personalized learning experience where teachers and parents collaborate to provide academic excellence and social and emotional foundations to instill a love for learning in each individual student.

THE ORDER OF BUSINESS MAY BE CHANGED WITHOUT NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the order of consideration of matters on this agenda may be changed without prior notice.

REASONABLE LIMITATIONS MAY BE PLACED ON PUBLIC TESTIMONY

The Governing Board's presiding officer reserves the right to impose reasonable time limits on public testimony to ensure that the agenda is completed.

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION WILL BE PROVIDED FOR ANY INDIVIDUAL WITH A DISABILITY

Pursuant to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, any individual with a disability who requires reasonable accommodation to attend or participate in this meeting of the Governing Board may request assistance by contacting Excel Academy Charter Schools.

Directors Present

L. Alvarado, M. Humphrey, S. Fraire, S. Houle, W. Hall

Directors Absent

None

Guests Present

L. Hansen

I. Opening Items

A. Call the Meeting to Order

W. Hall called a meeting of the board of directors of Excel Academy (CA) to order on Thursday Feb 8, 2024 at 11:37 AM.

B. Record Attendance

II. Approve/Adopt Agenda

A. Agenda

S. Fraire made a motion to Bill Hall.

S. Houle seconded the motion.

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

III. Approve Minutes

A. Approve Minutes

S. Houle made a motion to approve the minutes from Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors on 01-11-24.

M. Humphrey seconded the motion.

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

IV. Correspondence/Proposals/Reports

A. School Highlights - Presented by Heidi Gasca, Executive Director/CEO

The presentation provided an overview of various updates and highlights within the school program. It began with an introduction of Lara Ulmer, the Director of Special Education, who was presenting in person. The enrollment growth was highlighted, reaching 1,631 students across both charters. The admin summit and its success were briefly mentioned, with further details to be shared by Lara. Jenny Craig was slated to present assessment data, and updates on counseling, field trips, and the gate program were included.

Recognition was given to outstanding staff members. The presentation also touched on outdoor classrooms, community events, and student achievements, such as a student working on the Disney Channel and being accepted to Howard University. Professional development initiatives and upcoming events, such as the parent power up workshop and entrepreneurial activity for students, were also highlighted.

B. Admin Summit Recap - Presented by Lauren Hansen, Senior Communications Coordinator

The presentation provided a recap of a successful administrative summit that took place in Temecula. The summit aimed to empower and motivate the leadership team for the upcoming school year. It began with a video to set the tone for collaborative and focused work. Topics discussed included efficient use of time, identifying meeting types, and streamlining communication processes. Specific agenda items included enrollment goals, staffing reviews, and reshaping professional development days. The presentation concluded with appreciation for the organizers' pre-work and their role in setting the tone for the productive two and a half days.

C. Special Education Update - Presented by Lara Ulmer, Director of Special Education

The presentation provided an update on the Special Education department, beginning with a review of the instructional and specialist teams. Despite a vacancy in the case management team, creative solutions were implemented to maintain support. The specialist team was expanded internally, reducing reliance on vendor agencies.

Student enrollment increased, prompting adjustments in disability identification processes. Diagnostic placements were utilized, ensuring proper support for new students. Despite demographic shifts, the top three disability categories remained

consistent. Additionally, specific initiatives, such as speech improvement and social communication groups, were introduced to address student needs effectively.

Professional development efforts focused on internal training sessions, facilitating peer-to-peer learning and engagement. Legal updates indicated positive trends, with no due process filings initiated since fall 2021. A clip showcased a moderate-severe primary group engaging in a holiday-themed activity, highlighting the department's commitment to inclusive education and student engagement.

D. State Budget Overview - Presented by Joe Sorrera, Director of Business Services

The presentation focused on the Governor's proposed budget for the 2024-2025 fiscal year, particularly its impact on education. Joe highlighted the initial budget deficit of \$68 billion, which was reduced to \$38 billion in the final proposal. Despite the absence of major budget cuts, deferrals, or program rollbacks, the minimal cost of living increase (COLA) for education was noted.

A historical chart of COLA percentages over four decades was presented, illustrating the proposed 0.76% COLA for the upcoming year, significantly lower than previous years. While this COLA translates to a modest increase of about \$80 per average daily attendance (ADA), adjustments may occur before the finalized budget in April.

The presentation also discussed funding allocations for art and music programs, which were protected from reductions. Additional funding received in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, totaling approximately \$5.7 million, was outlined, with a focus on meeting the needs of low-income students, students with disabilities, and those with mental health issues. The importance of adhering to spending timelines to avoid returning unspent funds to the state was emphasized.

In summary, the Governor's budget proposal was described as conservative, lacking significant shifts in funding or new program proposals. The next crucial step is awaiting the Governor's May revise, which will provide updated information following negotiations with the legislature. Joe concluded by noting that adjustments to the budget will be incorporated for the second annual presentation in March.

E. LCAP Mid-Year Report - Presented by Jenny Craig, Director of Assessment & Accountability

The presentation focused on the mid-year monitoring report for the 2023-2024 LCAP (Local Control and Accountability Plan) at Excel Academy. Jenny began by reiterating the mission and vision of Excel Academy, emphasizing a personalized learning experience and academic excellence.

The goals outlined in the LCAP were discussed, including improving academic achievement, promoting a positive school climate, establishing connections with families and the community, and ensuring students are on track for graduation. The progress

towards these goals was detailed, including actions taken, outcomes achieved, and areas for further improvement.

For each goal, specific outcomes and achievements were highlighted, such as exceeding state standards in CASP test scores, maintaining high ADA and positive school climate, enhancing communication with families, and increasing access to college and career readiness programs.

The presentation also addressed mid-year expenditures, ensuring alignment with budgeted funds and ongoing monitoring to avoid exceeding allocations.

Overall, the presentation showcased Excel Academy's commitment to student success and continuous improvement through the implementation of the LCAP goals.

V. Consent

A. Consent - Business/Financial Services

B. Consent - Education Student/Services

C. Consent - Personnel Services

D. Approve Consent Agenda

S. Fraire made a motion to Bill Hall.

M. Humphrey seconded the motion.

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

VI. Board Governance

A. Approval of the Excel Academy 2024-2025 Board Meeting Calendar & Schedule

S. Fraire made a motion to Bill Hall.

S. Houle seconded the motion.

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

VII. Business/Financial Services

A. Approval of CliftonLarsonAllen (CLA) Final Annual Audit Report - Year Ended June 30, 2023

S. Fraire made a motion to Bill Hall.

S. Houle seconded the motion.

The presentation covered the final annual audit report by Clifton Larson Allen (CLA) and was led by Lili. The main points discussed included required communications, changes in accounting policies, accounting estimates, and any difficulties or disagreements with management.

She highlighted that there was one change related to lease implementation prescribed by an accounting change for the Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB).

There were no significant accounting estimates or unusual difficulties encountered during the audit process. Lili emphasized the clear, neutral, and consistent presentation of financial statements by management. She also addressed uncorrected misstatements, noting that no adjustments were proposed as the monthly financial statements were aligned with the audit findings.

Management provided a representation letter affirming the completeness and accuracy of the information provided. There were no consultations with other auditors or disagreements noted. Lastly, Lili briefly discussed changes in the financial statements. The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

B. Approval for Instructional Funds Increase for Students

S. Fraire made a motion to Bill Hall.

S. Houle seconded the motion.

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

Heidi discussed a decision made by the Executive team to address the rising costs of inflation. They allocated an additional \$250 for each student in grades TK through 12 to their instructional fund balance for the spring of 2024. This decision was made in response to increased costs from service providers for extracurricular classes and materials. The team acknowledged the need expressed by parents and staff and emphasized the careful consideration given to the decision-making process. While the decision might not always be popular, they believed \$250 was a reasonable starting point. They also mentioned plans to further analyze funds for the next year as part of the strategic plan for 2024 and 2025.

VIII. Board Comments

A. Comments:

The board members expressed appreciation for the efficient manner in which the meeting was conducted and commended Bill for his preparation and management. They thanked staff members from finance and special education for their excellent work. There were congratulations extended to Danielle White for her achievements at the university. The board members acknowledged the positive outcomes of the audit report and praised the decisions made by the finance team. Lara was thanked for her contributions, and there was appreciation expressed for not having to deal with certain issues in closed sessions. Overall, there was gratitude for the efforts of all involved in the school's operations and a sense of assurance in the unity of purpose among the team members.

IX. CEO Comments

A.

Comments:

Heidi expressed gratitude for the support of the board and highlighted the collaborative effort between herself, Joe, and Lili during the final audit process, acknowledging the late nights and productive discussions. She also praised Jenny for her work on the LCAP, emphasizing the importance of addressing learning loss and providing support to new students entering the program. Heidi commended Jenny's efforts and expressed pride in the team's accomplishments.

X. 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 12:51 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

W. Hall

S. Fraire made a motion to Bill Hall.

M. Humphrey seconded the motion.

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

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information concerning this agenda, contact
Excel Academy Charter School.