APPROVED

Excel Academy (CA)

Minutes

Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors

Date and Time
Thursday February 13, 2025 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

Zoom Meeting Information:
Dial In: +1 669 444 9171
Meeting ID: 810 0347 8214
URL: https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81003478214

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, S. Fraire, S. Houle, W. Hall

Directors Absent

M. Humphrey

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 13, 2025 at 11:43 AM.

B. Record Attendance

II. Approve/Adopt Agenda

A. Agenda

S. Fraire made a motion to Bill Hall.
S. Houle seconded the motion.
The Agenda was amended to remove the Special Education Update presentation, as the Director of Special Education was unable to attend today's meeting.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

S. Houle	Aye
M. Humphrey	Absent
S. Fraire	Aye
W. Hall	Aye
L. Alvarado	Aye

III. Approve Minutes

A. Approve Minutes

S. Fraire made a motion to approve the minutes from Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors on 01-09-25.
L. Alvarado seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call	
W. Hall	Aye
S. Fraire	Aye
S. Houle	Aye
L. Alvarado	Aye
M. Humphrey	Absent

IV. Adjourn to Closed Session

A. The Board will consider and may act on any of the Closed Session matters.

S. Houle made a motion to Bill Hall.
L. Alvarado seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call	
W. Hall	Aye
L. Alvarado	Aye
S. Fraire	Aye
S. Houle	Aye
M. Humphrey	Absent

V. Reconvene Regular Meeting

A. Report out any action taken in closed session.

No action was taken.

VI. Correspondence/Proposals/Reports

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

Heidi provided an update on student enrollment, school initiatives, and recent successes at Excel Academy.

- **Enrollment & Planning:** The school welcomed new students at the semester break, bringing enrollment to 1,751. Planning for the 2025-26 school year is well underway, including calendar approvals and revisiting the SWOT analysis.

- **Leadership Development:** The admin team participated in team-building activities focused on communication and collaboration, including reviewing *Crucial Conversations* and personalized work styles.
- **Academic Initiatives:** The report card process was revamped to better educate parents on its purpose and how to use it to support student progress. The school also received the **ERP Honor Roll** award for the second consecutive year, recognizing state test score improvements.
- **Student Engagement:** Recent highlights included a successful spelling bee, outdoor learning activities, and community events like bowling and pizza gatherings, reinforcing the goal of building a sense of local connection among students and families.
- **Staff Recognition:** Heidi spotlighted **Jenn Sheehey**, the Virtual Path Coordinator, for making a remarkable impact since joining the school. She praised Jenn's leadership, expertise, and contributions to non-classroom-based and hybrid education.
- **Professional Development & Conferences:** Staff participated in various training sessions, and leadership is preparing to attend the **California Charter Schools Association (CCSA) Conference** in Sacramento next month.

The presentation highlighted Excel Academy's strong student growth, dedicated staff, and ongoing commitment to fostering both academic excellence and a supportive community.

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

Joe presented Governor Newsom's **proposed 2025-26 fiscal year budget** and its impact on **K-12 education**, particularly **Excel Academy**.

Key Highlights:
State Budget & Economic Factors:

- The state projects a **$17 billion surplus**, providing financial stability.
- **Major risks** include **wildfires in Los Angeles County**, **delayed tax filings**, and **federal policy changes**, which could impact revenue projections.

Proposition 98 & Education Funding:

- Schools will receive **$118 billion**, about **50% of state revenue**, with funding allocated for **COLA adjustments, reducing reliance on one-time funds, and discretionary grants**.
- However, **$1.6 billion in Prop 98 funds has been delayed**, raising concerns about school funding.

Impact on Excel Academy:

- A **2.43% COLA increase** translates to approximately **$440,000 in new funding** for the school.
- Excel will continue receiving **grade span adjustments and supplemental grants** but does **not** qualify for the **concentration grant** due to a lower unduplicated pupil percentage (UPP).
- The school maintains a **strong reserve**, growing from **36% in 2022-23 to 48.5% in 2023-24**, ensuring financial stability compared to brick-and-mortar schools.

State Budget Process & Next Steps:

- The **final budget** will be released in **June**, with a **May revision** providing updates on tax revenues, COLA adjustments, and potential budget changes.
- Excel Academy must **monitor enrollment trends, advocate for funding, and prepare for potential financial shifts**.

Enrollment Growth:

- Since December, Excel Academy's enrollment has increased from **1,728 to 1,758 students**, reflecting **2% growth** in recent months.

Joe concluded by emphasizing **continued financial vigilance, advocacy, and adaptability** as the budget process unfolds.

C. LCAP Mid-Year Report - Presented by Jenny Craig, Director of Operations & Accountability

Jenny provided a mid-year update on **Excel Academy's Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP)**, reviewing progress toward school goals, implementation of key initiatives, and financial alignment.

Key Highlights:
Goal 1: Academic Achievement

- Fully implemented **student monitoring, broad course offerings, professional development, and parent education**.
- Excel Academy ranked **#8 in ELA and #3 in math** among 61 comparable charter schools in Warner; **#19 in ELA and #7 in math** in Helendale.

Goal 2: School Climate & Retention

- High **attendance rates, positive school culture, and credentialed staff retention** remain a priority.
- Regular **teacher-parent communication** and student engagement initiatives are in place.
- Maintaining **0% suspension and expulsion rates**.

Goal 3: Family & Community Engagement

- Ensuring **vetted content providers, annual safety plan reviews, and translation services** for non-English-speaking families.
- Using **POSSIP surveys** for real-time feedback from families and staff to refine programs and improve engagement.

Goal 4: College & Career Readiness

- Expanded **A-G courses, CTE pathways, and college/career support**.
- **8th-grade counseling** prepares students for high school success.
- New **science test prep** added in response to California dashboard requirements.
- **Pre-algebra and algebra support** provided.
- Ongoing FAFSA guidance, scholarship support, and student leadership opportunities (National Honor Society, prom, volunteer programs).

Financial Oversight & Budget Alignment

- Monitoring **mid-year expenditures** to ensure alignment with LCAP funding.
- Collaboration with **business services** to stay within department budgets and prepare for **2025-26 planning**.

She expressed excitement about continuing to refine the LCAP and looks forward to presenting further updates in the coming months.

VII. Consent

A. Consent - Business/Financial Services

B. Consent - Education Student/Services

C. Consent - Personnel Services

D. Consent - Policy Development

S. Houle made a motion to Bill Hall.
S. Fraire seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

S. Fraire	Aye
L. Alvarado	Aye
M. Humphrey	Absent
S. Houle	Aye
W. Hall	Aye

VIII. Board Governance

A. Approval of the Excel Academy 2025-2026 Board Meeting Calendar

L. Alvarado made a motion to Bill Hall.
S. Fraire seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

S. Fraire	Aye
M. Humphrey	Absent
W. Hall	Aye
L. Alvarado	Aye
S. Houle	Aye

IX. Personnel Services

A. Approval of the MOU Between Excel Academy Charter Schools and the University of La Verne

S. Houle made a motion to Bill Hall.
L. Alvarado seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

M. Humphrey	Absent
W. Hall	Aye
S. Fraire	Aye
S. Houle	Aye
L. Alvarado	Aye

X. Board Comments

A. Comments

The board expressed deep appreciation for the staff's dedication, leadership, and achievements, emphasizing the importance of strong communication and teamwork. They praised the Crucial Conversations training, highlighting how learning effective communication techniques can help de-escalate tense situations and foster better understanding. A board member shared a personal anecdote about creating an open and approachable environment as a principal, reinforcing the value of nonverbal cues in communication. The board congratulated Excel Academy on its impressive academic rankings, with special recognition for Warner's #3 ranking in math among 61 comparable charter schools. They also acknowledged the importance of transitional kindergarten (TK) in California and were excited about the school's involvement. Joe received high praise for his clear and thorough financial explanations, ensuring confidence in the school's fiscal management. The board credited Excel's leadership and strong communication for maintaining a consistent, engaged, and high-performing team, and they expressed gratitude for the many behind-the-scenes staff members who work tirelessly to support

the school's success. The meeting wrapped up with excitement for future visits and continued collaboration, reinforcing the strong sense of community and commitment within Excel Academy.

XI. CEO Comments

A. Comments

Heidi introduced Possip Connect, an initiative designed to acknowledge and respond to staff and parent feedback in a constructive and professional way. She emphasized the importance of ensuring that staff feel heard and valued by actively addressing their input. At the recent all-staff meeting, the leadership team demonstrated how feedback is being reviewed and framed in a way that promotes growth and positive change. Heidi sees this as an ongoing process that will strengthen communication and engagement within the school community.

XII. 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 12:40 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
W. Hall

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