APPROVED

Excel Academy (CA)

Minutes

Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors

Date and Time
Thursday March 12, 2026 at 9:40 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:
Meeting ID: 844 1709 7524
One tap mobile: +12532050468,,84417097524# US
URL: https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84417097524

MISSION STATEMENT

At Excel Academy, we invest in each student by providing a personalized and engaging learning experience centered on a collaborative partnership between school and home that creates unmatched opportunities for excellence and future success.

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 Mar 12, 2026 at 9:46 AM.

B. Record Attendance

II. Approve/Adopt Agenda

A. Agenda

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

Roll Call

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

III. Approve Minutes

A.

Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting held on February 12, 2026

S. Houle made a motion to approve the minutes from Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors on 02-12-26.
L. Alvarado seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

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

IV. Correspondence/Proposals/Reports

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

Heidi shared several exciting updates regarding the school's growth and recent extracurricular successes. Here are the key highlights:

Enrollment & Growth

- **Strong Demand:** Applications for the **2026–2027 school year** are "flying in," serving as a testament to the school's reputation and the admissions team's proactive follow-up.
- **Counter-Trend Success:** While surrounding districts are experiencing declining enrollment, Heidi noted that their school continues to grow and expand.

The Inaugural Talent Show

- **A First for the School:** Heidi celebrated the success of the school's first-ever in-person talent show, describing the event as "inspiring" and "filled with joy."
- **Leadership Credits:** She extended special thanks to Elementary Principal April Saade and Music Teacher Casey Lipka for their roles in organizing the event.

Staff Spotlight: Casey Lipka

- **Impactful Teaching:** Casey Lipka was recognized for her immense energy and passion. Heidi emphasized that finding a teacher of her caliber is "priceless."
- **Creative Programming:** Casey leads a weekly choir class and organized a high-energy opening performance for the talent show.
- **Student Engagement:** Heidi highlighted Casey's ability to work with and mentor "fantastic students," some of whom were present at the meeting to share their experiences.

B. Student Choir & Music Club Member Testimonials

Melody (6th Grade, Choir)

- **Experience:** Melody shared that she has learned a significant amount about vocal technique and choir performance in Ms. Casey's class.
- **Performance:** Despite recovering from a cold, she performed a live rendition of **"Into the Unknown"** from *Frozen II*.
- **Outcome:** The board and staff praised her performance as "absolutely beautiful" and recognized her bravery for singing live.

Raelene (6th Grade, Choir)

- **Growth in Confidence:** Raylene spoke about her long history in theater arts and how the choir program has significantly reduced her performance anxiety.
- **Technical Skill:** She emphasized that Ms. Casey's focus on enunciation and vocal technique has made her performances "10 levels better."
- **Broader Impact:** She noted that the confidence she gained in choir now translates to public speaking and leading group activities in other areas of her life.
- **Showcase:** She shared a video clip of her performance in a production of *Annie Junior*.

Preston (High School, Music Club)

- **Creative Philosophy:** Preston highlighted a key takeaway from Ms. Casey: that music is a form of "personal preference" and individual expression.
- **Collaboration:** He showcased a digital music track he co-produced with another student, Vince. He demonstrated his ability to use production software to layer audio files and collaborate remotely with peers.
- **Response:** The board was particularly impressed by the sophistication of the composition, noting the "talent beyond anything" they could wrap their heads around.

Lucas (Music Student)

- **Skill Development:** Though he did not give a formal presentation, Lucas expressed his gratitude for the class, noting that the curriculum is "fluent" and has significantly "upped his skills."

The Board of Directors expressed deep appreciation for the students' talent. President Hall, a self-professed fan of musicals, encouraged the vocalists to keep pursuing their dreams, while also specifically praising the balanced composition of Preston's digital music project.

V. Consent

A. Consent - Business/Financial Services

1. Approval of Check Register **-** February 2026
2. Approval of Cash Payments - February 2026

B. Consent - Operations

1. Approval of the Excel Academy 2026 Conflict of Interest Code

C. Consent - Personnel Services

1. Approval of Certificated Personnel Report
2. Approval of Classified Personnel Report

D. Consent Items - Policy Development

L. Alvarado made a motion to Bill Hall.
S. Houle seconded the motion.
Approval of existing board policies revised, reviewed, and eliminated by staff for the 2025-2026 school year.

Board Policies: Revised (With Changes)
The following are current policies that have been revised to provide clarity or alignment with changes in law or procedures.

6000 Series - Instruction (Revised with Changes)
6010 - EA Independent Study Policy
6030 - EA Education for Foster and Mobile Youth Policy
6080 - EA Alternative Diploma Policy
6116 - EA Discipline & Involuntary Withdrawal Policy
6210 - EA Graduation Policy
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

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

VI. Board Governance

A. Approval of the Fourth Amended Bylaws of Excel Academy Charter Schools

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

Roll Call

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

VII. Business/Financial Services

A. Approval of the Second Interim Financial Report

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

Roll Call

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

B. Approval of Additional Chromebooks Purchase

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

Roll Call

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

C. Approval of CliftonLarsonAllen (CLA) Annual Audit Engagement Services between and Tax Enity Compliance Statement of Work

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

Roll Call

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

D.

Approval of the Sage Intacct Ageement (Renewal)

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

Roll Call

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

E. Approval of the School Pathways LLC Agreement for 2026-27 (Renewal)

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

Roll Call

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

VIII. Education Services

A. Approval of the Curriculum Associates (iReady Assessment) Agreement (Renewal)

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

Roll Call

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

IX. Operations

A. Approval of the Amended Articles of Incorporation

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

Roll Call

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

X. Personnel Services

A. Approval of Educational Leadership Services (ELS) Agreement

S. Houle made a motion to Bill Hall.
L. Alvarado seconded the motion.
This item was approved but was discussed that it will no longer be needed.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

B. Approval of the Professional Services Agreement with Robert Half

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

Roll Call

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

C. Approval of the Zoom Phones Purchase for Excel Academy Staff

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

Roll Call

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

XI. Calendar

A. Calendar

The next meeting will be a Study Session held on April 9, 2026.

XII. Comments

A. Board Comments

The board members closed the presentation with a heartfelt narrative of gratitude, emphasizing that the students are the heart of the school's mission. They collectively agreed that having children attend the meetings to share their personal stories and "fantastic" talents is the highlight of their work, bringing joy to the administrative process and serving as a direct showcase of the school's success.

- **Holistic Education:** The board reaffirmed their strong belief that music is an essential pillar of a well-rounded education. They specifically lauded Casey Lipka's leadership and April Saade's foundational support, noting that the "wholesome," intelligent, and well-developed character of the students is a direct result of their mentorship.
- **Organizational Strength:** Members took a moment to recognize the "phenomenal" staff, including the finance and tech teams, for their behind-the-scenes hard work. One member noted that the transparency and excellence of the current leadership has provided them with a deeper understanding of school operations than ever before.
- **Community Presence:** The board expressed excitement for future growth and upcoming site visits to Irvine, where they look forward to interacting directly with the "whole gang"—parents, staff, and students alike.

Ultimately, the board described the school as a place where leadership and talent "work together" seamlessly. They left the students with a final word of encouragement, noting that their confidence and intelligence are what truly make the institution stand out.

B. CEO Comments

Heidi concluded the meeting with a narrative of resilience and pride regarding the school's recent charter petition presentation to the Irvine Unified Board. She described the evening as a powerful display of community solidarity, noting that Excel Academy utilized every second of their allotted 30-minute public comment period. The turnout was so significant that parents, staff, and students spoke up until the final minute, a feat Heidi cited as a moving "testimony to the work we do."

Despite the overwhelming support from the school community, Heidi offered a candid assessment of the reception from the Irvine Unified Board:

- Heidi noted that the district board was not particularly welcoming, which she attributed to the "competition" for students. She highlighted the irony that while Irvine Unified is facing enrollment declines for the first time in its history, Xcel Academy continues to grow and already serves students across every grade level within that district.
- She provided context for the board's demeanor, explaining that the meeting was highly "intense" and "high-emotion." The district was simultaneously dealing with heated negotiations with their own classified staff, who were present with signs regarding pay and pensions.
- Although only two of the five board members provided positive feedback, Heidi remained undeterred. She praised her team's performance as "stellar" and expressed a firm commitment to the school's longevity. She signaled that while they hope for a partnership, the school is prepared to appeal to the county level if necessary.

Ultimately, Heidi left the experience filled with pride, viewing the petition process not just as a legal requirement, but as a "learning experience" that solidified the strength and unity of the Excel Academy team.

XIII. 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 10:32 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,
W. Hall

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