APPROVED

Lawrence Family Development Charter School

Minutes

LFDCS Board of Trustees Meeting

Date and Time
Wednesday September 10, 2025 at 5:30 PM

Location
Lower School Conference Room- 34 West Street Lawrence, MA 01841

Zoom

Trustees Present
C. Needham (remote), D. DeFillippo, G. Lopez, J. Cedeno (remote), J. Henriquez (remote), J. Tejada (remote), L. Perez (remote)

Trustees Absent
E. Nolberto, L. McRae, R. Almanzar

Trustees who left before the meeting adjourned
J. Henriquez

Guests Present
A. Croes, C. Parcell, D. Thakkar, H. Castleman, L. Lawler, M. Ventre, N. Arpin (remote), Nicole Dean-Ward (remote), S. Stukuls, Sean Reardon, Y. Rodriguez

I. Opening Items

A. **Record Attendance**

B. **Call the Meeting to Order**

G. Lopez called a meeting of the board of trustees of Lawrence Family Development Charter School to order on Wednesday Sep 10, 2025 at 5:43 PM.

C. Pledge of Allegiance

D. Approve minutes from the August 13, 2025 BOT Meeting

D. DeFillippo made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees Meeting on 08-13-25.
L. Perez seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

J. Cedeno	Aye
C. Needham	Aye
R. Almanzar	Absent
G. Lopez	Aye
L. McRae	Absent
E. Nolberto	Absent
L. Perez	Aye
D. DeFillippo	Aye
J. Henriquez	Aye
J. Tejada	Aye

Darshan T. shared a note from Robert Carpenter. He has offered to attend the October Board Meeting and if that is too late he has offered to meet with governance committee individually.

Dave D. proposed he attends a board meeting and provide a presentation that will be beneficial for everyone to attend.

II. Board Member Terms and Offices

A. Re-elect Dave DeFillippo to a third term.

Dave D. was asked if he is willing to serve a third term. He responded that yes, he is.

All members present voted in favor of Dave D. serving a third term.

Roll Call

C. Needham	Aye
D. DeFillippo	Aye
J. Henriquez	Aye
L. Perez	Aye
G. Lopez	Aye
J. Cedeno	Aye

J. Tejada Aye
R. Almanzar Absent
L. McRae Absent
E. Nolberto Absent

B. Re-elect Elizabeth Nolberto to a third term.

Elizabeth N. was called over the phone and asked if she was willing to serve another term. She confirmed that yes, she is.

All members present voted in favor of Elizabeth N. serving a third term.

Roll Call
C. Needham Aye
D. DeFillippo Aye
J. Henriquez Aye
L. Perez Aye
G. Lopez Aye
J. Cedeno Aye
J. Tejada Aye
R. Almanzar Absent
L. McRae Absent
E. Nolberto Absent

C. Re-elect Jennifer Cedeño to a second term.

Jennifer C. was asked if she is willing to serve a third term. She responded that yes, she is.

All members present voted in favor of Jennifer C. serving a second term.

Roll Call
C. Needham Aye
D. DeFillippo Aye
J. Henriquez Aye
L. Perez Aye
G. Lopez Aye
J. Cedeno Aye
J. Tejada Aye
R. Almanzar Absent
L. McRae Absent
E. Nolberto Absent

D. Re-elect Jose Tejada to a third term.

Jose Tejada agreed to serve another term, noting that his children will be graduating this year and it will be the last year he will be serving on this board.

All members present voted in favor of Jose T. serving a third term.

Roll Call
C. Needham Aye
D. DeFillippo Aye
J. Henriquez Aye
L. Perez Aye
G. Lopez Aye
J. Cedeno Aye
J. Tejada Aye
R. Almanzar Absent
L. McRae Absent
E. Nolberto Absent

E. Re-elect Rita Almanzar to a second term.

Rita A. was not present. This item will be moved to next month's meeting.

F. Committee Assignments

The *Finance Committee* is currently composed of trustees Chris N., Dave D., Germinudy L., Jose H., and Lynette M.

All members, with the exception of Lynette M., who was not present, have agreed to serve another term. Lynette M.'s continuation will be confirmed at the next board meeting. All current members of the *Academic Advisory Committee* have agreed to continue serving another term. Dave D. confirmed via text that Elizabeth N. will also remain on the committee.

The trustee representatives on this committee are Dave D., Elizabeth N., and Germinudy L.

In addition, four faculty members will serve as part of the Academic Advisory Committee. All current members of the *Bylaws Committee* have agreed to serve another term.

The trustee representatives on this committee are Chris N., Germinudy L., and Jose H. All current members of the *Nominating and Governance Committee* accepted to serve another term.

The trustee representatives on this committee are Elizabeth N., Jose T., and Linette P. *The Superintendent's Evaluation Review Committee* consists of trustees Chris N., Dave D., Elizabeth N., Germinudy L., and Rita A.

Rita A. was not present.

Dave D. withdrew.

All other trustee members in this committee agreed to serve another term.

G. Roles Assignments

Dave D. nominated Germinudy L. to serve another term as Chair. Germinudy L. accepted the nomination, and all board members present voted in favor.

Roll Call
C. Needham Aye
D. DeFillippo Aye
J. Henriquez Aye
L. Perez Aye
G. Lopez Aye
J. Cedeno Aye
J. Tejada Aye
R. Almanzar Absent
L. McRae Absent
E. Nolberto Absent

Jose Tejada agreed to serve another term as Secretary of the Board, and all board members present voted in favor.

Roll Call
C. Needham Aye
D. DeFillippo Aye
J. Henriquez Aye
L. Perez Aye
G. Lopez Aye
J. Cedeno Aye
J. Tejada Aye
R. Almanzar Absent
L. McRae Absent
E. Nolberto Absent

Elizabeth N. agreed to serve as Vice-Chair of the Board, and all board members present voted in favor.

Roll Call
C. Needham Aye
D. DeFillippo Aye
J. Henriquez Aye
L. Perez Aye
G. Lopez Aye
J. Cedeno Aye
J. Tejada Aye
R. Almanzar Absent
L. McRae Absent
E. Nolberto Absent

Chris N. and Jose H. agreed to serve as Treasurers of the Board, and all board members present voted in favor.

Roll Call
C. Needham Aye
D. DeFillippo Aye
J. Henriquez Aye
L. Perez Aye
G. Lopez Aye
J. Cedeno Aye
J. Tejada Aye
R. Almanzar Absent
L. McRae Absent
E. Nolberto Absent

III. Superintendent's Report

A. Lease Agreement

Darshan T. reported that the lease has not yet been finalized. He had hoped it would be completed by today’s meeting, but that has not occurred.

He provided a summary of lease discussions to date: the fund has agreed that the 8 Bradford Place parking lot will be included in the lease and requested a tax map of the properties. The school has opted to conduct a survey instead, as tax maps can be unreliable, and has requested a placeholder in the lease for the survey. LFD has requested that the survey be completed before the lease is signed, which will take a couple of weeks and delay the signing process.

Linette P. requested clarification on the location of 8 Bradford Place. Darshan T. explained that the school has been using the space for parking. Initially, LFD did not permit this use, but has since allowed it.

The fund has requested oversight due to past concerns about unpermitted work. Darshan T. clarified that all alterations, deferred maintenance, and construction at the STEM Center since July 1 have been properly permitted. Any prior unpermitted work would have occurred before the school assumed control. He has asked LFD to investigate and provide evidence of any unpermitted work.

Darshan T. also reported that LFD has allowed the school to use the lot across from 34 West Street for parking for one year, which is not a concern given the school's intent to purchase the properties within that timeframe.

Regarding the option to purchase and right of first refusal, LFD is offering six months for financing and six months for closing. The school may need additional time depending on when the property evaluation begins.

The school has requested that the valuation be based on school use, reflecting the intended purpose of the campus. LFD, however, insists on an open-market valuation. Its Board has rejected the school-use limitation, which could prolong the valuation process and potentially affect the six-month financing and six-month closing timeline.

Mark V. noted that the legal description will form the basis for the purchase option, making accuracy critical.

LFD has requested that the lease remain open and unsigned until the school completes the survey.

The survey, which will cost $32,000, has been approved by the Finance Committee. Mark V. emphasized that it is worthwhile to wait an additional month before signing the lease in order to obtain an accurate legal description of the buildings.

B. Audit Firm Updates

At the beginning of September, the school engaged a new auditing firm, AAFCPAs. AAFCPAs provided a schedule of the work to be completed along with associated costs. The audit must be finalized by the end of November. The firm has experience working with charter schools in the state and also audits the Massachusetts Charter School Association.

The audit fees are $39,000, with a one-time additional fee for testing and balancing transfers estimated between $3,000 and $5,000.

Mark V. shared that the firm provided a list of required documents. As this is their first time working with the school, they are reviewing additional information. The school recently acquired access to NetSuite financial systems, which will need updating and will play a significant role in the audit.

Darshan T. noted that AAFCPAs has been in operation for over 30 years and works with many charter schools.

Chris N. reported that a special Audit Committee meeting is scheduled for October 29 to approve the audit in time for submission to the state by November 1.

C. Employee Handbook Updates

D. DeFillippo made a motion to accept Employee Handbook with all of the recent changes.
J. Henriquez seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

G. Lopez	Aye
J. Tejada	Aye
L. McRae	Absent
C. Needham	Aye
R. Almanzar	Absent
J. Henriquez	Aye
D. DeFillippo	Aye
E. Nolberto	Absent
J. Cedeno	Aye
L. Perez	Aye

J. Henriquez left at 6:45 PM.

D. Parent/Student Handbook Updates

D. DeFillippo made a motion to accept the parent/student handbook as presented.
L. Perez seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

E. Nolberto	Absent
D. DeFillippo	Aye
L. McRae	Absent
C. Needham	Aye

Roll Call

J. Cedeno	Aye
J. Henriquez	Absent
G. Lopez	Aye
R. Almanzar	Absent
J. Tejada	Aye
L. Perez	Aye

IV. Assistant Superintendent's Report

A. Updates from the Assistant Superintendent

Sally-Ann S. provided an update to the board. She reports that Stacey O'Brien, our grants manager, has been leading the preparation and submission of the ESSA federal grant application, which includes Titles I, IIA, IIIA, and IVA. The grant funds are planned to support our Title I program in math and ELA, the Extended Day and summer programs, staff professional development, and a curriculum review for mathematics. Following the ESSA submission on September 9, 2025, Stacey will begin the IDEA grant application for special education funding, due September 29, 2025.

Digital learning initiatives, led by Anna Yuen, included onboarding new staff in August on Schoology, ActivPanel, and updated curriculum programs, with ongoing support through coaching and feedback sessions.

Hallie Laroque has ensured compliance with all DESE data reporting requirements for 2024–2025 and is preparing additional data submissions for October. Current enrollment stands at 920 students with approximately 350 on the K1-4 waitlist.

The Extended Day program is at full capacity with 113 students, enhanced staffing, new enrichment positions, and a new online registration and payment system. Fall and year-long clubs include Math Olympiad, Choir, LEGO Robotics, and a new Counselor in Training program for 7th and 8th graders, with three club catalogs planned for the year. Darshan T. provided an update on the interpreter grant. DESE determined that, although the school has many bilingual staff members, certain domain-specific vocabulary and context require specialized knowledge. The course consists of three levels, and currently three LFDCS staff members have completed it.

This year's interpreter grant application aimed to support the participation of two additional staff members. The state is also developing a database on its website to list individuals who have completed the program.

V. Principal's Report

A. Professional Development Week Recap

School Principal Hali Castleman provided the Board with an update on in-service week for new and returning staff in August. The school welcomed 22 new teachers, one paraprofessional, and one new occupational therapist.

Highlights for new staff included sessions on the Mentor Program, Classroom Management/SEL, Family Engagement, and other key topics. Daily surveys showed that 90% or more of new staff found the sessions impactful or highly impactful. Staff also provided feedback on areas for improvement, including educational platforms and technology support.

During the all-staff professional development week, which included new staff, sessions covered topics such as the Crisis Prevention Institute, Vertical Teams, and a presentation by Dr. Brian Dinkins. Over 90% of staff reported that the information shared was helpful to their roles. Feedback for future PD included requests for additional sessions on classroom behavior management, social-emotional learning, and hands-on technology instruction.
Dave D. noted that behavioral management support is a recurring topic in AAC discussions and expressed his appreciation that many of the recent sessions addressed these concerns.

He asked Hali Castleman about positions that remain unfilled. Hali C. reported that the school is still seeking a K1 ESL teacher, a K1 classroom teacher, and four Spanish teachers. Additionally, a School Adjustment Counselor has been hired and is now working at the Academy.

VI. Other Business

A. Banking

Mark V. reported that the Fund currently manages the school’s scholarship accounts and proposed opening two new accounts with the same bank.

The first account would be dedicated to managing funds raised through Jeans Day and other school fundraising activities, giving the school full access and control over these funds rather than the Fund.

The second proposal involves creating a sweep account to support the school’s existing accounts, a checking account, and a money market account. Currently, the money market earns 2.57% interest, while the checking account earns none. The sweep account would fund the checking account, provide FDIC protection, and allow the school to accrue interest on available funds.

Mark V. requested a Board vote to authorize the creation of these two new accounts.

D. DeFillippo made a motion to create the two new accounts, scholarship and sweep account to benefit the school. Chris N. and Germinudy L. and Darshan T. and Mark V. will be signers and Yulissa R. has access.
J. Tejada seconded the motion.
Robin Hatfield will be doing all of the reconciliation allowing Mark V. to be a signer.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

G. Lopez	Aye
R. Almanzar	Absent
J. Cedeno	Aye
D. DeFillippo	Aye
E. Nolberto	Absent
C. Needham	Aye
J. Henriquez	Absent
L. McRae	Absent
J. Tejada	Aye
L. Perez	Aye

VII. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

D. DeFillippo made a motion to adjourn the meeting.
J. Tejada seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

D. DeFillippo	Aye
R. Almanzar	Absent
J. Cedeno	Aye
L. Perez	Aye
G. Lopez	Aye
E. Nolberto	Absent
C. Needham	Aye
J. Henriquez	Absent
J. Tejada	Aye
L. McRae	Absent

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 7:20 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Y. Rodriguez

Documents used during the meeting

- 2025-2026 Employee Policy Manual School (2).pdf
- Bell-to-Bell Cell Phone Policy LFDCS.pdf
- Parent-Student Handbook 2025-26.pdf
- BOT Report 9_10_25.pdf
- LFDCS PD Week Board Presentation.pptx