APPROVED

Lawrence Family Development Charter School

Minutes

Zoom-LFDCS Board of Trustees Meeting

Date and Time
Wednesday November 12, 2025 at 5:30 PM

Location
Zoom

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

Trustees Absent
J. Cedeno, R. Almanzar

Trustees who left before the meeting adjourned
L. McRae

Guests Present
Ahmatjan Mamtimin from AAFCPAs (remote), Brooke Melia from AleraHR (remote), Caroline Estabrook (remote), D. Thakkar (remote), H. Castleman (remote), Jennifer L'Heureux from AAFCPAs (remote), Jonathan Clark from AleraHR (remote), L. Lawler (remote), M. Ventre (remote), N. Arpin (remote), Nicole Dean-Ward (remote), S. Reardon (remote), S. Stukuls (remote), Y. Rodriguez (remote)

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 Nov 12, 2025 at 5:38 PM.

C. Pledge of Allegiance

D. Approve minutes from the October 8, 2025 BOT Meeting

C. Needham made a motion to approve the minutes from LFDCS Board of Trustees Meeting on 10-08-25.
E. Nolberto seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

II. Board Member Terms and Offices

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

This agenda item would need to be postponed due to Rita A. not being in attendance. Board Chair, Germinudy L. will be contacting her regarding term renewal.

B. Conflict of Interest Training Compliance

Darshan T. informed the trustees that all board members are required by the state to remain current with the Massachusetts Conflict of Interest Law trainings. This includes completing the full training every two years, as well as the annual Conflict of Interest Summary training.

Chris N. also reminded trustees to complete the Financial Disclosure Form and submit it to Yulissa Rodriguez for filing with both the state and Lawrence City Hall. Additionally, Chris N. recommended adding board attendance as an agenda item for next month’s meeting. Elizabeth N. suggested that the board review attendance on a quarterly basis.

C. Board Composition

Darshan T. informed the trustees that two parent representatives will be leaving the board at the end of the school year as their children are graduating. He also noted that a one-year waiting period is required before former parent members may return to the board as community representatives. Given the lengthy process involved in identifying and appointing new trustees, he asked members to keep this in mind and to share any recommendations for potential candidates.

III. Superintendent's Report

A. Audit Report Review

L. McRae left at 6:00 PM.
Jennifer L'Heureux and Ahmatjan Mamtimin from AAFCPAs joined the board meeting to present and review the findings of the 2025 audit. Dave Kelleher was unable to attend.

Jennifer L'Heureux provided the full board with a brief overview of the audit reports, which included the financial statements, required communications to the board, and the management letter. A more detailed review had been conducted previously with the Finance Committee.

Jennifer L. reported that the school received a clean, unmodified audit opinion, indicating that the financial statements are fairly presented and free from material misstatement. This is a desired outcome sought in any audit. Chris N. and Dave D. commended Mark V. and the team for their efforts in achieving this result.

Mark V. noted that while the audit report has not yet been submitted to the state, the school remains in compliance due to the government shutdown. Because the school qualifies for a single audit, submission to DESE is not required until January 1. Chris N. mentioned the possibility of a special Finance Committee meeting with the auditors to review pending items, but overall, the financial portion of the audit is complete.

Jennifer L. reviewed a report on internal controls and highlighted findings noted in the management letter. She explained that one report, the compliance report for each federal program, is currently on hold and cannot be uploaded to DESE due to the government shutdown and the pending release of the FY25 federal supplement. AAFCPAs tested the major programs, including ESSR funding under the draft supplement, and do not anticipate any differences between the draft and final supplement.

Jennifer L. also presented the board report, a non-public document reviewing the audit process, followed by the management letter, which is public and submitted to DESE with the audit. The auditors identified two material weaknesses and three significant deficiencies:

The material weaknesses noted were in the areas of General Ledger Maintenance and bank reconciliations. The audit required an adjustment with a net impact of $300,000.

This was attributed to the transition and use of multiple finance systems. Jennifer L. and Mark V. do not anticipate this issue recurring next year. Reconciliations were not completed from November 2024 to June 2025 due to the Fund's conversion to NetSuite and subsequent return to QuickBooks. Improved controls and segregation of duties are recommended.

The significant deficiencies noted were found in the submission of MTRS withholdings to the Massachusetts Teacher Retirement Board within the first 10 days of each month. The auditors found that multiple months had submissions that were not made on time. Deficiencies were found in the payroll documentation with missing employee records, including I-9s and W-4s, in some personnel files. Lastly, the school did not have documentation verifying that Susan P., the designated procurement officer, held the required DESE certification.

Jennifer L. emphasized that these findings are expected, given the school's recent transition from the nonprofit. She assured the board that DESE will expect no repeat of these findings in next year's audit.

Chris N. inquired if any further action with DESE is required. Mark V. responded that he and Darshan T. will draft a remediation response addressing the findings and ongoing compliance monitoring. Future Finance Committee meetings will include check-ins to ensure the resolution of major items.

Jennifer L. shared the school's fiscal year 2025 results. The school began the year with $11,758,128 and ended with $12,070,872, reflecting a surplus of $312,744. Darshan T. confirmed that the surplus is within the allowable limit of 20%. Jennifer L. noted that ESSR funding, which supported the budget, is concluding following the end of COVID relief funding, and this has been accounted for in budget planning

B. Health Insurance Update-AleraHR

Brooke Melia and Jonathan Clark from AleraHR joined the meeting to review employee health insurance benefits and proposed rates effective January 2026.

LFDCS HR Director Caroline Estabrook provided the board with an overview of an employee survey assessing satisfaction with current benefits and interest in attending an informational session. Of 187 employees, 52 responded. Regarding benefits satisfaction, 53.8% indicated they were somewhat satisfied, while 40.4% reported being very satisfied.

Jonathan Clark presented the school's medical insurance coverage and costs, highlighting the advantages of a captive insurance option, which is a form of self-funding that allows the school greater visibility into claims and spending. This approach enables cost containment and potential returns to the school through more efficient program management, such as the pharmacy program. In contrast, fully insured plans do not

provide claims data. The school's current plan is a limited deductible plan with a low out-of-pocket maximum and reasonable copays.

Jonathan C. proposed creating two plan options for employees. A low-deductible plan, which maintains a low deductible and low out-of-pocket maximum for the employees. Or a lower-cost payroll deduction plan that offers reduced payroll deductions but slightly increases the deductible, out-of-pocket maximum, copays, and prescription costs. This option may be attractive for younger employees or those with lower anticipated healthcare usage.

Jonathan C. noted that, compared to national trends, LFDCS has historically maintained insurance renewal increases between 5–7%, without exceeding 8%, helping avoid significant cost increases for employees.

Jonathan C. reviewed stop-loss coverage, noting the school currently covers claims up to $75,000, with any excess covered by the stop-loss carrier. Based on current usage and demographics, the renewal rate under this structure is 8%. Increasing the school's coverage to $100,000 would reduce the renewal rate to 7.14%, resulting in a 6.5% renewal rate for employees overall. Jonathan C. will also provide renewal projections based on a lower payroll deductible plan.

Chris N. clarified that decisions regarding increasing the stop-loss threshold to $100,000 and offering a second benefits plan option do not require board approval. He recommended that Mark V. and Darshan T. review the comparisons and determine which option best aligns with the school's budget and overall employee needs.

C. Lease Agreement

Mark V. reported that the updated title work was presented to the surveyors. They identified a couple of encroachment issues that can impact the signature of the lease.

Darshan T. shared that the encroachments are minor, but it is useful information to have in the school's pursuit of purchasing the buildings.

IV. Assistant Superintendent's Report

A. Updates from the Assistant Superintendent

Assistant Superintendent Sally-Ann Stukuls reports that LFDCS participates in the federal Title I program, which supports students from low-income families and helps close achievement gaps in math and English Language Arts. Students in grades K2–4 are recommended for Title I services based on assessments, classroom performance, and teacher input, with progress reviewed every three weeks. The program aims to strengthen foundational skills, build student confidence, and help families take an active role in supporting learning at home.

Sally-Ann S. explains that Title I ELA support includes letter identification and early reading skills in K2, automaticity and blending in grades 1 and 2, and phonics and comprehension instruction in grades 3 and 4 using the UFLI Foundations program. Math support focuses on core grade-level skills such as multiplication, division, place value, and measurement. Families are encouraged to reinforce learning through activities like reading together, using flashcards, cooking, counting money, and discussing time. Sally-Ann S. extends her appreciation to the Title I teaching team and staff for their dedicated support and contributions to this report.

V. Principal's Report

A. Quarter 1 Results

The Heads of School presented their Quarter 1 results to the Board.

Laurie L., Head of School for K1 and K2, reported that the beginning of the school year, particularly for K1, is a period of adjustment as students acclimate to the school environment. She noted that both grade levels are making meaningful progress in literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional learning. K2 students are also becoming familiar with the increased academic expectations of their curriculum. For Quarter 1, 19% of K1 students and 9% of K2 students achieved High Honors. Additionally, 59% of K1 students and 40% of K2 students earned Honor Roll recognition. The Model Student award was given to 36% of K1 students and 41% of K2 students. Perfect attendance was reached by 39% of K1 students and 45% of K2 students.

Ms. Castleman shared that Ms. Croes, Head of School for Grades 1 and 2, is currently on a leave of absence. She introduced Ms. Dean-Ward, the RTI Coordinator, who is providing coverage during the leave. For Quarter 1, 10% of Grade 1 students and 7% of Grade 2 students received High Honors, while 34% of Grade 1 students and 29% of Grade 2 students earned Honor Roll. Model Student recognition was awarded to 50% of Grade 1 students and 60% of Grade 2 students. Perfect attendance was achieved by 39% of Grade 1 students and 53% of Grade 2 students.

In the absence of Ms. Parcell, Head of School for Grades 3 and 4, Ms. Castleman presented the results for those grades. For Quarter 1, 10% of Grade 3 students and 2% of Grade 4 students earned High Honors. Honor Roll recognition went to 25% of Grade 3 students and 33% of Grade 4 students. The Model Student award was received by 51% of Grade 3 students and 57% of Grade 4 students. Perfect attendance was achieved by 50% of Grade 3 students and 49% of Grade 4 students.

Ms. Arpin, Head of School for Grades 5 through 8, reported that Quarter 1 results varied across the upper school. She noted that Grade 7 traditionally experiences a more challenging transition as students adjust to a middle school model with subject-specific teachers. High Honors was earned by 9% of Grade 5, 9% of Grade 6, 5% of Grade 7,

and 46% of Grade 8 students. Honor Roll recognition was awarded to 42% of Grade 5, 32% of Grade 6, 29% of Grade 7, and 37% of Grade 8 students. Model Student awards were given to 59% of Grade 5, 34% of Grade 6, 30% of Grade 7, and 59% of Grade 8 students. Perfect attendance was achieved by 46% of Grade 5, 53% of Grade 6, 54% of Grade 7, and 67% of Grade 8 students.

B. Parent Coffee 10/24-Social Institute

Ms. Castleman provided the Board with an overview of the updates she recently shared with parents regarding The Social Institute, a new program being piloted this year. The program is designed to support students, staff, and families in building awareness and understanding of various digital platforms. Lessons are delivered during morning meetings in grades 3–6, while all teachers and families across grade levels have access to the program's resources. The anonymous data collected from student responses helps the school better understand digital habits. For example, students reported using platforms such as YouTube, Roblox, and video-streaming services. Eighty-eight percent of students in grades 3–5 reported watching YouTube, and while YouTube remains the most commonly used platform among sixth graders, they also begin using more communication apps such as texting, FaceTime, and TikTok. Students also shared how they access these platforms, with younger students often using iPads and sixth graders more frequently using personal devices. When asked what topics they were most interested in discussing, students in grades 3–5 expressed interest in learning how to use devices and apps like YouTube in healthy ways, while sixth graders showed interest in maintaining control of their personal information online. Additional questions explored online citizenship, including how to respond when a joke is misunderstood; 44 percent of students indicated that the most difficult part is apologizing and making things right.

She also reported that October was National Bullying Prevention Month and that the school engaged students at all grade levels in a variety of activities focused on bullying awareness and prevention.

C. SPED/ESL PAC Meeting and Elections 10/29

Special Education Director, Sean Reardon reported to the board on the first PAC/SEPAC meeting of the school year. It was held in person and online. There were 10 parents in person and 35 online. The first meeting touched on what is the PAC/SEPAC and provide families information on what is the ELL and Special Ed program at LFDCS. The next meeting will be in December, will elections to join the PAC/SEPAC board and there will be a presentation by Rachel Sanchez on Wellness and anti-bullying.

VI. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

Dave D. reported that the Academic Advisory Committee has begun its third year of work. The trustees serving on this committee are Dave D., Elizabeth N., and Germinudy L. The

committee meets three times during the school year to hear faculty concerns and bring them forward to the leadership team. Today marked the first meeting of the year, during which faculty discussed several topics, including the use of paraprofessionals. Teachers also expressed appreciation for the vertical team structure and offered suggestions for strengthening it. In addition, they raised the need for greater consistency in addressing behavior concerns across all grade levels. Faculty noted that they are not fully informed about behavior-response expectations and that the behavior flow chart is not consistently shared with all teachers.

Jose T. also provided an update and shared that the Opening Doors team is doing an excellent job supporting families through the high school search process.
Chris N. also shared his interest in discussing engaging a financial advisor at next month's board meeting.
C. Needham made a motion to adjourn.
D. DeFillippo seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 7:40 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Y. Rodriguez

Documents used during the meeting

- Board of Trustee Report for November 12, 2025.pdf
- Awards 2025-2026.pdf
- Parent Coffee 10.24.25.pptx