APPROVED

Lawrence Family Development Charter School

Minutes

LFDCS Board of Trustees Meeting-Zoom

Date and Time
Wednesday May 13, 2026 at 5:30 PM

Location
Zoom

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

Trustees Absent
J. Henriquez, L. McRae, R. Almanzar

Guests Present
A. Croes (remote), C. Parcell (remote), D. Thakkar (remote), E. Fuller (remote), H. Castleman (remote), Jeovanny Rodriguez, Parent of LFDCS (remote), L. Lawler (remote), M. Ventre (remote), N. Arpin (remote), Rosa Perez, Parent of LFDCS (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 May 13, 2026 at 5:36 PM.

C.

Pledge of Allegiance

D. Approve minutes from the April 8, 2026 BOT Meeting

D. DeFillippo made a motion to approve the minutes from LFDCS Board of Trustees Meeting-Zoom Only on 04-08-26.
E. Nolberto seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

II. Public Participation

A. LFDCS Parents

Rosa Perez, parent of a third-grade student, introduced herself to the Board. She was there to observe the meeting, not for public participation.
Jeovanny Rodriguez, parent of a 7th, 3rd, and K2 student was present. Mr. Rodriguez wanted to share his opinion and in relation to a future agenda item that will be voted on by the Board, which is the *Visitors Policy*.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that his concerns about the proposed visitors policy and its potential impact on parent access to schools. He referenced a prior incident involving his child receiving a disciplinary “blue slip” on the morning of MCAS testing. He explained that he had gone to the school to seek clarification from the head of school regarding the timing and circumstances of the disciplinary action, which he believed may have negatively affected his child’s readiness for the exam. He stated that the disciplinary action had occurred shortly before testing and expressed concern about the timing in relation to standardized testing expectations for students.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that following his visit to the school, he received a certified letter restricting his access to the school premises. He reported that the letter cited Massachusetts General Laws, including provisions related to criminal trespass and school authority to restrict access, and indicated that he was no longer permitted to enter the upper school premises at 400 Haverhill Street. He expressed concern about the impact of this restriction on his ability to participate in school events involving his children,

including extracurricular activities and upcoming school ceremonies. He also stated that he had submitted public records requests, including requests for security footage from the day in question, and that he had not received the requested video.

Mr. Rodriguez argued that the proposed visitor policy, as well as its timing in relation to handbook revisions, could be used in ways that limit parental involvement in schools, particularly for parents who frequently raise concerns. He requested that the board carefully consider the implications of the policy for parent engagement and due process protections, and emphasized the importance of maintaining open access for families in school settings.

Darshan T. responded to Mr. Rodriguez to clarify several points. He stated that school visitor policies are routinely reviewed and updated as part of the annual handbook revision process, independent of individual incidents, and that policy adoption falls within the board's statutory responsibilities. It was also clarified that the restriction letter specifically referenced 400 Haverhill Street, and that 404 Haverhill Street is a separate address.

In response to questions regarding security footage, Darshan T. stated that such recordings are not released for public consumption and are governed by applicable laws and district procedures. It was noted that the matters raised by Mr. Rodriguez were already subject to multiple formal processes, including public records requests and complaints filed with DESE, and that the school had provided responses consistent with statutory requirements.

Darshan T. reiterated to Mr. Rodriguez that public participation is intended for the presentation of public comments and not for extended debate during the meeting.

III. Superintendent's Report

A. Board Attendance

Attendance records for board and committee meetings held between July 2025 and April 2026 were reviewed. During this period, a total of 10 board meetings, 9 finance committee meetings, and 3 academic advisory committee meetings were conducted. The attendance percentages for each board member were presented for review. During the discussion, concerns were raised regarding Jennifer C.'s attendance record. It was clarified that she had been excused from at least two or three meetings due to conflicts of interest involving matters related to the bank she works for. Chris N. shared that absences related to conflicts of interest should be considered excused and should not negatively affect board participation records or evaluations. It was also noted that the current attendance tracking system does not have an option to formally mark absences as excused. It was decided that an asterisk would be added next to Jennifer C.'s attendance record and include a note identifying the dates on which she was excused.

The Board also discussed finance committee attendance and noted that meeting dates had been adjusted due to changes in Lynette M.'s work schedule and Chris N.'s availability. It was suggested that some of her attendance issues during that period may have been related to those scheduling conflicts. Committee meeting dates were first moved from Wednesdays to Tuesdays and later changed to Thursdays to better accommodate schedules. The board discussed the importance of tracking committee attendance while also ensuring that legitimate scheduling conflicts do not unfairly reflect negatively on members in relation to charter or DESE compliance. It was clarified that committee attendance records are maintained in meeting minutes and may be reviewed by DESE if requested, though they are not formally reported. The Board agreed to handle Lynette M.'s attendance record in the same manner as Jennifer C. by adding appropriate notation for excused circumstances.

B. Advisory re Open Meeting Law violation.

Darshan T. addressed an Open Meeting Law violation that had been identified in connection with email communications among trustee members and school administration regarding the SSAT preparation program and its eligibility criteria. He explained that, based on legal counsel’s advice, the matter was required to be placed on the agenda and publicly discussed in an open session in order to “cure” the violation and ensure compliance with Massachusetts Open Meeting Law requirements.

Darshan T. summarized the sequence of events that led to the concern. He stated that the issue began after an email was sent to parents informing them about student selection for the SSAT exam preparation course, and that an unintended recipient also received the communication. Following this, questions were raised regarding how students are selected for participation in the program. School administration explained that eligibility is based on two primary criteria: whether a student’s intended private high school requires the SSAT exam and whether the student meets GPA requirements aligned with those admissions standards. The rationale provided was that the program is designed to support students who are academically positioned to benefit from SSAT preparation in the context of competitive private school admissions.

Darshan T. noted that a trustee subsequently questioned whether students with documented learning differences (IEPs) should be considered for the program even if they do not meet GPA requirements. The trustee expressed concern that the eligibility criteria could be discriminatory against students with disabilities and suggested that all students with IEPs should be eligible regardless of GPA. Administration responded that the SSAT program is an optional enrichment opportunity, not a core instructional or IEP-mandated service, and that expanding eligibility to all students regardless of GPA would significantly increase participation beyond available capacity and funding, while also undermining the program’s intended purpose of targeting students who meet external admissions benchmarks.

Darshan T. explained that the trustee then copied the board chair and vice chair on subsequent email correspondence, continuing to advocate for changes to eligibility criteria. Counsel advised that this type of email communication among board members regarding a matter within the board's jurisdiction constituted impermissible "deliberation" under the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law. He clarified that deliberation includes written communication between or among board members on public business, even if a quorum is not present, when the communication has the effect of discussing or influencing board decision-making outside of a properly posted meeting. Counsel further advised that once board members are included in such exchanges, it creates a legal risk that the communication could be interpreted as circumventing the requirement for public deliberation.

Darshan T. stated that counsel directed the matter to be placed on a board meeting agenda so that the communication could be publicly disclosed and formally addressed in order to cure the violation. He noted that this procedure is required under Open Meeting Law enforcement guidance, which generally requires that improper deliberations be brought into an open meeting and entered into the public record, allowing all board members and the public to be informed of the communication.

He further explained that the board had been advised that prior similar concerns had arisen involving email communications among trustees, and that counsel had previously recommended training and caution regarding serial or back-and-forth email exchanges on matters within the board's jurisdiction. Darshan T. emphasized that the purpose of bringing the issue forward was not only compliance with legal requirements but also to ensure transparency in board governance and to prevent inadvertent violations in the future.

Linette P. volunteered to share her involvement in email communications that were reviewed in connection with an Open Meeting Law matter. She stated that her initial purpose in sending the email was to request clarification about the funding source for the SSAT preparation program and that she did not initially receive a clear response to her question. She explained that when she later included the board chair and vice chair on the email, she was acting both as a parent and as a board member seeking information, and that at the time she did not view the exchange as board deliberation.

Linette P. stated that her inquiry was prompted after reference was made to a possible grant funding source, which led her to ask whether the program was supported by a grant and whether an RFP existed. She emphasized that her intent was to understand how the program was funded and to ensure transparency regarding the use of public funds. She stated that she was not seeking to change program eligibility criteria or policy, but rather to obtain clarification on the financial structure of the program.

She read portions of her original email into the record, reiterating that she asked for information on whether the program was funded through a grant, how to access related

public records, and whether formal documentation such as an RFP existed. She stated that she believed her request fell within appropriate transparency and public records inquiry.

Darshan T. clarified that the SSAT preparation program is funded through the school's operating budget and not through a grant, and therefore no RFP is associated with the program. He noted that he responded with this information to Linette P. by email.

Linette P. acknowledged that this explanation addressed her original question regarding funding. She further clarified that she included two board members in the email exchange but did not intend to engage in board-level deliberation or use a "reply all" function. She reiterated that her intent was to seek information in her capacity as a parent and trustee rather than to influence board decision-making.

Darshan T. reiterated the importance of distinguishing between individual informational inquiries and communications that may constitute board deliberation under Open Meeting Law. Trustees may ask questions individually, including multiple board members in discussions about board business outside a properly noticed meeting can raise compliance concerns. Linette P. maintained that her intent was informational and not deliberative.

Darshan T. emphasized that it's ultimately the board's responsibility to decide how to proceed but noted there are currently no formal bylaws or a code of conduct that clearly spell out expectations around trustee communication. He suggested the board should work on developing those so everyone has clearer guidance moving forward.

He also referenced the prior guidance from legal counsel after the June 2025 situation, which recommended open meeting law training. He said several training options had been shared and encouraged trustees to complete them, noting that lack of knowledge of the law is not considered a valid excuse.

Trustees discussed the need for clearer operating procedures and training so trustees can better understand what types of communication are appropriate.

Chris N. asked how board members should properly get items onto the agenda. Dr. Thakkar explained that the standard process is to contact the superintendent's office.

Chris N. suggested making training more accessible, including recorded or flexible options, since many trustees have full-time jobs. Darshan T. said they would explore multiple training formats, including options from legal counsel and the Charter School Association.

Darshan T. suggested that the chair or vice chair could issue a warning to Linette P. either verbally or in writing, or that counsel could help draft something formal.

Chris N. recommended that Germinudy L. consult with counsel before proceeding and ensure that any response is appropriate and avoids further issues. The board agreed to proceed carefully and prioritize training and clarity going forward.

Darshan T. informed the Board that they needed to decide whether to keep SSAT program as-is or change its eligibility rules. Linette P. clarified that she supports keeping the program and that her original concern was about understanding funding after a grant was mentioned, not about changing the program itself.
C. Needham made a motion to ask the school administration to keep the SSAT program as is.
J. Tejada seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

Chris N. raised the idea of developing a formal code of conduct, mainly focused on open meeting law compliance but potentially including other governance expectations. He offered to work with the vice chair and others to draft it. Darshan T. mentioned he already had a draft prepared that could be used as a starting point.

Chris N. agreed to begin with Darshan T.'s draft and noted that board development work for new members could incorporate this kind of training and guidance.

The Board agreed to form a small committee to work on the code of conduct in a way that complies with open meeting law. Chris proposed a three-trustee committee, including himself, Germinudy L., and Elizabeth N., supported by staff members Sally S. and Darshan T., with possible review by legal counsel before finalizing.

C. Advisory re school safety policies

Darshan T. presented a detailed memo for the board to keep in mind ahead of revisiting two policies, the *Visitor Policy* and the Student Illness Pickup Policy.

He began by reflecting on the prior board meeting, noting that while the discussion of policies was generally thoughtful and well-intentioned, some parts raised concerns about whether the conversation had drifted into areas that could create legal or compliance

risks. He emphasized that the purpose of the memo was to ground the upcoming policy discussion in the relevant legal authority and make sure trustees understood the framework behind the administration's recommendations.

For the Visitor Policy, Darshan T. outlined the legal basis for schools regulating visitor behavior, citing state laws requiring school safety and emergency planning, charter school regulations, and trespass statutes. He explained that schools have the authority to remove disruptive visitors and maintain safety in buildings. He also highlighted that policies must be applied consistently and neutrally to avoid constitutional issues.

Darshan T. referenced concerns raised during the previous meeting about cultural differences in communication styles, noting that while those comments were made with good intent, they could raise equal protection and civil rights concerns if they lead to different enforcement standards based on race, ethnicity, or national origin. He stressed that policies must be enforced consistently and cannot rely on cultural assumptions.

Darshan T. warned that anything discussed in board meetings becomes part of the official record and could be reviewed during oversight or charter renewal, so language used in deliberations matters.

For the Student Illness Pickup Policy, he explained that there is broad legal flexibility for schools to set procedures for notifying parents when a student is sick and requiring timely pickup. He noted that federal privacy law does not restrict these kinds of health and safety procedures and, in fact, allows disclosure to appropriate contacts in emergencies.

He said the proposed policy, requiring parent notification, a two-hour pickup window, backup emergency contacts, and follow-up meetings for repeated issues, is consistent with standard school practice and within legal authority. He added that schools are generally given discretion in setting these kinds of health and safety protocols as long as they are applied fairly and do not discriminate.

Darshan T. stated that counsel had reviewed and approved the policies based on the legal framework he presented, and that the memo was meant as background context rather than something requiring further board action at that moment.

IV. Assistant Superintendent's Report

A. Recommendation for form a Policy Subcommittee next year:

Sally S. proposed creating a policy subcommittee for the board starting next year, similar to the existing finance subcommittee. She explained that this idea came from her prior

district experience, where a smaller group would meet regularly to do the detailed policy work before items reached the full board.

She said the main benefit would be bringing more structure and organization to policy development, since policies can become scattered or inconsistent when handled only in full board meetings. A subcommittee could do the “heavy lifting” work, reviewing, drafting, and refining policy language, so that the full board focuses more on higher-level discussion and final decisions rather than line-by-line edits.

Sally S. emphasized that this approach would also improve governance and compliance, because a dedicated group could more carefully check that policies are up to date, legally sound, and aligned with state and charter requirements. She said this would reduce risk for the board and help it better meet its oversight and fiduciary responsibilities.

She also highlighted consistency across policies, explaining that a subcommittee could ensure new policies don’t conflict with existing ones and that everything stays aligned with the school’s mission and overall framework.

Another point she raised was using the subcommittee to support equity-focused review, meaning policies could be looked at more intentionally to identify any unintended impacts on different student groups, such as discipline rules, access to programs, or family engagement practices.
Sally S. added that the subcommittee could also serve as a place where trustees with specific expertise could contribute more directly, and where the board could regularly review and update older policies rather than let them become outdated.

She mentioned that the group could also help develop more structural governance policies, such as procedures for board grievances, audits, and other internal processes, using external templates and examples as guidance.

She suggested the board decide how often the subcommittee would meet, who would serve on it, and whether an administrator would participate. She also offered to be involved in the work if needed.

Elizabeth N. supported the idea, saying it would help address the challenge of managing a large volume of policies and improve clarity before items reach the full board.

Sally S. agreed, noting from her own experience that subcommittees allow for deeper discussion and “working through” language and concerns in advance. She said that by the time items reach the full board, most of the detailed debate would already be resolved, making meetings more efficient while still preserving full board oversight and final approval.

Dave D. supported the idea and added that an administrator should definitely be part of the committee, since they are closest to day-to-day school operations and can help ensure, policies are practical and responsive to real situations.

Sally S. agreed and reiterated her willingness to be involved. Others supported the concept as well, noting it would improve efficiency by resolving many details in advance, so full board meetings could focus on final review rather than lengthy drafting discussions.

Sally S. noted that they will revisit the structure in the fall, including membership and scheduling, with the intent to establish the subcommittee for the next school year.

B. Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for BOT attendance document

Sally S. presented a draft update to the board's standard operating procedures, focusing on clarifying expectations around board attendance and meeting logistics. She highlighted a proposed requirement that board members provide at least 24 hours' notice if they will be absent, so meetings can start on time without delays or uncertainty about attendance.

The draft also included a section on tracking attendance and setting a threshold for review. The proposal suggested that if a board member misses three meetings in a year (out of roughly 9–10 meetings), it would trigger a conversation to understand the reasons for the absences, identify any barriers, and determine next steps, including whether continued participation is feasible.

Board members discussed whether absences should be excused or unexcused, with the general understanding that the threshold would prompt a discussion rather than an automatic penalty. Sally S. also suggested that any known excused absences could be noted in advance and included in the meeting minutes for clarity.

Jennifer C. requested additional day-of reminders beyond email, such as text messages, since email notifications are sometimes missed. Sally S. clarified that required advance notices would still be sent by email, but agreed that additional reminders could be helpful.

The Board agreed that the three-absence threshold was fair, and Sally S. said she would revise the document to reflect the feedback and bring a finalized version back to the board at the next meeting.

C. Policy and evaluation regarding Equal Education Opportunity

Sally S. presented a new policy required by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for the board to formally adopt. The policy would require the board

to conduct an annual evaluation of equity in educational opportunities for students, ensuring all students have equal access to academic programs, extracurricular activities, and school resources regardless of protected characteristics.

She explained that she had developed both the policy and a related implementation protocol based on research from other schools. Under the proposed process, data would be collected by the administration in the fall, analyzed over the winter, and then used to produce an annual equity report. That report would be presented to the board in the spring, discussed collectively, and potentially followed by action steps if needed. At the end of the year, progress and outcomes would also be reviewed.

The evaluation would include reviewing participation in academics and extracurricular activities, assessing school climate through surveys and feedback from students, families, and staff, and examining school documents such as handbooks and policies to ensure compliance with nondiscrimination standards.

Dave D. shared that the policy covered important areas of school life and would be useful for evaluating programs and supporting students. Chris N. asked about protections for transgender students, and Darshan T. confirmed that such protections are already included in school policy and required under state guidance.

Sally S. noted that the board would need to vote on the policy before moving forward with the required annual equity evaluation report.
D. DeFillippo made a motion to accept the proposed Annual Program Evaluation Policy as proposed.
C. Needham seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

Sally S. presented the board’s required annual evaluation report on equitable access to educational opportunities. She explained that the report was developed to meet Department of Education requirements and focused mainly on gender equity in academic classes and participation in extracurricular activities and sports, since it was a new requirement and gathered later in the year.

She shared enrollment data showing a slight imbalance between female and male students (about 60% female and 40% male), which she noted reflected the school's lottery system, including sibling preference and random selection. She emphasized that classroom enrollment was generally balanced as much as possible, and that the school would continue to monitor scheduling to maintain equitable distribution.

The report also reviewed participation in athletics and clubs. Sally S. noted that most clubs are open to all students and generally show fairly balanced participation, though some skew toward one gender based on interest (for example, knitting being mostly female and some STEM-related clubs having more male participation). She stressed that access is open to all students regardless of gender, and differences are largely driven by student interest.

She also explained that she would expand future reports to include a broader range of equity measures beyond gender, such as students with disabilities, English learners, discipline data, and other areas of access. She indicated she was already considering additional research and data collection to better understand participation trends and improve inclusivity over time.

Chris N. asked about the gender imbalance and possible reasons for it. Sally S. shared that some reasons could be the lottery structure and broader developmental or societal trends. He also raised concerns about whether boys might be underrepresented in certain areas or whether participation patterns change over time through the grades. Dave D. noted similar patterns in education more broadly and supported further study of the issue.

Dave D. shared that the report was a useful starting point, and indicated support for continuing to refine and expand the analysis in future years. Sally S. shared that a vote was needed to formally accept the report before it could be submitted to the Department of Education.

C. Needham made a motion to accept the report on Student Equity and Civil Rights.
E. Nolberto seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

V. Finance Department

A. FY27 Human Capital Plan

Mark V. presented the FY27 human capital and compensation budget plan, focusing on restructuring how staff are paid and aligning compensation more closely with instructional priorities and long-term financial stability.

A major part of the plan is an average salary increase of about 9% for teachers and student support staff, with the goal of improving recruitment and retention. The district is also benchmarking pay against nearby public school districts (including Lawrence, Lowell, Haverhill, North Andover, Methuen, and Lynn) to remain competitive and reduce what was described as the historical “charter school discount,” meaning charter school salaries have typically lagged behind public school compensation. The plan aims to eliminate much of that gap, especially in the first decade of staff employment.

At the same time, the budget significantly reduces stipends (by about 85%), shifting away from COVID-era and project-based additional payments. Instead, the district is moving toward a “comprehensive compensation” model where responsibilities are embedded into job descriptions and paid through base salaries rather than separate stipend payments. The intent is to simplify compensation, reduce fragmentation, and improve efficiency while ensuring expectations for staff roles are clearer and more consistent.

Overtime is another major focus. The plan requires that most overtime be pre-approved, except in emergencies, and will be tracked more closely through a new ADP payroll and time-and-attendance system. This is intended to improve transparency, prevent unplanned overtime costs, and ensure better oversight, particularly for facilities staff and paraprofessionals.

On staffing and budget structure, instructional roles and student support services receive increased investment, while some administrative and operational areas (such as school operations and family services) are reduced through restructuring and elimination of certain positions. Facility services show decreases, while instructional leadership and paraprofessional (para) staffing see increases tied to performance and student support needs. Extended day and summer programs remain mostly stable with minor adjustments.

Overall, human capital represents about 70% of the school’s total spending. The total compensation envelope for FY27 is slightly reduced compared to the current year, with a stated cap of about 14.5% of the budget allocated to personnel costs, intended to help the school move out of a deficit position.

Chris N. shared that approving the plan is necessary to proceed with staff evaluations, renewals, and hiring decisions for the upcoming year. The finance committee had already recommended approval before it was brought to the full board for a vote.
C. Needham made a motion to approve the human capital plan.
E. Nolberto seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

VI. Principal's Report

A. Parent Coffee

Hali C. gave a brief update highlighting positive school activities and events shared previously at the last Parent Coffee, focusing on recent student engagement across all grade levels. In the lower grades (Academy A), students studied community helpers and had a visit from the Lawrence Fire Department, including seeing fire equipment and learning about firefighters' roles. In Academy B, students participated in field trips and enrichment activities such as an in-school art assembly with a visiting speed painter, Art Hero, and a trip to the LEGO Discovery Center.

At the Lower School, a Birdwatching Club formed organically from student interest during recess and has now become an official club. At the Upper School, eighth graders completed civics projects where they simulated committee hearings, practicing how government processes work and learning about civic participation.

She also highlighted a recent school-wide talent show for grades 5–8, showcasing student performances in music, dance, and other talents. Hali C. shared the school had a strong spring season filled with enrichment activities, field experiences, and student involvement. The last day of school on June 18 and the start of summer school on June 29.

Darshan T. shared the importance of the civics work, referencing national survey data suggesting gaps in civic knowledge among young people and emphasizing the value of students learning how government and the Constitution work through hands-on projects rather than relying on AI or informal sources.

VII. Parent Student Handbook Revisions

A. Student Illness Pickup Policy

Hali C. presented revised updates to the student illness pickup policy, incorporating feedback from the previous board meeting. She explained that there is currently no formal policy in place and outlined the updated procedure: when a student is determined by the school nurse to have a non-emergency illness that is too severe for them to remain in school, parents will be notified and required to pick up the student within two hours. If parents cannot do so, the school will contact at least two emergency contacts provided by the family.

The policy also states that repeated lack of adherence to the pickup requirement will trigger a meeting with school administration and family services to create a support/action plan, focusing on collaboration to address ongoing issues.

Dave D. suggested revisions to soften wording, replacing “violations” with “lack of adherence” to make the language less punitive. Elizabeth N. and Dave D. made the recommendation to reword the part in the nurse’s determination, changing the phrase to that the student has a “non-emergency illness but is too ill to remain in school,” to ensure clarity.

Darshan T. shared the importance of keeping the policy general rather than overly detailed to avoid unnecessary complexity and exceptions. The revised policy was viewed positively, and Jose T. shared that it is a huge improvement from the original draft.
D. DeFillippo made a motion to accept the Student Illness Pickup Policy with the two proposed edits.
E. Nolberto seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

B. Charting Academic Progress Policy

Hali C. presented revisions to the Charting Academic Progress Policy, incorporating feedback from the previous board meeting. She explained that several updates were needed to align the policy with the newly approved school calendar and current school practices. The updated policy reflects the correct dates for the four marking periods and clarifies that decisions regarding mandatory summer academy occur during the fourth quarter rather than the third quarter.

Hali C. added information about the school's RTI process, including a reference to the RTI handbook, so families can better understand how the school identifies academic concerns, implements interventions, monitors progress every six to eight weeks, and reassesses student needs. She emphasized that the previous handbook did not clearly explain what supports the school provides to students who are falling behind, and the updated language was intended to address that concern.

Hali C. also revised outdated terminology tied to former MCAS performance categories such as "advanced," "proficient," and "needs improvement." She explained that the school now uses numerical grades aligned with letter grades, so the policy language was updated to accurately reflect the current grading system used on report cards.

The retention section of the policy was expanded to clarify that decisions regarding student retention are based on multiple factors, including grades, internal and external assessments, and the social and emotional impact retention may have on the student.

She also added a requirement that any student recommended for academic retention must have documented RTI interventions during that school year. Hali C. explained that teachers must demonstrate that interventions and supports were implemented and monitored before retention is considered.

Hali C. explained that the original wording referencing five absences was inaccurate in this context because five unexcused absences trigger mandatory summer academy, not retention. The revised language instead references 18 absences, which aligns with the state definition of chronic absenteeism and the school's 90% attendance expectation. Linette P. and Elizabeth N. suggested removing the attendance section entirely because attendance is already addressed in another policy, while Dave D. felt it should remain for consistency with promotion guidelines. The group ultimately agreed to retain the section with the corrected 18-absence language.

Jennifer C. had a question regarding absences due to sickness, and if a doctor's note is required or if a note from the parent can suffice.

Hali C. explained that when a student is dismissed by the school nurse due to illness, the following day is automatically excused without requiring a doctor's note. She also clarified that the handbook generally requires documentation for excused absences, though the school recognizes that not every illness results in a doctor's visit.

D. DeFillippo made a motion to approve the Charting Academic Progress Policy as written.
E. Nolberto seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

C. Attendance Policy

Hali C. then presented a related update to the Attendance Policy to ensure consistency with the revisions made to the academic progress and retention policies. She explained that the current attendance policy states that students who exceed five unexcused absences “may” be required to attend Summer Academy, while discussion during the previous policy review referenced that students “will” attend Summer Academy after exceeding that threshold.

Hali C. emphasized the importance of maintaining consistent language across all school policies so families receive clear expectations and there is no confusion between documents. She noted that the school’s actual practice has been to require Summer Academy once a student exceeds five unexcused absences. Therefore, she recommended changing the wording in the attendance policy from “may” to “will” to accurately reflect current procedures and align with the language discussed in the earlier policy revisions.
D. DeFillippo made a motion to accept the revision to the Attendance Policy.
L. Perez seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

Roll Call

L. McRae Absent

D. School Visitor Policy

Hali C. introduced the final policy under review, the visitor policy, noting that the current language at the top reflects the existing handbook policy, while the proposed edits below incorporate updates based on prior board feedback, review of other district policies (including Boston Public Schools), and legal review by counsel to ensure alignment with safety expectations and compliance requirements.

Hali C. stated that the intent of the revisions is to maintain a welcoming environment for families while strengthening building safety procedures and clearly defining expectations for all individuals entering the school.

Hali C. first reviewed the updated sign-in and identification procedures, explaining that the policy now explicitly requires all parents and visitors to sign in at the front desk, present valid identification, and sign out upon leaving the building. She noted that while this is already current practice, it is being formally documented in policy to ensure consistency and clarity.

Hali C. then explained the addition of a visitor pass requirement, stating that all visitors will be issued a visible visitor badge upon signing in, and that the badge must be worn and remain visible at all times while inside the building. She clarified that this requirement would not apply during large school-wide events such as open houses, parent conferences, or other high-volume events where families are present in large groups.

Hali C. added that the policy further clarifies that any individual who is in the building without signing in or without a visitor badge may be considered trespassing, and staff may escort the individual to the main office to complete the proper check-in process. She emphasized that this language is intended to support safety and ensure staff can easily identify authorized individuals in the building.

Hali C. reviewed the section on volunteers and background checks, noting that visitors who are volunteering in an ongoing capacity or exceeding a certain threshold of time (referenced as more than 10 hours) are required to complete a CORI or equivalent background check prior to having unsupervised access to students. She also clarified that any volunteers serving as field trip chaperones or in roles where they may be alone with students must be cleared in advance.

Jennifer C. asked for clarification on whether board members participating in field trips are also required to complete the same clearance process. Hali C. responded that all individuals with access to students must be cleared but confirmed that if a board member has already completed the required check and is on file, they would not need to repeat the process unless the clearance had expired or was missing documentation.

Elizabeth N. made the suggestion of adding the requirements related to SORI (Sex Offender Registry Information) checks, noting that this may be an additional safeguard worth formalizing in policy. She emphasized the importance of ensuring the strongest possible protections for students and staff.

Hali C. acknowledged the comment and stated she would review whether SORI-specific language should be incorporated, noting that while it was not raised in prior legal review, it could be evaluated for inclusion in future revisions.

Hali C. then moved into visitor expectations regarding conduct and building rules, noting that visitors are expected to comply with all school policies while on campus, including the school's bell-to-bell cell phone expectations. She explained that visitors should keep phones on silent or vibrate and avoid disrupting instruction or school operations.

Hali C. reviewed bathroom access procedures, clarifying that visitors are not permitted to access student bathrooms and must check in with the main office if bathroom use is needed. She stated this is intended to maintain student safety and ensure appropriate supervision within the building.
Hali C. then discussed the section on scheduling and access to staff, noting that visitors seeking to meet with teachers or administrators are encouraged to schedule appointments in advance, including confirmation of date, time, and location. She added that while unannounced visitors may still be seen, they will be accommodated based on availability and urgency, recognizing the need to balance access with the operational demands of the school day.

Elizabeth N. shared agreement that the language appropriately balanced structure with flexibility for families. Hali C. then reviewed the visitor conduct and removal section, which states that visitors are expected to comply with all school rules and expectations while on campus or attending school events. She highlighted the updated language allowing the school administrator to restrict or deny future visits if a visitor engages in disruptive or inappropriate behavior.

Elizabeth N. raised concern about the phrasing "disruptive or inappropriate," noting that the language could be interpreted broadly and may benefit from clearer structure to ensure consistency and fairness in application.

Hali C. acknowledged the concern and stated that the intent is to allow administrative discretion based on the circumstances, but agreed that clearer procedural guidance may help strengthen consistency.

Elizabeth N. asked about a step-by-step escalation procedures for handling disruptive behavior. Hali C. stated that based on review of other policies and prior discussion, the following structure could be included:

- First, a school official would provide a clear and calm verbal warning, explaining the behavior and why it is not permitted.
- If the behavior continues, the visitor would be asked to leave the premises.
- If the visitor refuses to leave, law enforcement may be contacted, the incident documented, and a written notice of restriction or ban may be issued.

A discussion was raised by Germinudy L. regarding whether the policy was being shaped in response to a specific and recent incident involving Mr. Rodriguez. Linette P. expressed concern that the timing of the policy review appeared closely linked to that incident, and noted discomfort with voting on a policy they felt may not reflect the full context of events.

Dave D. shared that this is a general policy and to cover every circumstance will be impossible. Elizabeth N. shared that as a parent she doesn't want disruptive behavior around her children. She agrees with Dave D. that the policy must be generalized.

Hali C. indicated openness to incorporating the steps into the final policy language if the board agreed.

Darshan T. emphasized that based on the legal memo and statutes reviewed, the school has a clear responsibility to maintain a safe environment for students, staff, and visitors, and that authorized school officials already have the legal authority to take immediate action when a safety concern arises, including asking a visitor to leave the premises on the spot if necessary. He noted that these actions are not newly created by the policy but are already supported under existing law, including criminal trespass statutes and related legal authority previously discussed.
He further stated that the proposed visitor policy has been reviewed and approved by legal counsel, with language developed collaboratively through input from both the board and administration to ensure it is legally sound and consistent with district practice. He reiterated that the board has the authority to create or revise policies at any time during the school year, including in response to specific incidents, and that doing so is a normal governance function and does not invalidate the policy.
Darshan T. also stated that while the policy may include suggested procedural "steps" for addressing disruptive behavior, those steps are intended as flexible administrative guidelines rather than rigid requirements that delay action. He explained that, in practice, such steps may occur in rapid succession depending on the severity of the situation and are not meant to prevent immediate intervention when safety is at risk. He stressed that school administrators must retain the ability to respond in real time without hesitation when faced with potential threats or disruptive conduct.

He further stated that if the board were to decide not to approve the policy as written or were to limit the administrator's ability to act immediately, it could create ambiguity in how

safety situations are handled and potentially delay necessary responses in critical moments. He noted that administrators on the ground are the individuals responsible for making split-second decisions, and any limitation in policy language could impact their ability to act decisively in the moment.

He stated that enforcement of these procedures ultimately rests with school administration, who must rely on their training, experience, and judgment in real time. He emphasized that the intent of the policy is to support their authority to maintain safety while ensuring consistency and legal protection for staff and students, and that any policy should clearly reinforce, rather than restrict, that ability to act when immediate action is required.

Germinudy L. and Jennifer C. expressed concern that the school should have provided more information regarding the incident involving Mr. Rodriguez prior to making the decision to restrict his access to the school, as well as before his attendance at the board meeting. They stated that having a fuller understanding of the circumstances would have better informed their ability to evaluate the situation and make a more confident and informed decision when voting on the policy.

Elizabeth N. expressed her reservations voting at this time, noting that she is having difficulty isolating Mr. Rodriguez's situation from the proposed policy.

Hali C. shared that the policy was not based on one isolated incident, but rather on multiple occurrences over time where staff have had to manage disruptive or unsafe visitor behavior.
Jennifer C. asked if the letters have been given to other individuals restricting them from buildings, to which Hali C. responded yes, they have, but these individual cases don't have to be brought to the board.

Dave D. added that the board's responsibility is to set policy, not to adjudicate individual incidents or operational decisions. He emphasized the importance of trusting trained administrators to apply policies consistently and appropriately in real time.

Linette P. continued to raise concerns about fairness and potential long-term impacts of exclusion decisions on families, particularly in cases where parents may need access to the school for ongoing reasons involving their children.

Chris N. reiterated that the board's role is to establish clear policy frameworks and allow administration to implement them. Situations would be handled through administrative discretion and case-by-case decision-making, and that the policy does not eliminate flexibility but establishes baseline expectations and authority.

Dave D. suggested adding a specified duration of time within the policy outlining how long an individual may be restricted from entering the school building.

Hali C. explained that the school's approach is centered on maintaining a safe and supportive environment for students, families, and staff while also trying to work collaboratively with families whenever possible. She noted that while the goal is to preserve positive relationships, the responsibility of managing disruptive or unsafe situations often falls on frontline staff, particularly receptionists, who frequently handle these interactions.

She stated that the school aims to rebuild trust when concerns arise, but also recognizes that there are times when clear boundaries must be set to ensure safety. In such cases, the school may issue restrictions for a specified period of time, during which expectations for behavior and conduct are reinforced. She emphasized that this time-limited approach allows the school to maintain safety while also creating an opportunity to repair relationships over time.

Hali C. explained that while the school already has conduct expectations outlined in student and employee handbooks, there is a need to more clearly define expectations for visitors and how violations are handled. She noted that the visitor policy updates are intended to strengthen this framework.

She also highlighted the role of family liaisons, who often assist in de-escalating situations and supporting communication with families during challenging interactions, reinforcing the school's broader effort to balance safety with relationship-building.

Germinudy L. expressed her concern that the new policy steps were not provided to Mr. Rodriguez prior to his restriction and reflected a broader concern about fairness and consistency in how similar incidents are handled.

Darshan emphasized that while the board is attempting to ensure equitable treatment across situations, administration maintains that they are operating within legal authority and established procedures.

Darshan T. responded that the school's actions are grounded in legal authority and that it is important to recognize that any incident includes multiple perspectives, not just a single account. He stressed that decisions are based on the totality of information available, including written statements from multiple adults who described feeling unsafe during the incident, and that these accounts supported the administration's actions taken at the time.

Jennifer C. and Germinudy L. raised questions about access to security footage and whether additional context could help the Board better understand the situation. Darshan T. explained that security video is subject to legal restrictions, including FERPA and building security concerns, and therefore cannot be broadly released, but noted that multiple written statements from witnesses already exist and could be reviewed if permitted.

Darshan T. stated that the actions taken regarding Mr. Rodriguez were lawful, supported by witness accounts, and based on safety concerns, and that the decision to restrict access would remain in place. He also clarified that even with the adoption of updated policy language, prior decisions made under existing authority remain valid and will not be overturned. This does not limit Mr. Rodriguez's ability to restore the relationship with the administration.

Jose T. shared his opinion in support of the school's decision. He also expressed that disruptive and disrespectful behavior should not be tolerated towards the school staff and in front of students. The Board's responsibility is to ensure the safety of students and staff.

Dave D. and Chris N. expressed the same opinion as Jose T. The job of the Board is to ensure the safety of students and staff and set policies to ensure that, and for administrators to enforce them.
C. Needham made a motion to adopt the Visitors Policy as written.
J. Tejada seconded the motion.
Germinudy L. requested clarification on whether the proposed escalation steps were included in the final version. Dave D. confirmed that the motion reflected the current written policy language, without additional amendments.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

E. Nolberto	Aye
D. DeFillippo	Aye
J. Cedeno	Aye
G. Lopez	Aye
L. McRae	Absent
R. Almanzar	Absent
L. Perez	No
J. Henriquez	Absent
J. Tejada	Aye
C. Needham	Aye

VIII. Department Highlight

A. Access for ELL Students at LFDCS

Elaine F., the ELL Coordinator, presented an overview of the school's ACCESS testing data for English Learner (EL) students, along with updates on family engagement activities within the ESL department. She explained that the ACCESS test is administered annually in January and measures English proficiency across listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Students are considered to have tested out of ESL services and achieve FLEP (Former Limited English Proficient) status when they meet specific

proficiency benchmarks, including an overall score of 4.2 and a literacy score of at least 3.9.

Elaine F. reported that this year 43 students (13% of the EL population) achieved FLEP status, an increase from 30 students (11%) the prior year. She noted that six kindergarten students reached FLEP status this year, which is uncommon and viewed as a positive indicator of early language development. She also reviewed how FLEP students are distributed across school buildings, noting differences by grade level and explaining that students typically exit ESL services after about six years, with progress becoming more challenging the longer a student remains in the program.
Elaine F. presented student progress growth data, explaining that this measures whether students are meeting expected annual growth in English proficiency. She reported that 117 students (49%) met their growth goals this year, compared to 82 students (40%) last year, indicating an overall increase in progress. She noted that younger students, particularly in lower grades, tend to show higher rates of progress growth, while older students and those with additional learning needs may experience more difficulty reaching growth targets.

Chris N. asked if it is typically for growth to happen in the fourth grade. Elaine F. confirmed that most students tend to reach FLEP status by around fourth grade or after approximately six years in the program, with later progress becoming more difficult over time.

Elaine F. also shared examples of ESL family engagement activities, including family math nights for younger students in grades K–2, which may be held either in person or virtually. She described these events as highly engaging for both students and families, with hands-on math activities designed to support learning at home and in school. She also highlighted the English Learner Parent Advisory Council (ELPAC) and Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) meetings, which are held four times a year and address various family and student support topics.

Chris N. asked how many ESL teachers are bilingual and if that affects the students' growth. Elaine F. responded that not all ESL teachers are bilingual, but emphasized that all are ESL-certified and trained in linguistics-based instructional methods. She explained that while bilingual ability can be helpful, it is not required for effective instruction in ESL programs.

IX. 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 9:51 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Y. Rodriguez
E. Nolberto made a motion to adjourn.
L. Perez seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

Documents used during the meeting

- Sup Comm OML 05132026.pdf
- Sup Comm Safety 05132026.pdf
- board_attendance_.docx
- Recommendation for establishment of a Policy Subcommittee.docx
- SOP for BOT attendance.docx
- Annual Program Evaluation Policy for BOT.docx
- Protocol for BOT Annual Evaluation of school.docx
- Annual Evaluation Report on Student Equity and Civil Rights for BOT approval.docx
- Parent Coffee 5.1.26.pptx
- Student Illness Pick Up Policy.docx
- Chartering Academic Progress Policy.docx
- School Visitor Policy.docx
- Attendance Updates.docx
- ACCESS 2026 Presentation.pptx