



Board Meeting (in person)
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
October 17, 2025
10:23AM - 3:35PM

Members Present:

Hector Torres, Chair
Allison R. Kokkoros, Member
Ana Mejia, Secretary
Helen Mesfin, Member
John Goodman, Member
Cesar Lopez-Morales, Member (left from 11:26am - 12:03pm)
Vilma Rosario, Member
Ingrid Toledo, Member
Johan Uvin, Member
Larry Villegas-Pérez, Member

Members Absent:

Alejandra Barerra, Member
Robbie Dean, Vice-Chair & Treasurer
Giovanni Delfino, Member

Staff:

Eduardo Aponte, Vice President, Finance
Chelsea Bradford, Chief Schools Officer
Kim Coreas
Erin Hart
Elani Lawrence, Chief Academic Officer
John Marchese
Angela Medina, Chief Operations Officer
Libby Miller, Chief of Staff
Robert M. Skelton, General Counsel
Karla Vasconez, Manager, Executive Administration
Olianka Wingate

Quorum: Yes

Welcome & Pre-Meeting Announcements

Board Chair Hector Torres provided opening comments and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The meeting was called to order at 10:23am.

Review of Agenda

Mr. Torres asked if there were any proposed changes to the agenda previously sent to the Board. Board members did not propose any changes to the agenda.

Public Comment Period by members of school community

Mr. Torres confirmed that no members of the public had signed up to give comments during the Public Comment Period.

Consent Agenda Approval

The following items were brought forward for approval as part of the Consent Agenda:

- Minutes of the Board's regular meeting held on June 10, 2025.

Ms. Rosario moved to approve the Consent Agenda, and Mr. Uvin seconded the motion. Following the invitation for discussion on the motion, a roll call vote was conducted, and the Consent Agenda item was approved unanimously.

Mission Moment

Felipe Sanchez, who is a digital literacy tutor for the School, shared his immigration story. He immigrated at 12 years old and often had to translate for his parents. He completed the CR bilingual teaching assistant program. He has seen how the students show up and live our values every day. He helped students who were afraid to come to the school with their technology tools to be able to stay connected, and others who faced issues caring for aging parents. The flexibility to assist students and meet them where the students are really helps students stay connected to the school and keep learning. He noted digital literacy is key in our economy, and the School is focused on helping students develop this ability. Mr. Villegas-Pérez noted that we may have an opportunity to spread news about the school through younger students at local schools. Ms. Kokkoros noted the evolving hybrid model at the school continues to support the needs of the students. The board members greatly appreciated his inspiring story.

Board Engagement & Key Policies

Ms. Vasconez then spoke to the Board about the committee schedules and goals for the school year. She displayed the spreadsheet which will be available to all board members and which has the Board and committee schedules and the goals for each committee. The spreadsheet also includes a calendar which lists the dates of board engagement opportunities and includes a column for board members to sign up for the opportunities in which they can participate. Additional opportunities will be added to the calendar as they become available. Mr. Villegas-Pérez asked whether the opportunities could be sent out as calendar invitations to help board members remember when events are scheduled. Ms. Vasconez mentioned that it may be possible to do that for some events.

CEO Report

CEO Allison Kokkoros referred to materials shared in advance and noted the following highlights in her report:

- Ms. Kokkoros introduced John Marchese as the School's new Vice President of Advancement, and Erin Hart as the school's new Senior Director of Human Resources.

- The School is on track for its budgeted enrollment of 2000. Because of the external environment, the School was very concerned whether students would enroll and attend their classes. However, the School took several steps, including individual conversations with students who were on the fence, which helped reach the budgeted enrollment.
- She acknowledged that pressures on the community continue, including the loss of health insurance for some community members, and housing and food security.
- To help address the community pressures, the School has committed to remaining a safe, student-centered space for learning, has built creativity and flexibility into its operations, and is partnering proactively with allies, such as DC Health Link.
- Highlights from the SY24-25 school year include:
 - The School exceeded its budgeted enrollment of 2100.
 - It increased its CASAS gains by nearly 4%.
 - The new SIS project, which included a root cause analysis, began and is on track.
 - The School achieved an overall score of 78% on the staff satisfaction survey.
 - Staff retention was 99%.
 - The mortgage on the Sonia Gutierrez campus was paid in full.
 - The school dealt with the rapidly evolving political, social and financial changes
 - The School named two new principals (Santiago Sanchez and Keith Juarez), which enabled Elani Lawrence and Chelsea Bradford to assume their roles (Chief Academic Officer and Chief Schools Officer respectively) full-time this year.
 - The School successfully completed the 2023-2025 strategic plan and adopted its next three-year strategic plan. Mr. Torres noted that the School's DEIB work is incorporated in the work and practice of the School.
- Ms. Lawrence then provided the following academic performance report for the 24-25 School Year:
 - The School is meeting its charter goals except in one area.
 - The School is behind its goal in ESL program scores, although the scores did increase by 4% over last year, and the School has put in place strategies to increase the scores this year.
 - Mr. Villegas-Pérez asked whether the School helps students learn how to take tests, and Ms. Lawrence confirmed that it does.
 - Ms. Toledo asked what happens if the School does not meet its goals. Ms. Kokkoros replied that the School will undergo a deep review and renewal from the DC Public Charter School Board in SY 27-28, and that the DCPCS could put conditions on the charter renewal, since they are becoming more stringent. Ms. Kokkoros also noted that the CASAS test has changed and that nationally scores have declined. The School may consider asking that the goal be changed once data is available about the new test. Mr. Uvin asked how many other charter schools have this goal in their charter and Ms. Kokkoros responded three or four.
 - Mr. Goodman noted the importance of ESL, and Ms. Rosario sought confirmation about the steps being taken to improve. Mr. Torres also asked about student supports provided by the School. Ms. Kokkoros addressed the questions and reiterated the School's efforts and focus on improving the scores.
 - Ms. Lawrence stated that the key strategies for the year include:

- Adding an additional testing window during the semester as a pulse check.
 - Adding a listening assessment, which is showing gains.
 - Enhancing professional development for faculty.
 - Accountability for monitoring student progress and supporting teachers in making adjustments.
 - Ms. Mejia noted that it is frustrating that the students do not know on which questions they made mistakes, which makes it harder to address deficiencies and improve.
 - Ms. Lawrence confirmed that the administrators are working with teachers on how to best assist students. Mr. Torres noted the value of having students on the board.
 - Mr. Villegas-Pérez reiterated the importance of test-taking skills for students. Mr. Uvin noted that the additional testing window will give us insights on where to focus to increase student performance on the tests.
- Regarding the School's ASPIRE performance measures, Ms. Lawrence noted that the School's estimated performance rating is Level One, which is the highest level.
 - Mr. Torres noted that ASPIRE is student-centric and focused on student performance. Mr. Goodman noted that knowledge of the School's academic performance is included on the board self-assessment which will be conducted after the board meeting.
- Ms. Miller then noted the following regarding the new strategic plan:
 - The plan has been shared with all staff and have included managers on a deeper level.
 - Staff members and their managers are in the process of setting individual goals which support the strategic plan.
 - Implementation examples include flexible learning modalities, building leadership skills to deal with uncertainty, and staff training on emergency protocols, the evolving role of the Rapid Response Team to provide more tactical decisions to address various community risks, enhanced professional development for faculty and staff, the focus on persistence measures and the pursuit of additional partnerships.
 - Mr. Uvin asked what makes the strategic plan nimble, and Ms. Kokkoros responded that the goals are evergreen and forward-looking; a rapid response and accountability are built into the plan, and the leadership has prioritized the activities for the first year of the plan. Mr. Torres noted that the plan allows for adjustments to serve students better. Mr. Villegas-Pérez stated that with each risk the School should look for an opportunity, such as seeking more work with churches and other partners and Ms. Kokkoros noted that the plan includes increasing partnerships in the community. Ms. Medina commented that the School is constantly revising and adapting every day.
- Ms. Medina noted the following:
 - The School is currently in contract negotiations for the development of the new Student Information System. Salesforce has been selected as the base system after speaking with peer schools that use Salesforce. Once the contracts are signed, development of the system will begin, followed by implementation. The system

will go live after it is fully tested, hopefully by mid-2027. Users will be fully trained on the new system.

- Mr. Villegas-Pérez asks if we will need to have conversations with DCPCSB and OSSE during implementation to ensure reporting is timely and correct, and Ms. Medina affirmed.
- Mr. Goodman asked if the RFP was open to other vendors, and how much customization would be required. Ms. Medina confirmed that the RFP was open to other vendors, and that Salesforce scored 4.6 of 5 in out of the box functionality against requirements. Mr. Goodman also asked if the timetable has enough time to handle delays, and Ms. Medina affirmed that the timeline should be sufficient. Mr. Uvin noted that the long runway will help ensure that we have the right system in place.

The Board then took a break for lunch.

Financial Report

Mr. Goodman, accompanied by Mr. Aponte, presented the financial report. Mr. Goodman noted that:

- For fiscal year 2024-25, the School finished the fiscal year on a very strong footing. The financial results enabled the school to:
 - Fully fund the \$6 million special project reserves; and
 - Pay off the mortgage on the Sonia Gutierrez campus.

Mr. Aponte noted that:

- Forecasted revenue shared in June was within \$100,000 of actual results (pending finalization of the FY24-25 audit).
- Revenue was higher due to higher enrollment and growth in the investment portfolio
- In addition, expenses were less than budgeted because:
 - Student computer and data expenses were carefully managed;
 - Salary expenses were under budget due to vacancies. These savings are somewhat offset by additional contractor expenses; and
 - Managers budgeted conservatively and carefully managed their department budgets.
 - Mortgage interest declined due to the elimination of the mortgage.
- The School's cash position was \$3 million above due to entering the year with a higher balance, primarily.
- The audit is underway and going well. The auditors expect to present their findings to the Finance and Development Committee in November, and to present the finalized audit to the Board at its meeting on December 10, which is the deadline for submitting the audit report to the DC Public Charter School Board. Mr. Torres raised concerns about the short turn around considering the deadline, and Mr. Goodman and Mr. Uvin suggested several ways to have the board review the audit results. Mr. Goodman agreed to communicate with the Chair to determine if a special meeting prior to December 10 was warranted.
- For the current school year, with two months recorded, revenue is expected to increase by \$1.1 million, \$800,000 of which is due to more funds provided by OSSE under the Public Charter School Educator Compensation Payments Act of 2025 than budgeted. This also results in higher expenses as the funds are a pass-through to our Educator staff. In addition,

the School did not budget for the SOAR grant, which it now expects to receive. Cash on hand is projected to be 159-160 days. Mr. Villegas-Pérez asked where the per student funding is reflected, and Mr. Aponte responded that it is in the top line revenue. In response to a question from Mr. Torres, Mr. Aponte explained that the appendix to the financial statement provides a breakdown of the revenue sources.

Finance and Development Committee

Mr. Goodman noted the following:

- The Committee met with the auditors, and discussed the School's development plan and the committee's goals for the year.
- The internal control environment and cyber security will be the focus of the committee's work for the year.
- Mr. Goodman requested that the other board members provide references for potential sponsors for the Achieving the Dream event, and asked that Mr. Marchese keep the Committee involved in his fundraising efforts.
- Mr. Goodman requested that the board members provide their annual contribution to the School by December 31, emphasizing that the amount of the contribution is an individual decision and that full board participation is important.
- Mr. Torres noted that he promotes the School on his birthday on social media to help raise money. Mr. Villegas-Pérez also noted the process for getting the money raised through Facebook.

Academic Oversight and Strategic Planning Committee

Mr. Uvin noted the following:

- The Committee set the academic performance reporting plan for the school year.
 - At the December board meeting, the Committee will report on preliminary fall semester progress.
 - At the March board meeting, the Committee will provide a full report on fall semester progress.
 - At the June board meeting, the Committee will report on preliminary spring semester progress.
 - The Committee will include looking at the results of the climate survey, and input from student services and student government.
 - Mr. Uvin also stated that he was impressed with Ms. Lawrence's progress in addressing the CASAS issue.
- The Committee also received Part One of the AIR research report and noted that Part Two was delayed due to federal funding cutbacks.
- The Committee has been closely monitoring the progress with the School Information System project and appreciated the working relationship with Ms. Medina.
- Regarding the strategic plan, he noted that:
 - Current conditions have really tested staff and the plan.
 - Both staff and plan have proven to be nimble and responsive.
 - The plan is adequately focused and sufficiently nimble to respond to changing circumstances.

- Mr. Torres stated he was gratified to see the in-depth knowledge and focus by the Committee. Mr. Uvin also noted that the committee support structure introduced by Ms. Kokkoros works very well.

Governance and Nominating Committee

Ms. Rosario noted the following:

- **Board self-assessment:** Each year, the Governance and Nominating Committee asks the board members to complete the self-assessment so that the Board can continue to improve its work. The assessment will be sent next week and Board members will have two weeks to complete the assessment. The Committee intends to analyze the results and report back to the Board at the December meeting.
- **Potential new board members:** According to the School's bylaws, four of our board members' terms will expire on December 31, 2025. The board members whose terms are expiring are Hector Torres, Johan Uvin, Giovanni Delfino and Ana Mejia. We will discuss possible recommendations for new board members and possible committee assignments for next year during the closed session. The staff has already begun the process of recruiting for a new student board member to replace Ms. Mejia.
- The Committee is very aware of its duty to recommend board members who reflect the richness and diversity of our community, and we will continue our efforts to recruit those candidates.
- In response to a question from Mr. Villegas-Pérez, Ms. Rosario confirmed that the Committee asks board members whose terms are expiring if they want to continue to serve.

Closed Session

Mr. Torres noted the next item on the agenda is slated for closed session, citing the DC Code provision for doing so:

- Discussion in closed session pursuant to DC Code § 2-575(b)(10) – personnel matters.

Mr. Goodman made a motion to approve entering the closed session for the stated purposes. Mr. Dean seconded the motion. A roll call vote was conducted to approve entering the closed session as proposed. The Board voted unanimously to enter closed session. Following the vote, the Board entered closed session.

Following the closed session, the Board returned to the open meeting at about 3:25pm.

Open Session

Mr. Torres thanked everyone for a robust discussion during the closed session. The Board discussed the proposed board member, the performance review for the CEO Ms. Kokkoros, and the continued employment of Jay Haddock. Ms. Kokkoros recused herself from the portion of the closed session in which her performance review was discussed, and Mr. Torres recused himself from the portion of the closed session in which the continued employment of Jay Haddock was discussed.

Mr. Torres then requested a motion to approve the employment of Jay Haddock as Senior Advisor to the CEO upon the terms and conditions discussed with the board during the closed session. Mr. Goodman made the motion, and Ms. Rosario seconded the motion. All board members present voted in favor of the motion, except Mr. Torres who abstained from voting.

New Business

There was no new business.

Adjourn

Mr. Torres adjourned the meeting at 3:35pm.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ana Mejia".

Respectfully submitted by Ana Mejia, Board Secretary