



Board Meeting (via Zoom)
DRAFT Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
September 25, 2026
10:00am – 4:15pm

These are draft minutes. Final minutes from this meeting will be posted to the School's website following the next Board Meeting.

Members Present:

Robert Dean, Chair
Vilma Rosario, Vice Chair
John Goodman, Treasurer
Cesar Lopez-Morales, Secretary
Alejandra Barrera, Member
Hanane Hakim, Member (joined at 1:26pm)
Ana Harvey, Member (left at 2:00pm)
Steven Johnson, Member
Allison Kokkoros, Member
Helen Mesfin, Member
Ingrid Toledo, Member
Johan Uvin, Member

Members Absent:

Larry Villegas-Pérez, Member

Staff:

Eduardo Aponte, Vice President, Finance
Chelsea Bradford, Chief Schools Officer
Elani Lawrence, Chief Academic Officer
John Marchese, Vice President, Advancement
Libby Miller, Chief of Staff
Alexis Ortiz, General Counsel
Karla Vasconez, Director of Executive Administration
& Strategic Initiatives

Participants:

Deborah Kennedy

Quorum: Yes

Welcome & Pre-Meeting Announcements

Board Chair Robbie Dean provided opening comments and welcomed everyone to the meeting. The meeting was called to order at 10am.

Review of Agenda

Mr. Dean 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 the School Community

Mr. Dean 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 3, 2026.

Ms. Harvey moved to approve the consent agenda, and Mr. Goodman 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

Ms. Kokkoros introduced the Mission Moment, and shared with the Board Members the video of highlights of the June 2026 graduation ceremony. Board Members offered their congratulations and thanks for the important work over the last year.

Annual Board Business and Key Policies

Ms. Vasconez spoke to the Board about the Board and committee meeting schedules and goals for the year, including the spreadsheet available to all Board Members containing this information. The spreadsheet also includes a calendar listing the dates of board engagement opportunities and provides a place for Board Members to sign up to participate. Mr. Dean encouraged Board Members to participate in these engagement opportunities to support the School, its students, and its mission.

Mr. Dean reminded Board Members of key School policies, including its Equal Opportunity in Employment Policy, Title IX Policy, Whistleblower Policy, Recordkeeping Policy, Conflict of Interest Policy, and Emergency Succession Plan. He asked that Board Members read the policies carefully.

CEO Report

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

- There was a new article published in the journal by COABE written by Allison and a team of School Members, in conjunction with Washington Hospital Center. The article covered the School's partnership with Washington Hospital Center and how it has evolved over the years.
- She congratulated the Board on winning a highly sought-after, competitive award by the Center for Nonprofit Advancement for Board Leadership.

- Looking back at the last school year, highlights include:
 - The School's new Student Information System (SIS) is on track and a bit ahead of schedule. The new SIS should be in place by July 2027.
 - She acknowledged the rapidly shifting external environment that affects the community the School serves. The School put into place response protocols, trained teams, and has regular lines of communication.
 - She shared the performance dashboard with the School's targets and performance year over the year, including the percentage of enrollment related to what they budgeted for that year. Last year had 0.3% over what they budgeted.
 - With respect to compliance, the School is fully in compliance with applicable DC laws and PCSB guidelines and reporting timelines.
 - With respect to the School's annual health and culture survey, we had a target of 75% participation with 75% favorable response. Last year we had very strong results, with 82% participation rate and 85% favorable responses.
 - With respect to employee retention and voluntary turnover, a number of people retired over the last school year, but they are not seeing a pattern or trend that caused alarm.
- Ms. Lawrence then provided the following academic performance report for the 25/26 School Year:
 - She reminded Board Members of frameworks utilized by the School, including the measurable goals in the School's Charter contract with the PCSB, as well as the ASPIRE framework that is PCSB's accountability framework. The School is in the data validation period right now, so this is unvalidated data, but feels very confident in its internal modeling.
 - The School is meeting all Charter contract goals. Data for college and career readiness is still in process. Ms. Toledo asked what the validation period is, and Ms. Lawrence confirmed that it runs through November, but that she is hoping to get the data back sooner than that.
 - She noted tremendous improvement year over year, in particular in CASAS data showing gains in assessment. Students earning a GED also increased year over year.
 - This was the first year that all metrics were included in the ASPIRE framework. The School is on track to be a Level 1 school based on what we are seeing.
 - Mr. Goodman asked what the School did that led to improvement in the areas of CASAS and GED testing. Ms. Lawrence noted that last year, the School intentionally provided students with additional opportunities to take assessments. That provides more data to support students and reflect their learning gains. They are now giving the CASAS assessment in both reading and listening. There is also targeted professional development for ESL teachers and amped up support in academic teams.
 - There is strong collaboration with the team on tracking data for GED, since Spanish and English programs are located on different campuses. They spent a lot of time bringing these programs to understand how they track data as a unified school. They also added a Director of GED role to the team.
 - Mr. Dean noted that Ms. Lawrence and her team went to the Board months ago to flag trends that were not leading to Level 1, and had good conversations about

what support the team needed from the Board. This is an important part of our collaborative work.

- Ms. Barrera asked how long a level status lasts, and Ms. Lawrence confirmed that it is evaluated every year, and that every year some of the targets on the metrics shift.
- Mr. Dean stated that the School is in the strongest academic position it's ever been in.
- Ms. Miller then provided the following update on the School's Strategic Plan:
 - The School completed the first year of our 2025-2028 Strategic Plan. The School made remarkable growth on ESL and GED student outcomes this year.
 - She noted that last year, there were multiple food distributions and assistance, including parking assistance, provided to students to further reduce barriers to making education possible. The School also introduced a supplemental tutoring platform. She noted that the School covers nearly all costs associated with career training programs.
 - With respect to operations, talent, and culture, last year was a big year for the SIS. There was significant constituent engagement to make sure the School is responding to mitigate previous challenges.
 - They set the stage for assessment of performance management tools and processes to identify competencies where people need to grow. Compensation redesign work was essential prework this year.
 - With respect to the CR Way, they are focusing on how to make the School's values come to life, including look-fors to help everyone, including students.
 - Ms. Miller noted that organizational resilience and agility starts with enrollment, and gave major kudos to Ms. Bradford and her team for sustaining the School within 10% of budgeted enrollment.
 - She noted that the School exceeded its fundraising goals by quite a bit last year.
 - The School also did significant work with advocacy last year and brought advocacy education to the full school team.
 - Coming into Year 2 of strategic plan implementation, all goals are on track. For some talent work, there have been intentional shifts in the timeline, but there is lots of good work happening.
 - With respect to academic excellence and student success, the goal for this year is to enhance quality of instruction, as well as the launch of a healthcare mini-clinic on campus next month to support students' wellbeing.
 - With respect to organizational health, they intend to focus on project management norms, performance management and employee growth/professional development, and SIS implementation.
 - With respect to resilience and agility, Ms Miller noted that the outreach department has moved under registration. They are working on a resource development plan for the year, including work on establishing a foundation, as well as looking at key risks and scenario planning.

- Ms. Kokkoros, Ms. Lawrence, Ms. Bradford, and Mr. Marchese provided an update on enrollment:
 - Ms. Kokkoros shared that when enrollment numbers appear to be significantly down, they did a call to action for the entire School community, and put together a triage team. At one point, they thought the School could have as much as a 25% reduction in enrollment. But ultimately, the School exceeded its target. The budgeted target was 2015 students, and the School will end up with 2040 or even more.
 - There are enrollment dips, including in MCPS, in Virginia schools, and throughout DC, including due to lower birthrates, immigration and migration patterns and challenges, and people leaving the region, including because of cost of living.
 - Ms. Bradford stated her appreciation for Ms. Kokkoros's leadership in meeting this difficult moment. She noted that the School has set up a referral program, and the team has been working hard in reimagining what it means to push through challenging enrollment. They have been taking stepbacks to see what has and hasn't worked, and have also educated 10-month employees about the relationship of enrollment to budget. Collaboration with faculty and staff was highly successful.
 - Ms. Lawrence noted that the School has to run a lottery annually, and looked at how to ensure that those who won finished registration and attended classes. This year, they ensured that everyone received a phone call and was invited to come to school. This reduced the no-show list significantly.
 - Mr. Marchese shared that the triage team met twice a week and talked, coordinated, looked at data, generated new ideas, and figured out how to clear roadblocks. They created new media campaigns, new social media campaigns, and targeted new locations. They also made sure that during the first week of classes, there were announcements telling people to encourage their friends to come to school.
 - The team noted that they would share the results of the After Action Review with the Board.
 - Mr. Goodman offered congratulations, and asked about who might be influencers in the community. Mr. Marchese noted that the School did significant faith-based outreach, and that everyone in the School stepped up to help and volunteered based on their own communities. Ms. Bradford noted that the School has contracted with a marketing team that is going through the data.
 - Board Members discussed the strategies highlighted by the team, and asked how the team would codify its work. Ms. Kokkoros stated that the team is pivoting to its After Action Review to go through the discipline of documenting what worked, what questions were raised, and what the School would like to have in place.
 - Ms. Toledo noted that implementing the new SIS will be key to these strategies going forward, and Ms. Kokkoros agreed that it was worthwhile to look at SIS development to see if the School should prioritize any new functionalities.
- Ms. Bradford shared additional thoughts on the School's academic vision:

- She noted that they are focused on assessing the quality of instruction and strengthening academic excellence.
- The three pillars of the School's academic vision include professional development; feedback cycles; and data-informed instruction.
- The School acquired access to a platform, Elevated Ed, which provides asynchronous instructional learnings for faculty.
- They are also working on standardizing expectations for feedback, including return time on feedback.
- The School is looking at how faculty are using real-time data, and challenging faculty to get deeper and elevate rigor in the classroom. Principals have set expectations for diving into data and analyzing student work.
- The School has shifted to use the Danielson framework as a tool to align how it evaluates teachers with how the School is evaluated externally.
- Ms. Lawrence provided information on the School's high-stakes reviews:
 - Under the School's Charter contract, the School must be accredited. Accreditation visits are scheduled for the first week in March, coinciding with the March Board meeting.
 - The School will also be going through a 30-year Charter renewal, and will have a qualitative site review as part of that process. Reviewers will visit 70% of classes during the first two weeks in May.

The Board then took a break for lunch.

Financial Report

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

- The School closed SY25-26 in a strong financial position. The School exceeded its revenue goals and reinforced long-term financial stability.
- Three core themes from past year: Revenue exceeded budget by 5%, which was boosted by some grants and some strong returns. Operational savings were intentionally directed into critical campus and technology capital investments. And the School had a strong cash position, which would enable the School to weather a storm without it being disastrous or existential.
- Mr. Aponte noted that:
 - The report that was shared is preliminary, as the audit just got underway.
 - There was some one-time revenue that came in that was not budgeted.
 - On the revenue side, the School finished at \$44.7 million in revenue, about 5% ahead of budget. The most important line is the per-pupil funding line, which came in essentially on budget. The remaining overage was in the grants area, which included the DOH nursing grant and the SOAR grant, and in OSSE educator funding, which came in higher than budgeted.
 - With respect to expenses, the School underspent its direct student expense, in part due to savings from negotiations on student device costs. Also, some expenses budgeted as operating expenses were capitalized as long-term assets in accordance with our financial policies.

- Staffing expenses exceeded budget due to the DOH grant and higher OSSE educator funding.
- There were also costs for converting rooms to classrooms, and expenses also went up due to higher than budgeted inflation, particularly with respect to technology.
- Put together, total spending came in on budget.
- The School came in with a net income of \$4.6 million vs. \$1.4M, which reflects some one-time and non-cash gain revenue and differences between operating expenses and capital expenditures.
- The School is meeting or exceeding standards on all regulatory measures, including minimum cash on hand.
- Mr. Goodman congratulated the School on its extraordinary performance, including in a year where there was so much uncertainty.

Finance and Development Committee

Mr. Goodman noted the following:

- The Committee met on September 9, and was pleased to welcome Dr. Johnson to his first committee meeting.
- The Committee met with new auditors, and were pleased with the schedule, intent and attitude of auditors. Ms. Toledo noted that the scope of the audit is very thorough.
- The Committee reviewed with Mr. Marchese the status of fundraising, which was very successful. They achieved 100% fundraising by the Board, and would like to achieve the same result earlier in the year this year.
- He highlighted two Committee goals, including focusing on assessing internal controls to safeguard our overall organizational assets. A second goal is to help the Board better understand the School's financial performance, including reserves.

Academic Oversight and Strategic Planning Committee

Mr. Uvin noted the following:

- The Committee met on September 1, and set five goals for the year, including implementing a proposed academic reporting plan; closely monitoring SIS development; providing oversight to strategic plan implementation; monitoring school enrollment and support efforts to address it; and monitoring academic performance to achieve ASPIRE level 1.
- The Committee had a strong recommendation to keep up internal communications, and engaged in some scenario planning discussion.
- The AIR quantitative brief is now live and up on the AIR website. The report is about outcomes, not performance. Ms. Kokkoros shared that they are actively looking at how to leverage the report, including how to help people understand the validation for how effective our model is. She shared that the report looked at how many students in career training programs took the certification assessment, and how many passed and earned a credential. The AIR evaluator stated that she had not seen data like this before.
- Ms. Kokkoros shared that the school will be budgeting for a research and learning agenda. Mr. Dean highlighted the critical need to show irrefutable evidence, including for potential donors.

Governance and Nominating Committee

Ms. Rosario noted the following:

- Each year, the Governance and Nominating Committee asks Board Members to complete a self-assessment so that the Board can continue to improve its work. Members will receive a link to the survey during the first week of October, and should complete it by Monday, October 19. The Committee will analyze the results and share them at the December meeting.
- Administering and reporting on this assessment is one of the Committee's key goals for this school year, along with putting together a slate of candidates to replace any outgoing Board Members, recommending committee assignments, and supporting Board compliance with PCSB training requirements.
- She noted that the Committee was pleased to recommend Deborah Kennedy as a Member of the Board, to replace outgoing Member Johan Uvin, whose term ends at the end of the year. Ms. Kennedy has significant experience in adult education, literacy, and English language acquisition that she would bring to the Board, including eight years with the National Coalition for Literacy. She has also worked extensively as a consultant on professional development for instructors of English as a second language. The Committee believed that if elected, Ms. Kennedy would be a strong contributor to the work of our Board.

Closed Session

Mr. Dean 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 D.C. Code Section 2-575(b)(10) – personnel matters, D.C. Code Section 2-575(b)(11) – trade secrets and commercial or financial information, and DC Code 2-575(b)(12) – board training.

Mr. Goodman made a motion to approve entering the closed session for the stated purposes. Ms. Harvey 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.

Open Session

Following the closed session, the Board returned to the open meeting at about 4:00pm.

Vote on Resolution Electing Board Member

Mr. Dean thanked everyone for their discussion in closed session, and asked for a motion to approve the Resolution to Elect New Board Member. Ms. Toledo moved to approve the Resolution, and Mr. Goodman seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was concluded, and the Resolution was approved unanimously, and Deborah Kennedy will join the board effective January 1, 2027.

New Business

There was no new business.

Adjourn

Mr. Dean adjourned the meeting at 4:15pm.

Respectfully submitted by Cesar Lopez-Morales, Board Secretary

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