

MINUTES
Excel Academy Massachusetts Board Meeting
Thursday, December 7, 2023 – 8:30-9:30am
Location: Zoom

Board Members in Attendance: Caitlin Brumme, David Stolow, Pam Klein, Bernabe Rodriguez, Dave Sachs, Rob Lytle, Traci Griffith Walker, Devon Petersmeyer Johnson, Maher Colaylat

Board Members Absent: Steve Zrike, Nery Castro

Staff Attending: Owen Stearns, Nina Keough, Ferny Reyes, Andrew Solomon, Arthur Kaynor

Members of the Public Attending: N/A

1. Call to Order & Welcome

Brumme called the meeting to order at 8:33 am and presided over the meeting. Kaynor kept the minutes. The Board also noted that Colaylat's membership was officially approved, and the Board welcomed Colaylat to his first meeting as a voting member.

2. Public Comment

None

3. Board Business

Stolow motioned to approve the 11.9.23 meeting minutes, and Lytle seconded, and the motion was approved unanimously.

All those in favor: Caitlin Brumme, David Stolow, Pam Klein, Bernabe Rodriguez, Dave Sachs, Rob Lytle, Traci Griffith Walker, Devon Petersmeyer Johnson, Maher Colaylat

Opposed: None

Abstain: None

4. State of the School/Network Academic Team Update & Report from Academic Oversight Committee

Keough shared highlights from the Academic Update slides and academic data dashboard that were provided to the Board in advance of the meeting, including the following:

- Attendance has been a major area of focus, and we are seeing notable improvements, with still more work to do. The High School has seen the most significant improvements thus far: +1.7% average daily attendance to 92.3% in SY23-24 and a reduction in chronic absenteeism from 36.4% to 19.8% from SY22-23 to SY23-24).
- Interim assessments show improvements in 10th grade English and Math and continued growth in AP program participation and increases for specific sub-groups (including +38.5% for MLLs), and we are anticipating further improvements in performance data. The Board briefly discussed projections.
- Staff and family surveys were conducted in October on a subset of questions that are also on an annual survey. Staff data for 3 out of 4 campuses showed increased confidence and support in the school leadership. Student data was consistent with last year's.
- Suspension data is currently on track to be lower than last year, but likely higher than our network goal of 6%..
- The group discussed some outlier data for the East Boston campus in particular, with higher levels of disciplinary actions and lower feelings of staff satisfaction. This campus is experiencing significant challenges impacting school culture, which are contributing to these results. The Board and Keough discussed how the team is supporting that campus. The Network Academic Team is closely supporting the campus and embedding Network leadership in the school to provide additional capacity and coaching.
- We are looking forward to reviewing more data in March, including:
 - MAP Winter Testing (December)
 - MS Practice MCAS (Jan.-early March)
 - HS Interim Assessment 2 (January)
 - Interim Survey 2 (January)

The Board asked follow-up and clarifying questions about the data. Lytle asked about chronic absenteeism results relative to peer schools, which Reyes clarified. Griffith Walker and Rodriguez also shared reflections from the Academic Oversight Committee meeting on Dec. 4, 2023, which included a deeper review of the data presented today. The Committee is appreciating the deep work on academic data and also the building up of a bench of people who are equipped to support each school when needed. Sachs expressed that he would like to continue to look for ways for the Board to help more directly to uplift and celebrate this important work, and Colaylat shared this sentiment as well.

Keough also provided a brief summary of programmatic updates, also included in the Academic Update slides:

- Successes of the 8-week win process
- Trimester 2 focus on academic outcomes
- Increased visibility and ownership for MLL achievement
- Variability in strengths and weaknesses at each campus

5. Governance/Compliance Updates

Kaynor updated the Board that we are still awaiting feedback from DESE on the updated FY24-28 CMO agreement that was approved by the Board and submitted to DESE in June. Once DESE provides feedback and any required edits are incorporated, the anticipated process is that then DESE will grant provisional approval, after which point the agreement can be signed by both parties and resubmitted to DESE and the Commissioner as a formal amendment request for final approval. We are hopeful that we will hear back soon and be able to move forward with this process. For efficiency, we also intend to submit the amendment request to remove the Administrative Committee as a standing committee in the Board's by-laws as part of the same amendment request that will be submitted to finalize the CMO agreement approval process. We will keep the Board apprised of any developments.

6. CEO/Fundraising Update & Team Builder (continued from November meeting)

Stearns and Brumme summarized the discussion at the November Board meeting regarding efforts to ramp up our fundraising and noted that Excel's other Boards are engaging in similar efforts as well and doing the same team-building exercise. Several Board members shared how they were introduced to Excel first, and the group reflected on which strategies worked best. Brumme noted that there is nothing more powerful than a Board member bringing a warm introduction to build up the group of stakeholders that are supporting our mission. Stearns asked the group to provide 3-10 names of potential connections (prospective donors, families, staff, etc.) to Stearns and Kaynor after the meeting. Brumme noted that we can also provide support and training to Board members on how to engage in an initial conversation with a potential connection. Klein noted that there are groups of people who are already active and engaged who attended the COE and would like to find ways to continue to engage with them, such as small group dinners/meals, coffee meetings, and school visits. Brumme also asked the Board to consider whether there are coworkers in their organizations who may be interested in joining the Excel community in some way. Stolow shared that he was also compelled by the Excel story because of his family's roots in Chelsea and East Boston, and this conversation has prompted him to consider engaging others with similar backgrounds in his network who may have giving capacity.

7. Adjourn

Brumme motioned to adjourn the meeting at 10:04 am, and the motion was seconded by Lytle, and the meeting was adjourned unanimously.

List of Documents Presented at the Meeting:

1. Agenda
2. Minutes from 11.9.23
3. Academic Update Slidedeck
4. Academic Data Dashboard - updated with Q1/T1 academic data
5. Talent Update Slides
6. Solar Power Email Update