
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

A meeting of the Explore Knowledge Academy Charter School Board of Trustees was held on Feb 26 2026, at 4:00 PM, in person and virtually, at 5871 Mountain Vista Street, Las Vegas, NV 89120.

Board President Matthew Fitzgerald called the regular meeting to order at 4:03 PM.

OPENING

Call to Order and Flag Salute and Roll Call (For possible action) (Matthew Fitzgerald, Chair)

A quorum was established with the following board members present:

- Matthew Fitzgerald – President
- Michelle Alarie- Vice President
- Mario Rezai– Treasurer *Arrived at 4:05*
- Elisabeth Nyang-Coleman– Secretary *Arrived at 4:10PM*
- Calvert Webster – Trustee
- Jodie Piscioti - Trustee
- Matt Gromlich - Trustee

Matthew Fitzgerald presented a declaration of posting of the board meeting agenda. The meeting was called to order by President Matt Fitzgerald, who confirmed a quorum was present.

1 - PUBLIC COMMENTS

- No public in person and no public on the new board meeting teleconference, ekacademy.org/teleconference.
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ADMIN UPDATES

2. Financial Update

Ms Rogers presented the January 2026 check register and invited questions from the Board. Trustees observed that the expenditures appeared routine and requested clarification on a recurring Wells Fargo client analysis charge. Lori Rogers explained that the charge fluctuates based on the percentage of funds held across the school's sweep, general, and operating

accounts and covers bank monitoring and servicing. She further reported that, effective March 1, 2026, the school will fully transition to new accounting software. She described that staff training is underway and that accounting strings will be longer to include project and fund details, which will improve compliance and reporting capabilities to Schoolnomics and the Nevada DOE. Board members expressed openness to different report formats if they enhance clarity, and Lori committed to providing consistent, comprehensible reports throughout the transition.

3. Superintendent's Update (Abbe Mattson, Superintendent) (Information, Discussion, For Possible Action)

Superintendent Abbe Mattson reported that enrollment remains active and that increased distance learning enrollments are helping alleviate middle school capacity constraints. She explained that in-person middle school classes are at capacity, so new in-person enrollments are currently limited to kindergarten through fourth grade and grades nine and ten. She noted that the prior week's school closure reduced the volume of operational updates and stated that the Community Council met on February 9, 2026, and reviewed the preliminary FY 27 budget, the SPCSA contract amendment, the distance learning contract renewal, the preliminary FY 27 calendar, the grading policy, and the revised academic credit policy. She also described ongoing efforts to maintain weekly progress monitoring for distance learners, with direct outreach to students demonstrating academic risk to assess needs and connect appropriate supports, emphasizing coordination among parents, teachers, and administration.

Staff Reporting

The Board recognized staff engagement during the meeting, including acknowledgement of contributions by Student Support Advocate Joanne Sanders in supporting distance learners and general operations. Joanne also summarized her broader support role, including processing distance learner enrollments, weekly grade follow-ups, direct communication with students and parents when performance declines, and targeted sessions with students engaged in Read by Grade Three to reinforce foundational literacy. She added that she writes high school IEPs, attends special education meetings, substitutes as needed, and recently taught second grade social studies and science, having taught third grade humanities in the prior semester.

Middle school science teacher Kara Donnelly briefly introduced herself, noted her involvement in several school committees, and shared her interest in observing board proceedings. Trustees welcomed her participation and expressed appreciation for staff engagement in governance-related discussions.

4. Staff/Teacher's Update (Joanne Sanders, Student Support Advocate):

Elementary Highlights:

Joanne Sanders reported that elementary distance learning is in its third week and that students across grades are making active progress. She shared that kindergarten students are focusing on three-dimensional shapes, fourth grade students are beginning fractions in math while reinforcing division facts for an end-of-year mastery event in humanities, and fourth grade science is concluding a unit on processing and living things. She added that social studies instruction centers on the nation's foundational history. For fifth grade, she described students presenting book reports designed as movie posters based on fiction novels, initiating SBAC test preparation, and moving into a unit featuring realistic fiction and plays. Writing instruction has emphasized timed tasks and expository assignments. She noted that several distance learners used the previous week to catch up, with some completing courses and turning attention to remaining requirements.

Secondary Highlights:

Joanne reported that sixth graders began a physics unit covering phase changes, states of matter, and thermal energy transfer, and that seventh graders are exploring synthetic materials and preparing to start an ecology unit. She shared that eighth graders initiated an earth science unit on seasons, lunar phases, and eclipses and began SBAC prep testing, and announced that Science Olympiad competition will take place at UNLV on April 11, 2026. In English, sixth and seventh graders are composing argumentative essays aligned to current literature themes, using MLA formatting, reliable sources, and works cited pages, with seventh graders additionally incorporating counterclaims, evidence, and rebuttals for a major third-quarter grade. Mathematics classes are engaged in SBAC practice alongside topic-specific instruction. For high school, she reported that pre-algebra students are completing volume and surface area of cylinders, cones, and spheres, Algebra I students are working on polynomial operations, Algebra II students have started probability, Geometry recently concluded probability work, and Pre-Calculus began matrix theory. She added that middle school art students are illustrating the Mona Lisa on vacation, theater classes are developing a new play slated to premiere at the end of April, and public speaking has three finalists advancing in the high school oratorical competition. Joanne invited trustees to attend the next round of the oratorical competition at EK Academy on March 26, 2026, at 6:00 PM, and the Board expressed appreciation for the detailed update and interest in attending.

CONSENT AGENDA

5. Adoption of February 26, 2026 Agenda (Matthew Fitzgerald, Chair) (Information, Discussion, For Possible Action)

6. Approval of January 15, 2026 Board Minutes (Matthew Fitzgerald, Chair) (Information, Discussion, For Possible Action)

7. Acknowledgment of Current Enrollment FY 26 as of February 12, 2026 (Abbe Mattson, Superintendent) (Information, Discussion, For Possible Action)

8. Acknowledgement of Projected Enrollment FY 27 as of February 12, 2026 (Abbe Mattson, Superintendent) (Information, Discussion, For Possible Action)

Michelle Alarie moved to approve items 5 through 8 on the consent agenda as presented. Mario Rezai seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous, and the motion passed.

NEW BUSINESS

9. FY 27 School Calendar (Information, Discussion, For Possible Action)

The Board discussed the proposed FY 27 school calendar in the context of Community Council recommendations and capacity considerations noted by the Superintendent. Members confirmed alignment with instructional priorities, testing schedules, and anticipated distance learning utilization. Superintendent Mattson explained that the calendar maintains consistency with the current year while adjusting the end of the third quarter to better balance instructional days across quarters, noting that the school uses a continuous gradebook and that calendar changes affect pacing rather than cumulative grade calculations. Trustees agreed that the adjustments would support clearer grading timelines and student opportunities to improve performance.

Michelle Alarie moved to approve the FY 27 School Calendar; Mario Rezai seconded. The vote was unanimous, motion passed.

10. FY 27 Preliminary Budget (Information, Discussion, For Possible Action)

The Board reviewed the preliminary FY 27 budget, acknowledging the Community Council's prior review on February 9, 2026, and the planned transition to new accounting software beginning March 1, 2026. Discussion focused on maintaining clarity in board-facing reports during the software changeover, supporting enrollment trends and program needs, and sustaining distance learning as a mechanism to relieve middle school capacity. Superintendent Mattson outlined salary assumptions and grant pass-throughs and addressed questions about competitiveness and retention, noting that funding constraints limit compensation flexibility and that increases in enrollment are the primary lever to expand resources. Trustees affirmed the importance of transparent communication to staff and prudent planning given the variability of supplemental funds. No amendments were proposed.

Mario Rezai moved to approve the FY 27 Preliminary Budget; Jodie Piscioti seconded. The vote was unanimous, motion passed.

11. Revised Academic Credit - Promotion/Retention Policy (Information, Discussion, For Possible Action)

The Board examined the revised Academic Credit - Promotion/Retention Policy and discussed alignment with the school's continuous gradebook approach, quarter pacing, and interventions for students at risk of retention. Members emphasized clear criteria, timely communication with families, and consistency between distance learning and in-person pathways. Administration clarified that retention determinations in elementary grades require careful consideration and that chronic absenteeism is defined at ten percent under state standards, while middle and high school promotion relies on credit accrual and fixed high school duration. Trustees requested that the policy explicitly acknowledge consultation with teaching staff prior to final retention decisions to reflect existing practice of collaborative review. Minor revisions were incorporated during the discussion to improve clarity and to state that, in consultation with teaching staff, final determinations regarding grade retention are made by EKAPS administration.

Mario Rezai moved to approve the Revised Academic Credit - Promotion/Retention Policy with revisions. Michelle Alarie seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous, and the motion passed.

12. New Grading Policy for All Students (Abbe Mattson, Superintendent) (Information, Discussion, For Possible Action)

The Board considered the proposed grading policy changes with attention to consistency across instructional modalities and clarity for transfer students. Superintendent Mattson summarized the intent to ensure equitable grading practices and noted that alignment with the continuous gradebook model

would streamline reporting and reduce confusion when students change placement or modality. Trustees agreed that the revisions reflect best practices and support student success and indicated that the policy text had been included in the packet.

Michelle Alarie moved to approve the Revised Grading Policy for Transfer Students as presented. Calvert Webster seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous, and the motion passed.

13. Distance Learning Renewal Application (Abbe Mattson, Superintendent) (Information, Discussion, For Possible Action)

The Board discussed the renewal application for distance learning, recognizing the recent increase in distance enrollments and the program's role in relieving middle school capacity constraints. Superintendent Mattson described updates to reflect current operational realities, including enrollment processing improvements, weekly grade monitoring, and enhanced communication protocols for students needing support, and noted that the current application cycle extends through 2028 with expanded documentation requirements. Trustees reviewed minor edits and compliance elements and confirmed the need to correct date references and ensure full redaction of personally identifiable information in attachments prior to submission.

Michelle Alarie moved to approve the Distance Learning Renewal Application with noted changes. Matt Gromlich seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous, and the motion passed.

14. Charter Contract Amendment for Enrollment Cap Adjustment.(Abbe Mattson, Superintendent) (Information, Discussion, Acknowledgement)

The Board reviewed a charter contract amendment request to adjust the enrollment cap in response to sustained demand and middle school capacity limits, as well as to align the cap with projected enrollment and compliance expectations. Superintendent Mattson explained that cap adjustments are commonly brought to the SPCSA board and that aligning the cap supports integrated planning across grants and continuous improvement processes. Trustees agreed that any adjustment should be measured and data-driven to ensure sustainability and that flexibility is necessary to respond to enrollment realities. Jodie Piscioti moved to approve the Charter Contract Amendment for Enrollment Cap Adjustment as presented.

Jodie Piscioti moved to approve the Charter Contract Amendment for Enrollment Cap Adjustment as presented. Michelle Alarie seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous, and the motion passed.

15. Administration notification of any gifts or donations since the last board meeting.(Abbe Mattson, Superintendent) (Information, Discussion, Acknowledgement)

Petapalooza event scheduled for February 27, 2026; received multiple raffle baskets and two dog beds from Dog Pacer for raffle.

Paper drive update: Highly successful; sufficient paper for the remainder of the year. Celebrations included a pizza party and Nothing Bundt Cakes “bundtlets” for winning classes.

CLOSING

16. Public Comment No public in person and no public on the new board meeting teleconference, ekacademy.org/teleconfere

16. Board Reflection Period

Board members reflected on the productive discussion and acknowledged the importance of timely approvals to support upcoming fiscal and academic cycles. They noted appreciation for staff adaptability during the accounting software transition and commended growth in distance learning as a strategic response to middle school capacity. Trustees expressed interest in attending student events, including the oratorical competition scheduled for March 26, 2026, and looked forward to updates on Science Olympiad participation on April 11, 2026.

17. Upcoming Calendar Events (Abbe Mattson, Superintendent) (Information, Discussion, Acknowledgement)

- Next Meeting April 16, 2026
- High School Oratorical Competition: March 26, 2026 at 6:00 PM at EKAPS
- Science Olympiad: April 11, 2026 at UNLV

18. Adjournment (Action)

Michelle Alarie moved to adjourn; Calvert Webster seconded. The vote was unanimous, and the meeting adjourned at 5:05PM.
