

Polaris Charter Academy	Scheduled Date:	Monday, April 28th, 2025
Board Meeting Minutes	Scheduled Time:	6:30pm (Via Zoom)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval of December Meeting Minutes • State of the School Presentation (Academic Performance, Academic Strategy, Development Updates, Programmatic Work, etc.) • Development Committee Update • Finance Committee Update • Governance Committee Update • Upcoming Key Dates
	Start:	Tina Yarovsky, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:33 PM CST.

ATTENDANCE CATEGORY	BOARD MEMBERS & FELLOWS	SCHOOL STAFF
Attending via Zoom	Yaa Boakye Tina Yarovsky Roel Vivit Lauren Levine Antonio Gonzalez Michael Davison Sam Bottum Wendy Silva	John Lydon Michelle Navarre Francesca Peck Elizabeth Whiting Lissette Sanchez
Attending by In-Person		
Unable to Attend	Bennett Brenton	
EXPECTED GUESTS & VISITORS		
None/NA		

Approval of February Meeting Minutes

Discussion: The February board meeting minutes were circulated prior to the meeting. The Chair noted corrections needed: Ayana did attend the February meeting, and Michelle and Tina were physically on-site (not remote as indicated).

Motion: Roel moved to approve the February meeting minutes with the noted corrections.
Second: Antonio Gonzalez

Vote:

- **In Favor:** Unanimous "Aye"
- **Opposed:** None
- Motion carried, and minutes approved.

Public Comments

No public comments were presented.

State of the School

Presenter: Michelle Navarre, Francesca Peck and John Lyon

State of the School Presentation

Academic Development Updates

Presenter: Francesca Peck

Testing and Assessment Updates:

- State testing (IAR) completed successfully
- Teachers worked extensively with students on goal-setting and preparation
- Students practiced with online tools to ensure familiarity with test format
- Results pending for later in the year

High School Placement:

- Eighth graders beginning to accept high school placements
- Students gathering around placement board, sharing baby photos and reminiscing
- Retreat scheduled for next week:
 - Wednesday: Local activities
 - Thursday-Friday (May 8-9): Lake Geneva, Wisconsin retreat

Final Words and Passage Presentations:

- Francesca leading eighth grade Final Words weekly meetings
- Students working on TED talk-style presentations about their journey

- All eighth graders assigned mentors from diverse staff roles
- Passage presentations scheduled across multiple grades (K, 4th, 6th, 8th)
- Board members invited to attend (dates to be sent)

External Recognition:

- Francesca featured on first podcast debut discussing student empowerment
- Podcast with Liz Garden and Scott McCloud
- Focus on redefining student discipline and empowering reflection
- Release date to be announced

Student Leadership:

- Justice McCallum selected as newest member of EL Education Student Advisory Council
- First meeting attended today with positive response
- Christopher Tate mentoring Justice through transition
- Justice noted as one of students being followed by documentary filmmakers

Partnership with Black Ensemble Theater:

- Performance scheduled for Tuesday, May 13th
- Sixth grade crews working with Bailey Dunston (new teacher with EL Education roots)
- John Lydon supporting ongoing collaboration
- Students writing and performing their own play

Development Updates

Presenters: Michelle Navarre and John Lydon

Illinois Impact Initiative Charter School Program Sub-Grant:

Award Details:

- Awarded just under \$1,150,000 (pending final budget verification)
- Three-year grant structure
- Goal: Expand enrollment by at least 60 students in primary grades
- Addresses declining enrollment in lower grades

Year 1 - Planning Year (67% of funding - \$762,000):

Personnel Costs (\$162,000):

- Full-time student recruitment specialist (planning year only)

- Portion of salaries for planning staff:
 - Director of Community Engagement
 - Principal
 - Instructional Guides (14% of salary allowable)

Equipment:

- Two 15-passenger vans with Polaris branding
 - Transportation for kindergarten families
 - Field work transportation
 - Mobile advertising opportunity
- New ADA-compliant playground
- Outdoor classroom with shelter for pollinator/plant curriculum

Contractual Services:

- Blue Mill Group recruitment consulting
- Website redesign and rebranding
- Community events funding
- Exterior building improvements (landscaping, trim)

Other:

- After-school coordinator stipend

Year 2 - Implementation (23% of funding):

- Cannot fund full-time recruitment specialist
- \$50,000+ for supplies (increased from \$4,000):
 - Curricular materials
 - Technology for new students and teachers
- Continued contractual support for:
 - Blue Mill recruitment services
 - Teacher professional development (EL Education, Lexia)
- ESL certification stipends for teachers

Year 3 - Final Year (9% of funding):

- Continued partial salary support for positions working with new students
- ESL certification stipends maintained
- Professional development contracts continued
- Recruitment consulting ends (students should be enrolled)

Important Notes:

- Federal grant with funds already at state level
- Reimbursement model - school spends first, then gets reimbursed
- First reimbursement available in July
- Playground construction targeted for completion by August

Programmatic Updates

Presenter: John Lydon

EL Education Re-credentialing:

- Presentation scheduled for Wednesday, April 30th, 1:30-4:30 PM via Zoom
- Board members invited to attend
- Five panels planned:
 - Student panel (required)
 - Staff panel (required)
 - Leadership panel (required)
 - Graduate panel (added to show lasting impact)
 - Impact panel (former mentor school leaders)
- Recording will be available

Building Hope Impact Summit:

- Michelle competing next week in Miami
- Finalist presentation: 10-minute TED talk style
- Topic: True student empowerment vs. engagement
- Competing for \$20,000 grand prize (guaranteed minimum \$10,000)

The Audacious Project:

- Submitted proposal in partnership with Educate
- Focus on national math dissemination work
- Lab school concept building on 10 years of Polaris math work
- Potential funding: \$2 million annually
- Acknowledged as long shot but valuable for partnership exploration

Golden Apple Quarterly:

- Convening hosted at Polaris on Saturday
- Michelle delivered keynote on reflection practices
- Continued partnership for visibility and connection

Additional Updates

Presenter: Michelle Navarre

State of Education - Critical Legal Concern:

Supreme Court Case - Religious Charter School:

- Case fast-tracked, arguments begin April 30th
- First Catholic charter school (online) in Oklahoma
- Initially approved, then blocked by state Supreme Court
- Issue: Whether charter schools are public schools
- If Supreme Court allows religious charter school, could rule charter schools are NOT public schools
- Decision expected late June/early July
- Potential impacts:
 - State funding mechanisms would need restructuring
 - CPS authorization status uncertain
 - Public building occupancy questions
 - Major charter organizations filing briefs against

Local Charter School Environment:

Chicago Public Schools Board:

- Tumultuous period for charter schools
- Charter renewals pushed back two months
- 11 schools given only 2-year renewals (will join next renewal cohort)
- Polaris only school in last 3 cohorts to receive full 5-year renewal
- Acero schools closing - CPS taking 5 campuses, 2 closing entirely
- New board passed non-binding resolution addressing charter schools
- Increased scrutiny expected on finances
- Board member outreach planned through Illinois Network of Charter Schools

Note: Information about EL Education concerns shared off the record

No motion required.

Development Committee Update

Presenter: Roel Vivit

Fundraising Progress:

- Year-to-date: \$366,397 (70% to goal)
- Only \$133,000 remaining to reach \$440,000 goal

- Significant momentum compared to previous year

Spring Benefit - May 15, 2025:

Event Details:

- Time: 6:30-9:30 PM
- Venue: Greenhouse Loft (same as previous year)
- Early bird tickets: \$125 through April 30th
- Regular tickets: \$150 starting May 1st
- Currently: 2 tickets sold

Goals:

- Attendance: 150 guests (up from 130 last year)
- Board contribution: 60 tickets (6-7 guests per board member)
- Net revenue target: \$110,000+

Board Member Commitments Shared:

- Tina: 15 guests
- Sam: 15 invites sent, 2 confirmed attending
- Additional commitments to be confirmed by Wednesday

Special Notes:

- Complimentary tickets available for strategic invites
- Snap-on continuing as lead sponsor (Michael Bond and wife Nela attending)
- Strong raffle items secured
- Student art installation returning as revenue generator

No motion required.

Finance Committee Update

Presenter: Mike Davidson (with support from Lissette Sanchez)

Financial Overview:

Year-to-Date Performance (February):

- Net income: (\$100,000) unfavorable to budget
- Cash balance: \$2.2 million (compared to \$2.6M last year, \$2.9M prior year)
- Months of cash on hand: Above critical 4.0 threshold but trending lower

Revenue Variances:

- ERC funds reversal: (\$345,000) full year impact
- Special education appeal: +\$377,000 expected (offsets ERC loss)
- Donations slightly behind plan (Spring Benefit expected to close gap)

Expense Management:

- Generally on track with budget
- No significant concerns identified

Key Challenges:

- Enrollment at approximately 300 (needs improvement)
- Grant reimbursement timing (spend in current fiscal year, reimbursed next)

Positive Developments:

- New consultant (Tomali) assisting with:
 - Financial forecasting implementation
 - Budget preparation
 - CPS metrics tracking
- Lissette's successful work on special education appeal
- Minimal exposure from Chicago Teachers Pension Fund audit

Budget Concerns:

- No CPS budget received yet (end of April)
- CTU negotiated 4% salary increases
- Uncertainty about state funding levels

No motion required.

Governance Committee Update

Presenter: Tina Yarovsky

Board Composition:

- Stahili Muhammad resigned (relocated to Kansas City)
- Current gap: Legal expertise needed
- No candidates currently in pipeline
- Priority needs: Legal, finance, fundraising expertise

Compliance:

- Thank you to all for completing FOIA/OMA training
- Annual charter board training required (2 hours):
 - Live webinar options: June 16, September 29, November 3
 - On-demand recordings available if needed
- 2025 Conflict of Interest forms expected soon

Board Information:

- Request to update titles and employers for:
 - Website listing
 - Spring Benefit program
- Several members reported title changes during meeting

No motion required.

Upcoming Key Dates

April 30, 2025 (1:30-4:30 PM): EL Education re-credentialing presentation via Zoom

May 1, 2025: Spring Benefit ticket prices increase to \$150

May 8-9, 2025: 8th grade retreat to Lake Geneva, Wisconsin

May 13, 2025: Black Ensemble Theater performance

May 15, 2025: Spring Benefit at Greenhouse Loft

June 23, 2025: Tentative June board meeting (pending budget availability)

No motion required.

Adjournment

Motion: Mike Davidson moved to adjourn the meeting.

Second: Multiple seconds

Vote:

In Favor: Unanimous "Aye"

Opposed: None

Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at: 8:12 PM CST