



MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

SEPTEMBER 10, 2025 | 8 AM

VIA ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCE CALL INFO | Meeting ID: 893 5140 2100

MEETING LOCATION: FREIRE CHARTER MIDDLE SCHOOL (1026 MARKET ST., PHILADELPHIA PA 19107)

Board Members Present: Kiara Allison, Lisa Hoffstein, Nicole Jenkins, Linda Kilpatrick, Raquel Leach, Bruce Lesser, Kathleen O'Connell

Others Present: Leigh Botwinik, Doreese Bull, Olivia Burgess, Dawn Eubanks, Promise Evans, Brian Galetto, Jisu Jong, Robert Lattanzi, Chris Moore, Paul Ramirez, Melanie Reiser, Mya Reynolds, Anthony Royster, Scott Solomon, Nathan Yufer, Andrea Zepp

Meeting Start: 8:00 AM

I. Public Comment

A. No public comment.

II. Resolutions

A. Review & Approve Minutes from Board Meetings on June 11, 2025 (Attachment 1A)*

1. The board reviews the minutes from the June 11, 2025 board meeting.
2. Bruce Lesser requests an edit to section VIII.A.1.k.
3. Bruce Lesser makes a motion to approve. Linda Kilpatrick seconds.
4. Kiara Allison, Lisa Hoffstein, Nicole Jenkins, Linda Kilpatrick, Raquel Leach, Bruce Lesser, and Kathleen O'Connell vote in favor of the motion.

B. Approve Amended Conflict of Interest Policy (Attachment 1B)*

1. Leigh Botwinik shares the purpose of this policy is to ensure Freire's compliance with the Public Official & Employee Ethics Act 65 Pa.C.S. § 1101 et seq. ("Ethics Act").
2. The Pennsylvania Department of Education communicated an additional requirement that schools establish multiple layers of reporting.
3. The Board of Directors directed that staff annually distribute to each Board member a copy of the Policy accompanied by a plain-language summary of its key provisions to ensure all Directors understand permitted and prohibited actions.
4. Bruce Lesser makes a motion to approve. Linda Kilpatrick seconds.
5. Kiara Allison, Lisa Hoffstein, Nicole Jenkins, Linda Kilpatrick, Raquel Leach, Bruce Lesser, and Kathleen O'Connell vote in favor of the motion.

C. Approve Amended ELL Policy (Attachment 1C)*

1. Leigh Botwinik shares that the previous ELL Policy used outdated terms and included procedural language that made the Policy unwieldy. The substance has not changed, but language is more up to date and the section about students who are both English Learners and have IEPs has been streamlined. Staff worked with the Charter Schools Office for guidance around compliant language.
2. Raquel Leach makes a motion to approve. Linda Kilpatrick seconds.
3. Kiara Allison, Lisa Hoffstein, Nicole Jenkins, Linda Kilpatrick, Raquel Leach, Bruce Lesser, and Kathleen O'Connell vote in favor of the motion.

D. Approve Admissions Policy (Attachment 1D)*

1. Leigh Botwinik reported that Apply Philly Charter has implemented a new lottery process, referred to as the "Single Best Offer" system. Under this approach, families submit one application listing their preferred charter schools in rank order. All participating charter schools' lotteries will be conducted simultaneously, and the Apply Philly Charter system then issues a single offer to each applicant from the highest-ranked school on their list for which they were selected. The Policy has been updated to reflect this change in procedure.
2. Bruce Lesser makes a motion to approve. Linda Kilpatrick seconds.
3. Kiara Allison, Lisa Hoffstein, Nicole Jenkins, Linda Kilpatrick, Raquel Leach, Bruce Lesser, and Kathleen O'Connell vote in favor of the motion.

E. Approve Revised FY26 Budget (Attachment 1E)*

1. Nathan Yufer shares that the capitation rate in the Revised FY26 Budget has been updated.
2. In June, the budget assumed a 10% increase in capitation. Since then, the City of Philadelphia released updated figures:
 - a) General Education capitation increased by 17.6%.
 - b) Special Education capitation increased by 12.6%.
3. Enrollment remains budgeted at 965 students:
 - a) a) 480 students at the middle school.
 - b) b) 485 students at the high school.
4. An additional \$20,000 was added to capital expenses to address repairs needed at the high school.
5. After these adjustments, F1 is expected to have a year-end surplus of approximately \$637,000.
6. Linda Kilpatrick makes a motion to approve. Bruce Lesser seconds.
7. Kiara Allison, Lisa Hoffstein, Nicole Jenkins, Linda Kilpatrick, Raquel Leach, Bruce Lesser, and Kathleen O'Connell vote in favor of the motion.

III. Executive & Network Update

A. Vision Development

1. Paul Ramirez recaps his plan for stakeholder involvement in setting a vision for the Network.
2. Paul restates the four pillars:
 - a) Academics
 - b) Professional and career preparation
 - c) Sense of belonging
 - d) Addressing AI
3. Two working groups are proposed:
 - a) AI Vision Group – to meet twice (October and November)
 - b) General Vision Group – to meet twice (October and November) to focus on the other three pillars.
4. Meetings will include assigned readings to help inform and shape discussion. By the end of the sessions, each working group will provide recommendations and revisions for the vision.
5. Additional stakeholder engagement will occur with staff, students, and families.
6. By December or January, input will be presented to the CEO's Council for further review and refinement.
7. A larger virtual town hall is tentatively planned for January or February to release the vision publicly.
8. As discussed during the board retreat, the board will consider whether to undertake a formal strategic plan to carry the vision forward. Continued discussion on this topic will take place throughout the year.

IV. School Report

A. Staff & Student Update

1. Promise Evans shares her appreciation for being at the meeting.
2. She shares that a few students were shadowing companies that aligned with their professional interests.
3. She shares her thanks for the opportunity and also thanks Chris and his staff.
4. Promise shares that school morale is high and the school is filled to capacity but in a good way.
5. Andrea introduces Mr. Bobby (Robert Lattanzi), part of the Special Education department, teaching 7th- and 8th-grade math at Freire Middle School, and overseeing Freire Middle's 21st Century Learning Center grant that funds after school programming. This is his 4th year with us and he's a student and staff favorite.
6. Mr. Bobby shares information about Freire Middle's 21st Century Learning Center.
7. Academic support is offered through specialized centers:
 - a) Math Center – staffed by math teachers
 - b) Writing Center – staffed by ELA teachers
 - c) Dragon Center – staffed by science and social studies teachers
8. There are also 6 different partnerships in place for the 8th-grade:
 - a) Podcasting partner
 - b) Music partner
 - c) Pottery partner
 - d) Dance club partner
 - e) Choir partner
 - f) Fitness partner
 - g) Bobby notes professionals from each organization work directly with students.
9. After-school programs are funded through the federal 21st Century (21C) grant which pays for internal staff and external partners as well as programmatic expenses.

B. Heads Report

1. Chris Moore shares the school year at FCHS is off to a strong start with full enrollment in grades 9–11.
2. Parental engagement has significantly increased, with families showing stronger investment and partnership in supporting school policies (lateness, attendance, cell phones, etc.).
3. Staffing is nearly complete:
 - a) One temporary paternity leave long term sub remains on the wish list.
 - b) One teacher resignation was received but the teacher will remain through the end of the quarter.
4. New staff have exceeded expectations, supported by a robust summer professional development program.
5. Academic results from 24-25 Keystone exams were very positive:
 - a) Strong proficiency gains across subjects, with math remaining an area for improvement.
 - b) Significant reduction in the number of students scoring below basic.
 - c) Special education students performed particularly well relative to prior years.
6. Andreas Zepp is hopeful about the year at FCMS and shares the following with the board:
 - a) Enrollment Trends
 - (1) Initial enrollment is projected to land at 512 after the 10-day drop. The school continues to enroll : 7 new students starting next week.
 - (2) Staffing: Year started fully staffed. Two staff have departed since, with interviews underway to fill those roles.
 - b) Family & Community Engagement
 - (1) School hosted a new event prior to the first day of school. 190 families participated and the energy was high and very positive. The event set the tone for a strong parent-school partnership.
 - (2) The Middle School has also noted a positive response from parents when calls are being made to ensure school rules are being followed.
 - c) Transportation
 - (1) School buses reintroduced this year (three buses).
 - (2) Dawn leading implementation; initial challenges noted, improving daily.
 - (3) Students generally are arriving on time, participating in morning activities, and adjusting to routines.
 - d) After-School Programming
 - (1) After-school activities scheduled to begin the week of September 29.
7. Freire Network Academic Plan 2025-2026 (Attachment 2)
 - a) Paul Ramirez shares a few highlights from the Freire Network Academic Plan 2025-2026.
 - b) Quick-Win Initiatives (from May)
 - (1) Peer Mediation: Earliest network-wide launch to date; implementation underway on most campuses to promote a peaceful school environment.
 - (2) Special Education: The schools have been collaborating on professional development sessions to improve instruction and support for students with IEPs
 - c) Network Initiatives
 - (1) The Network office Hired a Director of Student Services to support the Directors of Special Education at each Freire school, with a goal of improved academic outcomes for students with IEPs.
 - (2) Teaching & Learning team is working across schools on a cross-subject literacy initiative.
 - d) Data and Strategies
 - (1) We will be scheduling an informational meeting for any Board members who wish to dig deeper into the performance data and strategies that inform our Schoolwide/Comprehensive Plans.
 - e) ELA Performance
 - (1) Significant growth in several schools; continued analysis of middle-school data to sustain gains.
 - f) Math Performance
 - (1) Middle school proficiency improved but performance among most groups of high school students remained flat.
 - (2) Paul has been evaluating our math curriculum, observing math classes, and speaking to math teachers to inform how to best move forward.
 - g) Science
 - (1) We are monitoring the new assessments aligned to STEELS standards and reviewing

curriculum alignment.

h) Attendance

(1) Network-wide attendance growth, with notable gains at the high schools.

i) Next Steps

(1) Continued data analysis and strategy refinement will be in the works for the remainder of the year.

8. Enrollment Update

a) *See Heads Report*

C. Health Insurance Renewal

1. Leigh Botwinik shares the following on the Health Insurance Renewal

a) Staff

(1) Last year, staff representatives provided feedback on benefits decisions.

(2) Plan to repeat this process, convening staff representatives in the next month

b) Board

(1) In October, after receive price quotes from the Broker, we can share with interested Board members. Last year Bruce, Kathleen, Linda, Scott participated in this early review. If anyone else is interested please let me know.

c) Timeline & Next Steps

(1) Renewal options and costs from the broker likely won't be available for the October board meeting.

(2) Decisions must be finalized before the December board meeting.

(3) Proposal to schedule a November board meeting, potentially as a special Zoom meeting focused solely on benefits/insurance.

(4) Suggestion to incorporate a November meeting into future annual board meeting schedules for better planning.

V. Financials

A. June 2025 Financial Report (Attachment 3)

1. Ben Wainwright shares that Freire Charter School remained in strong financial standing, with a projected surplus of \$245,000.

2. Capital Purchases for both Freire High School and Freire Middle School include purchases for internet servers, copiers, elevator construction and purchases of extra technology equipment for the upcoming school year.

3. As of June 2025:

a) Freire Charter Middle School had a projected year-end average daily enrollment of 455.

b) Freire High school had a projected year-end average enrollment of 487.

c) Combined, Freire Charter is forecasting a total average enrollment of 942 students for the year.

B. Audit Update

1. Nathan shares the audits are almost complete and will be presented at the next meeting.

VI. Advancement

A. Advancement Report (Attachment 4)

1. Melanie Reiser shares that the FY25 unrestricted fundraising target was set at a very ambitious \$775,000.

2. While the goal was not met, we did raise \$549,396 in donations and pledges.

3. Here are a few FY25 fundraising honorable mentions:

a) Across the Freire Network, 100% of board members, Network and School Leadership donated.

b) Majority of the FY25 pledges have been fulfilled.

c) Bridge to Wisdom was a huge success, celebrating 25 years of Freire Schools and honoring Kelly Davenport.

d) Joe Hennelly and the Advancement Team also had much success in raising additional funds to support the Experienceship program, in which students interned with companies across the city and earned a stipend.

e) The Advancement Team provided ongoing grant writing and management support with state grants, including PCCD Safety and Mental Health Grants (PA) and Stronger Connections (DE).

B. Political Landscape

1. Freire Schools continues to pay close attention to any proposed charter regulation, budget cuts or proposed changes to the charter school renewal process.

VII. Governance

- A. Resignation of Ashley Lynam (Attachment 5)
 - 1. The board acknowledges the resignation of Ashley Lynam.
- B. Annual Board Visitation Day | October 15, 2025 at 9am
 - 1. Olivia Burgess reminds the board of the upcoming annual board visit day at FCSW on October 15, 2025 at 9am.

VIII. Executive Session

- A. Settlement & Release for DH (Attachment 6)
- B. Employee Discipline Review
 - 1. Bruce Lesser makes a motion to move into Executive Session at 8:01 AM to discuss ***II.a.ii.: 65 Pa. C.S.A. § 708(a) (5): "To review and discuss agency business which, if conducted in public, would violate a lawful privilege or lead to the disclosure of information or confidentiality protected by law, including matters related to the initiation and conduct of investigations of possible or certain violations of the law and quasi-judicial deliberations."*** & to discuss ***II.a.ii.: 65 Pa. C.S.A. § 708(a) (1):To discuss any matter involving the employment, appointment, termination of employment, terms and conditions of employment, evaluation of performance, promotion or disciplining of any specific prospective public officer or employee or current public officer or employee employed or appointed by the agency, or former public officer or employee, provided, however, that the individual employees or appointees whose rights could be adversely affected may request, in writing, that the matter or matters be discussed at an open meeting."***. Linda Kilpatrick seconds.
 - 2. Kiara Allison, Lisa Hoffstein, Nicole Jenkins, Linda Kilpatrick, Raquel Leach, Bruce Lesser, and Kathleen O'Connell vote in favor of the motion.
 - 3. Bruce Lesser makes a motion to exit Executive Session at 8:30 AM. Raquel Leach seconds.
 - 4. Kiara Allison, Lisa Hoffstein, Nicole Jenkins, Linda Kilpatrick, Raquel Leach, Bruce Lesser, and Kathleen O'Connell vote in favor of the motion.

IX. Approve Settlement & Release for DH*

- A. Bruce Lesser makes a motion to approve the Settlement and Release for DH. Lisa Hoffstein seconds.
- B. Kiara Allison, Lisa Hoffstein, Nicole Jenkins, Linda Kilpatrick, Raquel Leach, Bruce Lesser, and Kathleen O'Connell vote in favor of the motion.

Meeting Adjourned 10:10 AM