

Minutes of the North Carolina Charter School Review Board

Department of Public Instruction

May 5, 2025

9 AM

Attendance – CSRБ Members (<i>Yellow Highlight = In-Person. Don't have access to Online</i>)	
Jeremy Wall- (nonvoting) Dr. Rita Haire (Virtual) Dr. John Eldridge Hilda Parlér (Virtual) Dr. Shelly Shope (Virtual)	Eric Sanchez Bruce Friend Lindalyn Kakadelis (Virtual) Todd Godbey (Virtual) Dr. Bartley Danielsен Stephen Gay (Virtual)
Attendance – Other	
<i>Office of Charter Schools</i> Ashley Baquero, Director Joseph Letterio, Consultant (Virtual) Melanie Rackley, Consultant Jenna Cook, Consultant (Virtual) Dr. Natasha Norins, Consultant Dr. Brandi Gill, Consultant Nicky Niewinski, Asst. Director Julie Whetzel, Consultant Megan Carter, Consultant	<i>CSRБ Attorney</i> Steven Walker - Absent <i>SBE Attorney</i> Allison Schafer - Absent <i>Teacher/Principal of Year</i> Lee Haywood – TOY - Absent Sarena Fuller – POY - Absent

Call To Order

Pledge of Allegiance & NC Flag Salute: Mr. Bruce Friend

Mission and Ethics Statement:

- Mission and Ethics Statement, Mr. Bruce Friend

Approval of the Agenda and Minutes

Motion: motioned to approve agenda for June Meeting

Second:

Vote: Unanimous

☒ Passed

☐ Failed

Motion: motioned to approve May 2025 minutes.

Second:

Vote: Unanimous

☒ Passed

☐ Failed

June Charter Schools Review Board Meeting

Office of Charter Schools' Annual Report: Ms. Ashley Baquero, OCS Consul

- Dr. Norins introduced the cohort and gave an overview of SECU PHP and their mission. Each student individually came up and gave an overview of what they planned to study in college as well as the reason for going into their major and school. They then met for a photo.
- Mr. Friend noted Mr. Rogers' quote on helping others and how it impacted his life and desire to help others.

Charter Amendments: Ms. Julie Whetzel, OCS Consultant

- Ms. Whetzel went over the amendments individually.

Franklin School of Innovation: National School Lunch Program

- Ms. Whetzel introduced the school and the amendment. She noted that this would be another form of revenue for them and that they got a brand new kitchen and other facilities to help them participate in this program.

Motion: Dr. John Eldridge motioned to approve Franklin School of Innovation's request to participate in the National School Lunch Program.

Second: Dr. Bart Danielsen

Vote: Unanimous

Discussion:

- None

☒ Passed

☐ Failed

Durham Charter School: Relocation Over 5-Miles

- Ms. Whetzel introduced the school and amendment. She noted that the CSRБ must approve all relocation requests over 5 miles and went into detail on where/how far away the move would be. She also listed the reasons the school gave for requesting approval for relocation.

- Mr. Quigley explained why they planned to move and that they were building a very large 50 acre property. He stated everything is well under way and said that growth and applications are over 1000. He said that everything is moving well and the City of Durham is on track to finish their items by the first week of August.
 - Mr. Friend asked if there are any transportation issues with existing families and Mr. Quigley stated they used this as an opportunity to restructure bus routes. He said that based on what he's seeing, the new model is allowing parents to have an easier time getting their kids on the bus. He said overall there's not a lot of students who can not attend the school anymore because of transportation.

Motion: Mr. Bruce Friend motioned to approve Durham Charter School's request to relocate over 5-miles from its current location.

Second: Mr. Stephen Gay

Discussion:

- Mr. Friend noted that this is one of the best charter schools in the state and that allowing more students to join is a good thing.
- Mr. Quigley thanked them for their support and apologized for not sending this request 3 years ago when they initially bought the land.

Vote: Unanimous

☒ Passed

☐ Failed

Liberty Charter School (RTO): Enrollment/Grade Level Adjustment

- Ms. Whetzel introduced the school and noted they were in RTO. They gave an overview of their timeline through RTO and why they needed to change the enrollment and grade levels served for the first few years. She went into more detail on those specific numbers.
- A representative from the school reiterated what Ms. Whetzel said in regards to their timeline for offering what they initially planned to do, just starting the school year at a different time and getting approval for the contingency location if they need it. At this time, they do not foresee having to use a back-up location. .
 - Mr. Friend asked if the alternate location would accommodate the 500 students projected. The representative said that it would probably hold less than that and because of this they are being strategic with their data.
 - Mr. Friend and Ms. Baquero discussed the original request for their charter.
 - Mr. Sanchez asked what the number of 10th graders they were expecting. The representative said she doesn't know off the top of her head. Mr. Sanchez asked if they expect 100 kids to start HS somewhere and then move to their school. The representative said that in theory yes and explained why they decided to start with both 9th and 10th grade. She said it was really about keeping promises to the kids they already had.
- Ms. Parlér asked how/what they are going to approve today and later. Mr. Friend clarified what is being voted on today.

- Dr. Haire asked what the breakeven number is and the number of applicants/number enrolled. The representative from the school said that some are enrolled and some are pending and clarified the number accepted. She said all the numbers are in the upcoming report.
 - Dr. Haire asked what the contingency building was previously used for and the representative went over where / what it used to be. Dr. Haire and the representative discussed where it would be and Dr. Haire said overall she's on board with the request. The representative noted they are also asking to extend the start date for their school to around Labor Day.
 - Dr. Haire asked if they stated what the determination is to use the alternate location. The representative from the school said that delays in renovation, and other possible delays in certifications/licenses are causing them to prepare for possibly using that alternate location.
- Mr. Friend said that he doesn't think the CSRБ needed to approve a delay in opening if the school's board approved it and Ms. Baquero said yes that's correct and that it was brought to them so they had the whole picture. Mr. Friend clarified what's going to be voted on today: grade level change, enrollment adjustment, and contingency location.
- Dr. Haire asked about the traffic study citing the large parking lot. The representative from the school stated they are actively talking about what they will need to do through the K-12 rollout.
- Mr. Friend clarified what is being voted on again.
 - Dr. Danielsen said what he thought the amendment should be and made a motion.

Motion: Dr. Bart Danielsen motioned to approve Liberty Charter School's request to adjust their enrollment, grade levels, and contingency location.

Second: Ms. Lindalyn Kakadelis

Discussion:

- Mr. Friend and others explained why the calendar piece was taken out.
- Mr. Sanchez clarified again what was being voted on and expressed his concern again for the 10th grade addition per his previous comments.

Vote: Unanimous

☒ Passed ☐ Failed

Thomas Academy: Grade-Level Expansion

- Ms. Whetzel introduced the school and gave an overview of their school's history. She went into detail on the amendment and why the CSRБ needed to approve this amendment. She introduced the members of school leadership online for any questions.
- Dr. Eldridge asked if they could give the current enrollment. The Principal said it's currently 71.
- Ms. Kakadelis asked if the new grades would be from the community or residential and the Principal said that it would be open to both groups with the goal of keeping families together. Ms. Kakadelis thanked them for what they're doing for those kids and the community.
- Dr. Eldridge asked about the impact on staffing with these new grades and the principal said that they are working with various groups to implement blended classes and grow staff if needed. Dr. Eldridge and the principal concurred that no staff will be added.

- Dr. Haire asked if they have any interest and the principal stated they were in the planning phase for the expansion. She and Dr. Haire explained in more detail what the plans were and what's happening in the school and that the numbers were estimates based on the population they serve.

Motion: Dr. John Eldridge motioned to approve Thomas Academy's request for grade-level expansion.

Second: Mr. Eric Sanchez

Vote: Unanimous

☒ **Passed** (Unanimous) ☐ Failed

Ready to Open Update: Dr. Natasha Norins, OCS Consultant

- Dr. Norins gave an individual breakdown from each school in RTO (highlighting the number of applications, their breakeven number, and any facility updates). She noted this is the last update before the June approval date.
 - She said that all schools passed RTO II and noted the reports due in RTO III by May 19th. She also noted what was included in the reports presented today including the number of offered seats AND fully enrolled students.

Questions from the CSRБ

- Ms. Baquero noted that a lot of schools are listening so this would be a good time to give advice. Dr. Eldridge noted that 80 students is a statutory requirement and stressed how important this is for schools to hit for financial reasons.
 - Dr. Eldridge also mentioned that he is going to be looking at staffing decisions as well.
- Dr. Haire asked if GO BIG has been back for the fourth time and Ms. Baquero said yes. Dr. Haire asked if they had an actual lease and have 28 students and Dr. Norins went over the details pertaining to their school (such as enrollment, lease/facility, and who is helping them financially). Dr. Norins also stressed that OCS has reached out to them and is looking for more clarity on some things.
- Dr. Haire asked when do they reevaluate their decision or do they let them go to opening day. Dr. Eldridge seconded that question. Dr. Norins said that by May 15th GO BIG will have a meeting to decide about opening and she and Dr. Eldridge discussed what schools would have to do by that time. Dr. Haire and Dr. Norins went over again what schools failed to meet the 80 student threshold and reiterated the statutory requirements. Dr. Eldridge reiterated his previous statements.
 - Dr. Norins stated they were optimistically hopeful about them getting the statutory / breakeven number.
- Ms. Kakadelis stated they will be looking at these numbers in June and Dr. Eldridge stressed that boards really look at avoiding getting in these situations

Charter Application Review and Discussion: Ms. Melanie Rackley, OCS Consultant

- Ms. Rackley introduced herself and gave an update on the sections of the 2026 application being reviewed. She noted that it is the third and final section they will be reviewing and gave the

timeline for when votes will be made for the overall application (September). She noted that statutory language changes were the biggest thing inputted throughout and they also took feedback from CSRБ members and others.

Comments from the CSRБ

- Dr. Eldridge noted that schools should look to reach out to schools in the area to get an idea on budgets, and other things. Ms. Baquero and Ms. Rackley noted what resources were available and the questions were supposed to guide schools to do their own research.
- Ms. Kakadelis expressed concern using the application as a teaching method and expressed concern over the length of the application.
- Dr. Eldridge said that he brought up what he mentioned because budgets are difficult and it honestly takes til after the first 30 days to see if their budget is right. He stated they really need to help applicants get a tight focused budget so that schools don't shut down.
 - Ms. Kakadelis said that she doesn't think they are unimportant questions, but said that she doesn't want to have an application that's filled with stuff they already know.
- Dr. Shope agreed with Dr. Eldridge, and stated her fear is that when they get to the CSRБ they want to have all the information possible because the application makes them ask questions that their presentation might not cover.
- Dr. Eldridge thanked Ms. Rackley for her work.

Director's Updates: Ms. Ashley Baquero; OCS Executive Director

- Ms. Baquero gave an overview of the 2025 application cycle and said that it is subject to change pending their 'completeness check'. She noted the number of fast track and accelerated applications and the counties that the schools are proposed to be in.
- Ms. Baquero then went over the renewal cycle for 2026 and noted there were 40 renewal visits in total. She went over what happened at each renewal visit.
- Ms. Baquero then introduced a new OCS initiative titled 'Discovering Your New School'. She said that it's a way for new boards to get resources on a variety of areas such as board governance, staff, etc prior to entering RTO.
- She then gave an upcoming schedule of meetings and thanked the staff for their work. She noted the next meeting on June 9th will have all the schools in RTO that failed to meet their requirements before the board.
- Mr. Gay asked if schools have new board members if they can have access to that google classroom for Discovering Your New School. Ms. Baquero said yes and also mentioned other things OCS provides for new board members.
 - Mr. Gay asked if Ms. Baquero could give insight on exclusions related to amendments. Ms. Baquero explained the process regarding adding exclusion to a school's application..
- Ms. Kakadelis thanked her for those comments and said that's what she was referring to in her previous questions. She also asked why DPI cancelled the contract with Linq and Ms. Baquero said that she doesn't know why it was cancelled but explained with Ms. Kakadelis the costs per school. Ms. Baquero stated this is the first year she believes that DPI hasn't funded it fully. Ms. Kakadelis said she'd like to get more information on why that money was taken out.

Motion to Adjourn at 10:45 am by: Mr. Bruce Friend

Second: Dr. John Eldridge