

Minutes of the North Carolina Charter School Review Board

State Board Room 755, Department of Public Instruction

June 8, 2026

9 AM

Attendance – CSRБ Members	
Jeremy Wall- (nonvoting) Dr. Rita Haire Dr. John Eldridge Eric Guckian Hilda Parlér - Absent Dr. Shelly Shope - Remote	Eric Sanchez Bruce Friend Lindalyn Kakadelis - Remote Todd Godbey Gerald McNair Stephen Gay - Absent
Attendance – Other	
<i>Office of Charter Schools</i> Ashley Logue, Director Joseph Letterio, Consultant - Remote Melanie Rackley, Consultant Jenna Cook, Consultant - Remote Dr. Natasha Norins, Consultant Dr. Brandi Gill, Consultant Nicky Niewinski, Asst. Director Julie Whetzel, Consultant Megan Carter, Consultant	<i>CSRБ Attorney</i> Steven Walker - Remote <i>Teacher/Principal of Year</i> Lindsay Phillips – TOY - Absent Jake Wilson – POY - Absent

Recording of June 8 CSRБ Meeting: [June NC Charter School Review Board - June 8, 2026](#)

Call To Order

Pledge of Allegiance & NC Flag Salute: Bruce Friend, Board Chair

Mission and Ethics Statement:

- Mission and Ethics Statement, Bruce Friend, Board Chair

Approval of the Agenda and Minutes

Motion: Dr. John Eldridge moved to approve agenda for June 2026 Meeting

Second: Todd Godbey

Vote: Unanimous

☒ Passed

☐ Failed

Motion: Gerald McNair moved to approve the May 2026 meeting minutes

Second: Dr. John Eldridge

Vote: Unanimous

☒ **Passed**

☐ Failed

June Charter Schools Review Board Meeting

Rule Making 101; Ryan Collins, Asst. General Counsel, ND DPI

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **Mr. Collins** provided a comprehensive overview of the North Carolina Administrative Procedure Act (APA), explaining that following a 2018 NC Supreme Court ruling (*NC State Board of Education v. State of North Carolina*), certain State Board of Education policies were determined to require formal rulemaking procedures under Article 2A of the APA. He described the full rulemaking lifecycle — from proposal through public comment, Rules Review Commission (RRC) review, and final codification — noting the process typically takes five to six months or longer.
- **Mr. Collins** clarified the CSRБ's statutory role in rulemaking under GS 115C-218.10(A), describing the board as a "step zero" that proposes and recommends rules regarding charter school operations before those rules proceed to the State Board of Education.
- **Bruce Friend** raised a procedural concern, noting he had been copied on correspondence referencing rules recently enacted by the State Board that appeared to have bypassed the CSRБ. Mr. Collins declined to address the legal arguments raised in that letter, stating it was beyond the scope of his presentation.
- **Dr. Rita Haire** questioned the composition and selection of the Rules Review Commission, and pressed Mr. Collins on the appropriate forum for the CSRБ to better define its fit within the rulemaking process. Mr. Collins indicated that question was better suited for a conversation involving the State Superintendent and State Board.
- **Eric Guckian** expressed a desire to see greater collaborative opportunities between the Charter Board and the State Board of Education in the interest of students and educators.

NC Collaboratory Presentation; Dr. Jeni Corn & Dr. Doug Lauen

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **Dr. Jeni Corn** introduced a proposed multi-year partnership between UNC Chapel Hill, the NC Collaboratory, the Office of Charter Schools, and the CSRБ — to be called the Carolina Charter School Research Lab. The initiative is funded by \$1.5 million in recurring legislative appropriations establishing the Office of Learning Research at the

NC Collaboratory. She emphasized the project's practitioner-centered approach and commitment to sharing results directly with board members and charter leaders.

- **Dr. Doug Lauen** outlined preliminary research questions organized into three areas: (1) what explains variation in charter school effectiveness (including time to effectiveness, optimal school size, and teacher licensure rates); (2) which students enroll, persist, and complete their course of study; and (3) what practices and support services promote student success. He stressed that the four-year agenda is flexible and will be revisited annually based on stakeholder priorities.
- **Bruce Friend** raised questions about how "effectiveness" would be defined, noting that relying solely on school performance grades or proficiency scores would be insufficient. He also requested that the comparability benchmark used during charter renewals — measuring a school against its local LEA — be examined, and suggested the researchers consult with Dr. Danielson, a former board member who had proposed alternative comparison models.
- **Eric Sanchez** raised two significant concerns: (1) declining kindergarten cohort sizes (nationally, the current kindergarten class is reportedly 15% smaller than the current senior class), and the potential impact of school voucher expansion on charter enrollment projections; and (2) the need for research on the virtual/remote charter sector, echoing concerns that had been discussed in prior board meetings without resolution.
- **Lindalyn Kakadelis** and others expressed enthusiasm for the research initiative, highlighting parental engagement as an important factor missing from the proposed enrollment persistence research questions. Multiple members emphasized that data on the virtual education environment is urgently needed to inform board decision-making.

Charter Amendments: Julie Whetzel, OCS Consultant

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **Julie Whetzel** presented a slate of amendments, the first four involving schools requesting to participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).
- **Bruce Friend** proposed consolidating the first three schools — CIS Academy, Shining Rock Classical Academy, TMSA Apex (93Y), and TMSA Cary (92T) — into a single vote, separating Thomas Jefferson Classical Academy because it also had a mission statement amendment. The board agreed.

Motion: Dr. John Eldridge moved to approve CIS Academy, Shining Rock Classical Academy, TMSA Apex and TMSA Cary's request to utilize the National School Lunch Program.

Second: Eric Guckian

Vote: Unanimous

- ☒ Passed ☐ Failed

- **Thomas Jefferson Classical Academy**, Julie Whetzel confirmed the school had satisfied all NSLP requirements and presented a revised mission statement emphasizing the Classical structure (grammar, logic, and rhetoric) and partnership with families to graduate college-ready, intellectually engaged students.

Motion: Dr. Rita Haire moved to approve Thomas Jefferson Classical's request to utilize the National School Lunch Program and change their mission statement.

Second: Eric Guckian

Vote: Unanimous

- ☒ Passed ☐ Failed

- **Francine Delaney New School for Children**, Julie Whetzel presented a revised mission statement focused on addressing each child's educational, emotional, and social needs. A board member flagged that "can not" in the proposed mission statement text should conventionally be written as one word ("cannot").

Motion: Eric Guckian moved to approve Francine Delany New School for Children's request to amend their mission statement.

Second: Lindalyn Kakadelis

Vote: Unanimous

- ☒ Passed ☐ Failed

- **Eno River Academy**, Julie Whetzel presented a revised mission statement focused on addressing each child's educational, emotional, and social needs.

Motion: Eric Sanchez moved to approve Eno River Academy's request to amend their mission statement.

Second: Gerald McNair

Vote: Unanimous

- ☒ Passed ☐ Failed

- **Corvian Community School**, Julie Whetzel presented a revised mission statement. Board members questioned the length of the proposed mission statement, specifically whether the final sentence referencing the "Basic School" framework by Dr. Ernest Boyer was necessary.
- **Executive Director Nikki Sinclair** (Corvian) explained that the reference was intentional to honor the school's founding principles.
- A board member noted the school had already shortened the mission statement from its original version and deferred to what was presented.

Motion: Dr. Rita Haire moved to approve Corvian Community School's request to amend their mission statement.

Second: Eric Guckian

Vote: Unanimous

- ☒ **Passed** ☐ Failed
- **Mountain Community School**, Julie Whetzel presented a revised mission statement focused on growing curious, capable thinkers through connection, the natural world, and community.

Motion: Dr. Rita Haire moved to approve Mountain Community School's request to amend their mission statement.

Second: Lindalyn Kakadelis

Vote: Unanimous

- ☒ **Passed** ☐ Failed
- **Focus Academy** (one-year delay request), **Bruce Friend** noted the school had been urged at the May meeting to consider requesting a voluntary delay if enrollment targets appeared unattainable.
- The board engaged in substantive debate about whether approving the delay was consistent with the expectations of the accelerated application process.
- **Dr. John Eldridge** argued that the accelerated pathway carried specific criteria and that approving delays sets a precedent.
- **Other board members** expressed concern about long-term enrollment viability but ultimately supported the delay as preferable to the school attempting to open with insufficient enrollment.

Motion: Bruce Friend moved to approve Focus Academy’s request for a one-year delay.

Second: Eric Guckian

Vote: 6:3 yay - BF, SS, JE, LK, EG, GM nay - RH, TG, ES

- ☒ Passed ☐ Failed

2025 Charter Schools Annual Report: Ashley Logue, OCS Director

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **Ashley Logue** presented the annual report summarizing data primarily from the 2024–25 school year. Key highlights included: 211 operating schools in 64 counties; over 161,000 enrolled students (exceeding 10% of total public school membership); 138 schools with wait lists comprising over 59,000 students; and North Carolina ranking as the fourth fastest-growing state for charter enrollment nationally over the prior six years.
- On academic performance, Ashley Logue reported modest improvements in school performance grades (30.1% earning A or B, up from 26.6%) and academic growth (72.3% meeting or exceeding growth, up from 70.3%). However, college and career readiness declined and remained the sector's clearest academic concern, with no subgroup having recovered to pre-pandemic levels. Students with disabilities showed the largest long-term decline in both grade-level proficiency and college and career readiness.
- **Bruce Friend** suggested the report add context clarifying that the majority of charter school students attend A- or B-rated schools, and asked whether the Indian/South Asian student population — growing significantly in the Triangle and Charlotte areas — was captured in demographic data. Ashley Logue agreed to review and potentially add that demographic detail.
- **Eric Guckian** questioned whether the report could better tell the story that 55 of the 96 historical charter closures involved schools that relinquished their charters before ever opening, noting that fact significantly changes how the closure data should be interpreted.
- **Dr. John Eldridge** asked whether the Office of Charter Schools had sufficient staffing to manage its growing workload. Ashley Logue acknowledged that increased staff would enable more proactive work, noting the office currently manages over 2,000 annual document submissions with a seven-consultant staff, despite school numbers having grown from 96 to over 211 since 2009.

Motion: Bruce Friend moved to approve the 2025 Annual Report as presented.

Second: Dr. Rita Haire

Vote: Unanimous

☒ Passed

☐ Failed

2026 Charter Application Cycle; Melanie Rackley, OCS Consultant

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **Melanie Rackley** reported that 13 applications were received by the April 24th deadline for the 2026 application cycle, with one subsequent withdrawal, leaving 12 active applications. Geographic distribution included four Guilford County applications, two in New Hanover, and applications in Mecklenburg, Gaston, Wake, Harnett, Stokes County (a county with no current charter), and one statewide remote/virtual applicant.
- **Melanie Rackley** noted that the application cohort includes 11 standard applications and one accelerated applicant, as well as one remote academy application and one applicant with a proposed management organization already operating in North Carolina. She outlined the summer evaluation timeline: external evaluators are to complete feedback by August 10th, with capacity interviews running September through December.
- **Board members** were reminded to verify their EdLusion platform credentials, conduct conflict-of-interest checks before reviewing applications, and that board member evaluations are conducted separately from external evaluator ratings in the platform. One board member confirmed they had been using a paper-based tool and expressed interest in reviewing the digital resource tool now available.
- **Bruce Friend** asked whether any traditional brick-and-mortar charters had applied to operate a remote charter academy for the upcoming cycle. Ashley Logue confirmed that the remote academy application window for the following year would open in October, so the board would not hear those interviews until approximately February.

2026 Ready to Open Readiness Reports; Dr. Natasha Norins, OCS Consultant

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **Natasha Norins** outlined the RTO readiness framework used for this cohort, defining four status categories: **Fully Ready** (ECO obtained, enrollment over 80%, all submissions satisfactory); **Substantially Ready** (ECO in progress with a formal date, enrollment at or approaching 80%); **Partially Ready** (ECO in progress, enrollment under 80%); and **Not Ready** (no ECO timeline, under 80% enrollment, multiple incomplete submissions). She reminded the board of its four voting options: (1) approve as ready to open, (2) approve with contingencies, (3) require delay and re-entry into next year's RTO cohort, or (4) deny, effectively removing the school from RTO. Schools denied have 10 business days to appeal.

- **NC Connections Academy** (Durham County, virtual K–12): Rated fully ready. Enrollment as of May 25th was 692 (92% of projected ADM of 750), with break-even at 500.

Motion: Todd Godbey moved to approve NC Connections Academy to move out of the Ready to Open process and open Fall 2026.

Second: Dr. John Eldridge

Vote: Unanimous

☒ Passed ☐ Failed

- **Warren Young Explorers School** (Warren County, grades K–6): Rated substantially ready. A date discrepancy was identified — the slide listed the first day of school as August 12th and ECO expected August 15th, which the board correctly flagged as unworkable. Board Chair **Caroline Henley** (Warren) clarified the correct dates as the first day of school August 24th and ECO expected July 31st. Current enrollment as of meeting date: 168 (break-even: 140).

Motion: Dr. John Eldridge moved to approve Warren YES to move out of the Ready to Open process and open Fall 2026.

Second: Eric Guckian

Vote: Unanimous

☒ Passed ☐ Failed

- **RYZE Academy** (Guilford County area, grades K–6, relocated from Forsyth County): Rated partially ready. Enrollment as of May 25th was 192 (77%). As of the meeting date, the school reported 201 enrolled (just over 80%). ECO obtained. Dr. Rita Haire asked about signage and traffic flow; RYZE representatives clarified that permanent signage would be installed after Liberty Charter's school year ended and that the two schools operate on staggered bell schedules. Staff reported at approximately 95% hired with two positions outstanding.

Motion: Todd Godbey moved to approve RYZE Academy to move out of the Ready to Open process and open Fall 2026.

Second: Eric Sanchez

Vote: Unanimous

☒ Passed

☐ Failed

- **Carolina Collegiate High School** (Durham County, grade 9 in Year 1): Rated partially ready. Enrollment as of May 25th was 78%. As of the meeting date: 164 enrolled (break-even: 140; projected ADM: 165). Staff reported 100% hired. A board member noted the proximity of projected ADM (165) to break-even (140) and urged the school to continue enrollment efforts. A board member asked about the reduction from 170 to 165 students; CCHS explained the adjustment was made at the request of the Durham DOT following a traffic study, reducing the allowed special use permit.

Motion: Dr. John Eldridge moved to approve Carolina Collegiate High School to move out of the Ready to Open process and open Fall 2026.

Second: Eric Sanchez

Vote: Unanimous

☒ Passed

☐ Failed

- **IDYL Wake** (Wake County, grades K–6): Rated partially ready (ECO approved the morning of the meeting). Enrollment as of May 25th was 256 (73%); as of the meeting date: 313 enrolled (break-even: 210; projected ADM: 350). Staff 96% hired. A board member asked about the source of \$500,000 in working capital listed in the Year 1 budget; the board confirmed it was a loan from IDYL Wake's flagship school. Multiple members praised the school's outreach effort — including use of a CRM agency in the final push — that grew enrollment from 256 to 313 since the May verification meeting.

Motion: Todd Godbey moved to approve NC Connections Academy to move out of the Ready to Open process to open Fall 2026.

Second: Gerald McNair

Vote: Unanimous (Eric Sanchez recused)

☒ Passed

☐ Failed

- **BH2 Stream** (Edgecomb County/Tarboro, grades K–6): Rated Not Ready to Open. Enrollment as of May 25th was 209 (75%; break-even: 251; projected ADM: 280). As of the meeting date, the school reported 238 enrolled. No educational certificate of occupancy (ECO) had been obtained, and no confirmed date was available. Seven RTO submissions from the May 20th deadline remained incomplete or unsubmitted, including employee/employer identification numbers, SAMS.gov account, bus inspection certifications, fire inspection, sewer inspection, certificate of liability insurance (submitted day-of), and lunch vendor contract.
- Site preparation for modular buildings had not commenced; building permits had been submitted but not approved as of the meeting; water and sewer lines had not been tapped or installed; and no buses had yet been received (pending purchase from Sally B. Howard School).
- **Dr. Haire, Dr. Eldridge**, and others cited the pattern of incomplete documentation, unresolved construction and utility preparation, unresolved items dating to the February submission cycle, and the absence of the school's engineer from the meeting. Ashley Logue shared photographs from a site visit conducted the Friday prior showing no visible construction activity. Board members expressed concern that even a conditional approval was unwarranted given the number and nature of outstanding items.
- **Bruce Friend** and **Lindalyn Kakadelis** noted that a motion to deny would remove the school from RTO and that reapplication would be the appropriate path forward.

Motion: Eric Guckian moved to NOT approve BH2 STREAM to move out of the Ready to Open process.

Second: Dr. Shelly Shope

Vote: Unanimous

☒ **Passed**

☐ Failed

Adjourn:

2:25 pm