

Minutes of the North Carolina Charter School Review Board
State Board Room 755, Department of Public Instruction
May 11, 2026
9 AM

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

Recording of May 11 CSRБ Meeting: [May NC Charter Schools Review Board - May 11, 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: Lindalyn Kakadelis moved to approve agenda for May 2026 Meeting

Second: Hilda Parlér

Vote: Unanimous

Passed

Failed

April 2026 Meeting Minutes:

Motion: Hilda Parlér moved to approve the April 2026 meeting minutes

Second: Dr. John Eldridge

Vote: Unanimous

Passed

Failed

May Charter Schools Review Board Meeting

SECU People Helping People Scholarship Awardees; Dr. Natasha Norins, OCS Consultant

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- Dr. Norins (Office of Charter Schools) introduced eight of ten 2026 SECU People Helping People Scholarship recipients, noting two were absent due to AP exams; recipients were selected from 45 applicants and will each receive \$10,000 over four years toward a North Carolina state university.
- Individual scholars introduced themselves and shared their planned fields of study, including elementary and special education, environmental and information science, biology, fashion design, and journalism.
- The Chair acknowledged all recipients, including absent honorees, and invited scholars to take photographs with the board.

Charter Application Amendments: Julie Whetzel, OCS Consultant

Mountain Discovery Charter: Mission Statement

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- Julie Whetzel (Office of Charter Schools) presented the request: Mountain Discovery Charter School (Swain County, K–8, est. 2002, approx. 220 students) sought formal board approval for a mission statement, revised to read: *"To inspire students to enjoy and lead their own learning,"* following informal adoption prior to COVID and in conjunction with the school's renewal process.
- Hilda Parlér offered that while the statement was clear and student-centered, it lacked specificity regarding what students will achieve, how they will learn, and why it matters long-term.
- Dr. Haire concurred, stating the statement lacked substance, measurable outcomes, and a defined purpose, and questioned whether the board would accept a similarly brief statement for itself.
- A subsequent board member argued that schools have latitude to define their own mission statements and that the board holds schools accountable through performance

outcomes rather than mission language; another member noted that the previous mission statement was similarly brief, making reversion inadvisable.

- A board member with renewal experience cautioned that a mission statement lacking definition can complicate the Office of Charter Schools' ability to assess whether a school is operating in alignment with its charter.

Motion: Hilda Parlér moved to NOT approve Mountain Discovery Charter School's amended mission statement

Second: None

Vote: No action was taken.

- Passed Failed

Motion: Lindalyn Kakadelis moved to approve Mountain Discovery Charter School's amended mission statement

Second: Dr. John Eldridge

Vote:

Yes: SG, LK, BF, RH, GM, TG, SS, JE, EG

Nay: HP

- Passed 9:1 Failed

Central Park School for Children: Mission Statement

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- Julie Whetzel presented the request: Central Park School for Children (Durham, K–8, est. 2003, approx. 575 students) sought formal approval to change its mission statement from *"To create a community rooted in justice and equity where all children thrive"* to simply *"All children thrive,"* following a 2018 revision.
- Multiple board members raised concerns that the proposed statement — three words in total — lacked an actionable verb, failed to define the school's reason for existence, and was more appropriate as a vision statement than a mission statement.
- One board member noted that the statement could not stand as a declaration of fact ("all children thrive"), was too generic to be measured, and required the reader to infer meaning. The same member stated that while schools retain latitude to define their own mission, this statement was insufficient.
- Another board member observed that the proposed statement was not substantially different from the previously approved Mountain Discovery mission, calling for greater board consistency in expectations communicated to schools.

- The school's designated representative was not confirmed as present online at the time of discussion.

Motion: Bruce Friend moved to NOT approve Central Park School for Children's amended mission statement

Second: Hilda Parlér

Vote:

Yay- BF, RH, TG, SS, JE, EG

Nay- SG, LK, HP, GM

- Passed 6:4 Failed

TMSA Charlotte: CSADM Over 20%/Low-Performing

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- Julie Whetzel introduced the request: TMSA Charlotte (Mecklenburg County, K–12, est. 2016, approx. 1,300 students) sought approval to exceed its maximum authorized enrollment by more than 20% — from 1,626 to 1,806 students for 2026–27 — a threshold requiring CSRБ approval due to the school's designation as a continually low-performing school.
- TMSA Charlotte Secondary School Principal and LEA Representative presented on behalf of the school, citing expanded campus capacity (two elementary campuses and one secondary campus), over 2,000 applications for the upcoming year, and MAP assessment data indicating approximately 74% of students exceeded fall-to-spring growth goals.
- Dr. Haire raised substantive concerns, noting the school's performance history reflected a composite score of 54 (D) in 2025, that the school performed below Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools in math and science, that only 10% of eligible students took the ACT compared to 53% statewide, and that the submitted documents contained no specific academic improvement plan. She noted the school had been continually low performing for at least five years.
- Another board member observed that the school's individual subject-level scores (C in math, C in reading, met growth in both categories) appeared inconsistent with the overall D composite, suggesting the school may have been very close to exiting low-performing status; he expressed interest in understanding what specific indicator drove the lower composite score.
- Multiple board members acknowledged that the school could grow by 326 students without board approval (from current enrollment to the 1,626 maximum), and that the board's consideration was limited to the additional 180 students above that threshold;

several members invoked the principle that academic stabilization should precede further growth.

Motion: Todd Godbey moved to NOT approve TMSA Charlotte’s request to increase enrollment over 20%.

Second: Hilda Parlér

Vote: 4:6

Yay: RH, HP, TG, EG

Nay: SG, BF, SS, JE, LK, GM

- Passed Failed

Motion: Lindalyn Kakadelis moved to approve TMSA Charlotte’s request to increase enrollment over 20%.

Second: Dr. John Eldridge

Vote: 6:4

Yay: SG, BF, SS, JE, LK, GM

Nay: RH, HP, TG, EG

- Passed Failed

Charlotte Secondary School: CSADM Over 20%/Low-Performing

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- Julie Whetzel presented the request: Charlotte Secondary School (Mecklenburg County, grades 6–12, est. 2007, approx. 156 students) sought approval to increase enrollment beyond 20%, from 176 to 200 students for 2026–27, citing operational and financial capacity and adherence to a small class-size instructional model.
- School Leader Johanna Miller, appearing online, voluntarily withdrew the request before board deliberation, stating the school was working on internal improvements and did not wish to proceed with the expansion at this time.
- Multiple board members commended the school's decision, citing the integrity and self-awareness reflected in the withdrawal.

Carolina Collegiate (RTO): Enrollment Change

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- Julie Whetzel presented the request: Carolina Collegiate High School (formerly West Triangle High School, Durham, grades 9–12), approved in 2023 and subject to two prior delays, sought to reduce its first-year 9th-grade enrollment projection from 200 to 165 students ahead of its planned August 2026 opening.
- The school reported 262 applications received, 159 accepted offers, and 147 families engaged in registration; it secured a facility currently under renovation with an anticipated educational certificate of occupancy by July 10th.
- Mr. Friend questioned the procedural basis for the vote, noting that the school remained well above the minimum enrollment threshold (80 students) and that a vote against the revised projection would effectively require the school to enroll a number set three years prior; other board members concurred that the request was procedural in nature.
- School representative Brandon Mitchell clarified that the "other funds" line in the budget (approximately \$500,000) comprised tenant revenue from the facility and a guaranteed grant of \$100,000.

Motion: Dr. John Eldridge moved to approve Carolina Collegiate’s request to decrease their enrollment projections.

Second: Lindalyn Kakadelis

Vote: Unanimous

- Passed Failed

Bettis Academy (RTO 2027): Multiple Requests

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- Julie Whetzel outlined three consolidated requests from Bettis Academy (Eastern Wake County, planned opening fall 2027): (1) a mission statement revision emphasizing hands-on, real-life experiences and applied leadership and entrepreneurial skills; (2) a grade span and enrollment reduction from a planned K–6 opening of 420 students to kindergarten and 9th grade only, with a projected enrollment of 150; and (3) implementation of a weighted lottery prioritizing economically disadvantaged students at approximately 45% enrollment.
- Founder and Board Chair Allison Brown explained that the grade span revision was driven by community polling (94.4% of respondents indicated support for a high school option in Eastern Wake County), overcrowding concerns at the area's sole traditional high school, and the need to match facility capacity at a potential 75,000 sq. ft. church life enrichment center.
- Multiple board members raised concerns about the operational and structural complexity of simultaneously serving kindergarteners and ninth graders, including EOC testing

implications, facility logistics (separate wings), and the need for teachers capable of covering multiple subjects in early years of operation.

- Brown cited her background as an early college counselor (including building a college and career promise program with 100% CCP participation at her prior institution) as a basis for confidence in the high school model; board members acknowledged this expertise while noting the inherent risks of a non-contiguous grade span in the school's startup phase.
- Regarding the weighted lottery, Brown explained that the average household income in the Zebulon/Eastern Wake service area had risen significantly since the original application (from approximately \$51,000 to \$79,000), while the poverty rate remained approximately 9%; the weighted lottery was intended to proactively ensure enrollment remained aligned with the school's original commitment to serving economically disadvantaged students.

Motion: Dr. John Eldridge moved to approve Bettis Academy's requests in aggregate: mission statement change, enrollment and grade span reduction, and implement a weighted lottery.

Second: Hilda Parlér

Vote: Unanimous

- Passed Failed

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

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- Dr. Norins (Office of Charter Schools, RTO Lead) presented the May RTO update. Schools submitted final documentation by April 25th; RTO readiness reports (a new tool for the cycle) were distributed to schools and made available in Eboard.
- Three schools were identified as **substantially or fully ready** (not required to appear in person): North Carolina Connections Academy (virtual K–12, 65% ready), Carolina Collegiate High School (Durham, grades 9–10, 88% ready), and Warren YES (Warren County K–6 school 90% ready); board members commended their progress.
- Four schools were identified as **not ready or partially ready** and presented updates in person:
 - **BH2 STREAM (Edgecomb County, K–6, projected ADM 280):** As of the meeting date, 209 scholars were fully enrolled (paperwork complete). The school returned to its original location (1308 West Wilson Street, Tarboro) after a prior request to relocate was denied by the board. Modular units were contracted through Mobile Modular and described as ready to deliver; however, no site work

had begun, permits were not yet finalized (anticipated June 5–10), and no staff beyond the founder had been formally hired. The proposed first day of school was August 3rd. Multiple board members expressed serious concern about the feasibility of the construction and hiring timeline, with one board member noting an independent engineering estimate suggested 10 months would be needed to install modular units for a comparable student population. Board members repeatedly encouraged the school to consider voluntarily requesting a one-year delay.

- **Focus Academy (Wake County, K–4, projected ADM 200):** As of the meeting, 53 students were fully enrolled (up from 43 at the April 25th report date). The school reported 126 total applicants with a conversion rate of approximately 30%. The ECO was confirmed in hand. Five of seven needed teachers had been hired. A board member noted that reaching 75% of projected enrollment (175 students) would require enrolling approximately 16 additional students per week over the remaining nine weeks. The board encouraged intensive outreach and urged the school to consider a voluntary delay if enrollment targets appeared unattainable.
- **RYZE Academy (Guilford County, K–4, projected ADM 250):** As of the meeting, 171 students were fully enrolled (approximately 68% of ADM), with a projection to reach 200 by month's end. The facility ECO was confirmed and furniture was in place. Seven of ten teachers were hired. The school's break-even enrollment was stated as 130. The board acknowledged the school's recent enrollment momentum (growth from approximately 70 to 171 in one month) and encouraged continued progress and communication with the office.
- **IDYL — Institute for the Development of Young Leaders (Wake County, K–6, projected ADM 350):** As of the meeting, 217 students were confirmed enrolled (all paperwork submitted). A marketing and CRM firm had been engaged with a target of 100 additional enrollments within one month. The school cited a revised break-even of 210 students. Remaining facility work (paint, signage, fencing, playground equipment) was described as on track for completion by July 1st.

Adjourn:

Motion: Bruce Friend

Second: Dr. John Eldridge

12:10 pm