Minutes of the North Carolina Charter Schools Review Board

State Board Room 755, Department of Public Instruction

October 5, 2026

9 AM

Attendance – CSRB Members	
Jeremy Wall- (nonvoting) - Remote Dr. Rita Haire Dr. John Eldridge Eric Guckian Hilda Parlér Dr. Shelly Shope - Absent	Eric Sanchez - Absent Bruce Friend Lindalyn Kakadelis Todd Godbey Gerald McNair - Remote Stephen Gay - Absent
Attendance – Other	
Office of Charter Schools Ashley Baquero, Director Joseph Letterio, Consultant - Remote Melanie Rackley, Consultant Jenna Cook, Consultant - Remote Dr. Natasha Norins, Consultant Dr. Brandi Gill, Consultant Nicky Niewinski, Asst. Director Ansel Caceres, Consultant Dr. Julie Whetzel, Consultant - Absent	*CSRB Attorney* Steven Walker *Teacher/Principal of Year* Deborah Brown – POY - Absent Stephanie Lane – TOY

Recording of October 2026 CSRB Meeting: Day 1 - October NC Charter School Review Board - Oct. 5, 2026

Call To Order

Pledge of Allegiance & NC Flag Salute: Dr. John Eldridge, Chair

Mission and Ethics Statement:

- Mission and Ethics Statement, Dr. John Eldridge, Board Chair
  Recuse from ALA - Capeton – Hilda Parlér, Bruce Friend

Approval of the Agenda and Minutes

Motion: Hilda Parlér moved to approve agenda for October Meeting
Second: Lindalyn Kakadelis

Vote: Unanimous

☒Passed ☐Failed

Motion: Bruce Friend moved to approve September 2026 meeting minutes.
Second: Hilda Parlér

Vote: Unanimous

☒Passed ☐Failed

October Charter Schools Review Board Meeting

School Growth Score Calculation Concerns

- Bruce Friend introduced concerns submitted by seven charter schools that experienced substantial declines in growth scores despite maintaining or increasing student proficiency.
- Eric Sanchez reported that 23 schools had growth-index declines of at least eight points while proficiency increased, compared with four schools in the preceding year and one school the year before; he also noted that three different calculation approaches had been used over three years.
- CSRB members stated that all retest results were counted in 2024–2025, while only retests completed within a 10-day window were counted in 2025–2026, creating concern that the baseline and current-year calculations were not comparable.
- CSRB members identified consequences for grant eligibility, public reporting, employee bonuses, licensure, charter renewal, and potential closure. They requested statewide retest data and a clearer explanation of the calculations.
- CSRB members requested a November presentation from Department of Public Instruction Testing and Accountability staff and SAS/EVAAS representatives and discussed whether legislative attention might be necessary.

Amendments: Ms. Ashley Logue, OCS Director

- Endeavor Charter School – Mission Statement

Ms. Logue shared information included in the Executive Summary which was prepared by Ms. Whetzel, OCS Consultant.

Motion: Bruce Friend moved to approve Endeavor Charter Schools's amended Mission Statement
Second: Lindalyn Kakadelis

Vote: Unanimous

☒Passed ☐Failed

Rules Review - Phase 1: Admissions, Application, and Renewals: Ms. Ashley Logue, OCS Director

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- Ms. Logue reported that approximately 20 charter-specific administrative rules had not been comprehensively revised since 2018 and contained outdated references to the former Charter Schools Advisory Board and State Board of Education processes.
- Ms. Logue proposed reviewing the rules in small groups and distinguishing matters that belong in administrative rules from matters that can be addressed through Board policy.

- The Board was advised that its action would initiate the external rulemaking process rather than directly amend the Administrative Code; the process would include legal review, public notice, stakeholder comment, and Rules Review Commission consideration.
- Board members supported allowing charter-school stakeholders and the public to review the proposed revisions before the Board considered formal action in November.

Admissions and Lottery Procedures Rule

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- OCS proposed correcting the rule's statutory citation from N.C. Gen. Stat. § 115C-118 to the charter-school admissions statute, N.C. Gen. Stat. § 115C-218.45.
- The proposed revisions retained the 30-day admissions period and the requirement that lottery information include the date, time, and location and be handled as an open meeting.
- Board members asked whether the rule should address articulation arrangements and enrollment priorities; staff noted that those subjects are addressed in statute and through compliance review.

Renewal Process and Self-Study Rule

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- Ms. Logue clarified that the renewal process begins with a notification letter from the school rather than with the school's self-study.
- Proposed revisions replaced outdated State Board of Education references with Charter Schools Review Board references and stated that renewal materials would be supplied by the Office of Charter Schools rather than downloaded from a website.
- OCS proposed reorganizing and clarifying the required self-study information without materially changing the renewal process.

Application and Review Process Rule

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- Ms. Logue proposed updating the rule to reflect the current electronic application system rather than a downloadable application from the Office of Charter Schools website.
- CSRB members suggested that the application fee be due when the application is submitted, prompting discussion of fee processing and whether refunds should be available for incomplete applications.
- Proposed revisions updated references from the State Board of Education to the Charter Schools Review Board and aligned the rule with the current application, interview, decision, and Ready to Open processes.
- Board members and staff discussed clarifying how incomplete applications are handled and ensuring that the rule accurately identifies CSRB's available decisions.

Planning Year and Accelerated Application Rule

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- Ms. Logue proposed replacing the phrase "boards holding charters" with language referring to boards whose charter applications have been approved.

- The revisions would broaden the listed planning-year training topics and replace the former 75-percent enrollment-commitment measure with break-even enrollment and other planning-year documentation.
- CSRB members discussed the need to define what constitutes a facility that is feasible for opening, particularly for an accelerated applicant.
- The draft updated institutional references to the Charter Schools Review Board and clarified that an applicant seeking acceleration must select that option in its original application.

2027 Renewal Cohort Preview: Jenna Cook, OCS Consultant

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- Ms. Cook reported that the 2027 renewal cohort contained 38 charter schools and described the two-year review process, including site visits, school self-studies, and Department of Public Instruction portfolios.
- Possible renewal outcomes were identified as 10-, 7-, 5-, or 3-year terms or nonrenewal; Ms. Cook indicated that 22 schools appeared likely to qualify for 10-year renewals based on three years of comparability data.
- CSRB members asked about schools' prior renewal histories and whether any schools used alternative assessments; staff reported that none in the cohort did so.
- CSRB members asked staff to flag schools whose growth results might reflect the testing and growth-calculation concerns discussed by the CSRB and asked that compliance issues be clearly identified.
- CSRB members asked about the comparability analysis, and members expressed concern that continually low-performing schools should receive meaningful Board review even when statutory criteria might otherwise support a 10-year term. Renewal votes were anticipated for January or February 2027.

RISE Charter School - Scratch Cooked Meals Program: Dawn Arthur, Executive Director, RISE Charter School

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- Lindalyn Kakadelis introduced presentation on a scratch-cooked meal pilot at RISE Southeast Raleigh Charter School, a K–8 school serving approximately 550 students.
- The program began on August 10 through collaboration with Rocky Top Catering, Food Paradigm, and Overflowing Hands and was designed to provide fresh meals while meeting National School Lunch Program requirements.
- Dawn Arthur reported approximately 60-percent breakfast participation and 80-percent lunch participation, totaling about 3,850 meals each week.
- The presentation identified staffing, start-up funding, regulatory compliance, kitchen improvements, and fire-code requirements as principal implementation challenges.
- Board members asked about inspections, personnel needs, second servings, economies of scale, and whether the model could be replicated at other charter schools.

Introduction to 2026 Charter Application Interviews: Ms. Melanie Rackley, OCS Consultant

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- Ms. Rackley reported that three applicants would be interviewed across the two meeting days: American Leadership Academy - Capeton, Virtual Active Learning Academy of North Carolina, and New H.O.P.E. Technology Academy.
- OCS reviewed the statutory framework and the additional considerations applicable to remote academies and applicants proposing education-management-organization relationships.
- CSRB members were advised to consider management-company capacity, governing-board autonomy, and the organization's three-year performance history when reviewing an applicant using an education management organization.
- OCS reviewed the available decisions following an interview: approve the applicant for the Ready to Open process, deny the application, or request a second interview.
- Applicants denied by the CSRB were advised of their right to appeal within 10 days.

American Leadership Academy - Capeton (EMO) - Standard

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- The applicant proposed a K–8 school serving up to 900 students in the Lillington area of Harnett County, citing substantial residential growth, approximately 12,000 planned housing units, and interest from about 1,500 families representing approximately 3,000 students.
- The proposed school would contract with Charter One. The applicant cited improved performance at affiliated North Carolina schools, including B ratings and exceeded-growth results at Wake Preparatory Academy and American Leadership Academy Johnston, while acknowledging that performance across the network was not uniform.
- Board members questioned the approximately $400,000 in budgeted "other funds," updated revenue assumptions, the proposed facility and its estimated cost, transportation and attendance-radius plans, and the school's ability to serve high-need students.
- CSRB members closely examined governing-board independence from the education management organization, including the role of an ex officio member, conflict-of-interest safeguards, closed-session participation, and management-agreement language.
- CSRB members emphasized demonstrated community demand, local growth, the management organization's operating capacity, and the governing board's experience; concerns centered on student outcomes across affiliated schools and the need for written confirmation of governance safeguards.

Motion: Lindalyn Kakadelis moved to approve American Leadership Academy - Capeton's charter application and move them to the RTO Process.

Second: Dr. Rita Haire

Vote: Unanimous

Recused – Hilda Parlér and Bruce Friend

- ☒Passed ☐Failed

Virtual Active Learning Academy of NC: Statewide - Standard

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- The applicant proposed a statewide, teacher-led virtual school using an active-learning model, and Board members recognized the professional qualifications of the proposed governing board.
- CSRB members questioned the evidence of demand because the applicant had received 71 survey responses against a goal of 200 and had not demonstrated clear outcomes from its community presentations.
- CSRB members raised concerns about the team's limited experience operating a K–12 virtual school, the absence of a fully specified curriculum, the research foundation for the model, and whether the proposal was sufficiently differentiated from existing virtual options.
- CSRB members stated that the written education plan was detailed but expressed concern that the governing board's interview responses did not consistently demonstrate command of the application. CSRB members also questioned the possible dual role of the head of school and board chair and the absence of a budgeted principal position.
- CSRB members viewed the proposed parent university as a positive feature but joined the broader concern that too many major elements, including curriculum and operations, remained to be resolved during the planning year. CSRB members discussed whether a regional launch and a stronger career and technical education focus would provide a more viable path.

Motion: Bruce Friend moved to deny Virtual Active Learning Academy of NC's charter application.

Second: Todd Godbey

Yay: BF, RH, HP, TG, JE, Lk Nay: GM

- Passed (6:1) ☐Failed

Motion to Adjourn: Hilda Parlér

Second: Bruce Friend

1:45 pm

Minutes of the North Carolina Charter School Review Board

State Board Room 755, Department of Public Instruction

October 6, 2025

9 AM

Attendance – CSAB Members	
Jeremy Wall- (nonvoting) Dr. Rita Haire Dr. John Eldridge Eric Guckian Hilda Parlér Dr. Shelly Shope - Absent	Eric Sanchez Bruce Friend Lindalyn Kakadelis Todd Godbey Gerald McNair - Absent Stephen Gay - Absent
Attendance – Other	
Office of Charter Schools Ashley Baquero, Director Joseph Letterio, Consultant - Remote Melanie Rackley, Consultant Jenna Cook, Consultant - Remote Dr. Natasha Norins, Consultant Dr. Brandi Gill, Consultant Ansel Caceres, Consultant Nicky Niewinski, Asst. Director Julie Whetzel, Consultant	*CSRB Attorney* Steven Walker *Teacher/Principal of Year* Deborah Brown– POY - Absent Stephanie Lane – TOY

CSRB October Meeting Recording: Day 2 - October NC Charter School Review Board - Oct. 6, 2025

Call To Order

Pledge of Allegiance & NC Flag Salute: Dr. John Eldridge, Board Chair

Mission and Ethics Statement:

- Mission and Ethics Statement, Dr. John Eldridge, Board Chair

Introduction to 2026 Charter Application Interviews: Ms. Melanie Rackley, OCS Consultant

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- Ms. Rackley restated the interview process and review criteria before the Board considered the remaining October applicant.
- The Board was reminded that its decision should be based on the submitted application, the interview record, and the applicant's demonstrated capacity to open and operate the proposed school.
- The available outcomes were approval to enter the Ready to Open process, denial, or a second interview, with an appeal period following a denial.

New H.O.P.E. Technology Preparatory Academy - Standard

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- CSRB members described the proposed technology-focused and single-gender educational concept as potentially compelling and recognized the founding team's community relationships in the Wilmington area.
- The budget was a principal concern. CSRB members questioned the school's break-even enrollment, discussed estimates ranging from approximately 80 to 95 students, and identified inconsistencies between the narrative and spreadsheet, including food-program assumptions and reimbursement estimates.
- CSRB members questioned whether the application clearly defined its intended student population, particularly its references to underserved or underrepresented students, and whether the written application demonstrated sufficient operational depth.
- CSRB members also raised concerns about facility readiness, documented enrollment demand, and whether the team should develop the concept through another educational model before seeking a charter.
- CSRB members indicated that the group could return through a future or accelerated application after strengthening its facility plan, demand evidence, financial model, and overall application.

Motion: Lindalyn Kakadelis moved to deny New H.O.P.E. Technology Preparatory Academy's charter application.

Second: Eric Guckian

Vote: Yay- BF, RH, HP, TG, ES, LK, EG Nay- JE

- ☒Passed (7:1) ☐Failed

Strengthening NC Charter Schools: Charlie Lyons, Vice-President, MGT

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- Dr. John Eldridge introduced representatives of MGT to discuss a possible review of the charter application, interview, Ready to Open, and related policy and rule processes.
- MGT cited research indicating that approximately 80 percent of schools beginning in the lowest performance quintile remained low-performing by year five, while approximately 94 percent of schools beginning with strong performance remained strong.
- The proposed work emphasized front-end authorizing quality, including revised application questions, scoring rubrics, interview and decision criteria, timelines, legal and policy analysis, and stakeholder engagement.
- CSRB members discussed capacity-building for applicants, including boot camps or certification, more flexible reapplication opportunities, earlier preparation before the Ready to Open process, and the importance of not advancing schools that were not ready.
- Ms. Logue reported that the Office of Charter Schools already offered training and a "Discover Your New School" program but experienced limited participation; she also noted that additional requirements could require rule, policy, or statutory authority and that staff capacity was limited.

Closed Session and Return to Open Session

The CSRB entered into closed session at 11:27 a.m. pursuant to NC General Statute 143-318.11(a) (3) to consult with attorney in order to preserve the attorney-client privilege between the attorney and the public body.

Motion: Dr. John Eldridge moved to enter into closed session.

Second: Bruce Friend

Vote: Unanimous

- ☒Passed ☐Failed

- After completing the closed-session discussion, the Board returned to open session.

Motion: Hilda Parlér moved to enter into open session.

Second: Lindalyn Kakadelis

Vote: Unanimous

- ☒Passed ☐Failed

NC Collaboratory 2026 K-12 Legislative Study: Jeni Corn, Ph.D., Research Director - Social Sciences, NC Collaboratory

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- Dr. Corn, Research Director for the North Carolina Collaboratory, described 15 new K–12 research mandates enacted in 2026, many of which involved charter schools, as well as the Collaboratory's charter research laboratory.
- Literacy studies included professional-development providers and literacy in grades 6–8; mathematics studies included vendors, K–12 supports, K–8 curricula, and requirements for low-performing schools involving 60 minutes of on-grade-level mathematics, screening, and student success plans.
- Technology and innovation projects included artificial-intelligence tools, competency-based high school and community-college models, and principal recruitment and retention; additional studies addressed weighted student funding, open enrollment, and the renewal school system.
- CSRB members asked whether testing could pause during transitions to new standards, expressed concern that increased mathematics requirements could displace literacy instruction, and asked about the effects of open enrollment.
- Dr. Corn described project timelines extending from 2027 through 2030 and stated that identifying researchers able to produce policy-ready work was a principal challenge; approximately 15 of 20 anticipated projects had identified research teams.

Work Session Scheduling and Adjournment

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- CSRB postponed the planned afternoon work session concerning the MGT proposal.
- CSRB members discussed arranging an online training session at a later date.
- OCS indicated that any rescheduled session would be publicly noticed in accordance with meeting requirements.

Adjourn: Hilda Parlér

Second: Dr. John Eldridge

12:54 pm