FREIRE CHARTER SCHOOL

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

SEPTEMBER 9, 2026 | 8:30 AM
MEETING ID: 869 6068 0755
MEETING LOCATION: FREIRE CHARTER MIDDLE SCHOOL (1026 MARKET ST., PHILADELPHIA PA 19107)

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: KIARA ALLISON, NICOLE JENKINS, LINDA KILPATRICK, RAQUEL LEACH, BRUCE LESSER, CHUCK RUDALAVAGE, KATHLEEN O'CONNELL

OTHERS PRESENT: LEIGH BOTWINIK, JAMIE BOYER, LAYLA BUNCHES, ALLURE-MILANI DOUGLASS, DAWN EUBANKS, KATIE PICK, ALEXIS PRINCE, PAUL RAMIREZ, MATT RANKIN, MELANIE REISER, MYA REYNOLDS, ANTHONY ROYSTER, BEN WAINWRIGHT, MADELINE WECKEL, NIKKIA WILLIAMS, NATHAN YUFER, ANDREA ZEPP

MEETING START, 8:31 AM

I. **Public Comment**
   A. No comment.
II. **Resolutions**
   A. Review & Approve Minutes from Board Meetings on June 30, 2026 (*Attachment 2A*)*
      1. The board reviews the minutes from June 30, 2026.
      2. Kiara Allison makes a motion to approve. Raquel Leach seconds.
      3. Kiara Allison, Nicole Jenkins, Linda Kilpatrick, Raquel Leach, Bruce Lesser, Kathleen O'Connell, and Chuck Rudalavage vote in favor. There are no votes against or abstentions.
   B. Consideration & Election of Nikkia Williams as parent representative to the TECH Freire Charter School Board of Directors (*Attachment 2B*)*
      1. Scott Solomon introduces TECH parent Nikkia Williams to the board. Nikkia further introduces herself and thanks the boards for their consideration.
      2. Bruce Lesser makes a motion to approve. Linda Kilpatrick seconds.
      3. Kiara Allison, Nicole Jenkins, Linda Kilpatrick, Raquel Leach, Bruce Lesser, Kathleen O'Connell, and Chuck Rudalavage vote in favor. There are no votes against or abstentions.
   C. Review & Approve Section 127 Educational Assistance Plan (*Attachment 2C*)*
      1. Madeline Weckel presents the Section 127 Plan, which allows the school to provide up to $5250 in tuition assistance to employees without it counting as taxable income.
      2. Raquel Leach makes a motion to approve. Bruce Lesser seconds.
      3. Kiara Allison, Nicole Jenkins, Linda Kilpatrick, Raquel Leach, Bruce Lesser, Kathleen O'Connell, and Chuck Rudalavage vote in favor. There are no votes against or abstentions.
   D. Review & Approve Network Academic Plan/Schoolwide Plan 2026-2027 (*Attachment 2D*)*
      1. Paul Ramirez presents the Network Academic Plan, which also meets the federal requirements for the Schoolwide Plan. It overviews preliminary academic data from the previous year and strategy for the upcoming year. Paul identifies literacy and ELA as a major priority for the year. Four major strategies include:
         a) Being specific, detailed and opinionated about what good teaching looks like, including the top core skills that teachers need to help students move academically in their classrooms.
         b) Revamping our coaching program and training our instructional coaches on how to develop these skills in our teachers to improve their practice.
         c) We have implemented a new Math curriculum, and will begin similar work with our ELA curriculum..
         d) We have created internal assessments in Math and ELA and will implement Data Driven Instruction in conjunction with the administration of these assessments.
      2. Bruce Lesser makes a motion to approve. Raquel Leach seconds.
      3. Kiara Allison, Nicole Jenkins, Linda Kilpatrick, Raquel Leach, Bruce Lesser, Kathleen O'Connell, and Chuck Rudalavage vote in favor. There are no votes against or abstentions.
III. **Executive Session**[T]
   A. Kathleen O'Connell makes a motion to enter into Executive Session at 9:11 AM for the purpose of II.a.ii.: 65

Pa. C.S.A. § 708 (1) "To discuss any matter involving the … evaluation of performance …of any specific … current … employee… employed … by the agency" to review the Head of School Evaluation for Andrea Zepp. Bruce Lesser seconds.

B. The Freire Charter School board exits executive session at 9:21 AM

IV. Executive & Network Update

A. Academic Review Meeting
   1. Paul Ramirez invites all board members to attend the Academic Review Meeting which will be scheduled once growth data is released by the state. Paul explains that during this meeting, the board will have the opportunity to further examine the academic data from the previous year.

B. Health Insurance Renewal
   1. Paul Ramirez shares that we will expect to have updates on health insurance at the end of October and that we are already scheduled to meet as a board on Monday, November 16.

V. School Report

A. Staff & Student Update
   1. Matt Rankin, Director of Instructional Coaching at Freire Charter High School, shares updates on Freire's approach to coaching.
   2. Alexis Prince introduces Allure-Milani Doughlas, who is currently a Senior at Freire Charter High School. Allure shares that she is a student ambassador and recently created her own after school club with the support of the staff at Freire. She appreciates how adaptable and supportive Freire is to their students.
   3. Andrea Zepp introduces Layla Bunches, who is currently a 6th grade student at Freire Charter Middle School. Layla is the third child in her family to attend Freire Middle School. Layla shares that she enjoys that Freire has a lot of after school clubs and that the teachers help students reach mastery in their classes.
   4. Shakeeta Parker, Head of School Culture at Freire Middle School, shares the updates on efforts to build a strong culture at the start of the schools, including revamping the PBIS program for students and running new student orientation days so that new students and families are clear on the code of conduct. She also shares that the deans are sending weekly newsletters to families to further keep our parents informed and share what they are seeing in the building as well as trends on social media that are potentially dangerous. She concludes that the entire staff is working hard and being intentional about building a school community where students feel they belong at Freire Middle School.

B. Heads Report
   1. Alexis Prince shares she expects enrollment to be around 530 after the drop window. Alexis shares that last week, staff led students through Dragon Day, which centered on our "Dragon I Cans" which are the nonacademic standards and expectations for students at Freire High School. The day was both informative and joyful. Alexis notes that all AP students and parents have met individually with their AP teachers to review the AP Course contracts, ensuring that they fully understand the expectations and requirements of the course.
   2. Katie Pick shares the 5 Pillars covered during staff professional development which include: Radical Clarity, Academic Excellence, Character in Action, Safety and Self Care, and High Quality Work. She also shares that 9 out 41 instructional staff are brand new and that the High School retained all but two highly effective teachers whom we wanted to have return. She notes that there is still one open position for a 12th grade case manager. Further, the High School recently added two additional honors classes, Honors US History and Honors Chemistry, and that the Math Medic curriculum rollout has gone really well. Based on early observations and feedback from teachers, students are super engaged and the work feels real world and applicable.
   3. Andrea Zepp's theme for the year is "Believe in the flame." She explains that we want to ensure that our staff believe in our students and our students believe in our systems. We want to keep the bar high for everyone. This year the Middle School is focused on revamping the coaching program, developing core teacher skills, expanding self-contained classrooms for special education students, and implementing Read and Math 180. Andrea expects enrollment to be around 540 students following the drop window. She emphasizes the importance of being intentional about the support provided to teachers in terms of curriculum and classroom management, given the high enrollment and large class sizes. Andrea concludes by emphasizing attendance as a core priority

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and explaining that there will be frequent and early intervention in order to bring our families in to support this initiative.

VI. Financials

A. June 2026 Financial Report (*Attachment 6*)
   1. Ben Wainwright presents the financial report from June 30, 2026. He shares that Freire Charter School ended the year with 465 students at the High School and 439 students at the Middle School, and a surplus of $1.68M. Ben clarifies that Freire Charter School is expected to meet all 7 of the financial ratios.

B. Audit Update
   1. Nathan Yufer shares that audits are underway and expected to go smoothly.

VII. Advancement

A. Advancement Report (*Attachment 7*)
   1. Melanie Resier presents the advancement report. She notes that it was a challenging fundraising year and invites board members to join the advancement meeting happening later in the month to dive into deeper analysis of the data. She reminds the board that we set an ambitious goal of $675K and came about $272K short of that goal. Some factors that may have contributed to this include the lack of a major fundraising event; board member resignees and previous donors giving at lower levels; and the loss of a major donor.
   2. We had two successful smaller fundraising events and were successful in raising restricted donations through EITC, and received several grants.
   3. We recently sent out our "Meet the Grads" mailer and have entered a heavy grant-writing cycle. Specifically, we are seeking a Longwood grant for a major capital improvement project for Freire Wilmington.

B. Political Landscape
   1. Freire continues to monitor the political landscape.

VIII. Governance

A. Conflict of Interest Policy
   1. Madeline Weckel reminds board members to sign the Conflict of Interest Policy that will be sent via Dropbox Sign.

B. Annual Board Visitation Day
   1. Madeline Weckel invites all board members to attend the Board Visitation at TECH Freire, tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, October 21. Details to follow.

MEETING ADJOURNED, 10:29 AM

**Requires Vote*

[T]***Citation of reason for executive session: II.a.ii.: 65 Pa. C.S.A. § 708 (1) "To discuss any matter involving the … evaluation of performance …of any specific … current … employee… employed … by the agency."***

The next Board Meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, October 7, 2026 at 8:30 AM** at 2221 N. Broad Street

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