

**Erie Elementary Charter School
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
March 11, 2026, 6:00pm
1405 N Washtenaw Ave, Chicago, IL 60622**

Board members who attended in person: Sarah Airola, Board Chair; Keith Ellett, Chair of Board Finance Committee; Rajiv Naidu, Board Secretary; Mary Boehler; Melanie Madigan; Victor Sy Nelson; Tony Sutton; Jeanne Varwig

Board members who attended virtually: April Kennedy, Parent Representative; Leslie Pigozzi, Staff Representative

Staff who attended in person: Karem Gomez, Principal and Executive Director; Aimee Frantzen, Assistant Principal; Marisol Martinez, Business Operations Director; Diana Morquecho, Business Operations Coordinator; Jessica Jaimes, Instructional Coach

Staff who attended virtually: Gina Vega; Andrea Zayas

Guests: Jennifer Edgecomb of GEMS, donor

The meeting was brought to order at approximately 6:05pm

APPROVAL OF JANUARY 14, 2026 MEETING MINUTES

Ms. Airola: The 1st order of business is the approval of the minutes of the January 14, 2026, board meeting.

Mary Boehler moved to approve the minutes as presented.

Sy Nelson seconded the motion to approve the minutes.

All who voted in favor: Sarah Airola; Keith Ellett; Rajiv Naidu; Mary Boehler; Melanie Madigan; Victor Sy Nelson; Tony Sutton; Jeanne Varwig

All who voted against: None

Directors who Abstained: None

PUBLIC COMMENTS/NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Airola: Next order of business: are there any public comments- new business? None

ACADEMIC COMMITTEE REPORT- Presented by Principal/Executive Director Karem Gomez

Continuous Improvement Work Plan (CIWP) Update:

A previously scheduled Instruction and Innovation (I&I) rigor walk has been rescheduled and will focus on providing instructional feedback to teachers.

Student Data and Progress Monitoring:

Student academic data is currently being reviewed using standards-based grading. Unlike traditional percentage-based grading, the school focuses on levels of proficiency:

- 4 – Above Expectations
- 3 – Meets Expectations
- 2 – Approaching Expectations

Previously, reports presented only students scoring **3s and 4s**, representing students meeting or exceeding expectations. Updated reports now include **2s, 3s, and 4s** to provide a more comprehensive view of student progress.

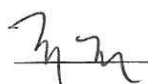
The school leadership team reviews this data monthly alongside other indicators such as attendance and behavior referrals to guide instructional coaching and intervention strategies.

Teacher Coaching and Support

Coaching strategies currently being implemented include:

- Side-by-side coaching
- The "Get Better Faster" coaching framework
- Ongoing classroom walkthroughs focused on small group instruction

Teachers who have not demonstrated sufficient growth have been placed on Professional Improvement Plans. Additionally, instructional walkthroughs have been intentionally structured to monitor **small group instruction and targeted interventions** designed to address student learning gaps.

 Initials of Marisol Martinez

 Initials of Rajiv Naidu

State Assessment Preparation

Preparation for upcoming state student assessments is underway.

IAR test preparation materials are being integrated into instruction weekly on Wednesday so that students are familiar with both the content and the testing platform.

Academic Data

The Academic Report included student academic data, and board members asked several questions regarding the data:

Keith Ellett requested a breakdown of performance by grade level and suggested providing information on the total number of students assessed each month to better interpret fluctuations in the data.

Tony Sutton asked about trends across grade bands.

Specific classrooms have also been identified as needing additional instructional support. Targeted strategies have been implemented to support behavior and attendance as well as the specific academic challenges

Instructional Support in Mathematics

The school continues to work with a high-quality math consultant who supports teachers by:

- Assisting with deeper analysis and planning of math units
- Conducting classroom observations
- Facilitating teacher debriefs and instructional coaching

The math team therefore receives **dual support** through both internal coaches and the external consultant.

At this time, the school is NOT working with an external literacy consultant. Administration noted that literacy coaching currently focuses on:

- Small group instruction strategies
- Unit internalization with teachers
- Standards analysis
- Professional learning related to the science of reading

Progress towards Strategic Plan

MS. Gomez shared progress toward the school's Strategic Plan and noted:

- **Big Rock 1** is currently on track to be met by the end of the school year.
- **Big Rock 3** requires additional focus, particularly in increasing the percentage of teachers rated proficient on evaluations. Instructional coaches are working with staff to build capacity in this area.

Student Attendance

Attendance data shows improvement, with February 2026 attendance rates representing the highest levels since September. This is notable as attendance typically declines over the course of the year.

Ms. Gomez reported that staff have been working hard to communicate with parents of students with chronic absences and using a multi-pronged approach. The strategies being implemented include:

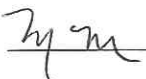
- Increased outreach to families through phone calls and meetings- some of the meetings are long and the parents get emotional
- Home visits
- A Tier 1 attendance committee
- Systematized attendance monitoring

There was discussion of the fact that some parents are facing unusual challenges in their lives and that is affecting their ability to get their children to school. The school is offering those parents what support it can.

There is a meeting scheduled with **Rang**, a platform used by other charter schools to incentivize and improve attendance. Board members discussed approaches to addressing chronic absenteeism and emphasized the importance of maintaining a strong focus on student attendance as a driver of academic success.

Upcoming Assessments

- Seal of Biliteracy assessments are currently underway.
- Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR) begins March 30, 2026.
- Illinois Science Assessment (ISA) begins April 20, 2026.

 Initials of Marisol Martinez

 Initials of Rajiv Naidu

DEVELOPMENT REPORT:

Bd. Chair Sarah Airola reported that she and Karem Gomez, Alex Molina, and Kreagan Carbone are meeting monthly to coordinate development efforts and review grant opportunities. We submitted an application for a \$200,000 grant. Board members were encouraged to share connections to potential funding opportunities, including:

- Corporate giving programs
- Educational foundations
- Organizational grant opportunities

Update on the Annual Fundraising Gala

Planning is underway for the 2026 Taste of Erie Gala, scheduled for October 8, 2026. The theme will celebrate the diverse cultures represented within the Erie community.

Ms. Airola encouraged board members to assist with:

- Sponsorship connections
- Auction item donations
- Corporate partnerships

Website Development Update

Alex Molina, Administrative Assistant and Communications Manager, provided an update on the development of a new school website.

The previous platform, WebFlow, presented usability challenges. Ms. Molina has updated the design of the school website and shared a preview of the new website, highlighting improvements in accessibility and usability.

Board members were invited to provide suggestions for content for the new website.

Suggestions included highlighting alumni success stories to showcase the long-term impact of the school.

Board leadership also discussed broader messaging about the school's identity, including celebrating Erie as a cultural hub that honors and reflects the diverse communities it serves.

SCHOOL CHARTER RENEWAL UPDATE:

Principal/Executive Director Karem Gomez provided an update on the process, as the school will have to complete the renewal process this summer, and the role of consultants VKA in supporting the application process.

Board members discussed whether VKA could assist with project management support for the renewal process given that the members of the firm formerly worked at Erie and have key experience with the process.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT:

Keith Ellett, chair of the Finance Committee referenced the Statement of Activities through 01/31/26 and shared that

- There continue improvements in **expense coding practices and reporting**
- No staffing cuts are projected
- Based on current figures, there is the potential for a small surplus by the end of the fiscal year

Ms. Gomez is keeping a tight rein on spending.

ADJOURNMENT

Mary Boehler moved to adjourn the meeting.

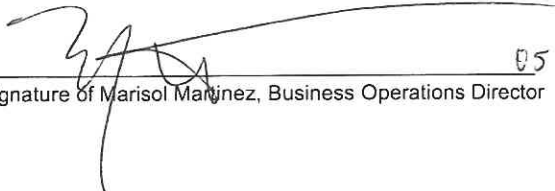
Jeanne Perkins Varwig seconded the motion to adjourn

Directors who voted in favor: Sarah Airola; Keith Ellett; Rajiv Naidu; Mary Boehler; Melanie Madigan; Victor Sy Nelson; Tony Sutton; Jeanne Varwig

Directors who voted against the motion: None

Directors who abstained: None

These minutes were prepared by Marisol Martinez


Signature of Marisol Martinez, Business Operations Director


Signature of Rajiv Naidu, Board Secretary