Erie Elementary Charter School
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
May 13, 2026, 6:00pm
1405 N Washtenaw Ave, Chicago, IL 60622

Directors attending in person: Sarah Airola; Mary Boehler; Victor Sy Nelson; Keith Ellett; Vivek Sadanand; Jeanne Perkins Varwig; Loreen Strasser

Directors attending virtually: Tony Sutton; Leslie Pigozzi; April Kennedy

Staff attending in person: Karem Gomez, Principal; Aimee Frantzen, Assistant Principal; Marisol Martinez, Business Operations Director; Diana Morquecho, Business Coordinator

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Board Chair Sarah Airola brought the meeting to order at approximately 06:20pm following a technical difficulty with the Zoom link for remote attendees

Approval of Meeting Minutes
Ms. Airola: 1st order of business is the approval of the meeting minutes of the 03/11/26 meeting

Keith Ellett: I move to approve the minutes of the last meeting
Mary Boehler: Seconded the motion
All in favor: Sarah Airola; Mary Boehler; Victor Sy Nelson; Keith Ellett; Vivek Sadanand; Jeanne Perkins Varwig; Loreen Strasser
All opposed: No one opposed
All who abstained: No one abstained

Public Comments
Ms. Airola asked if anyone had public comments/new business for the board? No questions, comments or new business were brought up.

Academic Report presented by Principal and Executive Director Karem Gomez Perez:

Ms. Gomez: she and the School Leadership Team have been working on the IL State Board of Education's (ISBE) Continuous Improvement Work Plan (CIWP) for Erie, and they are on track to complete the portion for FY27 by the due date.

We have scheduled the English Language Program Review on 5/14 and on 5/15/26 we have the CPS Office of Multi-Lingual Learning coming to review our Dual Language Program.

Student Data was presented broken down by month for September 2025 to April 2026. Ms. Gomez provided percentages of students approaching or meeting Grade Level Standards in English Language Arts and Math. Examining growth over time or percentage of classrooms with growth in primary metric areas in semester #1 and semester #2:

The academic team is looking at data and each month looking for "Red" classrooms- classrooms that are underperforming. The number of classrooms categorized as red has dropped over the course of the year.

The Instructional Coaches are offering multiple supports to teachers and she and the Assistant Principal are doing several things to support coaching.

School Attendance:
Ms. Gomez then discussed that ISBE (the Illinois State Board of Education) has made some changes to accountability measures. They are now calling it "consistent attendance." They track the percentage of students that consistently attend and that is what they are reporting.

Initials of Marisol Martinez

Initials of Rajiv Naidu

It was suggested that we compare how we are doing to other schools. Ms. Gomez reviewed the CPS data and listed the comparison info on the academic report. Erie is above the district average numbers, although the data from August is affecting our numbers. There are not 21 learning days in August.

Keith Ellett: How the reception has been from the community?

Ms. Gomez: We had an attendance raffle this last week as an incentive. The student that won was very excited to win the card.

Asst. Principal Aimee Frantzen: In most cases where there have been home visits for students with chronic absences, and other methods to help, we have seen a difference, perhaps not consistently.

Seal of Biliteracy Test:
We have students in two grade levels, 5th Grade and 8th Grade, take The Seal of Biliteracy assessment and the results are in.100% of our 5th Grade testing students attained the seal. 8th Grade had 77% success rate.

The year before we were at 65% of 5th Graders and 61% of 8th Graders. This is reading and writing in both languages and both General Education and Dual Language students take the test.

Vivek Sadanand: a multi-year data comparison would be great to look at year over year as well as comparison to a starting point. A particular date.

Ms. Gomez stated that she would like feedback on data reporting for the board. She will be meeting with director Mary Boehler to discuss this.

School Calendar for 2026-2027:
Ms. Gomez presented a proposed calendar for school year 2026-2027. This is only a draft. She reviewed staff start dates, days off, ½ days, start and end dates for each quarter. 176 days of school is minimum requirement.

There was a question as to whether we usually have 5 days off in November (the week of Thanksgiving)? Students are off, but Parent-Teacher conferences take place that Monday and Tuesday. CPS also has that week off.

Do instructional days count ½ days as full days? Yes.
Aimee Frantzen: This calendar more closely mirrors the CPS calendar. It may help our attendance as we have kids off now because parents assume that we have some days off that CPS does.

Mary Boehler: moved to approve the proposed calendar for the 2026-2027 school year
Vivek Sadanand: Seconded the motion
All in favor: Sarah Airola; Mary Boehler; Victor Sy Nelson; Keith Ellett; Vivek Sadanand; Jeanne Perkins Varwig; Loreen Strasser
All opposed: No one opposed
All who abstained: No one abstained

Development Report presented by Board Chair and Chair of the Development Committee, Sarah Airola:
We have two grant applications out:
1) Invest for Kids - a $200,000/one time grant
2) Fighting for Futures – is awarded in June. The founder is on Ms. Airola's organization the Grace Network board.

We have won the FUSE grant for STEM. That is $20,000 for STEM materials for next year. There are lot of grant applications submitted. Ms. Airola feels that the more we apply, the more chances to get one.

Gala Annual Fundraiser in October 2026:
The Save the Date is going out now. We made a change this year. The team is working hard.

Ms. Gomez: school staff will be opening the Puerto Rican parade in June. It's a great opportunity to represent the community and promote Erie. Ms. Gomez has been working with Brenda Torres, our Music Teacher as Ms. Torres has a lot of connections in the community. We will be on the float.

General Fundraising:
Ms. Airola shared that the Spring Appeal mailing did go out, but we don't have a report on what we received so far.
We also submitted an application for the Illinois Creative Arts Grant. We have not heard back. There is a lot in the pipeline.

Finance Report presented by Finance Committee Chair Keith Ellett

Mr. Ellett reported that we are still in the black for this fiscal year. We feel that will continue to year-end.

We have hired someone for Financial Consultant position, Shatila Sago. She formerly worked at the CPS Budget Office and in the Federal Grants office.

Initials of Marisol Martinez _____ Initials of Rajiv Naidu _____

CPS Budget Rollout Meeting for Fiscal Year 27
Ms. Gomez reported that the PCTC [the PER CAPITA TUITION CHARGE that CPS uses to fund schools per student] is going up to $18,859.64
This year (FY26), PCTC was $17,606.36. The difference = $1,253.28

CPS will be basing it on enrollment. If our enrollment is lower on 10th day of 2nd Semester (01/25/27), they will still base the payment on that day. That means the lowest our funding can be based on is a student count of 365. CPS told us we won't lose funding. In January we had 365, and we now have 365.

Right now, projected enrollment for SY 2026-2027 is 382. It is still higher than where we were.

We sent a return survey to Erie families, and so far, they all indicate that they are returning. We know some families will move. The FY27 budget is based on an enrollment number 270.

How does Kindergarten enrollment look?
Ms. Gomez: We have received 38 applications. We have low enrollment in K this year, but we are ahead of where we were in applications a year ago.

In Special Education funding, we have $4K per sped student. We were not able to appeal our SPED funding this year. We had successful appeals 2 years in a row. In 2025-2026 funding was structured differently, so we could not hit the threshold necessary to appeal. Asst. Principal Frantzen shared some details of how funding has been changed/reduced for Special Education/Diverse Learning.

Staff Salary Increase and Offers for Staff for 2026-2027- Prioritizing Positions
Staff Board Representative Leslie Pigozzi indicated that staff received a letter without a salary amount, and asked when can we expect to have an actual salary offer? We get the actual budget figures on Friday. We got the overview yesterday. There is mention of a surplus in financials.

Mary Boehler: No one is happy with CPS' schedule. Normally we get a CPS budget for the following year in April, so usually we have numbers by this meeting. I'll give you my commitment, and that of the finance committee that will get a final budget for FY27 to you as soon as possible.

Discussion centered on fact that we are not hiring a Director of Curriculum and Instruction and instead hiring a financial accounting position.

Sarah Airola: It's important to note that the position we are hiring is a part-time accountant position and that is normally a full-time position. We aren't adding an additional position that is full time. We will not be paying the financial reporting person the salary of a Director of Curriculum.

Rajiv Naidu in terms of school finances, it is called a surplus if you don't fund the capital account. It is a question of when unplanned expenses or repairs hit. We have been delaying repairs. It's not really a surplus.

Tony Sutton asked that all consider school leadership said they were going to do x and now we are doing something else.

Mr. Naidu: It should result in a net savings to the school. When we bring the financial accounting staff on, we can get rid of other expenses. The budget piece is a critical piece of operations.

Keith Ellett: Adding the financial position was necessary. We want to free up staff's time, so they are not working on financials to the degree that has been necessary this year.

Mary Boheler: As the full board won't be meeting before 6/20, I move we give authority to the Finance Committee to decide on a raise for staff for the next school year.
Vivek Sadanand: I second the motion
All in favor: Sarah Airola; Mary Boehler; Victor Sy Nelson; Keith Ellett; Vivek Sadanand; Jeanne Perkins Varwig; Loreen Strasser
All opposed: No one opposed
Abstentions: None

Board Meeting Schedule for 2026-2027
Directors were presented a proposed schedule for board meetings next year for meetings on October 14, 2026, January 13, 2027, March 10, 2027, and May 12, 2027.
A quorum is required for meetings that means 40% of directors attending *in person*.

Keith Ellett: I move to approve the board meeting schedule as presented
Mary Boehler: Second the motion
All in favor: Sarah Airola; Mary Boehler; Victor Sy Nelson; Keith Ellett; Vivek Sadanand; Jeanne Perkins Varwig; Loreen Strasser
All opposed: None
Abstentions: None

Initials of Marisol Martinez

Initials of Rajiv Naidu

Mr. Sutton turned the discussion to accountability for staff. We have conversations of what happens when to hold people accountable but if you are a teacher. What is the accountability for school leadership?

Karem Gomez: I know there has been concern about school leadership team members. Everyone on staff gets reviewed. I am interested in hearing more about it. I'm committed to working on this. I'm happy to talk to staff to hear what is on people's mind.

Sarah Airola: Our meetings are open for any staff. I would say to staff to communicate to people, teachers and staff to come and talk to us. I don't want people to think we are unapproachable.

Ms. Airola offered the floor to those logged in virtually for additional comments. There were none

MOTION TO ADJOURN:

Vitor Sy Nelson: I move we adjourn the meeting
Mary Boehler: Second the motion
All in favor: All in favor: Sarah Airola; Mary Boehler; Victor Sy Nelson; Keith Ellett; Vivek Sadanand; Jeanne Perkins Varwig; Loreen Strasser
All opposed: No one opposed
Abstentions: None

Minutes Prepared by

Marisol Martinez, Business Operations Director

Minutes Approved by

Rajiv Naidu, Board Secretary