



Advanced Math & Science Academy Charter School

Minutes

Board of Trustees Strategic Planning Meeting Session One

Date and Time

Saturday March 1, 2025 at 8:30 AM

Location

AMSA In-Person

201 Forest Street, Marlborough, MA 01752

Upper School Cafeteria

Trustees Present

Bela Gorman, Darren Rose, Dwayne Stanley, Evan Przyborowski, Gregory Theos, James Carter, Maura Webster, Stephan Richter

Trustees Absent

None

Ex Officio Members Present

Lisa Mobley

Non Voting Members Present

Lisa Mobley

Guests Present

Amanda Cence, Mike Nawrocki, Sara Snow

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

Maura Webster called a meeting of the board of trustees of Advanced Math & Science Academy Charter School to order on Saturday Mar 1, 2025 at 8:35 AM.

II. Welcome / Warm-up / Connection

A. Ice Breaker

Maura led a fun "ice breaker" with skittles.
Each attendee was given a skittle.
Each color corresponded to a specific personal question.
This proved to be enjoyable for all attendees and very enlightening.

B. Key School Updates

What are the Goals of the Retreat?
This is the first of two sessions.
The Board hopes to develop a shared understanding of what the Board needs to do to guide the schools leadership goals and priorities.

To develop a Strategic Plan that will build relationships and help to expand the Board membership.

Lisa and Mike presented The Story of AMSA (see attached slides)

III. Panel Discussions

A. Student Panel

Students on the Panel:

Olivia Casella
Lucian Albota
Riley Whittier
Noah Hill
Miguel Pedrosa
Ashley Barrientos

Students were asked why they chose AMSA and what suggestions they would make.

Student: Started in 6th grade. His mother is a Brazilian immigrant and she was interested in AMSA through name recognition. He came for a better education.

Student said the choice was his and he is very happy to be at AMSA. He said he is getting a private school education for a public price.

Student started in 6th grade. He prefers to be surrounded by people who want to do well. He enjoys the incentives and is motivated by those who have the same goals. He is particularly pleased with the advanced courses that are offered at AMSA.

Student came to AMSA in the 7th grade. Her mother made her. However, when she got here she liked it. She had believed that only weird kids went to AMSA, which she found out was not the case. Soccer was the fun.

Student started in the 9th grade because she never made the earlier lotteries . She started at Marlborough High School and didn't like it so she decided to try AMSA. She made the choice. ..but her mother made the decision. She feels that she is very prepared for whatever comes next.

Student started in 6th. Her brother did not want to be at AMSA but ended up liking it. She really liked it. She said that AMSA helps to make you feel good about yourself and there is a lot of support, even if you are not the smartest kid.

Student is especially happy with the athletic facilities and opportunities. Her suggestions is to let students use the Upper School back door during the day.

Student believes that advanced courses should be weighted differently. Honors and AP are weighted the same and affects the GPA credits. When colleges look at advanced they are not seeing the distinction between honors and AP. Math was hard and he was doing double the work but had lower GPA than the kids in the lower course. There is no recognition on rigor.

Student would like changes to the student parking lot.

Student feels the comparison culture between high achievers is good. It challenges you to succeed.

Student agreed that the competition is good.

Students were asked how could the Board help support them.

They said support that would help with stress about underperforming and self doubt. Evan Przyborowski is a former AMSA student and recalled that popularity was often based on GPA. Do you feel this affects social relationships?

High performing students do look down on some students in certain circles. Is the pressure coming from each other or from families, teachers, peer to peer?

The students agreed that the pressure does not come from teachers. The pressure mostly comes from themselves or from home or peer to peer. Parents have high expectations. In the student survey, 40% say they can't meet their parents expectations.

Are there structures that teachers could do something to help with stress?

When you are surrounded by students who care about learning then you try to do what they are doing. When teachers do cold calling it is stressful. In some classes students feel that they can't ask questions or ask the teacher to repeat and are terrified to ask questions. Most teachers allow questions but there is also peer ridicule.

Do you have ideas to help that?

Challenge success survey provide admin with the a student perspective.

In most cases it is safe to make a mistake. Make this a cultural thing and should be fostered.

What is the hardest part and the best experience.

What is your vision for AMSA's future?

Hardest is student pressure and hard classes and not enough time to hang out.

Best is that you have a lot of options at AMSA. Lots of different classes.

Hardest is the work load but it is worth it. Academics are a blessing.

Finding balance in the work load. It is a challenge but reasonable. Academics and preparation.

AMSA students who go to college report they feel well prepared.

Pet peeve is that different teacher have different work loads. Students feel that AMSA people are the best and she appreciates the support she has received from the community. When she played in Milton she was amazed at how many teachers came to support her. She made her 1000 score points and was given recognition that she did not expect. She loves her teachers and the staff connections.

AMSA is a positive small community. The student said she can name every student in her grade and all the teachers. A negative is that it takes so much time to do the work and everything we do is always above and beyond. 15 hours of service for NHS at Marlborough, but 40 hours at AMSA.

However, the support is amazing. All the gym teachers came to her swim meet. Every teacher is always there for you. Teachers always ask if you are ok. This connection is important.

There is an open mindedness in AMSA students. They work hard and change a lot over the years showing tremendous growth.

B.

Parent Panel

AMSA Parents on the Panel:

Elizabeth Albota

Rich Manning

Cathy Schoenleber

Raquel Marotta

Panel questions:

Schools strengths and weaknesses.

Major strengths are the rigor, the discipline, high standards, and expectations of admin and students.

What is AMSA's release for the stress?

Coming from private school they are familiar with the rigor and standards, and what is acceptable. Kids will always push boundaries. Parents and schools are supposed to provide boundaries. Having a uniform is important as this takes away a lot of pressure.

A parent with a 9th and 5th sees lots of strengths. The counseling team and staff spend a lot of time with her autistic child. Counseling and staff seem to have the bandwidth. She likes that some teachers will follow students through the years. Her child has yet to be bored. A weakness is around diversity and inclusion. He son is picked on. She wonders if the staff really understand his needs.

Hudson has a negative opinion of AMSA and believes that AMSA doesn't take the "hard" kids. Many believe the lottery is rigged. AMSA has a big PR challenge. However, the fact remains that 3 million dollars is taken away from Hudson schools and "hard" kids cost a lot of money.

A parent with twin boys in 6th grade (one dyslexic and one not) reported that both have done well at AMSA. However, she has mixed feelings about how teachers handle her child's IEP. She has had multiple meetings with staff and she believes the reading program needs to be expanded. Some families do not send kids to AMSA because of their reputation with special education. She feels the reading groups need to be more balanced and levels need to be addressed. She will make her decision about remaining at AMSA based on the IEP meeting that is coming up soon.

Lisa addressed this concern by letting her know that AMSA is looking to add a trained Orton-Gillingham (OG) or Wilson (WRS) person into the budget. *(The Orton-Gillingham (OG) approach is a structured, multisensory, and systematic reading instruction method, particularly effective for students with dyslexia and other reading difficulties, that focuses on explicit teaching of phonics and language skills. The Wilson Reading System (WRS) is a structured literacy program based on Orton-Gillingham principles, designed for students in grades 2 and above, and adults, who struggle with reading and spelling due to*

language-based learning disabilities like dyslexia, emphasizing explicit and systematic instruction.

Another parent said she is a teacher in Hudson and it was hard to send her child to AMSA. But she is happy with the "legendary" staff and the rigor was the point of her decision. AMSA classes are harder than Hudson and the challenge is great. AMSA teachers follow their students and build relationships, which is awesome. Her daughter has a 504 and as an 8th grader she has many classes. Due to her ADHD, homework is a problem. Her experience is there is no consistency in Google Classroom. She would like to see AMSA set up conferences to provide more opportunities to meet teachers. She would like to see Spanish offered in middle school. She would like AMSA to do better at letting colleges know that AMSA is a harder program than most other schools. Planning half days on the same day of the week would be helpful to family planning. Free lunch would be helpful too.

It was suggested that it would be helpful if AMSA would communicate clearly about the additional fees, so they will know what to expect when enrolling their students. Transportation costs are high and uniforms are expensive. There are uniform sales but they usually only have jackets and fleeces available.

IV. Faculty Panel Discussion

A. Faculty Panel Discussion

Padmaja Bandaru
Jessica Bowen
Amanda Morin
Lino Alvarez
Darcy Cloutman

Lower School Teachers have 200+ students and there is not as much attention given to the Lower School in comparison to the Upper School. It is hard to convince students that they have potential. Kids just want the answers and do not want to work at it. It takes time to reprogram them to be critical thinkers.

Classes that meet every other day pose a problem with consistency, especially if there are events that cause a skip in the rotation.

Middle school teachers feel forgotten.
Teachers strive for rigor without being onerous.

Faculty miss the monthly grade-level meeting time where they could do common planning and build a culture within their departments.

Most teachers agreed that improvements could be made to how teachers are able to access information regarding support for their special needs students. All the information is available, but not easily accessed...it is clunky with too many steps to get to the necessary data.

V. Closing Items

A. Closing & Next Steps

The Board will review the information heard and discussed at today's meeting in order to guide their strategic planning on March 8.

B. Adjourn Meeting

Maura Webster made a motion to adjourn.

Stephan Richter seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 2:45 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Sara Snow

Documents used during the meeting

- Bot Strategic Planning Session 2025 (3).pdf