



Amber Charter Schools

Minutes

October Board Meeting

Date and Time

Wednesday October 15, 2025 at 6:00 PM

Location

Amber Charter School East Harlem- 220 E 106th St, New York, NY 10029

Trustees Present

Brad Olsen, John Gutierrez, Khiera Pena, Li'Esha Garcia, Luina Munoz-BlueSpruce, Miguelina German, Soledad Hiciano, Timothy Day

Trustees Absent

Kim Ramos, Lindsay Marino Long, Robyn Epps

Guests Present

Christine Ganey, Clarisse Alvarado, Francina Yaw-Costello, Gina Mellusi, Joey Gustafson, Kate VanBramer (remote), Kirsys Gomez, Mia Thomas, Noelani Gabriel-Holt, Rose Castillo, Samantha Kienemund, Sashemani Elliott, Veronica Almedina

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

John Gutierrez called a meeting of the board of trustees of Amber Charter Schools to order on Wednesday Oct 15, 2025 at 6:08 PM.

II. Audit Presentation

A. Audit Updates

- Kate VanBramer presented audit results to the board
 - Explained the delay in issuing the federal government single audit due to the pending compliance supplement.
 - Issue financial statements and the financial package; no changes to the draft.
 - Clean, unmodified audit, no significant changes.
 - Total assets down \$2.8 million due specifically to grants and contracts related to the ESSER funding.
 - ESSER grant ended in September 2024. \$ 3.2 million decreased due to ESSER grant ending.
 - ASC 842, the new lease standard, where all of the building and operating leases are closed up essentially on our balance sheet.
 - Decreased in liabilities by \$2.3 million dollars.
 - The auditor shared that Amber is in good standing, and the finance team has done a fantastic job of controlling expenses.
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- Reviewed Draft Single Audit Report
 - The financial statements were issued an unmodified opinion, no material weakness, no significant deficiencies related to those internal controls over financial reporting, no non-compliance materials in the financial statements noted in terms of the single audit itself, the federal awards, no material weaknesses, and no significant deficiencies identified related to the federal programs.
 - low risk audit
 - The board secretary asked if there were any delays due to the government shutdown. The co-CEO responded that the only thing that could be affected is the child nutrition reimbursement funds. We have the cash flow to support half the school year.

John Gutierrez made a motion to approve draft audit submission.

Soledad Hiciano seconded the motion.

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

III. Education Committee

A. State and IReady Scores

- New York State Test Proficiency Scores
 - Math: We met the goal of 54%
 - ELA: Exceeded goal of 52%
 - The board reviewed our neighboring charter schools' scores, where we either outperformed or closely aligned.
- School & district level results: Math
 - Amber: 54%
 - City: 57%
 - State: 55%
- School & district level results: ELA
 - Amber: 54%
 - City: 56%
 - State: 53%
- Reviewed math and ELA scores by school and grade level.
- Science
 - 26% proficiency- 1% increased from last year.
 - We are making shifts at the schools to increase our scores for this year.
- The academic committee shared some factors that they thought contributed to last year's test results.
 - Four of our 3rd-8th-grade teachers in the network were new to Amber.
 - IW long-term substitute in 3rd grade.
 - KBMS long-term substitutes (6th grade ELA, Math Interventionist).
 - First time computer-based testing in grades 3rd and 4th at all campuses.
 - The board secretary asked how many students are new to Amber?
 - KBMS principal answered that all schools have an influx of new students.
 - The vice chair is asking us to add these new students coming into Amber being a factor as well.
 - Reviewed the ELL proficiency numbers.
 - Reviewed the Increasing Proficiency goals for the 2025-2026.
 - Strategies to reach these goals
 - Shared strategies all schools will use in: Math, Science, ELA, Professional Development, and computer-based testing skills.
 - The board Secretary asked which strategies you are excited about?
 - Co-CEO responded that she looks forward to small group work, Phonemic awareness to 3rd and 4th grade, and working with consultants.
 - The board chair asked does the proficiency include the students who are already proficient?
 - Robinhood
 - The tutoring grant is until next year.
 - \$600,000 for the year.
 - Additional strategies

- Shared professional development & computer-based testing skills.
- The board member asked if we should take laptops away due to the new regulation of tech in school? Co-CEO responded, No, we don't take laptops away since students use school-provided laptops.
- Instructional priority
 - The strategy we will use to improve instruction is teacher coaching (frequent observation/feedback).
- i-Ready
 - Network i-Ready results- Reading K-8
 - ELA
 - 25% of our students, as a Network, are 3 or more grade levels behind their peers.
 - 49 % are one grade level below.
 - 26% are at or above grade level.
 - Math
 - 27% are three or more grade levels below.
 - 59% are one grade level below.
 - 14% are at or above grade level.
 - The vice chair asked if we are looking deeply into our data regarding the new kids coming into our schools.
 - This includes differentiation instruction for our students with IEPS in the red zone.
 - School level: We use data to group our students into interventions
 - Phonics in the upper grades are getting work in phonics.
 - The board of trustees questioned whether or not the returning KBMS summer slide is a factor or not to the fall scores.
 - Board member requesting information about our summer program. He asked if there was a way we could see a student who stayed with us that didn't fall back we can learn from that? Board member requesting information about our summer program.
 - Co-CEO answered that we have data from students who attended summer school, and we have standards for excellence.
 - KBMS principal shared about the importance of relationship building between teachers and students. There is no time to do that at the beginning of the year, no exposure to the curriculum.
 - Next year, the board of trustees recommended that the schools let families know now that there is a certain number of spots available for

summer school, and we are not able to provide more spots due to funding.

IV. Development Committee

A. Update

- We raised a total of \$319,000 at the Amber 25th Anniversary Celebration, including the paddle raise.

V. ACS Principals

A. Updates

- IW
 - Ms. Francina served as the Marshal and represented our network at the African Day parade.
 - The Chief Communications Officer and the team collaborated with families at the event.
 - Discussed whether she should attend annually and if it would help increase enrollment for EH.
 - Piloted drama club; went well with families. Hosted 3rd & 4th auditions. Students gave up their lunch to audition.
- EH Updates
 - There are beautiful and welcoming decals on doors and stairs, receiving positive feedback from the families about the upgrade.
 - The Student Council elections started.
 - Hosted the first coffee with the principal. 26 families attended. The Principal gathered new insight and recorded feedback.
 - The families were focused on what enrichment we provide to the students and what clubs we offer.
- KBMS Updates
 - We attended the rally on the Brooklyn Bridge, and our students attended during school hours by choice.
 - Started the 8th-grade student council.
 - Discussed the TAX tutoring program. It is a specialized exam, and teachers are giving up their free time to help support our students.
 - Announced the launch of our Girls Volleyball team.
- KBES Updates
 - The school celebrated Unity Day, and everyone wore orange at the parade.
 - The principal shared pictures of students on field trips.
 - This Friday, the school will be hosting a special education fair where they will educate families on the process and have a chance to meet our service provider.

VI. Co-CEO Report

A. Monthly Update

- Finance
 - The refinancing of the FIF & LISC loan will not be completed in time, and we will not be able to close by January 4th.
 - EFF informed us that the credit committee approval for them has been pushed to October 30th.
 - Our placement agent is the bank with which the loan is associated, so they're already in discussions. If there will be a cost, which will likely be legal fees due to the need to amend the loan documents, it will not be possible to close by January 4th. There is no current closing date set. It could take up to 6 months.

VII. Board Chair Report

A. Monthly Report

- Amador Centeno joined the Amber Education Fund.

VIII. Closing Items

A. Approve September Board Minutes

John Gutierrez made a motion to approve the minutes from September Board Meeting on 09-17-25.

Luina Munoz-BlueSpruce seconded the motion.

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

B. Adjourn Meeting

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 7:48 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
John Gutierrez