



Advanced Math & Science Academy Charter School

Minutes

Board of Trustees Meeting

Date and Time

Thursday October 16, 2025 at 6:00 PM

Location

This meeting was held in the Upper School Cafeteria, at AMSA, 199 Forest Street, Marlborough, MA 01752.

Trustees Present

Darren Rose, Dwayne Stanley, Evan Przyborowski, James Carter, Jessica Bowen, Mary Swartz, Maura Webster, Stephan Richter

Trustees Absent

Andrea Grych, Bela Gorman

Guests Present

Liana McLaren, Lisa Mobley, Marcy Eckel, Moses Ajou, Sara Snow

I. Opening Items

A. 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 Thursday Oct 16, 2025 at 6:04 PM.

B. Record Attendance

II. Public Comment

A. Public Comment

There were no requests for public comment.

III. Consent Agenda

A. Financial Statements

No further discussion necessary.

IV. Votes

A. Approve BOT Meeting Minutes from September 23, 2025

Darren Rose made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees Meeting on 09-23-25.

Stephan Richter seconded the motion.

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

B. Approve CD Policy

When Massachusetts voted to eliminate MCAS as the statewide competency determination, DESE initially stated that districts could establish their own local requirements. In response, the AMSA Board of Trustees approved AMSA's local graduation requirements, which include core expectations such as four years of math. We chose to keep MCAS performance within our local graduation requirements because we believed that removing it would signal to students that MCAS was no longer important—even though the state will still continue to publicly measure schools based on MCAS results.

It is important to distinguish between the state's new competency determination and local graduation requirements. DESE now requires all schools to implement a general mechanism to measure competency. The state's bar is very low: students must pass Algebra I and Geometry (typically taken in 8th or 9th grade for AMSA students), complete two years of English, one year of Science, and one year of History. Each school must define what "passing" means and describe how mastery will be assessed. Many districts will simply use final exams for this purpose.

AMSA intentionally chose a different approach. We identified specific courses—Algebra I, Geometry, Biology, English 9, English 10, and U.S. History I—as our competency determination courses, with a passing score defined as 60% or higher. Rather than diluting the rigor of our final exams, our English, Math, Science, and History Chairs collaboratively designed alternate demonstrations of mastery using work students already complete as part of our curriculum. The passing score for these mastery demonstrations is set at 50%, aligning with the threshold equivalent to "Partially Meeting Expectations" on

MCAS. This ensures that every student has a meaningful yet attainable pathway to meet competency requirements without reducing the academic expectations of our courses or assessments.

If students do not meet the CD requirement, they also will not meet AMSA's local graduation requirements. The structure below outlines the CD pathways established for each subject area:

For English, students meet the competency determination through their work in English 9 and English 10. They must earn at least a 60 percent in each course. To demonstrate mastery, Grade 9 students complete a four-page literary research essay, and Grade 10 students complete a five-page literary research essay. For both essays, a score of 50 percent or higher meets the mastery threshold.

In mathematics, Algebra I and Geometry serve as the competency determination courses. Students typically take these in Grade 8 or 9 for Algebra I and Grade 9 for Geometry. To meet the course requirement, students must earn a minimum grade of 60 percent. Their demonstration of mastery is an AMSA-developed comprehensive assessment that covers both Algebra I and Geometry and is taken in Grade 10. A score of 50 percent or higher on this assessment satisfies the CD mastery requirement.

In science, Biology is the identified CD course. Students must earn a 60 percent or higher in the course. Mastery is demonstrated through consistent performance on laboratory work: students must earn at least a 60 percent on three-quarters of their labs throughout the year.

For history, the CD course is U.S. History I, which students take in Grade 10. Students must earn at least a 60 percent in the course. To demonstrate mastery, they complete a timed Document-Based Question (DBQ) at the mid-year point focused on the U.S. Constitution. A score of 50 percent or higher on this DBQ fulfills the mastery requirement.

Together, these pathways provide students with multiple, meaningful opportunities to show competency through work they already complete as part of AMSA's rigorous academic program.

The Board already voted on AMSA's local graduation requirements.

Stephan Richter made a motion to approve the CD Policy.

Dwayne Stanley seconded the motion.

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

C. 2026-2027 School Calendar

Concern that this year started early and rushed. The opening for teachers is an extra set up day. Professional development is going to be a deep dive into our own curriculum so we don't need a full day training next year. We will go back to half days for professional development.

Jess asked how the PD day dates are determined. Lisa said the Admin Team tries to use the day rotation but realized that this was not always helpful. Some teachers have approached Mike preferring a consistent day of the week to help with scheduling. Jess suggested that they consider alternating odd and even days to avoid impacting the every other day classes so hard. Lisa suggested that Jess she conduct a poll for her next teacher report.

Dwayne Stanley made a motion to approve the 2026-2027 School Calendar.

Evan Przyborowski seconded the motion.

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

V. Updates

A. Fundraising Update

Marcy reported they had a terrific meeting with Business Partner ASI to discuss internships and mentoring. Reflecting on the meeting, it made sense to target small-to-midsize firms for business opportunities as they are easier to navigate from the start.

There are two new development committee members, Andrew Wienen and Jamie Conaghan.

They have a Business Partners promotion going out through the Marlborough Chamber for STEM Week on October 20. There is a STEM Board meeting in November and they will be looking for ways for the Development Committee to work with this leadership group.

They submitted the LOI to Cummings last month as well as one to BJs. Next up will be Moderna, AAUW and Rockland Trust. Next month they will publicize giving opportunities through Giving Tuesday and another potluck.

They are pushing brick sales right now as the program ends 12/31/25.

The two golf events are booked with Cyprian Keyes for May 20 and August 11 (8th annual).

She is excited about the Women only 9 hole par 3 on May 20.

8th annual gold August 11..

B. Parent Representative Update

Dwayne is serving as the parent liaison until the PTO nominates a new Parent Rep. Unfortunately, there was no news regarding a new Parent Rep candidate. Maura may reach out to parents.

C. Faculty Representative Update

Jess did not hear much from her colleagues. However, she heard from two officially, which is a good sign. It was mostly a positive smooth start of school. The middle school students, especially in grades 6,7,8 there was a noticeable improvement in the hallway behavior. Students assuming leadership roles was a common thread, and behavior with each other in the classroom and out. There was more engaging in class.

Lisa gave a shout out to teachers. Teachers are implementing fantastic behavior routines. Lino wrote a super custom program to produce agendas for 6th graders. The teachers made them and bound them. Strategies like limiting bathroom visit as an escape from class have been effective. Students are not wasting class time. This is working! Students can use the bathroom three times a day. Students with plans are exceptions.

There are concerns about the gaps in reading fluency and less stamina for reading. Students are used to short TikTok bytes. As a school, what are we going to do to address these gaps? Some of our curricula is not using the most up to date curriculum.

October gets busy...testing PSAT field trips, teachers are feeling overwhelmed. However, we are also focusing on the great things that have happened. The Massachusetts Association of Science Teachers (MAST) selected Alex Cattani as a 2025 recipient of the ***Dawn Sather Outstanding New Teacher Award***. This annual award, first given in 2004, recognizes an individual who has gone above and beyond what is expected of a new science teacher! The Mass Academy recognized three of our teachers, Anna Makovoz, Paige Perkoskie, and Zak Schlichtmann. AMSA is very proud of our own Darcy Cloutman who has her own art exhibit at the Hanover. This is lovely news.

Stephan would like to invite teachers and Mike Nawrocki , Amanda Cence, and Martha Richardson to present to the Education Committee. Jess said that the teachers are trying to solve the problem of differentiation, especially in sixth grade English. There is a lot to do to correct the reading deficiencies. They will include Catilsa Indresano for language gaps.

For the Reading Writing Workshop, IXL is used to assess and deliver curriculum and reassess. There is a huge disparity between reading levels. The reading teacher is using OG. He is servicing the same number of students as the last two years, but it is not enough. Too many students are coming to AMSA who are struggling. Lisa feels it is an excellent technique as she witnessed three kids jumping up to read. A consultant will be coming in to work with the reading teacher on his technique. Stephan wants to hear

more about the IXL gaps. Not to get into operations, but just so he understands. Maura added that committees are tracking issues but they are to stay in their lane.

There have been concerns from teachers about the Health and Wellness curriculum. Lisa said that most of our curriculum is teacher curated but we need to give the PE/Health Department time to take a deep dive into reviewing their curriculum.

D. Executive Director Report

Lisa provided her monthly report. (See attached report)

Comparison of AMSA to Other Top Schools: Lisa presented charts that demonstrated the overall SGP of Boston Latin, Pioneer Valley, Lexington, and Sturgis.

AMSA's budget is significantly lower compared to schools like Lexington, which has a much higher student budget.

Boston Latin has an average of \$20K was spent per pupil, highlighting the financial gap. Attrition was notably high this year, which impacted scheduling, particularly for mid-level math sections where there weren't enough students.

A total of 25 students left, most transitioning to public schools.

Exit interviews indicated a lack of data to understand why students are leaving, but it was noted that 10 students were retained while 8 left, and 2 stayed.

Retention strategy: The decision to hold students back was seen as a necessary step. Jess feels that this strengthens the institution, despite it being a gamble. Many students were not academically ready and simply passing them along wasn't effective. The focus should be on academic rigor moving forward.

Student Retention and Funding Questions:

Lisa presented charts that explained AMSA attrition and enrollment data.

A question arose about whether the school is compensated for students held back. The 10 retained students were given intensive support through team interventions, though the results were mixed. Moving forward, more referrals for additional support will be considered.

The retention decision was made with the understanding that those spots are always filled, and there were a lot of last-minute moves. The school was at 965 students as of October 1st, below the target of 966.

Schools like Parker (which operates a return-to-district model) have specialized programs, such as self-contained programs and social-emotional learning programs. These provide an alternative to AMSA's current approach.

The board discussed the need to address why top-performing students are leaving AMSA and how to retain them.

Lisa presented proficiency comparisons between MCAS performance in 2024 and 2025, in ELA, Math, and Science in grades 6, 7, 8, and 10. (See attached ED Report for charts)

There were significant gains in ELA in grades 6 and 7, but there were significant drops in ELA in grades 8 and 10.

There were significant gains in Math in grade 6, 7, and 10, but there was a significant decline in Math in grade 8. Item analysis for grade 8 math suggests a large increase in questions that scored a zero, which is a state level concern.

The good news...

AMSA's student attendance rate, chronic absenteeism and advanced coursework completion increased!

91% of grade 10 students scored meeting or exceeding expectations in Math.

95% attendance rate.

96.1% of students completed advanced coursework.

74% of grade 10 students scored meeting or exceeding expectation in ELA and Science.

Target Setting in Schools:

Jess questioned whether AMSA should set academic targets like traditional schools.

However, the general consensus is that target-setting may not be a healthy approach for AMSA. Instead, school-wide plans tend to set goals that might be considered lower than ideal.

There is a preference for standards-based progress over strictly numerical scores.

Focus Areas for Improvement:

Attendance Rates: Improved attendance and chronic absenteeism were seen as key indicators. The Bridge Program was eliminated, and attendance improved after restricting activities for students with chronic absenteeism. Physician letters were used to hold students accountable.

Advanced Coursework: There was a noticeable increase in advanced coursework participation, which is a positive outcome.

Growth Areas:

Grade 8 and MCAS: While data on grade 8 performance and MCAS scores is concerning, She asked: "At what point do we need to panic? What are the red flags we should look for?"

Leadership Development:

Lisa's goal is to develop a leadership team to discuss and address these issues systematically. Chairs should regularly review this data, discuss potential problems, and plan solutions collaboratively. The focus will be on a system-thinking approach to the challenges in subjects like CS, Science, and Reading. The goal is to boost fluency and academic performance across all subjects.

Next Steps:

Work on data-driven solutions through regular collaboration with subject chairs and PLCs (Professional Learning Communities).

Focus on improving reading fluency and academic performance across disciplines.

Action Items:

Lisa will follow up on 8th-grade concerns and possible adjustments.

Investigate the reading program data for the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 cohorts.

Jess emphasized maintaining excellence despite cohort challenges, focusing on ELA gains in grades 6 and 7.

E. Capital Plan Update

The condition and renovation of the lower school bathrooms was briefly mentioned as an ongoing concern for the Capital Plan. A rebate of \$140K has been secured for HVAC improvements.

Approval was granted for a \$20K threshold to replace the fire alarm system in building 199 and install air conditioning in the network rooms.

Emphasis was placed on being mindful of financial decisions and prioritizing spending.

While we have ambitious goals, it's crucial to be frugal and intentional with our resources. AMSA's Tuition remains static.

A potential revamp of the white building was discussed. However, it may not meet current classroom codes. It could, however, be converted into office space.

An estimated \$300K–\$500K is required for physical projects.

The electric bus grant was substantial, but the purchase of one bus cost around \$300K, which made taking advantage of the grant too expensive. One regular AMSA bus will be acquired this year, with another one in two years.

Lisa confirmed that everything has been organized and accounted for and projects are aligned with the overall plan.

Several smaller projects have been rolled into the larger building project. Details are available in the "Completed" column of the tracking sheet. No projects were removed; they have simply been consolidated.

Lisa said if at some point the third and fourth floor in the white building could be renovated, there may be potential for rental of one of the floors.

VI. Chair Business

A.

Board/Committee Meeting Dates for the 2025-2026 School Year

Maura noted that the scheduled BOT meeting date in November does not work. She would like the board to decide on another date in November.

All committees have now set meeting dates.

B. Charter Association Update - Legislation

Lisa went to the state house on behalf of charter schools.

Nov 12 is a follow-up to lobby for charter schools. She is hoping to inform families about how they can help writing to senators and representatives to advocate for charter schools.

There are 3 bills pending, if passed, could financially hurt all charter schools. Reach out if you want to get involved.

The Commissioner is visiting AMSA on Nov 7. The actual time has not been established. He will be at AMSA for a short visit, about an hour. It would be great to have board members present.

The awards ceremony to celebrate Alex Cattani will be held during the Massachusetts Association of Science Teachers (MAST) annual banquet on Tuesday, November 4th, 2025. It will be held at the Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel and Trade Center 181 Boston Post Rd W, Marlborough, MA 01752. The social hour reception begins at 5:30 pm, followed by a dinner and awards program at 6:30 pm.

ACTION: Email the board about important event dates.

Action: Add board members to Sunday newsletter.

Andrew Wienen and Jamie Conaghan are new Development Committee members
Maura approved these members.

VII. Committee Reports

A. Development

Evan will be having their official onboarding for their two new members at the next Development Committee meeting, Andrew Wienen and Jamie Conaghan.

The Development Committee will be meeting with the Alumni Association to discuss programs and potential alumni initiatives. They want to develop an alumni mentoring program for getting engaged with students and the school.

Evan said that being an alumni himself helps him to understand what the alumni might want. He understands that recent AMSA grads are very busy, making it difficult for them to schedule time for events and meetings.

B. Finance

See attached Finance Reports.

Liana presented the June 30, 2025, Annual Audited Financial Statements. They were presented to the Finance Committee on October 14th, 2025, and they voted to approve the report. Liana's summary was to inform the Board of Trustees.

Liana highlighted the following items:

- The report was clean and unmodified by the independent public accounting firm AAFCpa's.
- The balance sheet is solid with the ending cash balance of about \$10 Million and total assets totaling \$45 Million. Liabilities totaled \$26 Million leaving Net Position at \$17 Million.
- The finance committee inquired whether we could use the \$10 Million in Cash for Investments, but the answer is no because we need to comply with our loan covenants with First Citizens.
- We ended the year with a surplus of over \$1 Million but when you look at the percentage (5%) compared to the total Revenues it is relatively low when you compare it to the charter school average.
- When you look at the Statement of Cash Flows you will see a negative change in cash for the year. This is due to the completion of the new Main Building.
- There is a new accounting standard included in the footnotes of the financials which covers compensated absences. The auditors were pleased to know we had previously adopted this policy.
- Our US Treasury Bills are performing well. There is minimal uninsured cash as of 6.30.25. The uninsured amount represents a balance in Paypal due to timing.
- On average 83 cents of every dollar goes toward staff, which is 3 cents higher than the average charter schools that are audited by AAFCpa's.
- The benchmark report was compared to a stop light. AMSA is in good shape because everything is highlighted in Green. Nothing is yellow or red.
- The excess surplus report indicated that we are \$1.5 Million away from needing to return money to DESE. Due to our list of capital projects, we have a lot of room to go.
- Evan asked about the cybersecurity recommendation on the Board report. Erica, our IT director, is aware of the issues surrounding 2 factor authentication and passwords. She is rolling out processes to deal with this as new staff are onboarded and teachers swap out their laptops for new ones.

C. Governance

Darren reported that the Governance Committee continues to review the bylaws and Board policies. He plans to have a first look of revisions in January and include the full board in further discussions.

D. Education - Staff and Family Survey Results

Stephan reported that the Education Committee reviewed the CD Policy with a better understanding. They talked about developing a letter of support for our students to submit when they apply to colleges. This is a good start, but the question is how do we distribute this letter.

The larger conversation is about AI in education and what role should it play. The staff requested our AI tools to be turned on. He would like to collect feedback from the AMSA community and staff about AI and he would like to have the opportunity to enlighten people on AI's limitations and benefits.

Lisa said she would be happy to host this discussion at the Potluck dinner. Industries are adopting AI and it is coming!

Stephan will provide a High level summary on the staff and family survey results in November.

VIII. Review Action Items

A. Action Items from Previous Meetings

Ongoing...bylaw/policy review and staff and family survey results.

B. New Action Items

Maura reported that the ED Evaluation has been completed. The ED Contract Negotiation Task Force will meet next week. Maura, Darren, Bela, and Andrea.

She will send the ED Evaluation summary of results to all members. The survey was based on the last school year. She said if any members have comments they are to send them to her independently.

IX. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

Jessica Bowen made a motion to adjourn.

Mary Swartz seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** unanimously 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 9:15 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Sara Snow

Documents used during the meeting

- Financial Statements 7.1.25-9.30.25.xlsx
- Proposed CD Policy.pdf
- 2026-2027 AMSA School Calendar D-4 10-01-25.pdf
- October 16, 2025 (3).pdf
- AMSA Capital Plan - Capital Plan Buildings (1).pdf
- Legislation Update.pdf
- AMSA Board Report DRAFT.pdf
- AMSA Key Financial Ratios Draft.pdf
- AMSA Financial Statements Draft.pdf
- October 16, 2025 (1).pdf