Northern Lights ABC Advisory Board

MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, 3/17/2026
3:00 pm
NLABC School

PRESENT: Dorissa Martin, Jenny Cabasag, Kelly DeRouin, Terre Kimble, Cheryl Holden, Michael Wuerth, Tyler Kobelnyk, Robert Voelker, Debbie Maestas, Rosa Hohnstein, Tiffany Voelker, Jackie Morris, Andie Kelly, Greta Gionet, Elizabeth Congdon-McGee, Zoya Stephens, Brittany Gallagher

1. Call to Order: 3:03PM - Jenny called to order, Mike seconded. Motion passed.

2. Approve agenda: Jenny moved to approve agenda. Terre seconded. Motion passed.

3. Meeting Minutes from 02/10/2026: Jenny asks for a motion to approve minutes. Mike makes a motion. Tyler seconded. Motion passed.

4. Pilot Program – Open Discussion
   Jenny asked whether Mrs. Matthew would continue the Mos Dos Pilot Program. Mrs. Martin shared that Clare reached out on 2/13/26, but Mrs. Matthew declined to continue, stating she is not interested in the pilot if there is no plan to adopt the program. As a result, 5th grade has returned to using H&M for reading. Mrs. Martin also confirmed that Mrs. Matthew provided an updated standards alignment list based on Mos Dos findings. While Jenny requested access to that list, Mrs. Martin reiterated Mrs. Matthew's position: with recent Spalding training now in place as NLABC's core language arts curriculum, Mos Dos would serve well as a supplemental literature component. However, she does not feel it is a productive use of her time to continue piloting the program if she is the only teacher involved.

   ACTION ITEM: Mike requests to get a copy of the email from Mrs. Matthew, and Mrs. Martin asks that we (PAC) contact Mrs. Matthew directly as she does not feel comfortable sharing this document without her approval. Jenny will email Mrs. Matthew to follow up.

Kelly asks what happens to the Mos Dos materials since we are no longer continuing the pilot program. Other members agreed that it's a huge waste of money and resources since the program was not used for even a whole school year, but no plan was identified.

Jenny confirmed that while Spalding materials are already in place for 5th grade, an additional resource such as H&M or Mos Dos is still needed to support literature instruction. Mrs. Martin clarified that Spalding does not include embedded literature components, but rather provides suggested texts. After attending the training, she noted that while Spalding strongly supports literature and targets specific standards, it does not include built-in supplemental comprehension materials.

Mrs. Martin shared that, based on her 12 years of intensive curriculum training, effectively teaching reading and writing standards requires more than 20–30 minutes. She outlined a typical Language Arts block within a 90-minute period including approximately 45 minutes for spelling, 30 minutes for writing, and 45 minutes for reading (more than 90 minutes). Given this, she noted that 20–30 minutes is often not sufficient time for students to read, review, and engage in meaningful discussion highlighting that the current time expectations do not fully align with instructional needs.

She explained that Mos Dos has been positioned as a 20–30 minute supplement, but in her view, a more comprehensive approach would require additional time. Both she and Mr. Redhead have expressed concerns that Mos Dos may not be rigorous enough to fully address the standards, which has been a key concern since the pilot was first discussed.

Mrs. Martin also reflected that the intent of the pilot was to evaluate what the program offered, and suggested that a single unit similar to a CKLA unit may have been more appropriate than attempting to pilot the program more broadly. Jenny clarified that materials were provided in April of the previous school year, including a teacher manual and a student book, to begin preparing for the pilot. Mrs. Martin noted that having only one student copy and a teacher manual was not sufficient to fully implement the program. Jenny shared that copies could have been made for initial lessons, though Mrs. Martin indicated that implementing at that time would have been challenging given how late it was in the school year. Jenny acknowledged the timing, while noting that materials were available.

Mike stated he feels the program was "sabotaged from the beginning" and that Mrs. Martin "was not on board with the pilot program from the start." He emphasized that the original discussion was to pilot Mos Dos as a supplemental program, not to replace a 90-minute block, and expressed disappointment that "thousands of dollars were wasted," citing lack of alignment among teachers, lack of administrative oversight, and missed opportunities for collaboration. He noted that in January the plan was to continue the pilot, but it was "suddenly canceled," calling the process "managed so poorly."

Jenny agreed the situation was “very unfortunate,” noting it created division among parents and staff. Mrs. Martin responded that teacher support was limited from the beginning. Mike pushed back, stating multiple surveys were conducted “until she got the desired vote.” Mrs. Martin maintained she remained neutral, citing concerns that Mos Dos is “over 20 years old,” could “phase out,” and lacks rigor and comprehensive alignment from early grades.

Jenny asked directly: *“It feels like the administration agreed to the pilot to shut the parents up… was it to make (parents) shut up?”* Mrs. Martin replied, *“That’s never been a discussion.”* When pressed again, she stated, *“Do I think so? Absolutely I think so,”* explaining the pilot was allowed to move forward despite her concerns in order to evaluate it in practice.

Parents expressed concern about student impact. One parent described her child’s experience as being used as a “guinea pig” and noted a significant difference in 5th grade instruction compared to prior years. Concerns were also raised about lack of oversight, communication gaps, and inconsistency in curriculum delivery.

The discussion also expanded to 4th grade concerns. Parents shared that while substitute teachers during Mr. Popek’s medical leave were “phenomenal,” there was a significant lack of communication, inconsistency in schedules, and limitations with substitutes not being able to enter grades or fully manage the classroom. Some families considered pulling their students due to uncertainty. Additional concerns were raised that gaps in foundational skills—such as cursive writing and multiplication became evident, with substitutes having to address missed instruction rather than continue forward progress. Parents emphasized that the issue was not the substitutes themselves, but the lack of curriculum continuity and oversight both before and during the absence.

Mrs. Martin acknowledged the challenges with staffing and stated that efforts were made to support the classroom with retired teachers and shared lesson plans. However, parents reiterated that the core concern remains the lack of consistent oversight, communication, and alignment to ensure students are meeting standards.

Mrs. Martin also reiterated concerns about Mos Dos rigor and stated she did not have access to a teacher manual, limiting her ability to support implementation. PAC members challenged this, emphasizing that materials were provided and that accountability ultimately falls on administration. Robby stated that while it’s acceptable the program didn’t succeed, “someone has to take responsibility,” especially given the impact on students.

Overall, the discussion highlighted broader concerns around curriculum consistency, teacher accountability, administrative oversight, and communication particularly in 4th and 5th grades and the need to reestablish clear expectations and alignment to support student success.

Computer Usage – Open Discussion

Jenny raised concerns that plagiarism is becoming a growing issue. While it's important for students to learn how to use computers and tools like Google, there is a clear gap in understanding the difference between research and plagiarism.

Cheryl shared that her 5th grader is experiencing far fewer pencil-to-paper assignments this year, with more reliance on slide decks, Google, and typing—even during rough drafts. She noted that a student received a zero for plagiarism after copying and pasting an assignment, highlighting a lack of understanding and consistency. Cheryl stated that in 4th–5th grade, there should be continuity with pencil-to-paper work and added, "Since we're not teaching how to research on a computer, plagiarism is becoming a real issue." She also advocated for book reports to return to a handwritten format due to the noticeable decline in writing practice.

Mrs. Voelker confirmed that in 6th grade, book reports are completed pencil-to-paper until the final draft, and computer use requires permission even for iReady. She agreed that "free choice computer time needs to stop."

Mrs. Morris shared that her 3rd grade class only uses computers for testing and iReady.

Mrs. Hohnstein noted that while some middle school work was done online last quarter, she "will never do it again." She explained that students became "quick & sneaky," with over 20 students navigating away from testing screens for 10–15 seconds enough time to Google answers resulting in a noticeable shift in grades. She emphasized that there "shouldn't be a shift," and since Spalding is the school's foundation through 6th grade, computers should remain a limited tool.

Terre shared that her child reported being allowed to "play on computers" after finishing work and expressed concern over book reports that contained minimal writing, with more focus on slide transitions and images than grammar or punctuation. She stated that Google should not be available for browsing at school. Terre also shared that she emailed Mrs. Martin about a classroom incident and did not receive a response, and felt the teacher's response was insufficient. Mrs. Martin clarified the incident occurred during lunchtime when the teacher was on break. Jenny noted that, based on noon-duty expectations, if a teacher is present in a classroom, they are typically considered responsible.

Mrs. Maestas agreed that computers should be used strictly for educational purposes and emphasized that NLABC should remain distinct from other schools, including having more limited technology use.

Kelly asked whether teachers could be required to sign a "Philosophical Agreement" similar to students. Mrs. Martin responded that due to union constraints, teachers cannot be required to sign such agreements, and future limitations may also impact tools like a Teacher Manual.

Mrs. Martin stated that grades 3 and above use computers for testing and iReady, with expectations for active monitoring. She noted that for three consecutive weeks, she has communicated in the NL News the need to limit non-instructional use (e.g., “Fun Friday”), restrict access to approved platforms like Clever, and ensure screens are visible and monitored. However, she also stated that teacher contracts prevent her from requiring lesson plans, despite parent preference for more pencil-to-paper instruction.

ACTION PLAN: Utilize teacher leadership to reinforce school philosophy and ensure consistent expectations around appropriate computer use.

5. Spalding Update – How is it going?
   All K–3 teachers (with one exception) have participated in Spalding training.

   Mrs. Voelker shared that she “feels like a pro in Spalding” and is learning a great deal. She highlighted the value of repetition, handwriting, and phonograms starting in kindergarten and continuing through the grades, noting these elements support students “phenomenally.” She also expressed appreciation that ELL teachers are participating in the training.

   Mrs. Kelly thanked Mrs. Martin for taking the training as an administrator so she fully understands the content being delivered. She noted that while Spalding introduces cursive in 2nd grade, NLABC has traditionally waited until 3rd grade. Mrs. Voelker added that 4th and 5th graders need continued cursive practice, as 6th grade teachers are seeing a decline in that skillset. Both Kelly and Cheryl confirmed that Mrs. Kaas consistently uses cursive in her 4th grade classroom.

   Mrs. Martin shared that the Spalding training “is going amazing” and that she appreciates access to resources she was previously unaware of. She emphasized the importance of using Spalding as a consistent foundation across grades and expressed interest in investing in additional literature resources and training for Tier 2 support. She also noted efforts to secure online or reduced-rate opportunities for continued teacher access.

   Mrs. Hohnstein shared that she “really enjoyed” learning the rule systems and implementation and now feels she has a clear understanding of the Spalding foundation.

   Mrs. Martin confirmed there will be no staff meeting on Monday, 3/23, as nine staff members will be attending Spalding training. A leadership meeting will take place after school that day, with follow-up planned for the next PAC meeting.

6. Follow-up Items – Mike Wuerth
   a. Middle School Electives – Shared via Google Docs

   Jenny inquires if Mrs. Martin has reviewed the Middle School GPA proposal sent via email. Mrs. Martin confirms that Mrs. Freeman is pulling scores (*a lot of additional work, thank you Mrs. Freeman!*) which will be used to calculate GPA. Jenny asks for confirmation if we can use the "N," "S," or "N" versus the letter grade in Art, Health, and PE? If the student receives an "N" in either of those subjects they are still ineligible for deportment.

   ACTION ITEM: Mrs. Martin to check with Mrs. Freeman to see if this is an option.

   b. What's too sick for school?

   Mrs. Martin has not sent out any correspondence for this item as she has been working with the new temporary Nurse, as Nurse Natasha is officially on maternity leave.

   ACTION ITEM: Mrs. Martin will generate an email to send to staff and families.

   c. Mr. Rushiti contact information
   Jenny received contact information for Mr. Rushiti to formally thank him for the snow removal in the parking lot & has passed a "thank you card" around the meeting for teachers, staff, and PAC members to sign.

   ACTION ITEM: Jenny will ensure that Mr. Rushiti receives the Thank You Card.

   d. Parking Brochure

   Jenny suggests that Tyler still create the parking brochure, but that it is shared with families at the beginning of next school year (2026-2027 start) as we've entered the 4th quarter.

   ACTION ITEM: Tyler & Jenny will work on the brochure to share with families in the fall.

   Jenny reminds every one of the Red, White, Blue Assembly this Friday 3/20 & Thurs 3/26. Traffic is historically WAY worse during assemblies; asks if we can have indoor lineup during assemblies so we can open the playground for additional parking.

   ACTION ITEM: Mrs. Martin approves indoor lineup during assemblies so we can open the playground for additional parking.

7. PTA Comments

   Jenny asked whether Math & Science Night would still take place. Mrs. Martin shared that due to the demands of the Winter Carnival, ongoing assessments, limited PTA volunteers, and teachers feeling "stretched thin" and like "workhorses," the event is currently at risk. Jenny suggested bringing in outside support such as robotics teams or other community science partners to help run stations. Mrs. Martin clarified that Math & Science Night is "not a teacher thing" and is not required.

   Mrs. Kelly asked why events like Math & Science Night couldn't be incorporated into the school day, similar to the Thanksgiving Feast, noting there may be more teacher buy-in if held during school hours "not often enough to disrupt instruction, but enough to have fun." Mrs. Hohnstein suggested using the additional school day(s) that were added.

   Cheryl asked if the event could still happen if the PAC secured volunteers. Mrs. Martin said yes and stated she would email Mrs. Wright during the meeting.

   Cheryl also asked whether the Science Fair would be canceled, especially since 5th grade projects are now required. Mrs. Martin clarified that the two are separate: Math & Science Night consists of activity-based stations, while the Science Fair is an academic component. She noted that Mr. Pierce is working with her to determine how to showcase student projects in the MPR.

8. Philosophical Corner
   ACTION ITEM: Jenny will create a blurb about plagiarism while defining academic integrity.

9. Committees
   a. Nomination Committee: Cheryl hasn't heard any response back for parents who are interested in applying for the PTA or PAC.

   ACTION ITEM: Teachers ask about any interest in their newsletters and to email PTA (nlabcpta@gmail.com) or PAC (nlabcboard@gmail.com)

   ACTION ITEM: Cheryl & Mrs. Martin mention open seats for PTA & PAC at upcoming assemblies to spread the word to parents.

10. Parent Comments – Open Forum
    a. Talent Show: Kelly shared her disappointment that multiple emails were sent to Mrs. Martin asking whether the Talent Show would take place, but instead of receiving a response, the cancellation was announced in Tiger Tracks. Mrs. Martin apologized for the lack of direct communication and explained the decision was based on several factors, including it being "too

much of a task" for the PTA president at this time, challenges with securing enough "valid participants," and having to turn away students whose acts "might not hold the attention of the crowd."

Parents expressed frustration that another school event was canceled "behind closed doors" without first communicating a need for volunteers or seeking PAC support. One parent shared that her 1st grade daughter performed last year and, despite concerns her act wouldn't be captivating, "the entire crowd was enthusiastic," which greatly boosted her confidence. Other parents noted their children had been preparing all year for auditions and were disappointed by the sudden cancellation.

11. Primary Teacher Rep Comments

Mrs. Gionet acknowledges how hard the students are working, and how they look forward to the "fun events" like carnival, movie night, and community events, and while the teachers want to keep the routine, it's fun to see staff & students get up to dance/sing/tell jokes; we need more cool stuff to be reinstated. She also goes on to say how we should bring back "all day read-ins".

Ms. Kelly suggests incorporating more spirit days; but states that the behavior, especially the past two years, is disruptive and the kids only want to play and be silly.

Mrs. Gionet admits that she doesn't know the solution, but that (NLABC) shouldn't only be remembered for the rigorous program.

12. Secondary Teacher Rep comments

Mrs. Voelker reiterates that she will continue to help influence other teachers in a positive way that encourages our school's philosophy.

13. Middle School Teacher Rep comments

Mrs. Hohnstein shares how the student advisory representing NLABC at "spirit of tomorrow".

They are currently working with the PTA for the MS spring dance; she has 15 students who are interested in putting it together. Hoping to meet with Zoya this week or next. Jenny offers to share her cousin's contact information as she can teach 3 basic line dances on Fridays.

Recognition has moved to West High School for the 8th Grade Graduation. Currently looking for student montages (growing up pics, baby-8th grade) for a background slideshow. Also looking for leis or sashes for students (Zoya has more information).

One of the MS students uncle who's volunteered to provide his photobooth and archway he's providing for the graduation.

ACTION ITEM: Since the yearbook elective doesn't have a lot going on, those students can assist Mrs. Hohnstein with the 8th grade slide deck. Mrs. Hohnstein will coordinate with Mr. Pierce.

14. Principal comments:
    Mrs. Martin confirmed that 4th quarter PLC meetings will be "ladder meetings" focused on the transition from 3rd → 4th → 5th → 6th grade to ensure consistency and clarity.

    She also shared that there will be no Health class next year due to the absence of a Health teacher in the budget. When asked about foreign language offerings, Mrs. Martin confirmed there are no plans at this time, noting her primary concern is staffing and structure—specifically how to manage three 4th grade classes merging into two 5th grade classes, placement of PTR students, and avoiding teacher loss. Regarding combination classes, she stated she is considering a 2nd/3rd and 4th/5th split, but shared that philosophically she "doesn't believe in combination classes," feels they are "a punishment," and prefers not to combine younger grades, though she acknowledged content (outside of math) is easier to manage at the upper elementary level.

    Lottery applications currently total 224, with approximately 50% coming from homeschool and private school families, as well as applicants from closing schools such as STEM and Lake Otis Elementary. Mrs. Martin expects to receive allocation details from ASD soon.

    A total of 126 students are participating in ELL ACCESS testing; 16 students exited last year, with another 16 projected to exit this year.

    For NAEP testing (grades 4, 8, and 10), students are randomly assigned either math or reading, with exams proctored externally. Mrs. Martin shared that the proctor reported NLABC's 8th graders were attentive, hardworking, and "put forth amazing, engaged effort."

    It's teacher evaluation season; there are currently 17 teachers tenured due for their observations.

    Finally, Mrs. Martin noted that during the next leadership meeting, the team plans to develop a behavior matrix. However, scheduling challenges have made it difficult to meet consistently on Mondays, and they are prioritizing meeting together to align on action steps.

15. Celebrating Successes & Positive Wins:

    It's teacher evaluation season; there are currently 17 teachers that are celebrating their 10 year anniversary!

The winter carnival was a huge success! Students from Service High School helped, and all of our students had a lot of fun.

The Annual Alternative School Fair went well. Shoutout to Jenny, Mrs. Gionet, Cheryl, and the Wuerths for setting up. Several applications came through after the fair.

16. Adjournment: Jenny motioned to adjourn at 5:42pm; Kelly seconded. Motion passed.