



Advanced Math & Science Academy Charter School

Minutes

Board of Trustees Meeting

Date and Time

Thursday March 26, 2026 at 6:00 PM

Location

This meeting held via remote participation.

Trustees Present

Andrea Grych (remote), Bela Gorman (remote), Darren Rose (remote), Dwayne Stanley (remote), Evan Przyborowski (remote), James Carter (remote), Jessica Bowen (remote), Maura Webster (remote), Stephan Richter (remote)

Trustees Absent

Mary Swartz

Ex Officio Members Present

Lisa Mobley (remote), Sara Snow (remote)

Non Voting Members Present

Lisa Mobley (remote), Sara Snow (remote)

Guests Present

Marcy Eckel (remote), Mike Nawrocki (remote), Xin Sun (remote), Iuba Shmidt (remote), Martha Richardson (remote)

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 Mar 26, 2026 at 6:01 PM.

B. Record Attendance

II. Public Comment

A. Public Comment

There were no requests for public comment.

III. Consent Agenda

A. Committee/Rep Report Summaries

The board discussed using the consent agenda to group routine, non-controversial items like meeting minutes and administrative approvals, into a single vote to save time.

Informational reports wouldn't require a vote, while items like minutes still do but can be bundled. Board members are expected to review materials in advance, and any item can be removed from the consent agenda for discussion if needed.

IV. Votes

A. Approve BOT Meeting Minutes from February 26, 2026

Darren Rose made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees Meeting on 02-26-26.

Dwayne Stanley seconded the motion.

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

Roll Call

James Carter	Aye
Jessica Bowen	Aye
Maura Webster	Aye
Darren Rose	Aye
Dwayne Stanley	Aye
Bela Gorman	Aye
Mary Swartz	Absent
Andrea Grych	Aye
Stephan Richter	Aye
Evan Przyborowski	Aye

V. Updates

A.

Fundraising Update

Marcy Eckel shared updates beyond her written report, highlighting new opportunities and outreach efforts. Students and faculty received free tickets to *The Outsiders* at the Boston Opera House, with transportation covered, and additional donated tickets to a local hockey game for faculty. These opportunities are part of growing partnerships, including a new relationship with the Rodman Foundation.

She also provides an update on the upcoming women's tournament on May 20, noting multiple sponsors secured, ongoing outreach for additional support, and strong participation momentum with a target of about 40 players.

Finally, she mentioned increased engagement with the charter school association and legislative outreach, including attending a recent policy meeting and participating in an upcoming legislative breakfast with local officials, especially tied to anticipated state funding decisions.

B. Faculty Representative Update

The faculty representative reports an unusually high level of feedback this month and summarizes key themes. On the positive side, middle school students, especially 8th graders, are showing stronger engagement, academics, and behavior. The main concerns focus on professional development, particularly the "continuous improvement" initiative. Teachers feel it has become more about learning a process than actually solving real classroom problems, and that it takes significant time away from essential tasks. This frustration is heightened by comparisons to past, more teacher-driven PD.

There was initial concern about requiring written reports in advance, but the representative now sees it as an improvement since it increases transparency and faculty engagement, suggesting a review of the process in six months.

Concerns were also raised about changes in the athletic department, including coaching decisions, communication issues, and their impact on staff morale and retention. The perception of these changes has negatively affected some faculty. Additional frustrations include unclear processes around monitoring struggling students and added teacher workload, as well as difficulties with fundraising due to the lack of digital payment options, something teachers would like the school to address.

Bela said that this discussion centers on challenges and possible solutions around implementing digital payments for school clubs and activities but this issue is more operational than a board or finance committee responsibility, especially given the finance team is currently overwhelmed with critical tasks like payroll and budgeting. While tools like Venmo and Square have been used in limited cases (e.g., by student groups), scaling them school-wide could create significant administrative work, such as tracking and distributing funds which might outweigh the benefits.

There's interest in researching how other schools handle similar challenges to identify best practices. The board acknowledges the concern and is open to exploring solutions when capacity allows.

Additional faculty concerns include doubts about the effectiveness and alignment of the lower school reading program, as well as issues around confidentiality in personnel discussions that have led to rumors and discomfort. The faculty representative emphasizes that these points reflect staff feedback, sometimes based on perception rather than full context and are shared to ensure awareness and allow for improvement, even when some issues fall outside the board's direct control.

Board members express support for having written reports in advance, noting it helps them better process feedback and follow up on key issues. Maura emphasizes the importance of handling sensitive topics, especially personnel matters, carefully and in line with school policies, which typically require those discussions to happen in executive session rather than public meetings. She suggests the board may need a clearer process for addressing such concerns while respecting confidentiality.

Teacher communication with families was brought up. Jess explained that teachers are not against communication, but some feel additional required emails about struggling students are redundant since grades are already available online and formal notices are sent. There's also frustration that broad requirements can add extra work for teachers who already communicate effectively, rather than addressing those who may not. Maura acknowledges this concern but notes, from a parent perspective, that consistent communication is essential, especially when grades are not always up to date, highlighting the need to find a balanced approach.

The discussion emphasizes that improving communication with families is a top priority, consistently identified in the annual parent survey. Leadership explains that recent efforts, like communication tracking tools, are meant to strengthen relationships between teachers, students, and families, not to add unnecessary workload. The goal is to ensure students are supported and families stay informed, especially in light of concerns like student attrition earlier in the year.

At the same time, there's acknowledgment that how these expectations have been communicated to staff may not have landed well, even if the intent was positive and community-focused.

Board members then step back to a broader concern: many of the issues raised are **operational**, not governance-level. There's some frustration about repeatedly hearing concerns without clear resolution or follow-up, since the board isn't directly responsible for day-to-day fixes. A suggestion is made to refine how information is brought to the board, perhaps focusing more on outcomes or unresolved issues rather than ongoing operational details.

The group agrees to think about better ways to balance staying informed with maintaining the board's role as a governance body, and then moves on, noting there is no parent representative report.

C. Parent Representative Update (Dwayne Stanley representing parents until PTO nomination of parent rep)

There was no information to report from parents.

D. Executive Director Report

Mike addressed the board...see slides.

Mike provides a follow-up on student academic performance, focusing on failing grades. He compares Quarter 1 data with Semester 1 averages (the midpoint of the year), where a failing grade is defined as below 60%. The update has already been shared with a principal advisory group of parents, students, and staff, who offered useful feedback—especially regarding notable concerns with 8th grade performance. Mike explains that the higher number of failing grades in 8th grade may be influenced by several factors, including student motivation. Some students may put in less effort, especially in electives, because they know failing won't significantly impact their promotion or future plans if they intend to leave for other schools. He also notes that detailed data has been compiled by grade level, subject, and specific courses. This information was shared with department chairs and the full staff, providing a comprehensive view of student performance across the school.

Mike explains that the school is aiming for greater transparency in tracking student performance and communication. He reports that about 100 students currently have at least one failing grade at the semester midpoint, and that the full dataset was shared with staff.

As part of improving consistency, the school is strengthening its communication process with families. He notes that while some teachers communicate regularly with parents, others have been less consistent, prompting the creation of a standardized Google Form system to ensure follow-up with families of struggling students. The goal, he emphasizes, is to bring all staff onto the same page in terms of outreach, rather than leaving communication practices uneven across teachers.

Mike describes a new, more structured system to improve teacher-family communication about student performance, particularly for students with failing grades.

Key elements include:

- A shared spreadsheet giving all staff access to student performance data (about 100 students with at least one F at mid-semester).
- A required Google Form for teachers to confirm when they have contacted families.
- A standardized email template teachers can use as a guide to communicate concerns, including academic performance, effort, and areas for improvement.

He emphasizes that the goal is consistency, not adding unnecessary burden, and that the process is still new and will be refined over time.

Mike also connects this effort to long-standing feedback from the annual parent survey, which repeatedly highlights concerns about inconsistent communication and families being surprised by sudden grade changes.

Finally, he references the SST (Student Support Team) process, which supports students not already on formal plans (like IEPs or 504s). This team works with families and staff in a coordinated, data-driven way to intervene early for struggling students. Mike outlines additional student support systems for those not making effective academic progress, including SST (Student Support Team) referrals and a new Academic Support Center led by Cat Cardoso. This program serves middle school students identified as struggling in math or English and focuses not only on academics but also on executive functioning and organizational skills.

He also describes a new pilot initiative where high school students—particularly high-achieving students like National Honor Society members—serve as peer tutors during study halls. The goal is to provide academic support while also giving high school students leadership opportunities and strengthening connections across grade levels.

Lisa added that these initiatives also support broader community-building and student retention, helping younger students feel connected and motivated by older peers, especially in the wake of learning and engagement challenges following COVID.

Mike explains that the school already has multiple layers of academic support in place and is continuing to expand them.

He notes:

- A long-standing **math intervention program** (initially grant-funded) where teachers tutor students during school hours.
- Additional **peer tutoring opportunities** through the Academic Support Center and after-school support involving high school students.
- A planned expansion of **reading support sections** next year, based on feedback from the English department.

To guide this expansion, staff reviewed existing reading support students and invited English teachers to identify additional students who may benefit based on academic data

and classroom performance. The school is now finalizing scheduling changes to reduce class sizes and add support sections.

Families of newly identified students will be informed once placements are finalized.

Mike presents a proposal to pilot ability-based leveling in 6th grade English next year, based on discussions with the English department chair. The motivation is that student reading levels vary widely, making it difficult for teachers to effectively differentiate instruction within a single classroom.

He notes that similar leveling already exists in higher grades (such as honors/AP tracks), and the goal is to better match instruction to student needs at the middle school level.

The discussion includes some reflection on past practices—where students were grouped by ability across subjects—which some recall as having both benefits and drawbacks. Staff acknowledge that earlier models were eventually abandoned due to concerns about their negative effects.

The conversation then shifts briefly to administrative updates:

- Parents are regularly reminded (about 8–10 times per year) about how to access the PowerSchool portal and monitor grades.
- For serious academic concerns, staff meet directly with families and students, including discussions about possible retention or summer school interventions.

Overall, the section focuses on expanding academic support structures while improving communication with families and refining instructional grouping strategies.

Mike explains that the new communication system is designed to make student support meetings more effective and organized. By consolidating teacher feedback in a shared system, administrators can better understand patterns across classes (for example, multiple failing grades in the same course) and provide clearer, more consistent information to families during intervention or retention discussions. This is intended to reduce scattered email chains and streamline decision-making around student support. He emphasizes that the goal is not to pressure teachers to pass students, but to ensure accurate communication and alignment when academic concerns arise. He also reiterates that failing decisions are based on student performance and that the school maintains high academic standards while recognizing that student outcomes are influenced by a range of factors, including effort, attendance, and home circumstances.

Lisa then shifts to positive classroom highlights, sharing examples of engaging student learning, including 6th grade computer science students working on robotics and AP Spanish students participating in a creative project celebrating women's history, showcasing active, hands-on learning across departments.

Bela expressed support for the administration's efforts to improve communication between teachers, parents, and students, noting that consistency has historically been uneven across the school. She pointed out that parents commonly experience a wide

range of communication styles, from some teachers who provide frequent updates to others who delay grade reporting until the end of a term. She suggests the new process could help create a more consistent school-wide communication culture and improve transparency for families.

She thanked Mike and encourages continued progress on strengthening communication practices across the community.

VI. Chair Business

A. Report on Strategic Planning Meeting

Maura provides a brief summary of the recent strategic planning session held on the 14th, noting that formal minutes are still being finalized and will be presented at the next board meeting.

She reports that the session was productive, focusing on:

- The school's accountability plan (presented by Lisa)
- Board governance, roles, and operating norms
- Overall board "impact" and how the board can be more effective

Key follow-up items from the session include:

- Reviewing best practices in the three main focus areas discussed
- Delegating new board member onboarding to the governance committee
- Developing a marketing and communications/PR plan for external messaging
- Clarifying board strategic priorities and outreach
- Exploring board training (Board on Track) and ongoing responsibilities
- Adding a dedicated advocacy segment to board meetings, with active involvement from staff and leadership

She thanked participants for their time and effort during the Saturday session and said that more structured follow-up will come at the next meeting.

VII. Committee Reports

A. Development

Evan reported that the committee met and discussed a fundraising and communications idea raised by Andrew Wyman: developing a clearer campaign narrative or theme for AMSA's fundraising efforts.

Instead of broadly asking for support as a charter school, the idea is to create a more structured, time-based story (annual or multi-year) that explains what AMSA is raising funds for and why it matters. This would help provide potential donors—individuals and

businesses—with clearer, more compelling information about the school's goals and needs, rather than general appeals for support.

B. Finance

Bela had nothing to add to the posted Finance Committee summary.

C. Governance

Darren reported that there are no additional updates beyond what is already included in the committee summary. They note plans to bring forward bylaw changes in the coming months and to begin focusing on onboarding new members.

There is a need for additional expertise, specifically someone knowledgeable about accessibility in marketing and digital communications, including websites and social media. Lisa noted that the school is currently facing significant challenges in meeting accessibility requirements and suggests that this would be a valuable area for future support or recruitment.

D. Education

Stephan reports that the calendar planning is coming together well. He notes plans to host a speaker from the WPI admissions office (organized by Dwayne) to support recruitment efforts in the upcoming admissions cycle and improve AMSA's outreach.

He also mentioned ongoing work on bylaw revisions, including developing a committee charter.

VIII. Review Action Items

A. Action Items from Previous Meetings

Maura reviewed the outstanding action items and notes that they have largely been completed. She thanked members of the board for submitting reports and encourages board members to read them in advance of meetings.

- Governance items are on track, including upcoming bylaw revisions.
- Q2 academic progress data was received.
- A negotiating team is expected to be formed before the summer.

- Additional advocacy-related items may be added as new action items going forward.

B. New Action Items

The board discusses how to incorporate more substantive “meaty” topics into future meetings, following their strategic session.

They agree that advocacy should be a key focus for upcoming agendas. Maura suggests adding it to the next meeting and inviting more detailed updates from Lisa and Marcy, along with input from the charter association to help identify priority issues.

Lisa notes that advocacy activity typically slows during the spring due to the legislative calendar, but she can still provide updates on ongoing efforts.

Bela raised the idea of planning ahead more intentionally so the board can be better prepared to advocate effectively, rather than reacting in real time. Bela...having more meaty topics. at BOT meeting.

IX. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

Dwayne Stanley made a motion to adjourn.

Stephan Richter seconded the motion.

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

Roll Call

Stephan Richter	Aye
James Carter	Aye
Evan Przyborowski	Aye
Bela Gorman	Aye
Maura Webster	Aye
Darren Rose	Aye
Dwayne Stanley	Aye
Jessica Bowen	Aye
Andrea Grych	Aye
Mary Swartz	Absent

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 7:22 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Sara Snow

Documents used during the meeting

- 3-26-26 BOT Education Meeting Summary 2-23-26.pdf
- 3-26-26 BOT Governance Meeting Summary 3-11-26.pdf
- 3-26-26-Finance Committee Meeting 3-17-26 Summary.pdf
- 3-26-26 DevComm Meeting Summary3-18-26.pdf
- 3-26-26 BOT Fundraising Update Summary.pdf
- 3-26-26 Faculty Rep Report 032626.pdf
- Executive Summary_ Semester 1 Academic Performance Overview.pdf
- March 26, 2026 ED Report (2).pdf