Ocean Academy Charter School
Board of Education

Minutes – Board of Trustees Regular Meeting, Tuesday, October 13, 2026

Anita Raynes Lepelstat – President
Jim Muzikowski – Vice President
Sharon Hollander
David Corso
Raul Orellana
Gregory Brandis
Aase Hare
Roxanne Martin - absent
Cori Scotti

Valarie Smith (Board Secretary), Lorna Hassel (Head of School), Amy LaBarca (Assistant Superintendent Curriculum & Instruction), Stephen Nichol (High School Principal), David Block (School Business Administrator), Didi Yencer (Whole School Reform), and Board Attorney.

Meeting Called to Order by Anita Lepelstat - Salute to the Flag @ 6:15 pm

Action Agenda

Public Session:

Old Business

Approval August 25th Meeting Minutes 2026
Motion to Approve Minutes made by Anita Lepelstat
Seconded by Jim Muzikowski
Vote: Unanimously Approved

New Business

Board President Vote – vote for SY26-27 Board President

Motion for Jim Muzikowski to become the Board President for SY 26-27made by Anita Lepelstat
Seconded by Sharon Hollander
Vote: Unanimously Approved by the Board

Board Vice President Vote

Motion for Roxanne Martin to become the Vice President of the Board for the SY 26-27 made by Anita Lepelstat
Seconded by Dave Corso
Vote: Unanimously Approved by the Board

Goals for the Board & Chief School Administrator – SY 26-27

3 Board Goals

Discussion of various Board Goals for the SY 26-27, agreement was made for the following Board Goals:

- Continue to monitor student attendance rates and evaluate the administration's ongoing efforts to communicate with parents and encourage consistent, daily school attendance. As the school is currently operating under a Corrective Action Plan for student attendance, continued monitoring, parent outreach, and proactive interventions will be essential to improving attendance rates and ensuring students are present and ready to learn.

- Continue to monitor and to improve Student Achievement in student performance in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics through data-driven instruction, analysis of NJSLA results, and monitoring of student growth by grade level, classroom, and special education sub-groups.

- Expand Enrichment, Athletics, and student opportunities and Long-Term Facility Issues. Measures of Success: Review participation in athletics, clubs, enrichment, and field trips. Evaluate whether available facilities, equipment, and transportation meet student needs. Monitor participation across grade levels and student groups. Assess the educational value and cost-effectiveness of major program investments. The Board will evaluate whether school facilities support current and projected educational needs, including classroom space, science equipment, storage, technology, security, and student activities.

Motion to Approve the Board Goals for SY 26-27 made by Dave Corso
Seconded by Cori Scotti
Vote: Unanimously approved by the Board

---

3 Goals for the Superintendent

Discussion of various Goals for the Superintendent for the SY 26-27, agreement was made for the following Board Goals:

- Continue with Whole School Reform Plans – Accountability of All Staff & Teachers:
  Strong Leadership & Administrative Leadership
  Whole School Reform requires active leadership from the Chief School Administrator and school leadership team reform

- Set school wide academic priorities & communicate them clearly
- Establish a consistent system for classroom walkthroughs & instructional supervision
- Monitor implementation of the curriculum & agreed-upon instructional practices.
- Address inconsistencies in instruction between classrooms & grade levels
- Hold administrators & instructional leaders accountable for progress

Teacher Accountability & Professional development – Teachers need clear expectations, effective leadership, useful feedback, & opportunities to improve their practice

- Establish measurable instructional expectations
- Provide professional development based on demonstrated student needs
- Schedule collaborative grade-level & subject-area planning
- Review lesson plans, student work, and assessment results

- Academic Achievement & Instructional Leadership
  - The CSA will lead & oversee the implementation of an instructional program designed to improve student achievement in English Language Arts & math, with particular attention to students who are below grade level, students receiving special education services, and multilingual learners.

- Data-Driven Decision Making
  - Analyze NJSLA results by grade, subject, classroom, and student subgroup
  - Review benchmark assessments, classroom work, & formative assessments
  - Identify learning gaps & students who need additional support
  - Monitor progress throughout the year rather then waiting for annual state testing
  - Require teachers & administrators to explain what instructional changes they are making in response to the data

Discussion

Motion to accept the three goals (as identified above) for the Chief School Administrator, Valarie Smith, for the 2026-27 School Year made by Jim Muzikowski
Second by Cori Scotti
Vote: Unanimously Approved by the Board

Sick Leave Policy – Presented by Kathleen Ehling, Board Attorney

DRAFT - SICK LEAVE BANK POLICY

Purpose:
The purpose of the Sick Leave Bank is to alleviate economic hardship caused by an employee's disability due to illness or injury. This often necessitates an employees prolonged absence from work, for which

the employee has no available paid leave. The Ocean Academy Board of Trustees recognizes that employees would like to voluntarily donate a portion of their accumulated sick days to employee(s) suffering from catastrophic injury, terminal, prolonged or recurring illness. Sick Leave Bank days may also be granted for pregnancy-related medical complications but not for regular maternity leave.

As established in N.J.S.A. 18A:30-10, the purpose of the Sick Leave Bank shall be to enable employees of Ocean Academy Charter School who are entitled to sick leave to draw needed sick days in addition to any days to which they are otherwise entitled. The sick leave days available to a Board employee from the Sick Leave Bank shall be leave days previously donated to the Bank by Board employees.

Employee Contribution Requirement

1. Membership in the Sick Leave Bank is voluntary. Each certified employee and full-time permanent support personnel are eligible to participate in the Sick Leave Bank.

2. To participate, employees must actively choose to join each school year and must contribute a minimum of two (2) sick days per school year.

3. Employees must contribute to the Sick Leave Bank each year in order to be eligible to apply for its use. If an employee elects not to contribute in a given year, they forfeit eligibility to access the Sick Leave Bank for that year, regardless of prior participation or contributions.

4. Contributions will be deducted from the employee's annual sick leave entitlement.

5. Employees are permitted to donate to a specific employee in need by filling out a Designation Form, designating the receiving employee and number of days to donate. The days donated will be added to the receiving employee's sick days benefit. Any sick days donated must be taken and posted during the current fiscal year in which the days were donated. Any donated days that aren't used by the end of the fiscal year will be returned to the employee who donated them.

Employee Eligibility

To be eligible to apply for the use of the Sick Leave Bank, the employee shall:
1. Have completed at least two (2) years of continuous service to the school in a paid status.
2. Have at least 20 accumulated sick days.
3. Be a member of the Sick Leave Bank and contributor for the current school year.

Criteria To Award Sick Days

1. Sick Leave Bank days may be awarded to an employee only in cases of a catastrophic injury, terminal, prolonged or recurring illness. For the purposes of this policy, terminal illness is defined as a chronic disease or illness which, in the opinion of the employee's physician, may result in death or substantial disability. Catastrophic injury is defined as serious bodily injury which results in a substantial loss or injury of a bodily organ, member or function and which renders the employee incapable of performing

his/her job. Absences must be due to circumstances of an unavoidable nature to be considered for eligibility.
2. This policy excludes pregnancy, unless the employee develops a pregnancy-related illness or complications as well as cosmetic or elective surgery.
3. The Sick Leave Bank is not to be utilized when the employee is eligible for payment of his/her absences through worker's compensation, short-term or long-term disability or any other benefit which pays the employee partially or completely for the days on which he/she is absent. The Sick Leave Bank is not intended for employees to use to care for a family member.
4. The employee shall have exhausted all accumulated sick leave, personal days, and have taken five (5) consecutive unpaid working days before becoming eligible to access the Sick Leave Bank.
5. Maternity - If the request is related to medical complications affecting the mother or child due to childbirth, the circumstances may be eligible for consideration by the Sick Leave Bank Committee. A routine or emergency cesarean section (C-section), in and of itself, does not qualify for Sick Leave Bank usage. Eligibility for the Sick Leave Bank in maternity cases requires documented medical complications beyond those typically associated with a standard or emergency C-section. Such cases will be reviewed by the Sick Leave Bank Committee for consideration.

Limitations on Days Granted

Fiscal Year Limits:

a. An employee may be granted up to 20% of the total days available in the Sick Leave Bank, based on the number of contributions made after enrollment is completed.

b. The total number of days granted cannot exceed the number of days remaining in the employee's contract for that school year.

c. No employee may receive more than 30 days from the Sick Leave Bank in a fiscal year or more than 60 days in a five (5) year period.

d. Sick Leave Bank grants cannot be carried over to the next school year. All unused days will be returned to the bank.

e. Once the Sick Leave Bank is depleted for the year, the bank will cease operation for the remainder of the school year.

f. Any unused sick leave days will be returned to the Sick Leave Bank upon the employee's return to work.

Process for Requesting Sick Leave

1. Employees requesting Sick Leave Bank days must submit an application in writing to the Sick Leave Bank Committee.
2. If approved, the employee must submit written documentation of the illness from a licensed medical provider at the time of application. Continued use of Sick Leave Bank days requires updated medical documentation to be submitted every 30 days.
3. Applications must be submitted using the Sick Leave Bank Request Form and the HIPAA Privacy Authorization Form to the Executive Director, who will then take the application to the Sick Leave Bank Committee.
4. The Sick Leave Bank Committee will review the application, verify eligibility, and determine if the request meets the policy guidelines.

7. The Sick Leave Bank Committee will respond in writing to the applicant, detailing approval or denial with the reason for the decision.

Application

In order to request the use of sick leave days from the Sick Leave Bank, an employee must complete and submit the following:

1. A written request submitted to the Executive Director for transmittal to the Sick Leave Bank Committee. The
written request shall include:
a. The initial date of the catastrophic injury, terminal, prolonged or recurring illness.
b. The projected loss of work time and/or projected date of return.
c. The date that the employee will exhaust all of their personal, sick and vacation/non-work days.
d. A physician's note/letter indicating that the employee has a catastrophic injury, terminal, prolonged or recurring illness as defined above and the anticipated duration of the leave. All physician's certificates or other medical records or information produced pursuant to employee authorization and obtained by the Committee shall be held in the strictest confidence and shall not be further disclosed by the Committee. These documents shall be placed and stored in the employee's district medical file.
e. The Board Physician will have the right to review the physician's note/letter.

2. The Executive Director shall forward the request and supporting documents to the Sick Leave Bank Committee. A meeting shall be scheduled with the Committee and the Committee will review the request and provide notification of the decision to the employee within seven (7) working days of the Committee's meeting.

3. If the request is approved, the sick days will be added to the employee's allotment of days for use. Requests should be submitted at least 30 days prior to the effective date. In cases where an illness or injury does not allow 30 days notice, the employee should submit the request as soon as reasonably possible. In the event an employee has previously exhausted all of his/her sick, personal and vacation days, an award of sick leave from the Sick Leave Bank may be retroactive, if requested by the employee and approved by the Committee.

4. Employees that qualify for Sick Leave Bank days shall incur all benefit related costs. This includes: Health Benefits, Prescription Drug Costs, Dental and Board Paid Disability Programs.

Sick Leave Bank Committee

1. In accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:30-10, the Sick Leave Bank Committee shall be comprised of three (3) members selected by the Board of Education and three (3) members selected by the employees. The Sick Leave Bank Committee shall be comprised of the following persons:
a) The Executive Director;
b) The Head of School;
c) The Business Administrator or his or her designee;
d) Three (3) representatives of employees at the school. All eligible employees will be requested to

submit nominations to the Executive Director who shall conduct a random drawing from the submitted nominations to determine the three employee representatives.

2. Meetings of the Committee shall be held on an as-needed basis, but with no less than seven (7) calendar day notice, unless an earlier meeting date is mutually agreed upon. Participation by Committee members during meetings may occur in person or by electronic communication, including telephone.

3. A quorum exists for the purposes of a Committee meeting when four (4) Committee members are present and eligible to vote. All decisions of the Committee must be made by a majority vote of the full Committee (four (4) affirmative votes are required for all actions of the Committee).

4. The Committee will be required to submit an annual summary of the Sick Leave Bank activities to the Executive Director. The Executive Director will review the effectiveness of the Policy and will make a recommendation to the board whether or not to continue the Sick Leave Bank. Should the board determine at any point that the Sick Leave Bank program will no longer continue, all contributed sick days in the Sick Leave Bank will remain until they are exhausted and no further days will be added to the Sick Leave Bank. In that event only staff members that contributed a sick day during the last submission will be eligible to draw from the Sick Leave Bank until all days are exhausted.

Name: _____
Position: _____

The Board of Trustees has adopted a Sick Bank Policy effective for the 2026-27 school year. To apply for enrollment, eligible employees must complete and sign the bottom portion of this form. Members will donate two (2) days of accumulated sick leave in the first year upon approval of membership. No more than two (2) days per year will be donated thereafter. The Sick Leave Bank Committee may decrease or suspend the annual donation depending on the accumulated reserves of sick leave contained within the bank. If a SLB member resigns membership, contributed days will not be refunded or transferred, and re-entry to the SLB may not be granted.

MEMBER AGREEMENT

I have read, understand, and fully agree to comply with the above provisions of the SLB and the board's policy concerning the Sick Leave Bank Policy. I acknowledge that it is my responsibility to familiarize myself with this policy prior to applying for membership. I hereby donate two (2) of my sick leave days to the SLB to establish membership and understand that additional days may be taken according to guidelines above. I understand that these days are not refundable or transferable. Further, I understand that this membership is considered continuous unless I submit a written resignation of membership to the SLB Committee.

I understand that this program is a voluntary program and the Sick Leave Bank Committee has the right to approve/deny my request for utilization of sick days. I relieve the SLB Committee members and Ocean Academy Charter School, its employees, agents, or representatives from any liability resulting from action taken by the SLB Committee in accordance with the provisions of this policy.

Applicant's Name: _____ Date:_____

Applicant's Signature: _____

SICK LEAVE BANK: REQUEST FOR WITHDRAWAL OF DAYS

NOTE: A PHYSICIAN STATEMENT IS REQUIRED BEFORE THE SICK LEAVE BANK COMMITTEE WILL CONSIDER YOUR REQUEST

Name:
Position:
Number Days Requested:
Reason for Request:
Is this your first request for this illness/injury?
How many previous days were approved?
Have you been granted Bank days previously for other illnesses? How many?
How long have you been ill/injured?
Have you exhausted all other leave days?
Are you receiving other benefits for this incident (ie. WC)?

_____
Signature & Date
* All leave granted, but not used by the member, must be returned to the Sick Leave Bank

AUTHORIZATION FOR RELEASE OF ADDITIONAL MEDICAL INFORMATION
By signing this statement, I hereby authorize my medical records/information which pertain to this request to be released to the Sick Leave Bank Committee for review.

_____
Signature Date

****

Discussion:

- Current proposal needs to be amended for key administrator (SBA, Human Services Director)
- Current proposal needs to be amended for super majority approval
- More discussion needed in regards to eligibility requirements
- School Survey needs to be conducted for viability of plan

Aase Hare motioned to conduct a survey of all staff to discuss reasonable access/eligibility review for the next Board Meeting.

Seconded by Jim Muzikowski

Vote: Unanimously approved by the Board

HIB Grade & Report – Presented by Lorna Hassel

Ms. Hassel presented to the Board that Ocean Academy's Overall HIB Grade is **73**. The Maximum score is 78. In addition, last year's score was 69 so we significantly improved over the year.

Ocean Academy needs to address training for contractors & subcontractors. We will address this in the new 2026-27 School Year.

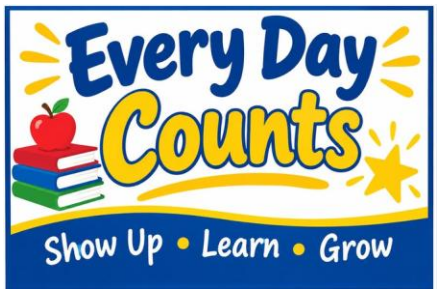
2026-27 School Safety Team Report K-12 – Presented by Lorna Hassel

Lorna presented that we organized a School Safety Team last school year. The Team has 15 members and the three lead members (Oscar Orellana, Breanna Meglio, & Lorna Hassel) will be attending a training session at the NJ State Bar Association.

Attendance Report Progress K-8 / Corrective Action Plan – Presented by Lorna Hassel

Moving forward with "Why Attendance is Important" Campaign

- Letter to Parents
- Overall Campaign "Every Day Counts"



Discussion – Dress-Down Coupons may be awarded to students with perfect/good attendance.
We are also trying to "highlight" students with perfect/good attencance.

Dave Corso suggested we track chronic attendance data, percentages, on a Monthly Basis!

Attendance Report Progress HS / Corrective Action Plan – Presented by Amy LaBarca

Perfect Attendance Awards for September at the high school – data show the HS has 66.4% perfect attendance.

Parent Academy – High School Program – Amy LaBarca

Update on our High School Parent Academy – overall the Parent Academy meetings are going very well with many parents attending. The importance of "Absent/Attendance" has been discussed at these meeting.

Basic Whole School Report on the NJSLA 2026 Outcomes - Presented by Valarie Smith

We will be preparing a detailed report on outcomes for a future meeting.

ELA - % Meeting + Exceeding		
2024-25	2025-26	Growth
42%	46%	4%

Math - % Meeting + Exceeding		
2024-25	2025-26	Growth
32%	39%	7%

So we scored at 46% in ELA, 4% growth from last year's 42%

The state proficiency rate was at 53%

In Math, we saw a 7% growth from last year's score of 32% to 39%

The State proficiency rate was at 41.6%

Special Achievements!

Fourth Grade Team
Students achieved an impressive 48% proficiency rate on the 2026 state ELA assessments, exceeding the statewide proficiency rate of 46%.
Even more impressively, students scored 7 percentage points higher than Ocean County's overall proficiency rate of 41%.
Kristin King (Middle School) ELA
King's students achieved an impressive 53% proficiency rate on the 2026 state ELA assessments, exceeding the statewide proficiency rate of 51%.
Even more impressively, King's students scored 7 percentage points higher than Ocean County's overall proficiency rate of 46%.
Samantha Mancuso
Mancuso's students achieved an impressive 54% proficiency rate on the 2026 state ELA assessments, exceeding the statewide proficiency rate of 53%.
Even more impressive, Mancuso's students scored more than 4 percentage points higher than the overall county proficiency rate.
Nicole Reagan (Middle School) Math
Reagan's students achieved an impressive 50% proficiency rate on the 2026 state Math assessments, exceeding the statewide proficiency rate of 40%.
Even more impressive, Reagan's students scored 15 percentage points higher than the overall Ocean County proficiency rate @35%.
Chris Roskos (Middle School Math)
Roskos' students achieved 46% proficiency in Math exceeding the statewide proficiency rate of 23%.
Even more impressive, Roskos' students scored more than 21 points higher than the overall Ocean County proficiency rate @ 25%
Discussion

Application for PreSchool Addition to Ocean Academy – Presented by Valarie Smith

OCEAN ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL
BOARD OF TRUSTEES RESOLUTION

Resolution Authorizing Application for Charter Amendment to Add a Preschool/Pre-Kindergarten Program
Date of Board Meeting:

WHEREAS, Ocean Academy Charter School is a public charter school located in Lakewood, New Jersey, operating pursuant to a charter approved by the New Jersey Department of Education; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Trustees is committed to providing high-quality educational opportunities that support the academic, social, emotional, and developmental needs of the students and families served by Ocean Academy Charter School; and

WHEREAS, the Board recognizes the importance of early childhood education in establishing foundational literacy, mathematics, language development, social-emotional learning, and school readiness; and

WHEREAS, the Board believes that the addition of a preschool/pre-kindergarten program may strengthen educational continuity between early childhood education and the school's existing elementary school program; and

WHEREAS, the Board desires to authorize the preparation and submission of an application to the New Jersey Department of Education requesting an amendment to the school's existing charter to permit the establishment and operation of a preschool/pre-kindergarten program; and

WHEREAS, the proposed program shall be subject to all applicable New Jersey Department of Education requirements, including charter amendment approval, applicable early childhood education standards, staffing qualifications, facilities requirements, enrollment provisions, and any required programmatic or funding approvals;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees of Ocean Academy Charter School hereby authorizes the submission of an application to the New Jersey Department of Education requesting an amendment to the school's existing charter to add a preschool/pre-kindergarten program; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board authorizes the appropriate school administrator(s) to prepare, execute, and submit the application and supporting documentation required by the New Jersey Department of Education, including the proposed program description, enrollment projections, revised charter provisions, and other required materials, consistent with this resolution and applicable law; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the proposed preschool/pre-kindergarten program shall not commence operation until all required approvals have been obtained and all applicable legal, regulatory, staffing, facility, and program requirements have been satisfied; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees retains its authority over any material changes to the proposed program that require further Board approval; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this resolution shall be maintained with the official minutes and records of the Board of Trustees and included in the school's charter amendment submission, as appropriate.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing resolution was duly presented to and considered by the Board of Trustees of Ocean Academy Charter School at a duly convened meeting held on the date set forth below, and that the resolution was adopted by the Board.

Board Voice Vote:

Jim Muzikowski – President Yes
Roxanne Martin – Vice President Yes
Sharon Hollander Yes
David Corso Yes
Raul Orellana Yes
Gregory Brandis Yes
Aase Hare Yes
Cori Scotti Yes
Anita Raynes Lepelstat Yes

FINANCIALS – Presented by David Block

- **Board Secretary's Report on the General Funds**

Motion to Approve the Bill List for the Month of May and the Board Secretary's Report on the General Funds made by David Corso
Seconded by Anita Lepelstat
Vote: Unanimously in the Affirmative

Announcements:

There will be a special presentation by Sheriff Mastronardy on Friday, November 6th at 10:00 AM on the workings of the Sheriff's department in Ocean County. Highly Recommend Board Members to Attend!

David Corso Thanked Anita for all of her hard work as President of the Board for all these years!
Jim Muzikowski also Thanked Anita also.

Motion to Adjourn:

Made by Dave Corso
Second: Sharon Hollander
Vote: Unanimously in Favor

Minutes Approved by the Board at the November 10, 2026 Meeting