

APPROVED



## Salem Academy Charter School

### Minutes

#### Education Committee Meeting

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##### **Date and Time**

Wednesday March 12, 2025 at 8:00 AM

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The Salem Academy Charter School Education Committee will meet at 8:00 a via Zoom.

Zoom Link: <https://salemacademyics.zoom.us/meeting/register/35HZrqEzRjyrA6Vm8Om2vg>

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##### **Committee Members Present**

Domina DiBiase (remote), Drea Jacobs (remote), Megan Franco (remote), Rich Cowdell (remote), Sabrina Williams (remote), Stephanie Callahan (remote)

##### **Committee Members Absent**

Amy Stewart

##### **Guests Present**

Fallon Burke (remote)

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#### **I. Opening Items**

##### **A. Record Attendance**

##### **B. Call the Meeting to Order**

Rich Cowdell called a meeting of the Education Committee of Salem Academy Charter School to order on Wednesday Mar 12, 2025 at 8:12 AM.

### **C. Approve Minutes**

Domina DiBiase made a motion to approve the minutes from Education Committee Meeting on 02-12-25.

Megan Franco seconded the motion.

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

## **II. 2025-2026 School Calendar**

### **A. 2025-2026 School Calendar**

The committee reviewed the proposed 2025-2026 school calendar, beginning with the last day on June 18 and working backward to meet the required 187 school days. The start date is set for Friday, August 22. Concerns were raised about absenteeism, staff retention, and competitiveness with traditional public schools due to the longer school year and extended school day. After discussing the concerns, the committee agreed that the calendar as presented is best.

Domina DiBiase made a motion to to accept the 2025-2026 calendar as presented to present to the Board for a vote.

Megan Franco seconded the motion.

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

## **III. SACS Schedule**

### **A. SACS Extended Day, Extended Year**

Rich Cowdell raised concerns about absenteeism with a longer school year, noting that families may not see missing a few days as significant. He also pointed out that an extended school calendar and longer school days could impact staff retention, making the school less competitive compared to traditional public schools. Domina echoed these concerns, emphasizing the need to remain competitive in staff recruitment and retention.

Stephanie provided historical context, explaining that the original charter included 195 school days to support academic achievement and Service-Learning. She noted that while the school has since scaled back its hours, families have expressed concerns about student-athletes frequently leaving early for games and how they will make up missed work. If the school were to shorten its hours, there would also need to be discussions about after-school options for students.

The committee acknowledged that any changes to the school year or day would require a charter amendment approved by DESE. While existing staff have not cited the longer school day as a primary reason for leaving, it was suggested to collect more structured

data on staff and student attrition, including withdrawals from the hiring process and transitions from 8th to 9th grade.

As next steps, the committee agreed to better track anecdotal data on staff departures and student withdrawals. They also discussed potentially adding questions to hiring and student withdrawal forms to assess the impact of the school calendar on decision-making.

#### **IV. Education**

##### **A. Intervention Plans**

The principals discussed intervention efforts. In grades 9 and 10, Response to Intervention (RTI) cycles launched on March 11, with ongoing skill assessments. The 10th-grade math team identified gaps, and targeted interventions are in place. The lower school math team (6th-8th) is focused on RTI for MCAS preparation, and an ELA RTI program has been implemented in 6th grade, with plans to expand to grades 7 and 8 next year.

##### **B. Staffing Updates**

Hiring updates for the 2024-2025 school year show progress in filling open positions, with long-term substitute roles still available. Job postings for the 2025-2026 school year are live, and hiring letters will be sent in April.

##### **C. Trustee Recruitment**

The committee will continue to think of board prospects.

#### **V. Other Business**

##### **A. Charter Amendment Request Decision Update**

Drea updated the committee on the charter amendment request decision. The decision was centered on math performance and transition rates between 8th and 9th grade.

##### **B. 2025 REACH for College Gala Updates**

Fallon Burke reminded the committee about the REACH for College Gala on May 9, 2025 and asked for sponsorship and auction prize referrals.

#### **VI. Closing Items**

##### **A. Adjourn Meeting**

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 9:16 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Fallon Burke

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Documents Referenced During the Meeting:

- February Committee Meeting Minutes
- 2025-2026 School Calendar