

APPROVED



Salem Academy Charter School

Minutes

Education Committee Meeting

Date and Time

Tuesday April 14, 2026 at 8:00 AM

Location

Zoom: <https://salemacademycs.zoom.us/meeting/register/cdZuSnk9TEOYHKDV23at2Q>

The Salem Academy Charter School Education Committee will meet via Zoom.

Zoom Link: <https://salemacademycs.zoom.us/meeting/register/cdZuSnk9TEOYHKDV23at2Q>

Committee Members Present

Domina DiBiase (remote), Drea Jacobs (remote), Melissa Lassen (remote), Rich Cowdell (remote), Sabrina Williams (remote), Sarah Morrill (remote), Stephanie Callahan (remote)

Committee Members Absent

None

Committee Members who left before the meeting adjourned

Melissa Lassen, Sabrina Williams

Guests Present

Fallon Burke (remote)

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 Tuesday Apr 14, 2026 at 8:10 AM.

C. Approve Minutes

Domina DiBiase made a motion to approve the minutes from Education Committee Meeting on 02-10-26.

Sarah Morrill seconded the motion.

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

II. Education Committee Reports

A. Q3 Academic Report

Drea Jacobs starts with an update on Q3 data. In the first data set. you see the LS INterim Assessments. Testing conditions have been bettered thanks to the systems Sabrina has put in place.

Lower School

Sabrina Williams adds more about LS. Worked on building stamina for open response questions. This year, students worked nearly the full 3 hour of the MCAS block and 60 students needed additional time. There was a pep rally on the Monday before to get ready for the MCAS. Math MCAS is the week after April break. The Math teachers are also open to working on stamina as well so that it pushes students for the word problems. Sabrina reviewed teacher actions to prepare for MCAS in ELA, Math, Science, and Civics. Academic Support block (MTSS) is going after skill gaps as well.

Math MCAS is two weeks earlier this year. Math tested students on things that hadn't been covered yet to see what gaps there are before the MCAS during the Interim Assessments. Once students get used to the rigor of SACS, scores typically improve too. 6th grade students come from many different schools and are adjusting to SACS. That's why we see lower average scores in 6th grade Interim Assessments.

7th and 8th grade shifts from just comprehension to explanation. Currently, the focus is on closing basic gaps. Sarah asks about backwards planning from 8th grade. Sabrina says that one day it would be nice to plan backward using the test, but we are not there at the moment. 100% completion for ELA MCAS.

Upper School

- 100% ELA completion in the US too! Which is major especially since the shift in the state requirements.

- Pep rally was after MCAS to celebrate
- Math MCAS is the next MCAS and there are teacher actions to prepare. instructional Leadership have also been supporting the math teacher in preparation for the math MCAS.
- Melissa and Susanna also supported with the ELA MCAS.
- 9th grade Biology MCAS is in June.

Drea adds that these data reports have been designed to align with DESE report card goals. More updates are include that tomorrow is the SAT for all 11th graders and Melissa has also been conducting AP Interim Tests for all AP courses in preparation for the May AP exams.

Chronic Absenteeism

- Tracking all students and the lowest performing group
- Originally thought target goal was 20% but it came out as 5.5%. Drea and Stephanie are following up with DESE.
- LS - 3 students that are high flyers for absenteeism. Kids also took some vacations/breaks around the Easter Weekend.
- US - attempting interventions and it's a priority for Parent Teacher Student Conferences.
- Both principals meet weekly with the Student Services Corodinator
- The MS lowest performing group didn't fluctuate that much, but the HS group did.

Sabrina Williams left at 8:48 AM.

Melissa Lassen left at 8:48 AM.

B. 2026 Committee Goals

The committee reviewed progress toward its 2026 goals. Updates related to the first goal, focused on accountability and academic performance, were covered during the Q3 Academic Report discussion.

The committee also discussed progress toward the trustee recruitment goal, noting that there is currently a prospective Board candidate with education experience in the pipeline.

C. Hiring Update

Stephanie Callahan provided an update on the Upper School Principal search process. Two finalist candidates visited campus this week, one yesterday and one today. Stephanie noted that each candidate brings different strengths and experiences to the role. The goal of the finalist process is to expose candidates to as many stakeholders as possible. Additional in-person follow-up conversations will take place in the coming days, alongside the collection of feedback through a stakeholder feedback form.

Stephanie also shared that the school continues to recruit for a Special Education Director position. Offer letters for returning staff have been distributed and are due back by April 17.

D. Enrollment Update

Stephanie Callahan provided an enrollment update to the committee. Overall, enrollment recruitment has been more challenging this year, reflecting broader trends of declining or fluctuating school-aged populations. Salem Public Schools also experienced a decrease in 6th grade enrollment compared to the prior year.

Salem Academy received 149 applications for 6th grade, compared to 171 applications last year, representing approximately a 12% decrease. The number of Salem sibling applicants also declined, from 32 last year to 21 this year.

Applications for 9th grade from Salem residents also decreased, with 26 applicants this year compared to 44 last year.

This was the first year the school conducted lottery processes for grades 10–12 following approval to backfill upper grades. The school received applications from 6 students for 10th grade, 2 students for 11th grade, and 1 student for 12th grade.

Stephanie noted that priorities moving forward include continuing to emphasize what makes Salem Academy unique while also strengthening student retention efforts.

E. Curriculum Opt-Out Policy Guidance

Stephanie Callahan shared that legal counsel is recommending that schools develop a curriculum opt-out policy in response to a recent court case. School leadership is currently working with legal counsel to gather guidance and draft recommendations. The item will be brought back to the committee for further discussion next month.

III. Other Business

A. Development Update

Fallon Burke gave a brief update on the REACH for College Gala, only 2 weeks away.

IV. 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 9:18 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Fallon Burke

Documents used during the meeting

- Academic Report 4.15.26 (1).pdf