



PRE-APPROVED MINUTES

Carolina Achieve BOD Meeting Minutes
January 12, 2026 | 05:00 PM EST
Virtual: [Carolina Achieve Public Meeting](#)

ATTENDANCE

Board Members Present: Charles Lopez, John Oxaal, Anjanette Miller, MaKayla Booker-Johnson, Jeff Clark, Tiffany Alrefae
Absent: Thomas Nechyba
Guests: Trip Cogburn, Head of School
A quorum was present.

NOTICE

Notice was provided. A waiver of notice is not included.

- 1) John Oxaal called the meeting to order at 5:04 pm.
- 2) Charles Lopez read the Carolina Achieve Mission Statement: Carolina Achieve prepares K-12th-grade students to achieve their scholastic, personal, and professional goals through a learner-centered educational program focusing on a strong academic foundation, Habits of Success (entrepreneurial skills), well-being, and a Home-School partnership.
- 3) Approve Agenda Jeff Clark made a motion to approve the agenda, and MaKayla Booker-Johnson seconded it. The motion passed unanimously.
- 4) Approve December Meeting Minutes - MaKayla Booker-Johnson made a motion to approve, and John Oxaal seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- 5) Construction & School Opening Update - Trip Cogburn reported that the playground has entered Phase 2, noting that the concrete has been poured, smoothed, and is now fully cured. He stated that the project is currently awaiting required safety inspections, after which installation of the fencing will proceed. Once completed, the area will accommodate a basketball court, a four-square, and additional recreational activities. John Oxaal added that Hubrich Construction discussed the potential installation of permanent signage and banners.
- 6) National School Lunch Program Update - John Oxaal reported that the Orange County School Board has not yet approved the provision of regular meal services and that support remains limited to emergency situations only. As a result, the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is not reimbursing meals for Title I students, even though approximately 60% of the student population qualifies for free or reduced-price lunch. Consequently, the school is incurring an unbudgeted cost of approximately \$4,000 per month to provide meals. This matter is expected to be addressed at the Orange County

School Board meeting in January 2026, with the goal of establishing Orange County Schools as a full-time meal provider for Carolina Achieve. In the interim, Vertex is requiring full payment for its services. John Oxaal further noted that Vertex has failed to fulfill its responsibilities, creating a challenging situation for the school. Trip Cogburn added that the quality and quantity of food currently provided by Orange County Schools are positive and appear to be in the best interest of the students. Tiffany Alrefae suggested that the school collect data on the student population, food insecurity, and how it serves marginalized communities. Trip Cogburn concluded by stating that the school is currently providing meals to every student who needs them.

- 7) Admissions & Lottery - Trip Cogburn reported that the school has received 88 applications to date, with a steady flow continuing. All applicants have been contacted and invited to attend the Open House scheduled for February 3, 2026. The majority of applications are for kindergarten. He noted that the application process will be paused in the coming weeks to allow Charter Success Partners sufficient time to complete required administrative processing. By February 6, 2026, the school anticipates being able to offer enrollment to all applicants unless kindergarten applications exceed available seats, in which case a formal lottery would be required. If a lottery is not needed, enrollment offers will be extended on February 6 to finalize enrollment. Trip Cogburn added that, similar to last year, applications are expected to continue through the spring and summer months. John Oxaal commented that the school is approximately three times as far ahead as it was at the same point last year, indicating strong momentum. He added that the Board should begin discussing target enrollment numbers for the upcoming school year. John Oxaal stated that, given the current facility footprint, the school could comfortably accommodate approximately 250–300 students. MaKayla Booker-Johnson inquired whether the school had data on applicants who did not enroll. Trip Cogburn responded that approximately 30 follow-up calls were made that day, reaching three applicants. One family expressed renewed interest and plans to reapply, while two families indicated they chose to keep siblings together at another school, a common response, Trip Cogburn noted. John Oxaal asked how the school could reach a total enrollment of 250 students. He noted that the school currently has close to 70 kindergarten students and 78 applications for the upcoming year. He added that reaching 100 students in kindergarten and 100 students in first grade appears achievable, which would meet enrollment goals and support a balanced preliminary budget of approximately 250 students, potentially resulting in a modest surplus. John Oxaal further noted that the school could potentially serve additional students without increasing overhead. John Oxaal raised the possibility of adding a modular building with 10 classrooms, noting that if the vendor were notified by the end of February, the building could be ready by the fall. The Board discussed whether to pursue expansion or cap enrollment in line with targets. Trip Cogburn stated that he is comfortable maintaining two buildings at this time, noting that this approach provides financial flexibility and prioritizes staffing. While this option may limit some co-curricular programming and shared office space, he emphasized that prioritizing people and staffing capacity is preferable. He added that the team is confident in its ability to support

growth within the existing space. Tiffany Alrefae noted that this approach is temporary and that growth will eventually align with expanded facilities. Trip Cogburn added that this would be the first time the school has had to navigate a decision of this type. Jeff Clark commented that the timing for a final decision on expansion appears to be a few meetings away. John Oxaal expressed optimism that enrollment demand may exceed current projections, noting there is strong evidence to support this expectation. Trip Cogburn also reported that the Winter Performance was rescheduled due to flu-related absences. The event drew more than 400 attendees and was described as a strong community-building experience. Trip Cogburn commended the teachers for their efforts in delivering a high-quality program and noted that social media engagement following the event generated significant awareness and traction for the school.

- 8) Summer Camp - Trip Cogburn proposed offering a summer camp as both a marketing and community awareness opportunity, as well as an introduction to the school for prospective families. Trip Cogburn noted that the recent hiring of Tammy Clark, After-School Coordinator, supports this initiative, as she has experience operating summer camps and is prepared to host one at the school. Trip Cogburn added that several current families have already expressed interest. Trip Cogburn stated that transportation would be the primary logistical consideration in determining the scope of the camp. Anjannette Miller noted that other organizations, including nonprofits and Duke University, also operate summer camps. Anjannette Miller asked whether there would be a cost to parents. Trip Cogburn confirmed that there would be a fee to cover staffing costs, but acknowledged that pricing and access for families who may not be able to afford the cost have not yet been determined. Tiffany Alrefae added that many summer camps use a pricing structure that subsidizes families in need, and that grants or alternative funding sources may be available, though such options may be more feasible in future years. Tiffany Alrefae suggested the camp could potentially be operated through the school, the Parent Association, or a separate 501(c)(3). John Oxaal shared that he has researched transportation options, noting that new buses can cost approximately \$200,000, while used buses may range from \$20,000 to \$30,000. John Oxaal added that borrowing a bus presents insurance challenges, as liability would remain with the owner. John Oxaal asked whether renting a bus was an option. Tiffany Alrefae responded that in past arrangements, bus rentals included paying the driver of the owning organization. Tiffany Alrefae also suggested exploring partnerships with Christian schools in Mebane or Hillsborough that may not have summer programming, including the possibility of hiring their drivers. Anjannette Miller suggested offering the camp to students and their older siblings to support families in the school community. John Oxaal asked about enrollment targets, and Trip Cogburn indicated an initial goal of approximately 30 students, dependent on early enrollment numbers. Trip Cogburn noted that while Ms. Clark has significant experience in this area, the school has not previously operated a summer camp. John Oxaal recommended continuing planning efforts as if the camp will proceed. Charles Lopez asked how meals would be handled, and Trip Cogburn noted that this remains an open item requiring further consideration. John Oxaal asked whether Ms. Clark should be invited to present a formal proposal to the

Board at the next meeting. Anjannette Miller and MaKayla Booker-Johnson provided additional recommendations and suggestions for summer camps for Trip Cogburn to research.

9) Committee Assignment -

- a. Finance & Development Committee - Jeff Clark reported that the Finance Committee met prior to the Board meeting. Jeff Clark noted that while several areas are performing well, other areas continue to present challenges. At this time, the school is projecting a budget deficit. Jeff Clark emphasized the need for additional funding and fundraising efforts to close the fiscal year. Jeff Clark also noted that the school's financial commitment to the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is currently at risk. John Oxaal, Trip Cogburn, and Anjannette Miller also participated in the Finance Committee meeting. Jeff Clark added that, overall, the financial systems and processes currently in place are functioning effectively.
- b. Academics Committee - Thomas Nechyba reported that he is currently traveling and will provide an update at the February Board meeting. John Oxaal added that a second round of testing is scheduled for the end of January.
- c. Governance Committee - The committee reported that there was no formal update at this time. Anjannette Miller asked for clarification regarding the school's bylaws and the permitted number of Board members. John Oxaal reported that the bylaws allow a Board size of six to twelve members. Anjannette Miller noted that the Board should begin a broader discussion regarding opportunities to recruit additional Board members. Anjannette Miller stated that the current Board has been instrumental in setting the foundation for the school, but should remain open to expansion. John Oxaal added that this underscores the importance of activating the Governance Committee, noting that a larger Board would allow for parent representation and support from individuals interested in donating to the school. Tiffany Alrefae suggested that the head of the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) is often a member of a school board and recommended outreach to entrepreneurs in Burlington, Mebane, and Hillsborough, North Carolina. Anjannette Miller further suggested that, as potential Board members are identified, the Board should clearly articulate the school's strategic goals and the type of support expected from Board members. She noted that due to their own organizational development responsibilities, Tiffany Alrefae and Anjannette Miller may have limited capacity to provide additional development support. Jeff Clark emphasized the importance of recruiting individuals who are deeply committed to the school's vision and mission. Jeff Clark and John Oxaal recommended that the team continue identifying potential candidates and submit names to the Governance Committee for future review and vetting.

- 10) Calendar of Upcoming Events - Trip Cogburn reported that he will travel to Raleigh on Thursday to acquire additional quality furniture to support both the current and upcoming school year. He also shared that on Wednesday, January 21, 2026, he will present to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and charter school leaders who are preparing to open new schools, highlighting strategies and practices that have been successful for Carolina Achieve. Trip Cogburn further noted that the Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) is hosting a Game Night on January 23, 2026, which is expected to have strong attendance. Jeff Clark asked whether open enrollment opportunities are being promoted at these events; Trip Cogburn confirmed that they are and will continue to be. Trip Cogburn also announced that an evening Open House is scheduled for Tuesday, February 3, 2026.
- 11) Charles Lopez reminded the Board that the next meeting will be on February 9th, 2026, at 5:00 PM. John Oxaal noted that he might not be able to attend the next meeting due to travel.
- 12) Adjournment- Jeff Clark made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and John Oxaal seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 6:09 pm.

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