

Thomas Edison Charter Schools  
Governing Board Meeting  
Date: May 7, 2025

Meeting called to order at 5:32 pm by Olivia Kirkham

**Board Members Present:** Olivia Kirkham, Ryan Reeves, and Lindsey Fowers

**Board Members Participating Electronically:** Jeff Mason and James Lyman

**Board Members Absent and Excused:** Corey Zhao

**Conducting:** Olivia Kirkham

**1. Adoption of the Agenda**

**2. Public Comment:**

Principal Brad Larsen thanked the governing board members for their many hours of work and support. Principal Melani Kirk agreed whole-heartedly.

**3. Approval of Minutes**

**Motion to approve the minutes as distributed:** Olivia Kirkham

**Second:** Ryan Reeves

**Affirmative Vote:** Olivia Kirkham, Ryan Reeves, Lindsey Fowers, Jeff Mason, and James Lyman

**Resolved:** unanimous

**4. Board Training: Brian Carpenter Podcast #8: Some Revolving Doors Lead to Dead Ends**

This training focuses on excessive school leader turnover, because leadership turnover is a key indicator a school will not be successful and will be low-performing. The training suggests five ways to prevent this turnover. First, the governing board needs to understand the importance and impact of picking the best school leader that fits the school. Second, the governing board needs to make sure the school's principles, policies, and practices are in line with good governance theories. Third, the governing board needs to enter into a written employment agreement with the school leader. Fourth, the governing board should evaluate the school leader's performance annually. Fifth, if the school leader needs to be terminated the governing board should do so in a lawfully, professionally, and humanely manner.

President Olivia Kirkham attended the SCSB conference recently, and she learned it can cost upwards of \$80,000 to find a charter school leader, and even then, it's really hard to find a high-quality candidate. She thanked the school leaders for all they do and hopes they will stay with the school for a long time.

## 5. Board Training Discussion: Policies & Procedures Section 7000 (Safety)

Board member Lindsey Fowers asked if the safety committee was combined between the campuses or if each campus has their own committee. Principal Kirk clarified by stating each school has their own safety committee, but administration from both campuses discuss safety issues during administration meetings to make sure both schools are proceeding lawfully, as well as in the same direction and doing similar things.

Board member Lindsey Fowers asked for the definition of a “volunteer employee” found in section 7105-Medication Administration. President Olivia Kirkham explained employees have to volunteer to be trained and to be willing to administer medication to students. Principal Kirk stated school volunteers are not allowed to administer medication, it must be an employee of the school. Everyone agreed the wording is confusing, but the wording comes directly from the law.

Board member Lindsey Fowers inquired if the schools have received parent feedback about the suicide prevention questions and if the methods are “too intrusive”. Principal Kirk said the parents are informed and involved first if there is any suicide ideation or if suicide is a concern. The school does not ask the students directly, the parents are notified and then the school works with the parents and the school does not ask questions to students without parental permission. Principal Brad Larsen said the school counselors take the lead on this and work with the students.

President Olivia Kirkham said there has been some changes to firearm safety instruction laws and as she was overlooking section 7000 she does not think the school needs to change its policies but the schools need to make sure that it’s aware of and adhere to the new changes. Principal Kirk said the schools are aware of the recent updates and they are working to implement them.

## 6. Section 7000 Law Reference Updates

Changes in this section include updates to the Utah Health Code, changes of Utah Code to 53 A to 53 G, and references updates.

**Motion to approve the changes to section 7000 as described in the handouts:** Olivia Kirkham

**Second:** Lindsey Fowers

**Affirmative Vote:** Olivia Kirkham, Ryan Reeves, Lindsey Fowers, Jeff Mason, and James Lyman

**Resolved:** unanimous

## 7. TECS Philosophy

This month's training is from page 2 of the charter, "Key Elements of the Charter" and is about how homework is an integral part of the academic program. Homework is important because it is a way to communicate with parents what is being taught at school, it teaches students time management skills and responsibility, it is used by teachers to assess whether students understand what is being taught, and it allows students to show that they understand what is being taught without their teacher's assistance. Jim Peterson explained some families leave Thomas Edison because the school is more challenging and parents don't like homework. Homework teaches skills like time management and good study habits which will benefit them in high school and college.

Principal Kirk agreed and stated the she explains and teaches the homework philosophy to all potential families interested in attending Thomas Edison.

Visitor Courtney Carpenter said the school's philosophy of teaching to the high and then accommodating the low, creates a beautiful relationship if parents get involved, because when parents and teachers to work together students get the accommodations that are the most beneficial.

Jim Peterson said it's common in most schools to teach to the lower level students, but when you teach to the higher-level students, the lower level students actually make more progress and gains.

Board member Lindsey Fowers said the practice of not doing homework can negatively affect children because the lesson of hard work goes to the wayside with the lack of homework and responsibility.

Courtney Carpenter shared an experience which she explained homework allows parents to know what concepts their children are struggling with and what concepts are their strengths. This allows the parent to support their child as well as to work together with the teacher to better help their child achieve their best.

#### **8. Financial Report: Jim Peterson**

Both campuses are operating below the projected monthly average. South campus is operating a little over \$34K a month below and North campus is just under \$19K per month. Both campuses have projects coming up but if they stay below the monthly projected average, then unused funds will move to cash surplus.

#### **9. School Data Report: Angela Barton**

This month's report is about the employee satisfaction NPS score. North campus scored an 82 and South scored a 90. Next month Angela will present the historical data on these scores.

#### **10. Fraud Risk Assessment Review: Steve Finley**

The Fraud Risk Assessment comes from the State Auditor's office and this report is from last year's assessment. A perfect score on fraud assessment is 395, the LEA scored 355 which puts them at low/very low for fraud to occur. The schools have been performing this audit for a few years and the plan is to continue.

## **11. Board Appointments and Election Results**

Eric Snelson has been elected from North Campus to serve a three-year term to replace James Lyman. His application shows he is a doctor and a parent of students at North campus. Principal Jamie Lewis said he is a big supporter of the school and his wife is very involved in the parent organization.

The South campus has two openings and there were several board applicants. Two candidates were selected and being presented to the board for a vote. Courtney Carpenter, she taught at middle school English and Literature at South for four years and left to raise her family. She wants to serve on the governing board as a way to give back to the school.

**Motion to appoint Courtney Carpenter to replace Corey Zhao for a three-year term:** Olivia Kirkham

**Second:** Lindsey Fowers

**Affirmative Vote:** Olivia Kirkham, Ryan Reeves, Lindsey Fowers, Jeff Mason, and James Lyman

**Resolved:** unanimous

The second candidate for South campus is Esther Israelsen. She has been a parent at Thomas Edison for eight years, and has 4 children currently enrolled. She owns a small business, and has been a financial administrator. She is committed to personal growth and the vision of Thomas Edison schools.

**Motion to appoint Esther Israelsen to finish out the final year of Olivia Kirkham's board term:** Olivia Kirkham

**Second:** Lindsey Fowers

**Affirmative Vote:** Olivia Kirkham, Ryan Reeves, Lindsey Fowers, Jeff Mason, and James Lyman

**Resolved:** unanimous

President Olivia Kirkham thanked James Lyman and Corey Zhao for their dedicated service to the board and all the time and effort they devoted.

Principal Jamie Lewis thanked Olivia Kirkham for all the work she has done to organize and refine the board's processes and procedures. The work she has done is amazing, and everyone who comes after her will be the recipients of all her hard work.

Principal Kirk agreed and thanked Olivia for the many hours she has selflessly put into making things great.

Steve Finley commented that he has worked with over a hundred of board presidents, and Olivia is the best that he's ever seen.

Angela Barton said she will always remember the stance and leadership that Olivia took after the school's tragic loss of Shem Smith. Her heart-felt words helped to unify everyone and showed her leadership skills.

## **12. Student Mental Health Screener Determination (Utah Code 53F-2-522)**

The board needs to decide if they are going to have the schools participate in a student mental health screener. The screener will help determine if a student might have anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation. Schools that participate may be eligible for grant funds, and parents may get some funds to help with professional services for their students. Data from schools that are participating show there is not enough funds given for the cost of the support staff required to do these mental health screeners.

The schools have requested to opt-out of this program in the past. The program is becoming more popular, but that doesn't necessarily mean it's a good fit or that it aligns with the Thomas Edison philosophy.

Principal Kirk requested the board hold off on approving this for another year because the school already has a counselor and implemented a therapist. Due to the high parental involvement already occurring, teachers already have good relationships with parents and if there is anything that is of concern, parents are notified immediately.

Board member Ryan Reeves does not agree with implementing these surveys.

Board member Lindsey Fowers asked if the schools agreed to the surveys does that cancel the funding they received for the therapists. The answer is no, these are two separate grants. President Olivia Kirkham explained this is strictly for providing the surveys to students. In the past, the school has rejected the surveys because it provides not other assistance, and it doesn't help parents enough with paying for services for their child.

Board member Lindsey Fowers asked if the school counselors have been asked about giving the surveys. Principal Kirk said the counselors have not been asked directly, but the school is already very aware of the students who struggle with anxiety and depression and the school already communicates those concerns with parents. President Olivia Kirkham, said the program is not set up to provide students and families with services, so she does not feel the school should start this program this year.

Board member Lindsey Fowers asked if the screener would make the school liable for not providing services for students if the screener help discover a student was in need. Board member Ryan Reeves said yes, the screener could make the school more liable for not providing services. He thinks the school is already doing a great job in providing for and taking care of the mental health needs of the students and there's no reason to change that right now. Principal Brad Larsen agrees, the school already is well aware of students who need mental health care, he believes the screener will not provide any more assistance. The school's current procedures are identifying these issues much faster and more accurately.

**Motion to not participate in the mental health screener:** Olivia Kirkham

**Second:** Ryan Reeves

**Affirmative Vote:** Olivia Kirkham, Ryan Reeves, Lindsey Fowers, Jeff Mason, and James Lyman

**Resolved:** unanimous

#### **13. Data Governance Policy #6108: Nichole Knudson**

The schools Data Governance Policy was audited by the state Data Privacy Team. The requested the school update the policy to include correct code and updated procedures. The school's new Data Governance Policy is modeled after the state template and has already been given the stamp of approval by the state Data Governance Team.

**Motion to approve the updated Data Governance Policy:** Olivia Kirkham

**Second:** Ryan Reeves

**Affirmative Vote:** Olivia Kirkham, Ryan Reeves, Lindsey Fowers, Jeff Mason, and James Lyman

**Resolved:** unanimous

#### **14. Student Placement Policy #2102: Jamie Lewis**

The policy is outdated and removing the parenthesis which states the elementary grades are K-4 for South campus.

**Motion to approve the change to the Student Placement Policy:** Olivia Kirkham

**Second:** Lindsey Fowers

**Affirmative Vote:** Olivia Kirkham, Ryan Reeves, Lindsey Fowers, Jeff Mason, and James Lyman

**Resolved:** unanimous

#### **15. Governing Board Appeal Form #1307a: Olivia Kirkham**

The governing board has an appeal policy but when parents are lodging a complaint they skip most of the steps listed in the policy. Olivia Kirkham has made a form which list guidelines and procedures when someone needs to appeal to the board and provide the board with the proper

information. The vote is in regards to the content of the form not in the physical or electronic appearance of the form.

**Motion to approve the Board Appeal Form which is procedures 1307a:** Olivia Kirkham

**Second:** Lindsey Fowers

**Affirmative Vote:** Olivia Kirkham, Ryan Reeves, Lindsey Fowers, Jeff Mason, and James Lyman

**Resolved:** unanimous

#### **16. Closed Session pursuant to Utah Code 52-4-205(1)(a): Principal Salary Adjustments**

Motion to move adjourn to a closed meeting of the Thomas Edison Charter School governing board pursuant to Utah Code 52-4-205(1)(a) for the purpose of discussing the character, professional competence, or physical or mental health of an individual. The closed session will be held at Thomas Edison Charter School South on May 7, 2025 at 6:23 pm: Olivia Kirkham

**Affirmative Vote:** Olivia Kirkham, Ryan Reeves, Lindsey Fowers, Jeff Mason, and James Lyman

**Resolved:** unanimous

Reconvening of the Thomas Edison Charter School Governing Board Open Session on May 7, 2025 at 6:30 pm.

Present: Olivia Kirkham, Lindsey Fowers, Ryan Reeves, Jeff Mason, and James Lyman

#### **17. Principal Salary Adjustments**

**Motion to increase Brad's salary to \$115K and increase to Melani's salary by 5%, as well as \$1000**

**bonuses for Jamie, Melani, and Brad:** James Lyman

**Second:** Olivia Kirkham

**Affirmative Vote:** Olivia Kirkham, Ryan Reeves, Lindsey Fowers, Jeff Mason, and James Lyman

**Resolved:** unanimous

#### **18. Principal Reports: Melani Kirk and Brad Larsen**

South:

- Enrollment for the upcoming school is at 688, but there are 10 middle school students on the wait-list that still need to take a placement test. She also has a new parent meeting with 6 kindergarten parents.
- Student Council elections occurred and there were a lot of candidates. The new presidency is listed in the handouts.
- 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduation is coming up. This year, students will be the speakers and reading and handing out the graduation certificates.

- Aide and teacher conferences are complete and it was a great opportunity to meet with everyone individually and give them offer letters for the upcoming school year. Due to the expected increased insurance costs, the offer letters listed level and range increases only. Principal Kirk explained to teachers about the upcoming insurance changes. Principal Brad Larsen explained the insurance costs are the reason administration asked to wait on voting on the teacher's salary adjustments.
- Teacher appreciation is this week and the parent organization is doing something every day to recognize teachers.
- South campus has one student moving on to the National History Day competition. Rachel Winkler is going to be going to Washington D.C.
- Seven elementary teachers will be switching grade levels for the upcoming school year. The new teacher positions are listed in the handouts. There will be a new third grade teacher, Ashley Roy; the current music teacher, Katie McKay is retiring, and the Elementary PE teacher, Jenna Oakey, will be taking her place; one of the art teachers, Steve Kropp, is retiring as well, and the school has rehired a former art teacher, Rob Davis, to be his replacement. The school hired Brooke Geary, to be the new PE teacher.
- Vice Principal Brooke Mullen explained the summer school improvement projects will be fixing and updating the concrete in the Kindergarten playground, leveling and hydroseeding the back field, replacing the old carpet on the hallway walls, and they are collecting bids for new lawncare and snow removal.
- Katie McKay did her final school play with her choir group. The students did an amazing job and were so energetic and it was a delightful play.

North:

- Upcoming year enrollment is similar to previous years, but they are really need 6 more kindergarteners to enroll.
- Combined band and orchestra concerts went extremely well.
- North Campus has two students going to the National History Day in Washington D.C.
- The spring family activity was the Daddy Daughter Dance and he gave his PO a huge shout out for all that they do.
- The school play was written and choreographed by the choir students. They based it off of the Thorne Museum in Chicago.
- North campus does not have any personnel or vendor requests at this time. He will have personnel requests in June. Upcoming projects include updating the entry system, updating cameras, and refinishing the parking lot.

## 19. Vendor and Personnel Requests: Melani Kirk and Brad Larsen

**Motion to approve the three new personnel on South Campus, Ashley Roy, Rob Davis, and Brooke Geary:** Olivia Kirkham

**Second:** Lindsey Fowers

**Affirmative Vote:** Olivia Kirkham, Ryan Reeves, Lindsey Fowers, Jeff Mason, and James Lyman

**Resolved:** unanimous

14. Adjourn at 6:49 pm.