

Syracuse Arts Academy

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Thursday, December 18, 2025

Location: North Campus, 357 S 1550 W, Syracuse, UT 84075



In Attendance: Art Hansen, Nate Schow, Mary Johnston, Rene Dreiling, Neil Garner,

Others in Attendance: Nathan Steed, Brad Taylor, Kellie Mudrow, Heidi Bauerle, Dawn Kawaguchi, Katie Valentin, David Robertson (via Zoom), Jon McQueary (5:34 p.m. via Zoom),

SAA Mission Statement

The purpose of Syracuse Arts Academy is to develop respectful, confident citizens in a solid educational environment enriched by artistic expression.

Minutes

2025-2026 Board Vision Plan

CTE/CCA Pathway Funding Access Policy Project
Lunch & SpEd Budget Management
Close Specific Curriculum & Learning Gaps
Build a Business Case for Phased-In Campus Expansions
Engaging Externally

5:30 PM – INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

- Welcome & Roll Call – Mary Johnston
 - Board Mission – Rene Dreiling
 - School Mission – Neil Garner

There was no PUBLIC COMMENT.

REPORTS

- Update on School Bonding – Brad Taylor provided a review of all prior items completed in support of the bonding requirements. David Robertson presented a detailed report on the selection of underwriters for the School's upcoming bond issuance. Given the size of the transaction, he recommended that the Board engage two underwriters to jointly market and sell the bonds, with DA Davidson serving as the lead underwriter and Raymond James acting as co-manager. He noted that the School will pay a single underwriting fee, which will be shared between the two firms. David also outlined the process, timeline, and next steps for advancing the bond transaction, one of which would be the submission of financing application to the Utah Charter School Finance Authority (UCSFA) and the required \$30,000 deposit which is also on the voting items tonight. Lastly, he indicated that an engagement letter for the underwriters will need to be executed by the Board

President as well as the UCSFA application. *David Robertston was excused at 5:45 p.m.*

➤ **Academica West**

- *Introduction to Human Resources* – Katie Valentin from AW’s HR department provided an overview of the team’s role in supporting the School, including recruitment, compliance, licensing, and employee benefits. She also outlined additional responsibilities such as tracking teaching assistants who work with specific subgroups and must either pass the Praxis exam or hold an associate degree to be considered highly qualified, state-required trainings and key employment law areas—specifically FMLA, ADA, corrective action, performance plans, and, when necessary, termination. Katie also stated that FMLA and ADA have become a significant portion of the department’s workload. Kellie took a moment to thank Katie, stating that she has been phenomenal and consistently stays on top of everything so that Kellie doesn’t have to. She noted that whenever an issue arises, she can simply call Katie, who promptly provides updates and helps her work through situations at the School. Kellie added that Katie’s calm demeanor is especially appreciated. Mary commented that this level of support is precisely why the School partners with AW—so that Kellie can focus on students rather than managing some of the complex HR matters. *Katie Valentin was excused at 5:55 p.m.*

➤ **Board of Directors (cont.)**

- *Financial Update* – Rene Dreiling stated that he spoke with Jon earlier since he has been sick but he is on Zoom to talk about the details. Jon McQueary discussed the budget and financial status of the School. He reported that the School is 41.7% through the fiscal year, with revenues at 41.3% of target noting that federal funds are lower than expected but will be drawn down in January and February. Jon highlighted several budget categories where actual expenditures exceed the budget by more than 5%, including supplies and materials, which is primarily due to the new campus opening. He explained that many of these expenses were anticipated but occurred earlier than expected. Jon also discussed the statement of activities, clarifying that the negative net income is due to budgeted amounts being lower than current figures, and explained the use of PTIF funds for the new campus. Jon explained that the PTIF had just under \$6 million, with an additional \$3.5 million in restricted cash, bringing the total to \$11.8 million. Kellie and Jon discussed the audit situation, with Kellie reporting that a letter had been sent in error and the audit was nearly complete.

➤ **Administration**

- *State of the School* – Kellie Mudrow presented the enrollment data, noting that the School currently has 2,025 students. She added that despite the new DSD elementary school opening near the South campus, all but eight students have registered for next year. Kellie also reported that the lottery for the upcoming school year opened on December 1st, and the School has already received 135 new family applications, including 85 kindergartners at the South campus. The discussion concluded with an update on SPED funding. Kellie informed the Board that the state had planned to cut \$1.2 million beginning December 1st; however, through Jon’s advocacy, the School was able to avoid cuts for this year. She noted that Jon

continues to work with USBE to develop a plan for future adjustments and has requested at least a three-year transition period. Kellie closed her state-of-the-school report by recognizing Nathan Steed for his dedication, commitment and support—not only in his daily responsibilities but also for setting up the Zoom meeting with a large TV screen for the Board, a new addition to the library today. She added that she had planned to recognize and celebrate Nathan even before he mentioned he would be staying to attend the meeting. Kellie expressed her deep appreciation for Nathan’s daily support, noting that the School is fortunate to have him and that she would be lost without his help. Mary added that Nathan’s kindness and courtesy are exceptional – qualities not always common in the IT field.

- Toilet Training Administrative Procedures – These procedures correspond with the Toilet Training Policy that was approved last meeting. Kellie reviewed the administrative procedures stating that if it is determined through child find that there is not a disability, the student may be unenrolled, and the school may give up their position or hold it.

CONSENT ITEMS

- October 9, 2025, Board Meeting Minutes – There was no further discussion. **Neil Garner made a motion to approve the consent items with no corrections. Rene Dreiling seconded the motion. The votes were as follows:**

Mary Johnston – Aye

Neil Garner – Aye

Rene Dreiling – Aye

Art Hansen – Aye

Nate Schow – Aye

Motion passed unanimously.

VOTING ITEMS

- Award Underwriters – This was discussed earlier in the meeting under reports. There was a discussion on how many times has AW has worked with two underwriters. Brad stated that it has only been a couple of times usually when the bond is very large. Kellie and board are happy that there is one shared fee for the underwriters. David Robertson will be leading these two groups. Mary stated that is glad that Brad oversees everything because he is the smartest person of all.
- Finance Authority Application and Deposit – There was no further discussion.
- 2026-2027 School Calendar – Kellie Mudrow reviewed the calendar and compared the big holidays with DSD. It is very comparable to DSD. She thanked Dawn and Heidi for their help with the calendar. It is possible that we may have an amendment, but it will most likely be moving the May comp day to October 14th to be consistent with DSD. She also added that kindergarteners will do three days of testing and start on Friday. Brad wanted it on the record that this is a great calendar and that he doesn’t care for DSD’s calendar.
- Amended Instructional Materials Policy – Kellie Mudrow reviewed the amended Instructional Materials Policy which the legislature defined sensitive material and with that the state renumbered criminal codes. The policy was updated to reflect those updated codes.

- Amended Paid Parental & Postpartum Recovery Leave Policy – Kellie Mudrow reviewed the amended Paid Parental & Postpartum Recovery Leave Policy which clarifies the two paid leave periods are 15 contracted days opposed to 3 calendar weeks.

Rene Dreiling made a motion to approve the following items.

- **Approve DA Davidson as the lead underwriter on the upcoming bond transaction and Raymond James as co-manager and authorize the Board President to sign the agreements when they are reviewed and ready;**
- **Approve the submission of the financing application to the UCSFA when ready, authorize the Board President to sign the application, and authorize the \$30,000 deposit to be submitted at the same time as the application;**
- **Approve the 2026-2027 school calendar**
- **Approve the Amended Instructional Materials Policy; and**
- **Approve the Amended Paid Parental & Postpartum Recovery Leave Policy.**

Art Hansen seconded the motion. The votes were as follows:

**Mary Johnston – Aye
Neil Garner – Aye
Rene Dreiling – Aye
Art Hansen – Aye
Nate Schow – Aye**

Motion passed unanimously.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

- Calendaring Items – ALL

- Next Pre-Board Meeting on January 22nd
- Next Board Meeting on February 5th
- NCSC26 New Orleans, LA June 24-26 (Wed-Fri). Early registration opens in January. Nate and Art are interested in attending.

6:51 PM – Nate Schow made a motion to enter a CLOSED SESSION to discuss the character, professional competence, or physical or mental health of an individual and/or to discuss deployment of security personnel, devices, or systems pursuant to Utah Code 52-4-205(1)(a) & (f) at the North campus library. Neil Garner seconded the motion. The roll call votes were as follows:

**Mary Johnston – Aye
Neil Garner – Aye
Rene Dreiling – Aye
Art Hansen – Aye
Nate Schow – Aye**

Motion passed unanimously.

Heidi Bauerle, Brad Taylor, and Nathan Steed were excused at 6:52 p.m. Jon McQueary was excused at 6:57 p.m.

8:08 PM – Neil Garner made a motion to exit the CLOSED SESSION. Rene Dreiling seconded the motion. The votes were as follows:

Mary Johnston – Aye
Neil Garner – Aye
Rene Dreiling – Aye
Art Hansen – Aye
Nate Schow – Aye
Motion passed unanimously.

8:08 PM – Nate Schow made a motion to ADJORN the meeting. Art Hansen seconded the motion. The votes were as follows:

Mary Johnston – Aye
Neil Garner – Aye
Rene Dreiling – Aye
Art Hansen – Aye
Nate Schow – Aye
Motion passed unanimously.

**Syracuse Arts Academy
Board of Directors
Closed Session Statement
Thursday, December 18, 2025**

Location: North Campus, 357 S 1550 W, Syracuse, UT 84075



CLOSED SESSION SWORN STATEMENT:

*At a duly noticed public meeting held on the date listed above, the board of directors for **SYRACUSE ARTS ACADEMY** entered into a closed session for the sole purpose of discussing the character, professional competence, or physical or mental health of an individual and/or to discuss deployment of security personnel, devices, or systems pursuant to Utah Code 52-4-205(1)(a) & (f)*

I declare under criminal penalty under the law of Utah that the foregoing is true and correct.

Signed on the 18 day of Dec, 2025, at Syracuse, Utah.


Mary Johnston
Board Chair