

Rochester Beacon Academy Board Meeting Minutes

Date: May 15, 2025

Time: 6:00 pm – 6:30 pm

Location: 974 Skyline Drive SW
Rochester, MN 55902

Call Meeting to Order:

Reading of Mission: RBA equitably meets the unique needs of students by inspiring integrity, cultivating compassion, and practicing perseverance. Read by: Christina Pruka

Attendance: To establish quorum

Name	Attendance
Dean Frank, Chair	Present
Elisa Bruske, Vice Chair	Absent
Christina Pruka, Treasurer	Present
Khristie Cano, Secretary	Present
Lizzi Clobes, Teacher Member	Present
Ellen Nelson, Teacher Member	Present

Guests

Beth Bruns	Executive Director, Ex Officio
Traci LaFerriere	Business Manager

Kate Gustafson
Tammy Bennett
Lauren Henrickson
Lori Rogers
Erin Volkart

Conflict of interest:

Approval of Agenda:

Motion	Second Vote	Move
Lizzi	Khristie	Approved

Dean Frank, Chair	Aye
Elisa Bruske, Vice Chair	No vote
Christina Pruka, Treasurer	Aye
Khristie Cano, Secretary	Aye
Lizzi Clobes, Teacher Member	Aye
Ellen Nelson, Teacher Member	Aye

Public Forum - Public Forum Guidelines -

Public Statement:

Tami Bennett

I believe in the importance of continuous improvement, personally, professionally, and systemically. Growth in education is essential, not only for student success, but for maintaining high standards as educators and as leaders. However, I recognize that meaningful improvement requires willingness, proper training, and the necessary skills to teach or lead effectively. When these elements are missing, progress becomes difficult, if not impossible.

RBA lacks many foundational frameworks necessary for a school to be functional. One such framework that has been lacking is a PBIS framework, which supports positive behaviors on the foundation of understanding behaviors, consequences to those behaviors, and administrative support to follow through, thus reducing negative behaviors. I joined the RBA WAY Committee to build the frameworks necessary to support RBA. Frameworks must be based in research and evidence with staff commitment and consistent implementation to be successful.

The majority of staff acknowledge the lack of administrative support and unfairness at RBA concerning student behaviors and discipline. Students are disrespectful to staff. Skip classes engage in lying. Staff members describe our workplace as toxic and often engage in various behaviors that perpetuate it. In one instance, a student claimed I grabbed their arm and blocked them from leaving class, which did not occur. Then the student later claimed that I watched or recorded a fight between parents that took place outside of school here. I closed the blinds and I continued to teach to not disrupt my class. It is known that others did watch the fight and a student recorded the fight. This student here has been called out online numerous times by administrators, however, no consequences were had. We know from research that when you ignore a child's misbehavior or downplay it, it not only does not provide a consequence, the child learns they can get away with it. That negative behavior will only increase.

In another instance, staff reported that I touched a student. This student took my hand to apologize for their behavior that occurred earlier in the week, and I automatically reciprocated by taking their hand and releasing it within seconds. After they apologized, I accepted and I reminded them to complete their project. It is not illegal to touch a student. RBA has a hands-off discipline policy noted in the staff handbook on corporal punishment, which is not the same as a reciprocated gesture. According to the teacher code of ethics, it is unethical to hug students, yet not discussed in the staff handbook and the majority of the staff hug students.

It is unethical to contact students outside of school and stated in the staff handbook that staff should not accept friend requests on social media. Yet there are a few staff that do so regardless. If you decide to terminate my agreement for touching a student, then the same consequences should happen to at least 75% of the RBA staff for touching students and not following staff expectations.

Thank you.

Old Business

1. Approve April 2025 Board Minutes

Motion	Second Vote	Move
Christina	Ellen	Approved

Dean Frank, Chair	Aye
Elisa Bruske, Vice Chair	No vote
Christina Pruka, Treasurer	Aye
Khristie Cano, Secretary	Aye
Lizzi Clobes, Teacher Member	Aye
Ellen Nelson, Teacher Member	Aye

2. Committee Reports

Community Outreach and Recruitment Committee (CORC)

- The board was informed that the Spring Fling event was successful, generating approximately \$2,400 in funds.
- Proceeds from the event will support the senior class trip, which has been planned for the Wisconsin Dells.
- Event organizers reported collecting feedback and notes to inform improvements for next year's Spring Fling.
- The board was invited to share any additional suggestions or ideas for future events.
- Plans are in place to explore additional fundraising strategies over the summer, including crowdsourcing and other methods to support senior activities.

Policy Committee

- The committee reported that minor revisions were made to several previously approved policies. These changes were administrative in nature (e.g., updating names/titles) and did not alter the substance of the policies.
- Final revisions to the Admissions and Lottery Policy, as requested by Glory, have been completed and shared with the board for review. The committee noted that several policies remain in progress, with additional policies identified for review and completion over the summer months.
- These updates will be incorporated prior to finalizing the Student/Family Handbook for the upcoming school year.
- The committee agreed to pause policy work for the remainder of May and will resume in June.

District Advisory Committee (DAC)

- Ellen reported that she and Megan attended a literacy planning workshop through the Southeast Service Cooperative. During the session, they were able to draft the majority of the school's literacy plan, with only a few items remaining for consultation with Beth.
- The school was awarded the Groves Foundation grant to support a Tier 2 reading intervention program.
- Work is ongoing to establish a District Literacy Lead position.
- In curriculum updates:
 - o The school plans to purchase Amplify ELA for grades 6–8.
 - o HMH Grammar Workbooks will be purchased.
 - o An inventory is currently underway to identify missing books and materials, with approximately \$5,000 budgeted to rebuild and establish a library collection.
 - o No additional intervention curriculum will be purchased at this time due to the recently awarded

- grant. Future purchases may be considered after the Minnesota Department of Education releases an updated list of recommended curricula in November and once new staff are in place.
- The district will transition to FastBridge for assessments, acknowledging a learning curve but anticipating improved long-term outcomes.
- The school is also reviewing implementation of the Capti Reading Dyslexia Screening Tool, the only screener currently approved by MDE. Cost and contract details are still pending
- Senior Progress Update
 - Staff reported strong progress toward graduation for senior students, with only three students remaining under review pending final grade updates.
 - Ongoing support includes daily monitoring, targeted assignment completion, and consistent communication between teachers and support staff.
 - Staff will continue to monitor progress closely as final grades are released.

Finance and Facilities: Consideration of Claims and Accounts

- The Finance Committee reported that the FY25 financials (actuals) and the draft FY26 budget were reviewed. Board members received documents reflecting both current year actuals and projected figures for the upcoming fiscal year.
- A five-year budget projection was developed in response to authorizer requirements. The projection reflects a conservative, “worst-case scenario” model based on lower enrollment estimates. Even under these assumptions, the school remains in a positive financial position.
- The board will review the proposed budget over the next month, with formal approval scheduled for June.
- It was noted that the salary scale for teaching staff and paraprofessionals, approved at the previous board meeting, will be held for two years (FY26–FY27), with a review planned at the end of FY27.
- The FY26 budget adoption and any necessary revisions will be presented for approval at the next board meeting.
- It was clarified that an additional \$13,000 was approved in April (FY25) for the curriculum expenditure line. This item was not reflected in prior meeting minutes and will be documented in the current meeting record.
- Discussion occurred regarding administrative compensation. The board confirmed that an administrative salary structure has not yet been finalized. Leadership will prepare and present a clear, visual proposal outlining compensation considerations and budget impact at a June meeting.
- The Finance Committee also referenced the monthly financial report prepared by Tracy, which was shared with board members for review.

3. Directors Report

As the 2024–2025 school year winds down, I find myself filled with both gratitude and joy as I reflect on what has truly been a remarkable year—my first as your Executive Director.

When I stepped into this role, I did so with hope in my heart and a determination to help steer the ship forward—and what a voyage it has been. Together, we have navigated meaningful change and exciting growth. From building a new leadership team and refining our systems, to launching a new website and strengthening structures that support both organization and innovation, we have made progress that will benefit our school community for years to come.

Most importantly, we have remained grounded in what matters most: student learning and a strong, connected community.

Of course, no school year comes without its challenges—and this year certainly brought a few, including the memorable stretch of 92-degree days without air conditioning. Yet, through it all, our staff, students, and families demonstrated resilience, flexibility, and determination (with a few strategically placed fans along the way).

I would like to take a moment to recognize some of the incredible teams whose efforts made this year especially meaningful:

- The Events Committee, for hosting a stunning Renaissance-themed prom—elegant, joyful, and truly

unforgettable.

- The CORC Committee, for their dedication in raising \$2,400 to support our seniors' trip—an incredible gift to our graduates.
- The Graduation Committee, who are hard at work preparing for our ninth graduation ceremony on May 29—a milestone celebration of our students' achievements.

And to our students—we see you. You have worked hard, pushed yourselves, and grown in knowledge, character, and community. Thank you for choosing us as your place of learning. It has been an honor to watch you rise.

Finally, thank you to our board members for your insight, encouragement, and trust. I am proud of all we have accomplished together and look forward to the continued work ahead.

Enrollment

Student Enrollment as of 5/13/2025 Total:114

6	7	8	9	10	11	12+
5	13	15	19 (+1)	16	27 (-1)	19

2025-2026 School Year Enrollment

6	7	8	9	10	11	12
9	9	18	20	20	20	28 + 8
1	2	3	0	2	3	Waitlist

RBA Personal Resignations

RBA Personnel New Hires

- Karis Kupinski, effective April 22, 2025, at \$21.25 hr

RBA Personal Terminations / Non-renewal

- Recommendation T. Bennett [Closed Meeting]
- Ms. Bennett was given the option to keep the board meeting open or to move into a closed session to discuss the recommendation of non-renewal.
- Ms. Bennett declined to remain at the meeting; therefore, the discussion remained in open session.
- After the vote, Ms. Bennett requested the following
 - After school hours the following day, to remove several items from their classroom
 - Access to Intellectual Property

Motion to terminate Tami Bennett, Science Teacher, effective May 15, 2026

Motion	Second Vote	Move
Christina	Lizzi	Approved

Dean Frank, Chair	Aye
Elisa Bruske, Vice Chair	No vote

Christina Pruka, Treasurer	Aye
Khristie Cano, Secretary	Aye
Lizzi Clobes, Teacher Member	Aye
Ellen Nelson, Teacher Member	Aye

New Business:

Board Election Results:

- There was a tie between Lizzi Clobes, Art Teacher, and two written-in nominations: Brenna Salfi, Special Education Teacher & Lori Rogers, Special Education Teacher.
- It was clarified that, per the bylaws, advancement requires representation from at least two categories, with one individual from each category (parent, teacher, community)
- It was agreed that nominated staff members should be formally notified and given the option to accept or decline participation. A deadline will be established by which nominees must declare their decision (yes or no).
- Further discussion and clarification were requested regarding the board election policy: The board agreed to review the policy again to ensure alignment with these interpretations before proceeding.

Enrollment and Lottery Policy 500

1. Staff Preference in Enrollment Lottery

The Board discussed whether the school will provide enrollment preference to children of staff prior to the general lottery, as permitted by law.

- It was noted that historically, preference had been informally given, particularly during the school's early years when many founding members had children enrolled.
- Board members discussed the balance between offering this as a staff benefit and ensuring equitable access for all students.
- Concern was raised that using "may" in the policy could create inconsistency in application and potential inequities.

Decision:

The Board agreed to revise the language from "may give preference" to "shall give preference" to ensure clarity and consistent implementation of the policy.

- All instances of "will" in this section will also be updated to "shall" for consistency.
- The Board acknowledged this decision can be revisited in the future if needed.

2. Lottery Timeline and Notification Requirements

The Board reviewed the timeline for conducting the enrollment lottery and notifying families in relation to the March 1 transportation notification deadline.

- Current policy states the lottery will be held no later than the first Monday following the January 31 application deadline.
- Discussion centered on whether the timeframe (particularly if the deadline falls on a Friday) provides sufficient time to notify families and meet district transportation deadlines.
- It was acknowledged that this may require weekend work to ensure timely communication.
- At this time, the volume of applicants is manageable and does not present a burden.

Conclusion:

The Board determined that the current timeline is sufficient and will remain unchanged. The situation may be

revisited if applicant numbers significantly increase in the future.

3. Enrollment Paperwork

Discussion:

The board reviewed the current policy requiring families to complete and return enrollment paperwork within 30 calendar days of acceptance. Concern was raised that 30 days is excessive and may delay filling open seats if families do not intend to enroll.

The board discussed reducing the timeline and considered 14 and 15 calendar days. The board determined that using business days would provide greater clarity. It was agreed that 10 business days (approximately two weeks) is a more appropriate timeframe for completion of enrollment paperwork.

The board also discussed improvements to the enrollment process, including:

- Limiting initial application questions to those required by statute
- Adding an option for families to select a preference for paper or digital enrollment materials
- Providing mailed materials to families without printer access, with documentation of the mailing date

The board noted that the policy number will change from 500 to 509 to align with MSBA

Motion to approve revisions to Enrollment and Lottery Policy 500, including reducing the enrollment paperwork completion window to 10 business days and aligning Policy 509 accordingly.

Motion	Second Vote	Move
Lizzi	Ellen	Approved

Dean Frank, Chair	Aye
Elisa Bruske, Vice Chair	No vote
Christina Pruka, Treasurer	Aye
Khristie Cano, Secretary	Aye
Lizzi Clobes, Teacher Member	Aye
Ellen Nelson, Teacher Member	Aye

Motion to approve the 5-Year Budget

Motion	Second Vote	Move
Lizzi	Ellen	Approved

Dean Frank, Chair	Aye
Elisa Bruske, Vice Chair	No vote

Christina Pruka, Treasurer	Aye
Khristie Cano, Secretary	Aye
Lizzi Clobes, Teacher Member	Aye
Ellen Nelson, Teacher Member	Aye

Executive Director Evaluation

- The board discussed the Executive Director evaluation process currently being completed by the Personnel Committee.
- The Personnel Chair reported that materials disbursed to the administration team for their review on the Executive Director have been received
- It was noted that a staff survey intended to gather additional feedback regarding the Executive Director's performance had not yet been distributed. The committee acknowledged the delay and stated that the survey would be sent to staff shortly in order to include staff input in the evaluation process.
- The committee indicated that the evaluation report is still in progress and has not yet been finalized.
- Administration clarified that the Executive Director evaluation and work agreement renewal determination must be completed prior to June 30 in accordance with administrative agreement timelines.

Contract Goals

- Administration reported that work is being finalized on the Executive Director contract goals with support from the Language Arts Teachers
- Goals will include the following
 - Student performance measures related to MCA Reading and MCA Math scores.
 - Due to the district's transition from NWEA MAP to FastBridge, the Math and Language Arts departments will collaborate to determine next steps after the first year of baseline data.
 - Administration shared data from the North Star Accountability System comparing RBA's Academy's special education performance with RPS.
 - Science performance rates were reported to be comparable.
 - Reading scores were reported to be approximately 9% lower.
 - Math scores were reported to be approximately 20% lower.
- Due to limited achievement gap differences in some areas, administration indicated that graduation rate differences, approximately 26%, may instead serve as a focus area within Goal 5.
- Additional contract goals include: Increasing overall student graduation rates, ensuring students are college and career ready, using science MCA data as an indicator of critical thinking and readiness skills.
- The finalized goals will be included in a report shared with the board and submitted to the authorizer.

Committee Meeting:

Finance & Facility Committee: Thursday, June 19, 2025, at 5:00 pm via Google Meet
Community Outreach and Recruitment Committee (CORC): Monday, June 9, 2025, at 5:00 pm via Google Meet
Policy Committee: Tuesday, June 3, 2025, at 3:00 pm via Google Meet
District Advisory Committee (DAC): Thursday, June 12, 2025, at 5:00 pm via Google Meet

RBA Events: Graduation is on May 29, 2025 at 5:30 pm

Next Meeting: Special Meeting on Thursday, June 5, 2025 ,at 6:00 pm, virtual

Regular Board Meeting on Thursday, June 19, 2025, at 6:00 pm, in-person

Adjourn Meeting:

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:31pm

Move	Second Vote	Motion
Christina	Khristie	Approve

Dean Frank, Chair	Aye
Elisa Bruske, Vice Chair	NV
Christina Pruka, Treasurer	Aye
Khristie Cano, Secretary	Aye
Lizzi Clobes, Teacher Member	Aye
Ellen Nelson, Teacher Member	Aye

Respectfully submitted by: Khristie Cano