

# DISCOVERY SCHOOLS GOVERNING BOARD MEETING MINUTES

**Meeting Type:** Combined Regular Monthly Meeting of the Governing Board

**Date:** Tuesday, November 18, 2025

**Time:** 9:15 AM to 11:35 AM

**Location:** Discovery Academy of Lake Alfred

**Presiding Officer:** Nancy Daley, Chairperson

**Minutes Prepared By:** Tania Sims, Secretary

The Regular Monthly Meeting of the Discovery Schools Governing Board was called to order at 9:15 AM by Nancy Daley, Chairperson.

*Board Members Present:*

- Kevin Warren, President/Treasurer
- Nancy Daley, Chairperson/Community Member
- Charlotte Butler, Community Member
- Doretha Tillman, Community Member
- Tania Sims, Secretary

*Board Members Absent:*

John Taylor

*Others in Attendance:*

- Gordon Crozier, CFO from Building Hope
- Darryl Jemison, Principal
- Stephen Frabotta, Principal
- Sandy Altamirano, Teacher of the Year
- Karie Schenkenberg, Teacher Representative

## I. Approval of Previous Minutes

**Main motion:** Moved by Doretha Tillman to approve DALA minutes from the October 21, 2025, meeting as written. Charlotte Butler seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

**Main motion:** Moved by Charlotte Butler to approve DHS minutes from the October 21, 2025, meeting as written. Doretha Tillman seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

## II. Treasurer's Report - Mr. Warren and Mr. Gordon Crozier

Mr. Gordon Crozier, CFO from Building Hope, presented the financial overview for Discovery Schools. (via Zoom)

### **Key Financial Highlights:**

- The combined financial position for the schools is strong, with approximately \$1.1 million in operating accounts. This is a conservative figure, as recent FEFP payments had just been processed and transferred appropriately.

Board Approved  
1/20/26  
Date

### **Food Service Program Analysis:**

- Mr. Crozier clarified that maintaining a separate bank account for food service is a best practice, though not mandated by the state.
- He reported that the DALA food service account holds a balance of approximately **\$576,000**. This balance is high relative to operational needs, as the monthly expenditures rate is roughly \$80,000.
- He noted the annual requirement to submit a cost report to state and federal authorities, demonstrating exclusive use of food service funds for that purpose.

### **Action Plan to Align Food Service Funds:**

Mr. Kevin Warren presented the following action plan to address the high balance in the food service account:

- The school will conduct an analysis to identify and quantify the time spent by relevant staff (including custodial staff) in supervising the dining hall.
- In accordance with federal guidelines, the cost of this staff time will be charged to the food service account.
- This process will legitimately draw down the excess balance, allowing those funds to be applied to support operations at both schools.

### **Mr. Crozier quantified the expected impact of this plan:**

- The analysis is projected to free up a portion of the DALA food service account.
- The freed-up funds will be moved to the schools' operating accounts to support general operations. The primary impact will be at DALA, as the High School's food service account balance is already at their monthly expenditures (~\$41,000).

### **B. Update on TECO Land Sale Escrow Funds & Bond Covenants**

Mr. Crozier provided an update on restricted funds related to bond covenants:

- Escrow funds from the TECO land sale, totaling over **\$690,000**, are currently held in the bond fund.
- Administration is working to secure the release of these funds to be presented the school's bank accounts, thereby increasing cash on hand.

### **Financial Impact of Release:**

- Importantly, it would improve the school's key bond covenant metric: **Days Cash on Hand**.
- The release would increase the Days Cash on Hand to approximately **41 days**. The bond requirement is 45 days, demonstrating strong progress toward compliance and financial health.
- Mr. Crozier noted the current debt service coverage ratio is between 1.0 and 1.5, which meets requirements.

### **A. Clarification on Historical Budget Variances**

Mr. Crozier addressed historical budget variances related to local millage revenue.

- Upon his start with Building Hope (July/August), initial budget reviews identified approximately **\$500,000** at DALA and **\$400,000+** at DHS coded as local millage revenue within the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) framework.
- Mr. Crozier clarified that these line items represented **inflation of revenue**, as all local millage is incorporated into the monthly FEFP disbursement from the state. The only separate local funding not included in FEFP would be for capital improvements.
- He stated these entries did not originate from him and acknowledged their inclusion created a significant variance in the original budget projections, totaling nearly **\$1 million** across both schools.

### III. Principal's Report

#### **A. Personnel Action Reports:**

- **Discovery Academy of Lake Alfred (DALA):** Mr. Steve Frabotta reported that there were no personnel actions requiring board approval.
- **Discovery High School (DHS):** Mr. Richard Jemison reported that there were no personnel actions requiring board approval.
- **Board Action:** The reports were received and filed. No motion was required

#### **B. Enrollment Update**

- **Discovery Academy of Lake Alfred (DALA) – Mr. Frabotta reported:**
  - 6th Grade: 358 students (target: 360)
  - 7th Grade: 342 students
  - 8th Grade: 328 students
  - **Total DALA Enrollment:** 1,025 students. This exceeds the budgeted projection of 1,020 students.
- **Discovery High School (DHS) – Mr. Jemison reported:**
  - Current Enrollment: 895 total students
    - 9th Grade: 280
    - 10th Grade: 222
    - 11th Grade: 202
    - 12th Grade: 186

### IV. Old Business

#### **A. Title I & Free/Reduced Lunch Status Updates**

##### **Discovery Academy of Lake Alfred (DALA) – Mr. Frabotta reported:**

- The current free/reduced lunch rate is **83.5%**, exceeding the Title I threshold.
- This qualifying rate improves the school's standing for other grants and programs. Specifically, it is expected to increase the **E-rate reimbursement** from 80% to 90%.
- Approximately 80 families have not yet applied, often under the assumption they will not qualify. The school will continue outreach and communication.

##### **Discovery High School (DHS) – Mr. Darryl reported:**

- The current free/reduced lunch rate is approximately **69-70%**.
- The rate fluctuates at the high school level due to the cutoff age for eligibility, where students age out of the program regardless of family qualification status.

#### **B. Open Enrollment & Marketing Update – Mr. Frabotta reported:**

The administration is actively preparing for the upcoming open enrollment period with the following strategies:

- **Internal Transition:** Coordination is ongoing for current 8th-grade students transitioning to Discovery High School (DHS) in January.
- **Direct Outreach:** Ms. Munoz and Mr. Hopkins are in constant communication with feeder schools. Scheduling is in place for December to conduct presentations to 5th-grade populations (future 6th graders) directly at their elementary schools.
- **Targeted Marketing:** The school is planning a targeted bulk mailing campaign to specific geographic areas (identified by zip codes) to raise awareness and attract new students.

#### **V. New Business**

##### **A. Safety Update – Mr. Frabotta reported:**

The following safety enhancements and drills have been completed or initiated at Discovery Academy of Lake Alfred (DALA):

##### **1. Emergency Preparedness Drills:**

- School administration, led by Ms. Azor and Mr. Souza, conducted grade-level assemblies to clearly communicate emergency protocols specific to the dining hall.
- A follow-up **lockdown drill was conducted during lunch** the following week to practice the new protocols. While not perfect, the drill provided valuable, realistic feedback.
- The drill involved the School Resource Officer and local police, fostering positive dialogue and coordination.

##### **2. Physical Security Upgrades:**

- All classroom locks have been retrofitted with **self-locking mechanisms**, ensuring doors cannot be inadvertently left unlocked.
- The district has scheduled a **complete campus rekeying** for an upcoming break, as it has been several years since this was last done.

##### **B. AP Capstone Program Proposal – Mr. Jemison presented:**

Mr. Jemison presented a proposal to adopt the **AP Capstone Program** as an alternative to the previously considered Cambridge program.

- **Rationale for the Pivot:** The AP Capstone program offers a very similar academic benefit to students at a significantly lower cost. The primary expenses are teacher training sessions (approximately \$1,000 per session), with no other major out-of-pocket costs for the school.
- **Student Benefit:** Students who successfully complete the two Capstone courses and pass the associated AP exams would qualify for the **full Bright Futures scholarship**, equivalent to the benefit of the Cambridge diploma.

- **Board Action:** After discussion, the **Board reached a consensus to direct the administration to move forward with planning and implementation of the AP Capstone Program.**

### **C. Upcoming Events & Student Recognition – Ms. Daley shared:**

#### **1. Upcoming Events & Volunteer Opportunities:**

- School groups will participate in several local Christmas parades: the **Havendale, Haines City, and Lake Alfred** parades.
- Volunteers are needed to assist with float preparation and to chaperone students on or alongside the floats.
- A **Chorus Concert** is scheduled for December 12th in the Discovery Academy multipurpose room.

#### **2. Student Recognition – Veterans Day Performance:**

- Ms. Daley recognized the **Discovery Chorus**, under the direction of Mr. Sterling, for an outstanding performance at the Lake Alfred Veterans Day memorial ceremony.
- When the accompaniment music failed during the National Anthem, the approximately 30 students continued singing a **flawless a cappella rendition** without hesitation.
- The Board commended the students for their poise and professionalism, and Mr. Sterling for his leadership and program.

#### **3. Discovery Academy of Lake Alfred "Sneaker Ball" – Mr. Frabotta reported:**

- In response to staff and student interest, DALA will host a **7th and 8th-grade "Sneaker Ball"** dance on the last school day before the winter break.
- The event is designed as a formal/semi-formal dance where students wear dress attire paired with sneakers, creating a unique, accessible, and practical experience.
- Staff enthusiasm is high, with the Student Leadership Association (SLA) sponsoring food for the event.
- **Ticket Sales:** The event has exceeded its initial cap, with **189 tickets sold** against a planned limit of 180.

### **D. Introduction of Prospective Board Members**

Ms. Daley introduced two prospective board members to the trustees: **Sherry Wells** (via Zoom) and **Aaron Nangle**.

- Both individuals shared their professional backgrounds and personal profiles with the Board.
- The Chair thanked Ms. Wells and Mr. Nangle for their interest in serving.

**Board Discussion & Direction:** This was an introductory item. No formal action was taken.

## **VI. Stakeholder Report**

### **A. Discovery Academy of Lake Alfred (DALA) Teacher of the Year – Ms. Sandy Altamirano**

Ms. Altamirano provided a brief report from the teacher perspective:

- **Positive Activities:** Acknowledged successful recent events, including All American Teaching Day and the Math-Science Show for 6th graders, which provided valuable student experiences.
- **Communication of Staff Concerns:** Noted that she has communicated staff feedback directly to administration (Mr. Warren and Mr. Frabotta) through personal meetings.

#### **B. Discovery High School (DHS) Teacher of the Year – Mr. Adam Phelps**

Mr. Phelps provided a brief update:

- **New Teacher Integration:** Reported that the many new teachers hired this year appear to be fitting into the school culture well.

The Chair, Ms. Daley, on behalf of the Board, extended heartfelt holiday wishes to all staff, expressing appreciation for their dedication, resilience, and hard work throughout the past year, which has included challenging periods.

#### **VIII. Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:35 AM by Chairperson Daley.

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Tania Sims**

Secretary, Discovery Academy of Lake Alfred Governing Board

**Next Meeting: December 16, 2025**

Discovery Academy of Lake Alfred Media  
Center after the Discovery High School  
Meeting at 9:15 A.M.