

DISCOVERY SCHOOLS GOVERNING BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Type: Combined Regular Monthly Meeting of the Governing Board

Date: Tuesday, March 24, 2026

Time: 9:15 AM to 11:15 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
- Aaron Nangle, Community Member
- Tania Sims, Secretary

Board Members Absent:

- John Taylor, Community Member

Others in Attendance:

- Gordon Crozier, CFO from Building Hope (via zoom)
- Darryl Jemison, Principal
- Stephen Frabotta, Principal
- Beth Fontaine, Assistant Principal
- Sandy Altamirano, Teacher of the Year

Welcome Remarks:

Ms. Daley welcomed the newest seated board member, Aaron Nangle, a pending board member, and a guest, the City Commissioner of Lake Alfred.

Mr. Warren distributed a binder to each board member containing historical information about Discovery Schools, noting it would be especially helpful for new members. He briefly reviewed the table of contents, which includes the history of the schools, organizational charts, board member lists, upcoming meeting dates, the approved budget, financial statements, last year's audits, bylaws, fundraising information, and past meeting minutes and agendas. Mr. Warren encouraged members to review the binders at their leisure.

I. Approval of Previous Minutes

Main motion: Moved by Doretha Tillman to approve Combined Discovery Schools minutes from the February 17, 2026, meeting as written. Charlotte Butler seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Main motion: Moved by Aaron Nangle to excuse John Taylor and Sherry Wells from today's meeting. Charlotte Butler seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Board Approved
4/21/26
Date

II. Treasurer's Report – Mr. Gordon Crozier

Mr. Gordon Crozier, CFO from Building Hope, presented the financial overview for Discovery Schools via Zoom. The presentation focused on full-year forecasts based on actual results through January and projected activity through June.

Mr. Crozier reviewed the "Discovery Schools Combined Actual Forecast" sheet, which takes actual results through January and forecasts out based on run rates to determine the year-end cash position. Key points included:

- The sheet was previously shared with bondholders in an effort to release approximately \$700,000 currently sitting with a trustee.
- The funds are held with the trustee as part of a forbearance agreement.
- Today's cash and debt service coverage were shown on the bottom of the sheet.
- The school faces a tight cash position at the end of the year because FEFP funding is received in July, not June.
- Bondholders recognize that if the escrow is released, the school remains within bond covenants.
- The funds are in an interest-bearing account, but are not available for school operations at this time.
- Mr. Crozier anticipates that by the end of the school year, the forbearance requirement may be waived or expire, freeing up the \$700,000.

Mr. Crozier noted that operations are tracking along with budget. He commended Mr. Frabotta and Mr. Jemison, as well as Kevin Warren, for staying within budget on the expense side.

On revenues, Mr. Crozier reported a positive development: DHS and Polk County schools received local capital improvement revenue for the first time this year. This is a byproduct of Polk County's increased tax roll due to new development and population growth.

III. Principal's Report

A. Personnel Action Reports:

- **Discovery Academy of Lake Alfred (DALA):** Mr. Stephen Frabotta reported that there were no personnel actions requiring board approval.
- **Discovery High School (DHS):** Mr. Darryl Jemison reported that there were no personnel actions requiring board approval.

B. Enrollment Update

- **Discovery Academy of Lake Alfred (DALA) – Mr. Frabotta reported:**
 - 6th Grade: 356 students (target: 360)
 - 7th Grade: 334 students
 - 8th Grade: 322 students
 - Total DALA Enrollment: 1,014 students**
- **Discovery High School (DHS) – Mr. Jemison reported:**
 - 9th Grade: 271 students
 - 10th Grade: 216 students
 - 11th Grade: 193 students
 - 12th Grade: 188 students
 - Total DHS Enrollment: 868 students**

IV. Old Business

A. Applications Update

- **Discovery Academy of Lake Alfred (DALA) – Mr. Stephen Frabotta**

Mr. Frabotta reported that DALA has received 661 applications across all grade levels, with 553 of those being for 6th grade. The school is currently working on the processing of applications and hopes to send out notifications this week or early next week. The school will be going through the lottery process and accepting roughly 400 6th graders.

- **Discovery High School (DHS) – Mr. Darryl Jemison**

Mr. Jemison reported that DHS has received 427 applications, with 360 of those being for 9th grade. The total goal for next year is to take in approximately 325 students, with an expected 275 to 300 of those being 9th graders.

B. Marketing Update

- **Discovery Academy of Lake Alfred (DALA) – Mr. Stephen Frabotta**

Mr. Frabotta shared that DALA sponsorships are rolling out. He noted that the middle school has a sponsorship letter and multiple tiers, similar to the high school, though adjustments are necessary since not everything that works for one school works for the other.

Mr. Frabotta reported the following partnerships:

- **Cypresswood:** The golf team has been invited to practice at Cypress Wood free of charge approximately 12 times. Mr. Frabotta noted this is invaluable for students to practice on an actual golf course. A sponsorship letter has been finalized, and a banner will be placed recognizing Cypress Wood.
- **City of Lake Alfred:** The city approached the school, expressing appreciation for the school's work in the community. City officials spoke to 6th graders about different city departments, which was a positive experience for both parties. The city is organizing a virtual 5K run, with proceeds going to help offset the cost of a field experience for students. The goal is to fully fund the field experience, which would allow greater opportunity for both 6th and 7th grade students to attend.

- **Discovery High School (DHS) – Mr. Darryl Jemison**

Mr. Jemison shared that marketing efforts have remained consistent for DHS. Most sponsorships are tied to sports programs, as coaches have been tasked with securing enough funding to cover expenses. Coaches have been successful in obtaining sponsorships. Mr. Jemison noted that the school is also trying to schedule another day for its Sport's for a Cure Program.

V. New Business

A. Staff Salary Increases

- Mr. Warren explained that approximately a month ago, Polk County Schools gave their teachers a two percent raise for the current school year. Their plan was to give the raise and pay it retroactively from July, with all future checks including the raise.
- Mr. Warren noted that Discovery Schools gave a one and a half percent raise at the beginning of the year, whereas Polk County did not. In keeping with the tradition of meeting or exceeding

what Polk County, Mr. Warren proposed giving Discovery Schools teachers an additional one percent raise, bringing the total 25-26 raise to two and a half percent (compared to Polk County's two percent).

- The one percent raise would be paid retroactively from July and would appear in the April check, with the raise also included in the May and June checks.
- Mr. Warren clarified that the raise applies to **all staff**, not just teachers, including bus drivers, secretaries, paraprofessionals, and everyone else. The raise is a flat one percent across the board.
- **Main motion:** Moved by Doretha Tillman to approve a one percent salary increase for all staff, paid retroactively from July, with the increase reflected in the April, May, and June checks. The motion was seconded by Charlotte Butler.

B. Amended 25/26 Budget

- **Discovery Academy of Lake Alfred (DALA) – Mr. Stephen Frabotta**

Mr. Frabotta presented the DALA Amended 25/26 Budget. He explained that the first column shows the approved budget, the second column shows the amended budget, and the third column shows the difference.

Key changes included:

- **General Operating:** A difference of \$500,000, largely due to a millage error that was incorrectly entered, along with other changes.
- **Transportation Revenue:** Increased due to a higher per-student payment.
- **Food Revenue:** A significant increase due to previously underreported funds.
- **Internal Funds:** Increased due to more field trips and student participation.
- **Instruction & School Administration:** Adjustments were made in salaries across the board to help balance the negative variance.
- **Food Service:** A large increase to match the rise in revenue, as the budget must remain balanced.
- **Transportation Expenses:** Increased slightly, specifically for bus insurance, which was previously underreported.
- **Electricity:** Increased approximately 17% over last year based on trend reports from Mr. Crozier. Staff has been made aware and is working to be more mindful of usage, especially for May and June.

Mr. Frabotta noted that the reserve fund (approximately 2% in the original budget) was eliminated in order to achieve a balanced amended budget.

Main motion: Moved by Aaron Nangle to approve the DALA Amended 25/26 Budget as presented. The motion was seconded by Doretha Tillman. All in favor. The motion passed.

- **Discovery High School (DHS) – Mr. Darryl Jemison**

Mr. Jemison presented the DHS Amended 25/26 Budget using the same format as DALA: approved budget, amended budget, and difference.

Key points included:

- **General Operating:** A negative variance of approximately \$500,000, largely due to the millage issue as well as a virtual program issue related to MTE.

- **Local Capital Improvement Revenue:** This was an unexpected positive addition that significantly helped offset the negative variance.
- Expense reductions were made across multiple areas to work through the deficit.
- Unlike DALA, Mr. Jemison did not cut the reserve fund. The uncommitted fund balance would end at - \$7,289, However, cutting the fund balance would bring the budget to a balanced position of \$79,978.

Main motion: Moved by Aaron Nangle to approve the DHS Amended 25/26 Budget as presented. The motion was seconded by Charlotte Butler. All in favor. The motion passed.

C. Meeting Schedule Proposal

Mr. Warren brought forward a proposal to cancel the May 19th meeting, noting that both schools are tremendously overwhelmed during the month of May. He also proposed moving the regular meeting start time to 9:30 AM.

Main motion: Moved by Charlotte Butler to approve the amended meeting calendar (canceling the May 19th meeting) and the amended meeting time (changing from 9:15 AM to 9:30 AM). The motion was seconded by Aaron Nangle. All in favor. The motion passed.

D. 26/27 School Calendars

Mrs. Daley shared that each school independently proposed a schedule for the 2026/2027 school year, and the two calendars were quite different. She distributed a handout showing the two calendars side by side with differences highlighted.

The admin team met and discussed the calendars. Mrs. Daley noted that the group decided to go back and find more common ground, as there were many dates where one school was open and the other was closed. Concerns included car riders, transportation, childcare, and families with children in both schools.

Mrs. Daley acknowledged that Discovery Schools does not have to follow the Polk County district calendar. While that was the norm in the past, the schools now have more flexibility to meet their needs. Her personal concern was keeping the calendars as close to each other as possible due to shared expenses such as transportation. She also expressed concern about how differing schedules might affect enrollment, particularly for families with children in both schools or in one Discovery school and a district school.

Mr. Frabotta shared data on early release days, noting that anywhere from 20% to 40% of the student population is absent on early release days. For the March early release day, DALA missed 32% of students. This creates challenges for teachers who must re-teach material to absent students.

Mr. Frabotta noted that the high school values early release days for professional development and teacher meetings. DALA teachers have asked about exploring alternatives to early release days, including making them full days.

Additional calendar considerations included:

- A high number of teachers taking PTO days in October and April, suggesting a need for a mini-break during those months.
- No teacher work day currently exists between the third and fourth quarters. DALA proposed shifting one teacher work day from January to March to address this.
- DALA reduced early release days to three and is considering increasing them for parent conference time. Teachers have expressed difficulty scheduling parent conferences during the

current 8:00-8:30 AM Monday through Thursday window. Early release days would provide a 2.5 to 3-hour block for parent conferences.

Mrs. Daley added that the two schools had proposed different first days back after summer break and winter break. While these may not affect teacher conferences, they could impact families and enrollment decisions. She referenced a past issue with transportation changes that seemed minor but became a significant problem, emphasizing the need to be more thoughtful.

Mr. Jemison explained that DHS's initial calendar followed Polk County more closely. He noted that DHS does not have the same 8:30 schedule as DALA, so early release days are used for meeting time. This is the primary reason DHS wants to retain its early release days. The school is currently generating a survey to send to staff for feedback.

Mrs. Daley concluded that a vote cannot be completed at this time. The admin team will continue working to keep the calendars as aligned as possible, and staff has agreed to review the calendars further to find opportunities for greater consistency.

Board Consensus:

The board agreed to allow the admin team to continue working on the calendars to find as much common ground as possible. The board noted that the calendars do not necessarily have to match the county exactly, but if there is a 50/50 choice, the preference is to stay close to the county calendar.

E. Bylaws Review

Mrs. Daley introduced the topic of bylaws review, noting that a subject had come up regarding whether to allow board members to attend meetings virtually.

Mr. Warren stated that the current bylaws already permit virtual attendance via electronic device. He recommended leaving the language in the bylaws but establishing an expectation that virtual attendance should only be used in cases of emergency. He noted that there are times, especially when the board was meeting quarterly, when unscheduled votes are needed (e.g., the reading plan), and not everyone can drop everything to attend in person for special meetings.

Board Decision:

The board decided to leave the bylaws as written and instead create a policy stating that all board members are expected to attend board meetings in person.

Mr. Aaron Nangle offered to draft the policy and bring it to the next meeting for review, editing, and finalization.

Board Consensus: The board gave consensus for Mr. Nangle to proceed with drafting the policy.

VI. Stakeholder Report

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

Ms. Altamirano provided updates on school activities and athletic achievements:

- **Girls' Soccer:** The team suffered a loss last night against San Joseph.

- **Football:** The team won, with a score of 46-0.
- **Track:** The track season is starting this week.

B. Teacher Representative Report – Mrs. Karie Schenkenberg

Mrs. Karie Schenkenberg, Teacher Representative, provided the following updates:

- **National Honor Society:** Approximately 70 students were inducted into the National Honor Society. Most were 6th graders, with some 7th and 8th graders joining as well.
- **Biz Town (6th Grade):** The 6th graders had a really good experience at Biz Town. The CEO of the Florida Aquarium attended the event and invited all the CEOs of the pretend companies to gather and give them advice about the role and responsibilities of a CEO. Volunteers from local high schools were also present to help out and serve as role models for the students.
- **Financial Park (7th Grade):** The 7th graders completed their Financial Park experience. Mrs. Schenkenberg did not participate but heard it went well.
- **Community Partnership:** Mrs. Schenkenberg noted that it is nice to have a community partner that will be around for a long time to help with these events. Students learn more about how government works by including stakeholders within Lake Alfred and the surrounding community.
- **Salary Increase Acknowledgment:** Mrs. Schenkenberg expressed appreciation for the 1% salary increase, noting that the school monitors what the county does and she is always happy to tell others that Discovery Schools does a little bit better than the county.

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

Mr. Phelps reported that the school is getting back from spring break and getting closer to the end of the year, but remains busy.

VIII. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:30 AM by Chairperson Daley.

Respectfully submitted,

Tania Sims

Secretary, Discovery Academy of Lake Alfred Governing Board

Next Meeting: April 21, 2026

Discovery Academy of Lake Alfred Media Center after the Discovery High School Meeting at 9:30 A.M.