



**Sela PCS Board Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, February 12, 2025**  
**Via Zoom**  
**5:00 pm**

**Board Members In Attendance:**

Alen Amini  
Amberine Huda  
Anika Wilkins  
Bryce Jacobs  
Ezra Karger  
Reut Rozenberg  
Steve Messner  
Tara Cuevas  
Nathan Groce

**Others in Attendance**

Rachel Sussman  
Ryan Benjamin  
Janalee Jordan-Meldrum  
Katherine Pippert  
Katie Herman

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 5:05 pm EST. No public comment for this session, but anyone can reach out to [selapcsboard@gmail.com](mailto:selapcsboard@gmail.com) or any individual Board member.

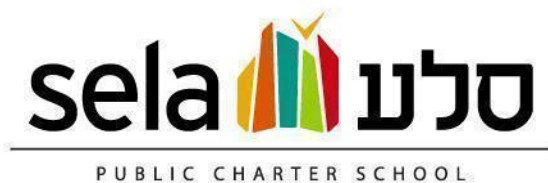
**Approval of Various Items: Alen Amini**

Upon motion and second, all Board members present voted to approve the agenda as presented. Upon motion and second, all Board members present reviewed and voted to approve meeting minutes from January 2026.

**Head of School Update: Rachel Sussman**

**General Sela Updates**

- Diversity Day happened earlier last month, families and staff came in to host tables which centered around communities, cultures and various identities.
- Launched Black History Month last week; held a PBIS assembly that featured an interactive drumming circle
- Sela Homecoming is upcoming
- Black History Month:
  - Sela Museum of African-American History and Culture; inviting community members, staff and families to host tables featuring elements of the African American history and experience at the school. It is led by a member of the leadership team and a Sela parent.
  - Black History Month Committee: Created powerpoints for each week of Black History Month, featuring various Black leaders across history.
  - A board member thanked Ms. Sussman for the thorough instruction and dedication to providing all grades with a dedicated Black History Month.
- The first annual Spelling Bee was hosted at the school, with 3 winners in each grade, who then went to compete in the school-wide Spelling Bee. 3 more winners went onto compete



at the regional level against 8<sup>th</sup> graders. One of our students placed in the Top 8 in the region.

- Math Design Sprint: 5 sessions through February-March
- Math Olympiad Club: 3-5 graders that are high performing in the subject, allowing upper graders to compete in the Spring
- Snow Updates
  - Many thanks to Ryan Benjamin and Ms. Sussman for supporting and chaperoning teachers safely to school and for ensuring the removal of from school grounds.
  - We have a regularly contracted snow removal company – the ice was so compacted and hard that it forced us to hire a private plow contractor to plow the city street. Another school’s snow bill was \$39k, so we have to use our reserved funds that are used for this purpose.

#### **Draft Calendar for 2026-2027 School Year**

- There are 181 days in the calendar year; we are required to have 180, which means we have one banked snow-day.
- First day of school is August 24, the last day is June 17, with 5 PD days and 3 asynchronous learning days.
- Back to School Night is Wednesday, September 16.
- Aligned vacation days with DCPS in order to make it easier for families who are bridging multiple schools and for consistency.
- A board member brought up questions around shortened school days in November and other considerations/concerns in the calendar for next year. A request was made to move the PD day in November to another month.
  - Ms. Sussman discussed various factors in the calendar (including Veteran’s Day and Thanksgiving in November). In April there is Emancipation Day and Passover, so the decision was made to close the school on the first night of Passover, to avoid having low staff attendance. Ms. Sussman will consider other feedback.

#### **Mid-Year Update: Key Performance Indicators**

- Enrollment: Mr. Ryan Benjamin
  - Enrollment cycle begins in December and ends on March 2, marking a heavy recruitment season. At the end of the month, lottery results are released to applicants so we are matched. Across April, families can enroll.
  - Trends: There are a lower number of lottery applicants across all charters this year. The largest dips in the district are in the Pre-k grades. There are significant drops from Pk3 to Pk4, and Kindergarten which is lower than the preceding school year. This has budgeting implications.
  - Strategies to Increase Enrollment:
    - Part-time Recruitment Associate who has been an excellent addition to the team. They are also doing the social media strategy, where we are looking to increase our follower count. **Please follow us on social media @Selapcs.**

- Ms. Joanna has created some faith-based partnerships to increase recruitment, and Sela hosted several other events at religious-based organizations and daycares.
- Recruitment of new students: hosted an Open House this week for Pk4 parents, following up with a virtual session for those who couldn't make it. This allows parents to see the K classrooms and speak to teachers.
- Retention of current families: We also have a 'return to intent' form to capture data on current families, which also tells us where to focus recruitment efforts. There is space on the form where they can identify if they want to have a meeting with us or have a concern. Mr. Benjamin looks at every form.
- Transportation: There is a 100% parent-financed van that transports families to and from Sela. There is a growing contingent of Sela families that are coming from The Parks, so they are connected to our van company that supports carpooling.
  - Additional resources:
    - <https://schoolpool.commuterconnections.org/schoolpool/>
- Facilities: Using the playground renovations as an enrollment landmark. There is a potential opportunity to host various events with the playground once renovations are complete and it is officially open.
- Chronic Absenteeism: Enrollment decline from previous year (matching DC trends); 9 students withdrew mid-year, but there is improvement in the in-seat attendance rate at 92.5% vs. 91.2% last year. Re-enrollment rate is projected at 77.5% and we did have one out of school suspension this year.
- Staffing:
  - Currently interviewing candidates for the self-contained Special Education classroom. This is a challenging position to hire for, particularly mid-year.
  - Mid-year evaluation with teachers and leadership is in process, which includes an intent-to-return form for staff.

**Committee Updates:**

- **Academic Committee:** Key highlights include a classroom walkthrough that the entire committee did in February. We had a great time observing one classroom per grade with guidance from Ms. Sussman on what to look for, and how to maintain a positive tone and presence in our walkthroughs. We saw a lot
  - **Aspire Goals Adoption Process:** In January we spoke about the adoption process and invited anyone to ask us questions between these board meetings. We will need to submit our minutes to the PCSB; the final deadline for approval is April 1, so we want to make sure that we are doing this with enough time to be ahead of the deadline.
- **Finance Committee:** We've worked with various people at EdOps, and we are hoping they can bring more consistency.
- **Governance Committee:** No Updates.



- **External Relations Committee:** Meeting next week as a committee, but we are planning the ribbon cutting ceremony for the playground and we have invited the primary donor to this event. We are also working on a lunch for a donor to bring some of his colleagues in March.

**Upon motion and second, all Board members present voted to adopt the ASPIRE goals as the Sela Charter Goals.**

*Motion to Adopt ASPIRE Framework as Charter Goals: That the Sela PCS Board of Directors adopt the ASPIRE framework (PK-8) for the Charter Goals and Achievement Expectations, which will be used for the 2027-28 15-year renewal with the DC PCSB. And, that the Board authorizes school leadership to communicate these goals to all stakeholders, including staff, students, families, and the DC PCSB.*

**HOS Search Updates: Katherine Pippert, TenSquare**

- We have moved through a list of 100 applicants to strong slate of semifinalists, who are meeting with the Search Committee of the board.
- It's been a very evidence-based process where we've been able to determine a lot about each candidates' process and leadership stories.

**Board Farewell: Reut Rozenberg**

The board said their farewell to Reut Rozenberg who will be moving back to Israel and therefore is ending her term on the Board. Her dedication and thoughtfulness based on her experience as a school leader has been evident across the last two years of her service.

**Motion to Move Into Closed Session: Ezra Karger**

- Upon motion and second, all Board members present voted to close the open meeting and move into closed session, per Section 2-575 of the DC Open Meetings Act: subsections (b) (12), to "train and develop members of a public body and staff."

**Adjournment: Alen Amini**

Upon motion and second, all board members present voted to adjourn the meeting at 6:50 pm EST.