Sela PCS Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday, October 22, 2026
Via Zoom
5:00 pm

Board Members In Attendance:	**Others in Attendance**
Alen Amini	Rachel Sussman
Ezra Karger	Ryan Benjamin
Bryce Jacobs	
Nathan Groce	

Call to Order
The meeting was called to order at 5:00 pm EST. No public comment for this session, but anyone can reach out to 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 the September board meeting.
Upon motion and second, all Board members present voted to approve minor adjustments to the Spring professional development dates.

Head of School Update: Rachel Sussman

- **Family Engagement & Community Events:**
  - Back to School Night (September 16): Well attended; concluded with a Middle School Task Force presentation to families with strong engagement.
  - Monthly Coffee Chats: Launched in late September with a "Meet the Mental Health Team" session featuring Courtney (Dean of Students), Mr. Matan (full-time social worker via Momentum Fellowship, funded by a Shatner Foundation grant), and Ms. Brielle (part-time social worker, 2 days/week, via the Department of Behavioral Health partnership).
  - Upcoming Sessions: Bullying Prevention session with families led by the DC Office of Human Rights (late October for Bullying Prevention Month); Literacy presentation in November led by Ms. Fauntroy (Literacy Coach) and Ms. Sam (Early Childhood Director).
  - Fall Family Conferences: Held in early October following Q1 progress reports and assessment data distribution. Teachers in departmentalized grades (1–5) teamed up to present jointly to families. 194 of 249 students' families (78%) have attended so far, with makeup conferences ongoing.

    - Garden Cleanup (Saturday, October 17): Highly successful community event where families and students cleared old beds, installed new garden beds, built a PreK4 playhouse, rehabbed the Little Library for outdoor reinstallation, created personalized garden stones, and held a dance party.
    - Hispanic Heritage Month Assembly: Full-school assembly celebrating diverse flags, student presentations, and guest sharing from Latino/Hispanic community members, staff, and families.
- **Staff Professional Development (October 9 & Recent Weeks):**
    - State of Sela Update: New recurring update held at each of the three annual PD days covering enrollment status and whole-staff participation in recruitment and retention.
- **Curriculum & Assessment Prep:**
    - Math coursework with EmpowerK12 and TNTP; UFLI foundational reading program work; Grades 2–5 ELA teachers trained on SBAC (the new adaptive assessment replacing CAPE as "CAPE Next" this spring); Hebrew team worked on Oral Proficiency Interviews (OPI) and Avant across grade levels; PreK, Mental Health, and Specials teams trained on supportive classroom environments (led by a Special Education teacher) and refreshed on the CLASS observational tool; full staff reviewed the Danielson framework ahead of the January Qualitative Site Review (QSR) for Sela's 15-year renewal.
- **Instructional Walkthroughs & Observations:**
    - Conducted internal walkthroughs focused on Danielson Domain 2 (culture/routines) and small-group data procedures.
    - Ongoing upper-grade math support with Dr. Asia Franks (via EmpowerK12 grant), internal PreK CLASS observations (Round 1 of 3), and biweekly coaching/learning walks with TenSquare (including a full-staff learning walk with Alexandra Pardo on the day of the meeting, with another scheduled in November).
- **Culture, PBIS & Social-Emotional Learning (SEL):**
    - PBIS Assemblies: Revamped monthly PBIS assemblies led by the Dean and full-time social worker, highlighting monthly values (September: Kindness; October: Self-Control / Bullying Prevention; November: Gratitude).
    - PBIS Ticket Incentive System: K–1 students redeem tickets for items from an incentive cart; Grades 2–5 earn tickets toward group experiences (pizza parties, arts & crafts, movie/popcorn sessions). Rachel noted she will follow up with Courtney regarding parent/student messaging for Grades 2–5 students who miss threshold incentives.

- SEL Programming: Summer PD refresh on the Peace of Mind curriculum (K–5) and continued Second Step implementation in PreK, monitored by Mr. Matan. Weekly October bullying prevention challenges (e.g., "Include Everyone"), Grade 4–5 Unity Day programming, and upcoming DC Office of Human Rights PD and family coffee chat. From November through February, Mr. Matan and Ms. Brielle will push into K–5 and PreK classrooms for 3–5 age-appropriate prevention sessions, alongside expanded 1-on-1 student and family counseling capacity.

- **Upcoming Visits & Events:**
  - **October 30: Harvest Festival (planned by Ryan, featuring pumpkin bounce, petting zoo, and school-wide activities).**
  - **November 12: Visit from Maoz delegation (Israeli nonprofit education leaders visiting DC and Texas to study charter schools, language instruction, and diversity).**
  - **November 16: Tour and visit from Dr. Walker-Davis (Executive Director, DC Public Charter School Board) ahead of Sela's renewal.**
  - **November 17: Second annual visit from the GW Graduate Program in Israel Education.**
  - **December 1: Giving Tuesday.**
  - **December 12: EdFest (recruitment season already underway).**
  - **December 16: Winter Lights Festival.**
- **Enrollment Updates (as of October 5 Count Day):**
  - Total audited enrollment is 248 funded students plus 1 non-resident student in PreK4 (42 funded + 1 non-resident), coming in 1 funded student shy of the 249 budgeted target (7 students were enrolled on Count Day itself) and well within the 5-student contingency (244 floor).
  - Year-over-year comparison shows a continued multi-year enrollment decline (302 on Count Day in SY 24–25; 279 in SY 25–26; 248 in SY 26–27, a drop of 31 students from last year).
- **Chronic Absenteeism Updates:**
  - Overall chronic absenteeism is down 6–8% compared to the prior two years across nearly all subgroups (including students with IEPs), though economically disadvantaged students remain steady at 38%.
  - Data notes: EmpowerK12 dashboard still includes a few withdrawn students who need to be removed, and early-year figures reflect students returning late from international travel. Unlike prior years, Jewish holidays fell on weekends this fall and did not inflate early absenteeism.

    - Attendance Monitoring: Ryan and Operations Associate Tim review EmpowerK12 predictive absence data weekly and send 4-day absence letters to families.
- **Fall Assessment Data (MAP / NWEA & DIBELS):**
    - 98% of eligible students completed fall MAP testing (exceeding the 90% PCSB threshold; the remaining 2% are newly arrived English learners exempt from testing).
    - K–2 students also completed DIBELS foundational reading assessments. Fall scores serve as the baseline for small-group intervention/enrichment ahead of winter (December) and spring (May) testing.
- **Grants & Development:**
    - Math Grants: EmpowerK12 grant ($32K in Year 1, $18K in Year 2, including TNTP asynchronous learning and 4 math teacher sessions) and City Schools Collaborative high-impact tutoring grant ($55K over 2 years).
    - Security Grants: Secured a $20K Safe and Secure DC Nonprofit Fund grant for camera system enhancements.
    - Whole Foods Grant: Received $3,500, utilized for the October 17 garden cleanup and improvements.

Committee Updates:

- **Academic Committee: Bryce Jacobs**
    - Met earlier in the week to review beginning-of-year MAP and DIBELS baseline data, identify target growth areas, and discuss Rachel's strategies around scheduling, staffing, coaching, and targeted PD.
- **Middle School Task Force: Bryce Jacobs & Rachel Sussman**
    - Reviewed feasibility study research from Alexandra Pardo; Alexandra will present her findings at the next task force meeting on October 30 so the group can present recommendations to the full Board at the upcoming retreat.
- **Finance Committee: Ezra Karger**
    - Monitoring budget closely; positive Count Day enrollment (248 vs. 249 budgeted) supports budget projections.
    - Summarized updates to the Financial Controls Policy (aligned dates/timelines, clarified Board/Finance Committee oversight of the annual audit and Form 990, raised formal sealed-bid procurement thresholds per consultant recommendations, and added an investment policy).
- **Governance Committee: Ezra Karger**
    - Finalized bylaw updates and made minor revisions to the Board Manual.
- **External Relations Committee: Bryce Jacobs & Nathan Groce**

- Met earlier in the week; planning the first "Friends of Sela" breakfast and prepping Board talking points ahead of the retreat.
- Giving Tuesday (December 1): Nathan is drafting email, social media, and PTA/Crew outreach messaging to be delivered by November 1. Bryce spoke with PTA Chair Mary Jo, who confirmed PTA support. Funds raised will go to the Teacher Equity Fund for holiday cash gifts to teachers, with a goal of 100% Board giving participation.

- **Nominations Committee**
  - Strong candidate pipeline with more qualified applicants than open seats; Rachel was thanked for candidate referrals.
  - Committee is reviewing candidates in the pipeline to finalize recommendations.
  - Noted a scheduling conflict for the upcoming Board retreat regarding candidate and member availability, which the Board will address to ensure proper attendance.

Motion to Move Into Closed Session: Alen Amini

- Upon motion and second, the Board voted to close the Open Meeting and meet in Closed Session, per Section 2-575 of the Open Meetings Act, subsection (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 6:10 pm EST.