

Odyssey School of Denver Board of Directors
Wednesday, July 11, 2025
9:00 am - 3:30 pm

<p>Our Mission: Odyssey School of Denver is a diverse, public, K-8 Expeditionary Learning school. We teach students how to learn through a focus on academic achievement, critical thinking and social responsibility, preparing them for high school and beyond.</p>	
<p>Our Vision: Odyssey School of Denver students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take risks and innovate; • Lead with integrity and compassion; • Be civically and socially engaged; • Push themselves to exceed expectations; <p>and • Embrace learning as a life-long adventure.</p>	<p>Board Responsibilities: We ensure Odyssey's compliance to its contract with the Denver Public Schools, set and monitor the implementation of school policies, manage the school's annual budget and financial planning, and hire and evaluate the performance of our school's Executive Director.</p>

1. Call to order - 8:43 am
2. Roll call & acknowledgments of conflicts of interest
 - a. Present = Amanda Brown, Travis Haley, Kelley Krupicka, Ryan Lally, Patrick Lane, Laurel Lenz, Pete Martinez, Melia Repko-Erwin, Caitlin Vaughan Sekar, Emily Wheat, Jeff Williams.
 - b. Absent = Alex Hannum.
 - c. No conflicts
3. Move to appoint Jeff Williams and Erin Siegel Peikin to board positions as community members.
 - a. Travis moves, Caitlin seconds. Passes.
4. Vote to appoint Kelly Krupicka as incoming board chair, becoming chair in 2026-7.
 - a. Travis moves, Jeff seconds. Passes.
5. Paul Cindric will be one of the faculty representatives.
 - a. The remaining faculty representative position is still open.
 - b. There is one family representative.
6. Travis presented slides outlining the board structure and roles/responsibilities.
 - a. The board oversees policies, financial state, and hires the ED.
 - b. ED hires staff and teachers, implements policies and school.
 - c. Members need to sign an oath.
 - d. Colorado Open Records Act (CORA) requests - Records requests can and do happen.
 - e. Sunshine laws - open records act. Our discussions and meetings are public.
 - f. Executive sessions are closed to the public and can be implemented for specific reasons.
 - g. Notice requirements. Notice must be given of a meeting no less than 24 hours before the meeting.
 - h. Minutes. Must be taken and open to the public. Except for executive sessions.
 - i. Financial responsibilities of the board include strategic financial planning, preservation of capital assets and endowments/reserves, etc.
 - j. Personally, board members should be contributing to the fund-raising efforts and donating a meaningful amount.
 - k. Board record keeping and compliance.
 - l. Expectations - Board members are expected to attend board meetings and participate.
 - m. Individual board members should not become directly involved in the school activities/management issues.

- n. Board members accept and support board decisions. Keep executive session deliberations confidential.
 - o. Inbound communication and public comments.
 - p. Other responsibilities and factors related to serving on the board.
 - q. Members should become familiar with relevant board drive contents, including meeting materials, board handbook, school charter, board bylaws, and family handbook (grievance policy on pp. 9-14).
7. Discussion of board communications and policies.
 8. Discussion of financial responsibilities.
 9. Pete presented on the state of the school.
 - a. Year end data
 - i. How do we track best how the school is doing?
 - ii. iReady - solid growth and performance overall, with some MS outliers.
 1. Math was good.
 2. Reading was very good.
 - iii. CMAS - achievement data from 2023-4 vs 2024-5.
 1. Fewer students doing below grade level in literacy.
 2. Same for math. (47% met/exceeded)
 - iv. CMAS growth data will be released soon.
 - v. Other data sources reviewed
 1. Yearly implementation review (EL)
 2. EOY student belonging survey
 3. Middle school SWOT analysis
 4. Incomplete data
 - a. EOY staff survey (only 14/44 individuals responded to survey)
 - b. Family survey (a modified version to be sent at beginning of year)
 - c. Discussion of other ways to get more input from staff and families.
 - i. Surveys at timing of conferences.
 1. Chromebooks in the hallway outside of the classroom?
 2. Share survey results and outcomes with families (and staff).
 - ii. Surveys earlier in the semester when teachers are less busy.
 1. Shorten the survey (~10 Qs)
 2. Pre-announce timing of surveys.
 3. Incentives?
 - a. Parking place raffle for survey participants?
 - b. Raffle for lunch?
 - b. Action steps
 - i. See performance and growth, but also disparities.
 1. How to grow top students (tier 1), while continuing to support “catch up” of struggling students (tier 2, 3)?
 - ii. Student surveys:
 1. Weak implementation of school-wide norms and expectations.
 2. How to grow social/emotional support and bolster the learner mindset of students?
 - iii. EL implementation review
 - iv. Strategic priorities
 1. School-wide accountability to the implementation of a clearly-defined set of norms and expectations that drive school and staff culture.
 2. Strengthen intentional integration of the habits of character to improve student work quality and engagement/ownership.
 3. Develop and strengthen professional learning communities (PLCs) as a structured system for data-driven instruction by building staff capacity.
 - v. Upcoming:

1. Complete the action cycle planning for the first 6 weeks.
 2. New staff institute (July 31/Aug 1)
 3. Staff institute
 4. Staff retreat
 5. All school family picnic
 6. Charter renewal submission (due August 8).
 - a. Discussion of board involvement in read-through and editing.
 - b. Much of the charter evaluation work by DPS was done last year.
10. Ryan presented a Finance update.
- a. Update through May 31, 2025
 - b. On track with financial metrics (dashboard).
 - c. Projected end-of-year budget surplus increased from ~\$30K to ~90K due largely to EOY increases in DPS finances.
 - i. This is after adjusting out the cost of the new van.
 - ii. On a non-adjusted basis, EOY balance was negative, due to the cost of the van.
 - d. Historically, the board's target is to reserve at least 14% of annual revenue each year.
 - i. This target was met in 2024-5.
 - e. Balance of reserves fund is ~\$1.6M.
 - i. Reserves can be used for one-time capital expenses without impacting DPS review.
 - ii. Can interest from this reserve fund be used for operating expenses?
 1. May already be included as unrestricted revenue.
 - iii. Enrollment next year is expected to be 333 students.
 1. 334 is the maximum we can currently enroll without DPS approval
 - a. With approval, the maximum at 340.
 2. Higher enrollment increases PPR revenue leading to a positive EOY predicted fund balance.
 - iv. It is expected that DPS will reduce the PPR rate paid to Odyssey in coming years.
 1. A "worst-case" scenario is being planned for. This scenario projects a yearly loss beginning the 2027-8 school year.
 2. The board needs to discuss strategies to ensure that the school remains solvent in these out-years.
 - v. Questions about staff costs and projections.
 1. Odyssey appears to be keeping up with DPS for teacher compensation.
 2. Other intangible benefits/challenges for teachers at Odyssey vs DPS and how best to ensure that our teachers feel appropriately compensated and supported.
11. Committee Assignments
- a. At the August meeting, a poll will be provided to board members
 - b. Ranked choice selection of committee assignments.
12. Olivia presented the MS SWOT analysis.
- a. Introductions.
 - b. Strengths**
 - i. The diversity of the middle school is greater than that seen in any competitor schools.
 - ii. There is a strong trust in current leadership.
 - c. Weaknesses**
 - i. Academic rigor - how to better challenge advanced learners
 1. Especially in math.
 - ii. Accountability - students are not consistently developing independence and accountability needed for high school.
 1. MS lacks deadlines, homework, pressure, and responsibility.
 - iii. Behavior - this might be less a factor going forward if other areas are improved.
 1. Opportunity here = onboarding, orientation for new students/families.
 2. Bring students, families, and staff into a process for setting expectations.
 - iv. Communication and transparency - there are historical gaps, though this has been improving in 2024-5.

1. Gray areas need to be stiffened.
2. Bring in folks to set and uphold expectations.
- v. Vision - Key point - the middle school lacks a clear, shared vision. Stakeholders are not aligned in their understanding of the direction they should be aspiring to.
 1. Feels like constant putting out fires.
 2. Unclear how the MS and its vision are distinct from K-5.
 3. Need to align and get buy-in from stakeholders.
- vi. Staff diversity - Gaps versus student body.
 1. This might be playing a role in behavioral issues.
 2. Invest in educating teachers about culturally-responsive practices and engagement of families.
- d. Questions:
 - i. Are these problems unique to the MS at Odyssey?
 1. No. These are typical in other middle schools.
 2. What is unique to Olivia is the strengths. She has never been at a school where there was so much alignment and positive energy from staff and strong relationships with students. Feels like a very tight community.
 - ii. Did you observe things consistent with the quotes shown in the presentation?
 1. Yes.
 - a. Beauty of the K-8 model, working together with other grades.
 - b. Staff and peer frustration observed.
 - c. Students finishing math assignments and sitting around to wait.
 - d. Differentiated instruction is not enough without more directed intervention.
 - iii. What is the expectation of families? What are they preparing for?
 1. Some families want students to be prepared for advanced math.
 - iv. Is the new Dean helping?
 1. This is not addressing the root cause of the issues and was not felt to be the most effective lever.
 2. How does the dean position fulfill the vision of the MS?
 - a. Their current role is more putting out fires.
 - b. The Dean just comes and sits next to the troublesome student - paradox.
 - v. Recommendation?
 1. Need shared responsibility.
 2. Families, teachers, and students should co-create a system that they all buy into.
- e. **Opportunities**
 - i. Leverage the K-8 models.
 1. YO buddies are a big positive.
 - a. Where are there more opportunities to bring together elementary and MS students and teachers?
 2. Students in MS want the opportunity to be leaders.
 - a. Especially those who have been in the school K-5.
 - ii. Build clear rituals, systems, traditions for MS experience.
 1. Used to be a more intense adventure experience in the MS program. E.g. going to the border to talk about immigration.
 2. Passages. Have MS students be involved. Help the passages to be more meaningful.
 3. Spirit week. MS needs to have its own something to be proud about as a middle school.
 4. MS needs to feel like its own thing, not just older elementary school.
 5. Embrace innovative solutions to fill gaps in programming.
 - a. E.g. World language virtual teacher → online with teacher in room to manage student.

- b. Bus kids from Odyssey to play volleyball, run track at nearby school?
 - c. Refresh website to better tell and sell the middle school.
 - iii. True coaching for MS teachers.
 - 1. There is a big need and teachers are not receiving any.
 - 2. Busy putting out fires.
 - iv. MS needs its own space. Elementary teachers near the MS space especially note there is too much overlap in space. More space would reduce friction.
 - f. **Threats**
 - i. Division between elementary and MS teachers.
 - 1. Elementary teachers show a resentment of resources going to the MS - unequal division.
 - 2. Feels like two separate schools operating under one roof.
 - ii. Negative narratives dominate parent perceptions of the MS.
 - 1. Some elementary teachers underscore this.
 - g. How to differentiate and create cohesion at the same time?
 - i. Make MS more unique
 - ii. Involve MS students in leadership of elementary events/activities.
 - iii. Unify the staff.
 - h. What is the theoretical rationale for a K-8?
 - i. Inherent value in mentorship of younger kids by older kids.
 - ii. Small close-knit community where students can see examples of leadership.
 - iii. Whether to continue to have a MS was up for vote and caused many families to leave. Now there are students continuing = may change school in the future.
 - i. Need to declare that a major goal of the MS is to ensure diversity in the school, which is better for all students. E.g. open-minded, etc.
 - j. Competition.
13. Strategic Planning
- a. The board evaluated the 2023/4-2027/8 strategic plan to identify topics that were still relevant, required further improvement, and identify new elements that should be considered for incorporation into an amended version of the plan.
 - b. Next step - incorporate suggestions for discussion and voting at upcoming executive committee and board meetings.
14. Travis moves to executive session under C.R.S. §24-6-402(4)(f): Personnel matters,
- a. Caitlin seconds. Passes.
 - b. The executive session started at 3:09 pm.
 - c. Travis moves, Jeff seconds.
 - d. Exited executive session at 3:35 pm
15. Adjournment - 3:35 pm
- a. Travis moves, Emily seconds, passes.



08/20/2025

Travis Haley, Board Chair