

RISING TIDE CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL

Minutes

Board of Trustees Meeting

November 17, 2025

Virtual Meeting

Narrative Mission Statement: What is the purpose of the school? "...The Rising Tide Charter School provides students with community-based education each day, using the Town of Plymouth as a local yet dynamic textbook which will provide fertile ground for the development of higher-order thinking skills."

Leadership and Governance: "In accordance with MA Charter School Law, the Board of Trustees is ultimately accountable for the school's educational mission, performance and adherence to its Charter."

1. **Call to order:** Laura called the meeting to order at 7:01pm In attendance were Laura Stearns Flynn, Chris Talamo, John Polvere, Erin Koh, Ralph Andre, Tess Goldmann, Sean Kelly, Jane Moskowitz, Amy Norris, Eric Mello, Michael O'Keefe, Zahra Williams, and Theresa Szczepanski.
2. **Introduction/Welcome to Guests:** There were no guests at the meeting.
3. **Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes:** Amy made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 20th Board of Trustees meeting. Chris seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous to approve the October minutes.
4. **Public Comment:** No public comment.

5. **School Report:**

5.1 STAR and MCAS Results: Theresa provided a summary of the fall STAR Assessments and the spring MCAS screening. Theresa reviewed the purpose of the STAR Assessments, noting that they are computerized adaptive tests used nationwide and are considered reliable predictors of student growth in literacy and mathematics. Screenings are administered as early as possible at the start of the school year. Assessments cover Reading (not Writing) and Mathematics. STAR results categorize students into four benchmark levels:

At or Above Benchmark: 40% or higher

On Watch: 25–40%

Intervention: Bottom 25% but above 10%

Urgent Intervention: Below 10%

In ELA, the accountability goal is for 80% of students to be at or above benchmark. Current results show strong performance, with High School meeting the 80% benchmark goal and Middle School approaching the benchmark.

In Math, the Schoolwide performance is 73% at or above benchmark, slightly lower than last year but nearing the 80% target. Middle School continues to have work to do to reach the goal. 5th Grade: 68% at or above benchmark. 9th grade was also identified as another entry year with lower performance relative to goals. Both grades are noted as "entry points" where students often need more support.

Theresa emphasized that even in grades where benchmark levels are lower, teachers should continue to deliver grade-level instruction for all cohorts, reinforcing high expectations.

Theresa outlined key trends the team is monitoring: Students demonstrated stronger performance in literature compared to informational text, with grades 9 and 10 showing the largest gaps in informational text proficiency. Students particularly need additional support in the Craft and Structure domain for informational texts. In order to reinforce these skills, the students need more repetition and practice to strengthen their ability to process informational texts. To that end, a weekly informational-text component has been added using *Scholastic News*. A dedicated 30-minute class session each week focuses on informational text practice. In Grades 5–7: Social studies classes are aligning instruction with both social studies and literacy standards, proactively increasing exposure to informational text.

While there is not a fully vetted social studies curriculum at the High School level, the ELA and Social Studies teams are collaborating to improve instruction related to craft and structure with informational reading.

In Math, numeracy remains the weakest area for 5th graders, particularly in numbers and operations. Students across grades 5–10 were screened on Multiplication fluency and addition facts up to 18. These are considered essential baseline skills for arithmetic fluency. Data indicates that the school is not yet closing the gap in multiplication fact mastery. To address the math gaps, the school has implemented *MIND “Facts on Fire”* (Grades 5–6): A program designed to support memorization of multiplication and division facts and in the upper grades - *Times Table Rock Stars* - a UK-based, adaptive digital program that customizes fact-practice based on each student’s performance. All students will be screened again in January to measure growth.

Reports on MCAS results began with recognizing that Rising Tide was classified as a School of Recognition. Theresa discussed student growth in both ELA and Math across cohorts and examined how this growth compared to prior years at RT and to other districts statewide. The conversation included a review of overall achievement in each subject, as well as comparisons to earlier cohorts and state-level performance. Since 2017, RT’s population of high-needs students has increased due to regional expansion. The student population now reflects sending districts with higher levels of need. Despite this, RT students demonstrated higher growth than their sending districts, including within the high-needs subgroup. Theresa provided context on why Grade 5 students struggled in Math; they had insufficient time with the core math text and did not receive enough assessments. To address this, some math instruction was integrated into the STEM course to increase math hours, and teachers were encouraged to base coursework in real-world problems. ELA performance showed the highest SGP, with RT middle schoolers outperforming the state. The school is currently improving alignment in the Grade 7 ELA program, noting that strong growth leads to strong achievement. Theresa also identified the need to improve ELA outcomes in Grades 5 and 8. The

science report indicated that the school has returned to baseline performance; science does not generate growth scores, only achievement scores. Grade 5 now has documented coursework and assessments from last year for a more consistent curriculum going forward. Theresa also addressed the state's ongoing push for High Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM), which includes vetting curricular materials and encouraging districts to adopt them. RT has mapped course schedules for ELA and Social Studies to help teachers plan the academic year, and the school continues to support teachers with time and resources while creating space for iterative collaboration.

5.2 Student Competency Determination Policy Update Process: Zahra reported on the Student Competency Determination policy approved by the board on March 17. This policy removed MCAS as a graduation requirement. A group reconvened on September 3 and again on September 10 to revisit the policy, making only minor adjustments. Beginning with the Class of 2027, students must complete required coursework, including U.S. History I or II, and must also pass final assessments for listed courses. Most courses weigh final exams at 10 percent and coursework at 90 percent. The updated policy introduces a performance task option for students who do not pass the final exam or who need to retake portions of it. A more formal presentation of this updated policy will be prepared for approval at the December meeting. The administration also emphasized improvements in communication with teachers and increased accountability.

5.3 Enrollment Update: Michael O'Keefe reported that postcards were mailed to families in grades 3-11 in the 20 towns in the school's region, and enrollment opened on November 1. The school has received 80 applications for Grades 5–12, including nearly 50 for Grade 5. Work continues to improve retention from Grade 8 to Grade 9.

6. **New Business:** Laura introduced the formation of a search committee as outlined in the succession plan. Chris Talamo agreed to serve as chair, and committee members will include board members: Erin and Jane, along with Theresa Szczepanski and Lisa Grogan, a Grade 6 ELA teacher. The board voted unanimously to approve the committee. The group is planning to meet every two weeks and provide updates at each board meeting.
7. **Old Business:** Eric reported on the extension of the school's line of credit. Although a five-year extension was originally approved, attorneys noted that the term exceeded the current charter period, so the extension was adjusted to run through June 2028. The board voted unanimously to accept this adjustment. Erin will add supporting documents to the minutes.
8. **Financial Matters:** The financial report for the period ending October 31 was presented. The report reflects the updated budget approved last month and is based on a projection of 605 students at an increased per-pupil rate. Enrollment is currently at 602 students, though the administration remains optimistic about meeting the target. Expenses are under budget, resulting in positive income and a strong cash position. Additional revenue

came from student events, field trips, and increased lunch sales. Savings were also realized due to two teachers on PFML leave. Electrical expenses ran over budget, and the school is in the process of purchasing a new van and upgrading necessary IT infrastructure, which will cost approximately \$20,000 more than anticipated. The board voted unanimously to accept the October financials.

9. **Board Subcommittee Reports:** The Nominations Committee had no updates. The Communications Committee has a meeting scheduled for next week, and the Finance Committee has not met since the last board meeting.

10. **Other business not anticipated by the chair 24 hours in advance:** none

11. **Adjourn:** Sean made a motion to adjourn - and the vote was unanimous.

 FOURTH AMENDMENT AND NOTE MODIFICATION AGREEMENT (1)

 Rising Tide Votes - 4th Modification Minutes [School] (Final)(2264827.2).docx