



**Heritage Classical Academy
1130 W. 34th Street
Houston, Texas 77018**

Board Minutes – Regular Board Meeting, July 21, 2026

Members present in person: Stuart Saunders (Chairman), Arthur Donnelly, and Sharon Griffin.
Present online: Kathryn van der Pol (Secretary) and Richard Hendee (Treasurer).

Guests present in person: Superintendent Oscar Ortiz, Head of School Gabriel Michalak, and Administrative Staff (Farrell Saunders). Present online: DaiAnn Mooney of DSS.

1. Mr. Saunders called the meeting to order at 5:17 p.m.
2. Mr. Saunders opened with a prayer and led the Pledge of Allegiance and the Texas Pledge.
3. Mr. Ortiz read the Mission and Vision statements.
4. No members of the public were present.

Reporting Items

5. DSS Financial Report – Fiscal Year-End (Preliminary)

Mr. Saunders explained that the June 30 year-end financials are preliminary. Because the fiscal year ended June 30, the numbers remain subject to change as auditors review them. The board will formally approve the year-end financials when it approves the audit, expected in November. The report was presented for informational purposes only; no vote was taken.

Ms. Mooney reviewed the June 2026 / year-end financials:

- Days cash on hand: 62 (above the 60-day threshold for full points),
our **Charter FIRST**: Projected score: 94 – A (Superior).

Year-to-Date / Balance Sheet / Cash Flow:

- YTD revenues: approximately \$1.7 million; expenses: approximately \$1.5 million. The school spent 95% of its expenditure budget.
- Balance sheet: cash \$260,000; state-funding receivable accrued (not finalized until September); net assets approximately \$440,600.
- Cash flow: net increase of \$136,000 over the fiscal year (beginning cash \$124,000; ending cash \$260,000).

- Facility rental income picked up during the second half of the year.
 - A small Fidelity brokerage account remains open for potential stock donations. Mr. Saunders noted one additional donor is considering a stock gift.
- Caveat: State funding is not finalized until September; the June 30 financials are preliminary.

6. Action Items

Item a.

Enrollment Presentation and Classroom Expansion

Mr. Michalak presented an enrollment and classroom-expansion analysis. DaiAnn Mooney remained on the call to address financial questions.

Current Enrollment Data (2026–27):

- Total enrolled: 158 students (73 kindergarten, 49 first grade, 36 second grade).
- Seven classrooms approved in the current budget (3 K, 2 first, 2 second); nine classrooms built out and available.
- Charter classroom caps: 22 students for K–1; 24 for second grade.
- With seven classrooms, K and first grade are oversubscribed (≈ 23 students per classroom); second grade is at 17.1 per classroom.

Waitlist for Kindergarten and First grade. Second grade: minimal waitlist; additional outreach needed.

Nine-Classroom Model:

Mr. Michalak presented a nine-section model (4 K, 3 first, 2 second). Using 5% projected melt and 95% ADA, the model showed:

- K: ≈ 20.6 students per classroom (ADA ≈ 19.6).
- First grade: ≈ 18 students per classroom (ADA ≈ 17.3).
- Second grade: ≈ 17 per classroom (unchanged)

Financial Impact:

Ms. Mooney and Mr. Michalak presented a cost-benefit analysis. Additional revenue from approximately 27 students over the initial budget was modeled against the cost of two additional teachers.

Key points:

- Teacher salary modeled at \$65,000; identified candidates are at or below that level.
- Furniture and most instructional materials already purchased through the CSP grant.
- Incremental instructional supplies estimated at approximately \$2,500 and \$1,200 per classroom.
- Kindergarten expansion projected to be clearly revenue-positive; first grade projected near breakeven.

- Ms. Mooney noted that the typical breakeven is approximately 20 students per classroom, but HCA's pre-purchased materials lower that threshold.
- The campus increase of approximately 20% supports administrative cost-ratio dilution and long-term sustainability.

Board Discussion:

- Mrs. van der Pol observed that first grade has a thinner margin but noted that Year 1 experience showed enrollment growing via late transfers and word of mouth; she assessed the risk as acceptable.
- Mr. Saunders noted that second grade classrooms will also operate below breakeven but serve the strategic goal of preparing students for STAAR.
- Mr. Hendee stated that the numbers made sense and that more marketing, including the exterior sign, should target first-grade enrollment.
- Mr. Donnelly asked about teacher-aide needs; Mr. Michalak confirmed the two approved co-curricular/aide positions remain sufficient for nine sections.
- Mr. Donnelly inquired about potential special-education cost from HISD-area transfers; Mr. Michalak reported no current indication of significant additional needs from waitlisted families.
- Mrs. van der Pol asked about leadership-team teaching; Mr. Michalak described plans for an assembly/story-time period to maintain instructional engagement without full section loads.
- Ms. Griffin raised attendance assurance; Mr. Michalak outlined plans for increased communication cadence and parent meetings after unexcused absences.
- Mr. Donnelly recommended requiring waitlisted families to complete enrollment by end of the week; Mr. Michalak agreed.

Management Recommendation: Add one kindergarten section (3 → 4) and one first-grade section (2 → 3), amending the FY 2027 budget to hire two additional teachers.

Motion: Approve classroom expansion by adding one kindergarten and one first-grade section, amending the FY 2027 budget to add two teachers with salary and benefits not to exceed the amounts presented in the financial model.

Moved by: **Richard (Dick) Hendee**; Seconded by: **Kathryn van der Pol**.

Motion approved: 5-0

Mr. Donnelly voted to approve. Mr. Hendee voted to approve. Ms. Griffin voted to approve. Mr. Saunders voted to approve. Mrs. van der Pol voted to approve.

Item b.

Approval of July 8, 2026 Special Meeting Minutes

Motion: Approve the July 8, 2026 special meeting minutes as presented.

Moved by: **Richard (Dick) Hendee**; Seconded by: **Arthur Donnelly**.

Motion approved: 5-0

Mr. Donnelly voted to approve. Mr. Hendee voted to approve. Ms. Griffin voted to approve. Mr. Saunders voted to approve. Mrs. van der Pol voted to approve.

Item c.

EMAT Funding – Certification of Provision of Instructional Materials

Mr. Michalak explained that state law requires annual certification that instructional materials are developmentally appropriate and aligned to TEKS. Through the partnership with Hillsdale (BCSI), all HCA curriculum meets this requirement. Certification unlocks EMAT funding of approximately \$33,540 for FY 2027, available for instructional materials and technology. HCA deferred EMAT funding in Year 1 due to CSP grant availability. Next year's allotment will be based on this year's higher enrollment, yielding a significant increase.

Mrs. van der Pol confirmed the current allocation is based on prior-year enrollment (approximately 59 students). Mr. Saunders noted that the increased enrollment will also increase future EMAT allotments.

Motion: Ratify the Certification of Provision of Instructional Materials to access EMAT funding.

Moved by: **Kathryn van der Pol**; Seconded by: **Arthur Donnelly**.

Motion approved: 5-0

Mr. Donnelly voted to approve. Mr. Hendee voted to approve. Ms. Griffin voted to approve. Mr. Saunders voted to approve. Mrs. van der Pol voted to approve.

Mr. Saunders signed the state certification document during the meeting. The document will be countersigned by Mrs. van der Pol (Board Secretary) at a meeting scheduled for Thursday.

Superintendent's Report

Mr. Ortiz addressed the board for his first formal report. Highlights:

- Establishing a weekly meeting rhythm with TEA, Region Four, DSS, campus leadership, and Fort Worth staff; a shared calendar will be distributed to the board.
- Creating a shared drive for board visibility into school operations, updated every Friday, including a compliance calendar, event schedule, and capital projects.
- His 100-day plan is 95% complete and will be shared in draft form by Friday. It emphasizes building systems and SOPs (“from heroics to habits”) to scale operations and reduce dependence on individual heroics.

- Mr. Ortiz requested prayers for his family's housing transition to Houston.
- Mr. Donnelly commended the early focus on SOPs, standardization, and delegation.

Annual Meeting Agenda (Deferred from June)

Mr. Saunders noted that the annual meeting customarily takes place in June but was inadvertently omitted. He confirmed that all board members received more than three days' notice for this agenda.

Ratification of Prior-Year Board Actions

Motion: Ratify all actions taken by the board during the previous fiscal year.

Moved by: **Sharon Griffin**; Seconded by: **Richard (Dick) Hendee**.

Motion approved: 5-0

Mr. Donnelly voted to approve. Mr. Hendee voted to approve. Ms. Griffin voted to approve. Mr. Saunders voted to approve. Mrs. van der Pol voted to approve.

Board Election – Sharon Griffin

Mr. Saunders explained the staggered board terms: Mrs. van der Pol and Mr. Saunders serve 2025–2028; Mr. Hendee and Mr. Donnelly serve 2024–2027; Ms. Griffin's seat is the only one up for election this year. Ms. Griffin accepted the nomination.

Motion: Elect Sharon Griffin to a three-year board term (2026–2029).

Moved by: **Kathryn van der Pol**; Seconded by: **Arthur Donnelly**.

Motion approved: 5-0

Mr. Donnelly voted to approve. Mr. Hendee voted to approve. Ms. Griffin voted to approve. Mr. Saunders voted to approve. Mrs. van der Pol voted to approve.

Slate of Officers for 2026–2027

Mr. Saunders proposed retaining the current officers: Stuart Saunders as President/Chairman, Kathryn van der Pol as Secretary, and Richard Hendee as Treasurer.

Motion: Approve the slate of officers for 2026–2027 as proposed.

Moved by: **Sharon Griffin**; Seconded by: **Richard (Dick) Hendee**.

Motion approved: 5-0

Mr. Donnelly voted to approve. Mr. Hendee voted to approve. Ms. Griffin voted to approve. Mr. Saunders voted to approve. Mrs. van der Pol voted to approve.

Appointment of Committees

Mr. Saunders confirmed that existing committees will remain in place for the coming year.

President's Report / Heritage ED Status

Mr. Saunders reported that the school continues to operate at a deficit, but its foundation is strong: re-enrollment is solid, demand is growing, the leadership team is in place, and the facility is well suited to the mission. He noted that the school is fulfilling its mission and must continue moving toward financial self-sustainability. Mr. Hendee added that the expenditures support a worthy cause and that the school is fortunate to have foundation support to help carry the mission forward.

FY 2027 Board Meeting Calendar

A draft calendar of FY 2027 board meeting dates and workshop schedule was distributed. Board meetings will continue on the third Tuesday of each month at 5:15 p.m. as required by state law (meetings held outside normal business hours). Mr. Saunders committed to distributing board packets by the Friday before each meeting (rather than Monday) and asked that staff submit materials by the preceding Wednesday.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Mr. Saunders adjourned the meeting at approximately 6:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kathryn van der Pol". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Kathryn van der Pol

Board Secretary

Heritage Classical Academy