



Essence Preparatory Public School
Board of Directors Meeting – September 2025
Location: Essence Preparatory
Date: September 24, 2025
Call to Order: 5:41 pm by Board Chair Brian Dillard

Members Present: Brian Dillard (Chair), Mike Frisbie (Vice Chair), Kanwal Lopez (Treasurer), Jackie Gorman (Secretary), Dr. Cynthia Warrick (Member), Lucinda Vigil (Member)
Staff Present: Akeem Brown (Superintendent)

The meeting was called to order by Chair Brian Dillard. The Board entered closed session immediately under Texas Government Code §551.074 to discuss the Superintendent's contract. After returning to open session, Dr. Cynthia Warrick moved to approve the Superintendent's contract renewal for one year at the current salary, including a one-time \$5,000 stipend for summer program work. The motion was seconded by Mike Frisbie and approved unanimously (6-0).

Following the personnel discussion, the Board proceeded with the remainder of the agenda. Jackie Gorman moved to approve state-mandated policy items A–D (Parental Notification of Employee Misconduct, Prohibition Against DEI Practices, Parental Engagement Policy, and Concussion Response Policy) as a single block. The motion was seconded by Kanwal Lopez and passed unanimously (6-0).

The Superintendent summarized each policy. The Parental Notification of Employee Misconduct policy aligns with CPS and SBEC reporting requirements. The Prohibition Against DEI Practices (Senate Bill 12) policy was adopted in compliance with TEC 11.051 and will be distributed to all employees and contractors at hiring. The Parental Engagement Policy establishes a parent-only portal on the school website within fifteen days, allowing submission of comments for monthly Board meetings. The Concussion Response Policy ensures that two certified concussion-response staff members are present at all athletic events. Leadership also discussed the forthcoming cell phone policy, which will include parent and scholar acknowledgment and progressive consequences for violations.

Kanwal Lopez moved to approve the Chromebook technology purchase for \$39,980.96 (excluding sales tax) using IMAT funds to maintain the 1:1 device ratio. The motion was seconded by Dr. Cynthia Warrick and approved unanimously (6-0). The Superintendent also highlighted the \$55,000 Outfit Street Church grant secured by Dr. Cynthia Ward, with \$25,000 allocated to technology for upper grades, and noted the continuation of the \$35,000 AM Project partnership for music-integrated math instruction, with all materials remaining school property.

Lucinda Vigil moved to approve the updated Employee Handbook, which includes revised hours (7:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.) and clarifies the PTO buyback clause to apply when funds are available. Jackie Gorman seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously (6-0). The Superintendent noted



that the Scholar and Family Handbook revisions will include the finalized cell phone policy, fee authorizations, and clarifications regarding the middle school uniform.

The Superintendent presented the 2023–2025 accountability results. The school received an F rating in 2023, a D in 2024, and an F in 2025. Leadership noted that these ratings were influenced by significant enrollment growth, with nearly 99% of scholars now classified as economically disadvantaged, and most students in non-tested grades (PK–2). The renewal application is expected to be released on September 16. Legal counsel, led by Denise Pierce, is developing the required financial plan that will support the district’s Strong Foundations Implementation (SFI) plan. This initiative underpins the school’s turnaround and renewal strategy.

Superintendent Brown reviewed instructional priorities and campus improvements, including the full implementation of the MTSS framework, the reintroduction of structured homework, the strengthening of PLC and observation systems, and the completion of the Bluebonnet Curriculum audit on August 27.

Community engagement efforts were also discussed. The partnership with New Covenant Church, under the leadership of Rev. Paul Stevens, continues to grow, with volunteers assisting in school events and outreach. Staff and families are invited to a community event in September. “Prayer at the Pole” continues each Wednesday morning with strong parent turnout and support for the school’s focus on accountability and consistency.

Board members expressed support for compliance with state mandates, while acknowledging philosophical disagreement with the DEI restrictions required under Senate Bill 12. Superintendent Brown also shared plans to collaborate with a marketing partner to better communicate Essence Prep’s academic growth through MAP data and scholar progress trends to funders and the public.

The Board confirmed several follow-up items: the Superintendent will distribute the new DEI policy to all staff and contractors; the IT team will finalize the Chromebook order; the administrative team will launch the parent comment portal within fifteen days; and the leadership team will complete handbook revisions and assist legal counsel with data required for the SFI plan submission.

The next Board meeting will be held in October 2025 to review the finalized cell phone policy, handbook revisions, and updates for renewal preparation. The meeting was adjourned after completing all open session business.

Minutes prepared by: Staff

Approved by the Essence Preparatory Board of Directors on: 11/5/2025