THE EXCEL CENTER, LLC
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING
AUGUST 10, 2026

MINUTES

The Board of Directors of The Excel Center, LLC met at 12:00 p.m. August 10, 2026, at Goodwill Legacy Group Foundation office. Present were:

Gita Baker, not present
Kofi Barko, present/virtual
Patricia Castaneda, present
Garland Graves, present/virtual
Perry Griffith, not present
Kent Kramer, present
Jay Oliver, present
Don Palmer, present
Laura Pickett, present
Josh Shelton, present

Staff/Other:

Shelley Ashley
Jaylyn Brown
Katie Bustamante
Josh Cooper
Ivan Cropper
Betsy Delgado
Rachel Eble
Corey Emery
Emily Fritsch
Matt Fortney
Mike Gallo
Lynn Greggs
Amanda Grube
Miriam Henry
Kacie Klem
Sylvia Lauer
Johnny Manson
Brandon Marks
Kim Myers
Mike Myers
Andrew Newman
Lakia Osborne
Khalilah Palmer
Kari Podany
Shonda Russell
Eric Schlegel
Dan Scott
Danielle White

Guests:

Bilen Mulugeta, TEC-UH
Jazmin Diaz, Student, TEC-SH

Board Chair Laura Pickett presided and called the meeting to order.

There was no public comment.

On a motion by Jay Oliver, duly seconded, the meeting minutes of May 18, 2026, meeting were approved as previously distributed. Roll call by individual members' present were all in agreement of approval.

Matt Fortney and Josh Cooper gave the Treasurer's report for the period through June 30, 2026. The organization ended the fiscal year with revenue of approximately $37.7 million, $1.3 million ahead of budget; operating profit of $976,000, approximately $830,000 ahead of budget; and a year-end cash balance of approximately $7 million. Net assets increased approximately $170,000. Josh noted that although reported cash decreased $3 million during the year, intercompany receivables and payables reduced the true net cash impact to approximately $850,000. Overall financial performance across the Excel Center schools remains healthy, with newer locations continuing to build enrollment and absorb startup/build-out costs.

On a motion by Kofi Barko, duly seconded, the financial statements for June and accounts payable for April, May and June were approved unanimously. Roll call by individual members' present were all in agreement of approval.

Jay Oliver provided an update from the GEI Finance & Audit Committee. The Committee approved the fiscal year 2027 Excel Center budget, which includes approximately $37.5 million in revenue based on approximately 4,975 students and projected operating income of approximately $50,000.

Katie Bustamante provided a network update and celebrated a record 1,048 Excel Center graduates for the 2025-26 school year. Several state legislators attended graduation ceremonies throughout the network. Katie also reported on the July 24 beginning-of-year celebration, attended by more than 350 team members and featuring approximately 40 professional development sessions covering topics including artificial intelligence, curriculum, early literacy, leadership and a justice-involved simulation.

Katie reviewed six commitments that will guide the network during the coming school year: year-round enrollment; high-quality, standards-aligned instruction; graduate success through integrated education and workforce outcomes; model quality and student retention; leadership development; and operating cohesively as one system across all schools.

There was discussion regarding the network's student cell phone policy. Staff reported that the use of Yondr bags implemented during the previous school year resulted in decreased discipline issues and increased student interaction in common areas. The process has become part of new student and family orientation and allows students to retain possession of their phones while preventing access during the school day.

Corey Emery and Lakia Osborne reviewed the Academic Dashboard. Demographic trends continue to show an increase in students age 25 and older, while multilingual learners remain approximately 44% of enrollment and students receiving special education services remain approximately 8%. Staff continue to closely monitor special education caseloads at Clarksville and Richmond and provide additional support as needed. The network has also continued to close graduation gaps among multilingual learners, Black students, older students and other student populations. The network earned more than 50,000 credits for the second consecutive year despite serving approximately 1,000 fewer students than the previous year, reflecting increased credit attainment per student. The network achieved 1,048 graduates, exceeding its goal of 1,046 and representing its highest graduate total since 2018. For the second consecutive school year, 100% of graduates earned college credit and/or a certification, continuing a 14-term streak at a 100% college and career readiness rate. Dual credits earned by graduates represented approximately $1.2 million in tuition savings, and 677 students earned at least one certification.

There was discussion regarding the use of artificial intelligence and innovation to improve access to and analysis of student data. Staff highlighted the use of Synergy Analytics to provide real-time information, allowing leaders to identify trends and student-level needs more quickly. AI and other technology tools are also being explored to streamline back-office functions and improve the usability and focus of data dashboards for school leaders and instructional staff.

Corey Emery and Lakia Osborne then presented an overview of Indiana's new high school diploma requirements and discussed the implications for the Excel Center model. The new diploma requirements begin with the 2029 cohort, with Core 40 remaining an option during the transition period and the new diploma becoming the only option beginning with the 2029-30 school year. The new diploma increases the total required credits from 40 to 42 while providing greater flexibility in how students fulfill content requirements based on their postsecondary goals.

Lakia reviewed the transition from the current pathway model to three primary diploma seals focused on enrollment, employment and enlistment/service. Staff highlighted existing strengths in dual credit, certifications, employer partnerships and military relationships, while noting potential challenges related to GPA requirements, foreign language coursework, credential stacking, attendance requirements, work-based learning and the additional cost of certifications. Staff are continuing to work with state and national partners to determine how the new requirements can best accommodate adult high school students while maintaining diploma quality.

There was discussion focused on attendance requirements, opportunities for work-based learning, employer capacity and ways to preserve flexibility for adult students. Staff noted that the student attendance policy was updated last year with the new diploma requirements in mind and that existing employer relationships and workforce initiatives will be leveraged and expanded. The Board will continue to receive updates on implementation of the new diploma requirements at future meetings.

Emily Fritsch provided the Director Spotlight and introduced the new Director of The Excel Center – University Heights, Bilen Mulugeta, who joined the organization in July and brings approximately 20 years of experience as a principal, instructional coach and teacher. She has also received the Emerging Leader in Education Award and Black Excellence in Education Award.

Emily also introduced Shonda Russell, Director of The Excel Center – Shelbyville, which is celebrating its 10th anniversary. Shonda introduced student Jasmine Diaz, a projected Term 4 graduate who enrolled at the Excel Center in October 2025. Jasmine shared her personal educational journey and spoke about the encouragement and support she has received from Excel Center staff while pursuing her diploma and raising her family.

There were no updates from the Mayor's Office.

The next meeting is scheduled for November 2, 2026, at 12:00 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned.