

Independence Classical Academy Governing Board

Board Meeting Minutes

January 28th, 2026 @ 5:00pm – School Cafeteria

2902 S. Jenkins Road Fort Pierce, FL

Meeting called to order at 5:02pm by Chairman Becton. In attendance were Clay Becton, Marcia Cully, Carlos Frade, Jason Revels, & EDO Sandy Howard. Also in attendance were 30 parents and staff members (sign-in sheet available by request).

On a MTA by CF and 2nd by MC, the agenda changes to 1. add a clerical correction to the proposed calendar (item 7C), 2. The addition to 3 new letters submitted by families regarding the proposed school start times (all opposed to the change, item 4) that came in after the board packet went out, and 3. The addition of policy updated (item 7d) for handbook changes were all approved.

On a MTA by CF and 2nd by JR the approval of the October 2025 regular meeting minutes was unanimous.

Public Comment: No regular comments on agenda items or otherwise were noted. The board then moved on to the public workshop agenda item of the approved school start times by the state, pushing middle and high school times later. Director Howard explained to the room that this was not a proposal by the school, but a requirement set forth by the state, and this meeting was part of the formal process to request an exemption to the requirement by FDOE and set our own start times as a charter. That the outcomes of the hearing would determine next steps by the board. Student Eva Gueye stood up to speak about the importance of sports and family time and how this would hurt that by getting home even later. Parent Cassandra Agharo spoke on not changing start times due to it not being conducive to family time, a value shared by ICA and her family. Parent Trisha Thomas spoke on how this would alter the ability of school clubs (two of which she runs) would mean less parent participation and support, as well as preclude the kids from have a school-life balance. Parent Wildra Barrios stated how hard this would be to balance work and transportation. The survey conducted online had 43 responses from parents stating the change would require them needing to secure before care with later start times in order to get to work on time, causing financial difficulty on top of home-school balance.

School Operations report was given the board with updates on the expansion project, high need student funds helping kids who needed jackets in anticipation of extremely cold weather, enrollment with expanding from 595 students to over 800, marketing to VPK's, dual enrollment, data dive at PM2 compared to 24/25, and presentation of the FY25 audits for Freedom Charter Property Holdings and Independence Classical Academy. On a motion by MC and a 2nd by JR, the audits and operations report was approved as presented.

A new Teacher Evaluation Tool including the VAM required by the state to include student data metrics, updating our classical pedagogy standards, and to include school and community engagement was presented to the board. After a short discussion on how it relates to the Cognia Evaluation form (which will still be used in addition to this form for accreditation purposes), and mention that it was very comprehensive by both the board chair CB and MC, the new tool was approved unanimously on a motion by JR and 2nd by CF.

The 26/27 dress code was presented to the board for review and after a short discussion on shirt colors, the removal of black as an option for shirt colors, choosing to remain with red, white, and navy, the remainder of the policy, separating upper and lower campus, was approved unanimously after a motion by CF and 2nd by MC.

The 26/27 attendance policy brought to the board originally in October, was brought back to the board in relation to disciplinary absences being given a zero. After previous comments about the desire not to punish students twice, a new policy was presented and a MTA was given by JR and a 2nd by CF, all in favor and the new policy changes are approved.

The 26/27 proposed school calendar, including contract days for employees was unanimously approved after a motion by CF and a 2nd by MC.

Handbook changes were provided to the board to address specific language regarding fevers being added to the health policy section, and state-mandated recitation of the Pledge being added to the handbook, per law, if we are to require students to recite. This publication provides for waivers by parents should they seek exemption for their students. Both handbook changes were unanimously approved after a MTA by JR and a 2nd by MC.

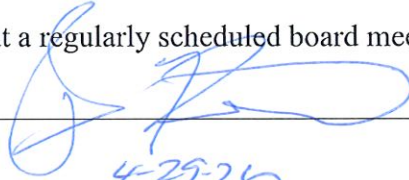
Director Howard recommended adding the next meeting to the calendar for March 25th, the Wednesday following Spring Break, in case updates are needed regarding the expansion as well as numerous expected enrollment, employment, and policy updates, prior to the April meeting, as opposed to having to add a meeting to the May calendar. After checking calendars, the board agreed it was clear, and on a MTA by CF and 2nd by JR, unanimously passed the addition of a March 25th, 2026 board meeting.

Calendar of events was provided to the board.

Good of the Order/Board Comment: Mrs. Cully asked the board what was expected of her and how involved they wanted her to be, as well as the preferred directions on inquiries that came to her. Chairman Becton explained as he has always done, he takes time to review the situation but reminds the person inquiring that the board's job is to set policy and hear appeals, as well as promote and support the school with its mission and vision, not get involved in day-to-day operations. There is a list of specific directors who can always help, or they can defer to Director Howard to get it to the right person. Director Howard reminded her that if it involves her or one of the directors, it should be brought to the board at a public meeting, and if not, she would always ensure it gets handled and that she gets follow up, so she knows it was resolved. She also mentioned she felt the shipping of uniforms was too much and parents might suffer for that, and

if we'd looked at local vendors. Director Howard mentioned we tried two local vendors in the past and they were both more than our current vendor, even though not local. When an initial larger (typically beginning of the year) order is placed, there is FREE shipping and sent to the house directly! It's only when you need to piece meal here and there. We determined that it would be wise to perhaps place a bulk order at the onset of the year and parents in need throughout the year can order it from us at cost with no shipping, keeping minimal items in stock. With no further comments or concerns by the board, the meeting was adjourned at 6:57pm. The next meeting is set for March 25th, 2026

Minutes approved at a regularly scheduled board meeting on April 29th 2026

Board Secretary: 

Date: 4-29-26