



Board Meeting Minutes
January 22, 2026, 4:00 p.m.
Ornelas Activity Center, 3402 Old Omen Rd, Tyler, TX 75707

ATTENDING IN PERSON:

Voting Members:

Alan Buckland
Dr. Joanna Neel

Dr. Michael Odell
Eric Semlear, President

Non-voting attendees:

Ashlie Aguilar
Heather Bailey
Sammi Broussard
Christian Chesnut

Dr. Aimee Dennis
Rachel Hawkins
Amanda Kaiser
Andrew Kohls

District Nurse, Cori
Mackey
Dr. Jaclyn Pedersen

ATTENDING ON ZOOM:

Voting Members:

Dr. Gina Doepper

Dr. Dominick Fazarro

Dr. Yanira Oliveras

Non-voting attendees:

Shelly Parsons

Board Meeting

1. Call to Order

Mr. Semlear called the UT Tyler University Academy board meeting to order at 4:03 p.m. on Thursday, January 22, 2026, confirming that a quorum was present.

2. Pledge

The Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag was said, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the Texas Flag.

PUBLIC COMMENT

3. Open for Public Comment

- a. Mr. Semlear noted that no one registered for public comment.

ACTION ITEMS

4. Consent Agenda
 - a. Approve Previous Minutes, [Monday, December 15, 2025](#).
 - b. Dr. Neel moved to approve the minutes, and Dr. Odell seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with Mr. Buckland, Dr. Doepker, Dr. Fazarro, Dr. Neel, Dr. Odell, Dr. Oliveras, and Mr. Semlear voting in the affirmative.
5. Request Approval of 2024-2025 Annual Finance Report (AFR)
 - a. [Annual Financial Report](#). The AFR was presented by Ms. Stephanie Harris of the independent auditing firm Crowe LLP via Zoom.
 - b. [Required Auditor Disclosure Letter: Conclusion of Audit](#). Ms. Harris stated that Crowe provided the highest level of assurance that the audit was prepared accurately.
 - c. Mr. Buckland moved to approve the 2024-2025 Annual Finance Report, and Dr. Neel seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with Mr. Buckland, Dr. Doepker, Dr. Fazarro, Dr. Neel, Dr. Odell, Dr. Oliveras, and Mr. Semlear voting in the affirmative.
6. Request Approval Board Policies:
 - a. [PG- 3.104 Married and Pregnant Students](#)
 - b. [PG- 3.201 Admissions and Enrollment](#)
 - c. [PG- 3.203 Attendance Accounting](#)
 - d. [PG- 3.204 Attendance Enforcement](#)
 - e. [PG- 3.205 Attendance for Credit](#)
 - f. [PG- 3.301 Alcohol and Drug Use](#)
 - g. [PG- 3.302 Tobacco Use and Possession](#)
 - h. [PG- 3.303 Immunization Requirements](#)
 - i. Dr. Dennis presented updates to the policies, and Mr. Semlear invited discussion.
 - ii. Dr. Odell moved to approve PG-3.104, PG- 3.201, PG- 3.203, PG- 3.204, PG- 3.205, PG- 3.301, PG- 3.302, and PG-3.303, and Dr. Neel seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with Mr. Buckland, Dr. Doepker, Dr. Fazarro, Dr. Neel, Dr. Odell, Dr. Oliveras, and Mr. Semlear voting in the affirmative.
7. Request Approval of [School Health Advisory Council Members](#)
 - a. Nurse Cori Mackey presented the recommended list of members.
 - b. Dr. Odell moved to approve the School Health Advisory Council Members, and Mr. Buckland seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with Mr. Buckland, Dr. Doepker, Dr. Fazarro, Dr. Neel, Dr. Odell, Dr. Oliveras, and Mr. Semlear voting in the affirmative.
8. Executive Session: The Board went into Executive Session under Texas Government Code 551.074 to deliberate on the appointment, employment, evaluation, reassignment, duties, discipline, or dismissal of a public officer or employee.
 - a. Consider the employment of Lone Finalist, Aimee Dennis, as Superintendent of Schools.

- b. The Board moved to Executive session at 4:24 p.m., and returned from Executive Session at 4:36 p.m.
- 9. Request Approval to Consider Employment of Lone Finalist, Aimee Dennis, as Superintendent of Schools.
 - a. Dr. Olivares moved that the Board recommend Aimee Dennis to the University of Texas at Tyler leadership for appointment as University Academy Superintendent. Dr. Fazarro seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with Mr. Buckland, Dr. Doepker, Dr. Fazarro, Dr. Neel, Dr. Odell, Dr. Oliveras, and Mr. Semlear voting in the affirmative.
- 10. Request Board Decision on Financial Feasibility to Purchase Three New Buses Equipped with Three-Point Seat Belts
 - a. [Cost of New Buses Equipped with Three-Point Seat Belts](#)
 - b. [SB 546 Reporting on School Bus Seat Belt Retrofit Costs](#)
 - i. [Shuttle Bus 1 Retrofit Costs](#)
 - ii. [Shuttle Bus 2 Retrofit Costs](#)
 - iii. [Bus #3 Retrofit Costs](#)
 - c. Dr. Dennis presented information on the costs of replacing buses/shuttles without three-point seat belts and retrofitting the current buses/shuttles with three-point seat belts.
 - d. Dr. Odell moved to not proceed with replacing the buses with current funds in the fund balance and to wait for further TEA guidance on retrofitting buses with three-point seat belts. Dr. Neel seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with Mr. Buckland, Dr. Doepker, Dr. Fazarro, Dr. Neel, Dr. Odell, Dr. Oliveras, and Mr. Semlear voting in the affirmative.
- 11. Executive Session- The Board will go into Executive Session under Texas Government Code 551.074 to discuss the Superintendent's annual performance evaluation.
 - a. Mr. Semlear stated that the board would not go into Executive Session for the Superintendent's annual evaluation.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

- 12. SB 11 Relating to a Period of Prayer and Reading of the Bible or other Religious Text in Public Schools
 - a. Dr. Dennis presented information on SB 11 for the board's consideration, to be voted on in February.
- 13. [Annual Report of the Early Childhood Literacy and Math Plan](#)
- 14. [Annual Report of the College, Career, and Military Readiness Plan](#)
 - a. Dr. Pedersen presented both the Early Childhood Literacy and Math Plan and the College, Career, and Military Readiness Plan.
- 15. Financial Updates:
 - a. Ms. Chesnut presented the [2025-2026 Budget Report](#).
 - b. The General Budget received \$ 4.3 million and expended \$5 million. The Activity Funds received \$20,000 and expended \$5,000.
- 16. Superintendent Report

- a. School Board Appreciation Month
 - i. Dr. Dennis thanked the school board for their dedication and for volunteering their time in support of UT Tyler University Academy.
- b. [District Enrollment and Attendance](#) presented by Dr. Dennis.
- c. Campus Updates:
 - i. Longview: Ms. Hawkins reported that Mr. Marshall was nominated for Conservation Teacher of the Year in Upshur County, and that students were participating in Robotics, Model UN, the Science Fair, and Leadership Conferences. They are hosting an Open House on January 29, 2026, where their students will present PBLs and discuss the UA school model with prospective families.
 - ii. Palestine: Ms. Parsons reported that over 50 students attended the District A+ UIL Academic competition in December, and 29 placed. Students planted trees on the Palestine campus, and grades 4 & 5 hosted a local author for a PBL. Their December Toy Drive was successful; the Lighthouse team earned 2nd place in a community tree-decorating contest; and 4th-8th-grade students attended a GT event in Lufkin. Coming up is NHS Induction, School of Choice week, and Open House on January 30, 2026, 4-H Robotics, and Model UN.
 - iii. Tyler: Mr. Kohls reported that 2 staff members graduated from UT Tyler in December through the UT Tyler Employee Scholarship- one with an undergraduate degree in teaching, and the other with a master's in education. Ms. McDaniel, a UT Tyler Ed.D. candidate and teacher, and Mr. Juan, a maintenance employee, were staff members of the month. Polar Express day in December was a success across all grade levels. Tyler had a state finalist in the Congress Speech and Debate competition. Tyler UTTUA is hosting a STEM Open House on January 29, 2026.
- d. Administrative Updates
 - i. Lab School Updates:
 - 1. Ms. Broussard reported that SpEd is hosting 2 graduate-level interns from UT Tyler, and an additional PhD student will collaborate with SpEd on data collection.
 - 2. Dr. Odell invited all to attend Code Jam on April 11 at the Tyler campus. They would also be celebrating the UTeach program's 15th anniversary. New data shows that 27% of completed dissertations in Education from UT Tyler used data from UA. The university continues to teach courses on the Tyler UA campus and Dr. Neel's Literacy program, Reading Buddies, resumes this semester.
 - ii. Facilities:
 - 1. State Facilities Incentive Grant Eligibility List. Dr. Dennis reported that University Charters were not eligible for this grant.
 - 2. Asbestos Containing Material. Dr. Dennis presented that the recent asbestos check reflected none on any campus.

- e. Looking Forward: Waiver Applications/Renewals, 2025-2026 District/Board Calendar Adoptions, Budget Amendments; Financial Updates; Superintendent Evaluation.

17. Adjournment

- a. Dr. Odell moved to adjourn the meeting, and Mr. Buckland seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with Mr. Buckland, Dr. Doepker, Dr. Fazarro, Dr. Neel, Dr. Odell, Dr. Oliveras, and Mr. Semlear voting in the affirmative. The meeting adjourned at 5:24 p.m.