



AMIKIDS MARITIME ACADEMY
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
March 26, 2026 @ 6:00 pm Central Time
Meeting held via TEAMS

The Special Board Meeting of AMIKids Maritime Academy was called to order at 6:00 PM CST by Board Chair O.B. The meeting brought together board members O.B., Jim Looker, Dr. Janine Walker-Caffrey, and school leaders Principal Lauren Chapman and Director of Educational Services Dr. Sabrina Richards. Jesse Rigby and Rebecca Edmond attended also.

Agenda Updates and Approval

Before adopting the agenda, board members added three key discussion topics:

1. Action steps to increase enrollment for the 2026–27 school year
2. Details regarding how the Board will monitor the school’s Corrective Action Plan (CAP)
3. Future Senior Class trips

The agenda was unanimously approved following a motion by Jim Looker and second by Dr. Walker-Caffrey.

School Progress and Academic Supports

Principal Lauren Chapman presented an encouraging update on school progress. Enrollment stands at 61 students, with 69 already committed to the upcoming fall—a positive sign of continued growth. Graduation planning is underway for the May 11 ceremony, and invitations will soon be mailed to board members.

Lauren reported that academic interventions have been inconsistent in attendance, with only 26% of invited students attending reading tutoring and 20% attending algebra support. To address this, intervention sessions will be moved into the regular school days specifically during elective periods—to ensure higher participation. Staff are developing incentives to enhance engagement, with refinements expected to be implemented in April.

The school continues to support students in accelerated learning, including 23 students enrolled in Florida Virtual School courses and seven dual-enrolled with Gulf Coast State College. Tuition is currently covered by a combination of school funding and, in some cases, Triumph Gulf Coast support. While scholarship funds may not be applied toward dual enrollment, the school is working closely with the district to ensure it properly receives acceleration-related FTE funding for eligible students.

The Board expressed concern about intervention participation and student motivation, emphasizing the need to better connect academic expectations with incentives and consistent support.

Banking Resolution

Sabrina Richards introduced an updated banking resolution intended to streamline and safeguard the school's financial operations. The revised resolution removes the former principal and adds Principal Lauren Chapman, Director Sabrina Richards, and Senior Vice President Heyward Golden as authorized signers, while maintaining CFO Maria Porto Duarte. The requirement for two signatures on checks over \$2,500 remains organizational policy, even though banks may not enforce it.

The Board approved the resolution unanimously.

Corrective Action Plan Update

After district submission of the Corrective Action Plan, the Florida Department of Education responded with a request for two modifications:

- A clear outline of how the Board will monitor progress
- A formal schedule for reporting CAP status

To meet these requirements, the principal will provide a detailed weekly written update to the Board Chair, copied individually to the other board members. These updates will include enrollment status, behavioral incidents of concern, failing academic grades, chronic absenteeism, financial matters, and ongoing recruitment efforts.

The Board also approved a monitoring schedule aligned with district expectations, requiring CAP status updates in October, November, and March following key FTE counts.

Charter School Program Grant Award

One of the most significant updates came from Dr. Sabrina Richards, who announced that AMIkids Maritime Academy has been awarded a **\$200,000 Charter School Program (CSP)** grant. This cost reimbursement grant will support major investments in curriculum and technology, including smart boards, student laptops, and new science and reading intervention resources.

The grant allows reimbursement of some previously incurred expenses dating back to 2023 and requires all new purchases or purchase orders be completed by June 17, 2026. AMIkids will initially advance payments, with reimbursement returning the funds to the organization. The staff accountant will assess all eligible expenses, and Treasurer Jim Looker will be kept informed to support financial oversight.

Charter Renewal and Board Development

Principal Chapman shared the positive news that the Bay District Schools Board approved the academy's five-year charter renewal on March 10, demonstrating strong district support. The school is now focused on building a successful renewal cycle that could eventually secure a 15-year term.

The Board discussed strategies to strengthen local governance, including engaging potential new members with expertise in community outreach, fundraising, and finance. Jim Looker will spearhead evaluating potential candidates. The upcoming graduation ceremony is expected to serve as a valuable opportunity for community engagement and recruitment.

Senior Trip Oversight and Safety

The Board revisited concerns surrounding the school's senior trip planning process. Issues raised included lack of prior Board review, unclear financial handling, and the absence of required background checks for chaperones. To prevent future risks, the Board directed that any senior trip plans must be presented well in advance for approval and must follow all AMIkids safety protocols. The Board also recommended creating a restricted student activity account to separate trip funds from operational dollars and to develop parameters for future senior class trips.

Enrollment Growth Initiatives

Looking ahead to 2026–27, the school is launching a more comprehensive enrollment campaign. Efforts include:

- Hosting an Open House (flyer completed by April 3)
 - Distributing updated recruitment materials
 - Considering a community mailer
 - Launching TV and social media advertising funded by the CSP grant
 - Promoting the academy's partnership with the local Sea Turtle Rescue project, a unique program expected to draw strong student interest
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FY27 Budget Planning and Workshop

The Board reviewed the timeline and expectations for the upcoming FY27 budget. Personnel costs remain the largest expenditure category, though initial projections are that staffing levels will largely stay unchanged until enrollment reaches 100 students—except for the planned addition of a half-time ESE teacher.

The draft budget will include updates to technology, challenge event funding, and anticipated educational license renewals. A formal Budget Workshop is scheduled for **April 30, 2026, from 5:00–7:00 PM Eastern**, with materials distributed one week prior.

In addition, the school plans to submit a TAG Fund application by April 10 to pursue partial funding for the Dean of Students position.

Future Opportunities

The Board briefly discussed national grant opportunities, including the **Yass Prize**, a \$1 million education innovation award. Dr. Walker-Caffrey offered support in preparing an application before the June 1 deadline.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:23 PM CST following a motion by Jim Looker and second by O.B.