



Board of Directors Meeting

Thursday, February 26, 2026 at 3:00pm

Goldberg Kohn | East Monroe Street, Suite 3300, Chicago, IL 60603

Board Members Present: David Chizewer, Craig Henderson, Brian Novelline, Christine Pointexter-Harris, David Napier, Maureen Resac, Katie Reilly, Evan Sharp, Jennifer Wilson, Doresah Ford Bey, Korrin Anderson, Venkat Maddila

Board Members on Zoom: Crystal Stonewall

CICS Staff Present: Beth Purvis, Allison Sussna, Meaghan Jennings, Elizabeth Winke, Claudia Beltran, Daniel Cancel, Apoorva Katikaneni

Welcome

At 3:04pm, Evan Sharp called the meeting to order. Roll call was taken and a quorum was established. No public comment was made.

Voting Item: Evan Sharp made a motion to approve the minutes from the December 4, 2025 Board of Directors meeting; the motion was seconded by Craig Henderson and approved unanimously.

Voting Item: Evan Sharp made a motion to approve the term renewals for David Chizewer and Brian Novelline to the CICS Board of Directors; the motion was seconded by Doresah Ford Bey. David Chizewer and Brian Novelline abstained. The motion was approved unanimously by all remaining members.

Network Office Report

Beth and David Chizewer recognized outgoing Board Chair Evan Sharp for his years of service. Beth highlighted Evan's leadership through COVID, CEO transitions, and the shift from direct operations. David noted that Evan holds the record for the fastest rise from board member to board president in CICS's 30+ year history. A token of appreciation was presented to Evan on behalf of the organization.

Voting Item: Evan Sharp made a motion to approve Brian Novelline as Chair of the CICS Board of Directors; the motion was seconded by Maureen Resac. Brian Novelline abstained. The motion was approved



unanimously by all remaining members.

Voting Item: Evan Sharp made a motion to approve Maureen Resac as Treasurer of the CICS Board of Directors; the motion was seconded by Craig Henderson. Maureen Resac abstained. The motion was approved unanimously by all remaining members.

Elizabeth Winke presented the financial update based on data through December 31, 2025. At the network level, CICS is projecting a year-end surplus of \$373,000, exceeding the planned budget of \$250,000. The cash position at year-end was approximately \$60 million (including all cash and investments). Revenue and expenses were both slightly above budget but remained on track overall.

At the campus level (consolidated), the campuses were running a \$3 million mid-year surplus, which is expected to normalize as summer personnel accruals are incorporated. Fund revenue was slightly below budget due to the timing of grant receipts. The consolidated statement of financial position showed cash improving by \$4.8 million since the prior year-end, offset by a reduction in accounts receivable. Total net assets increased by \$3.5 million. Operating cash flow was positive at \$5.9 million, with \$3.3 million in capital expenditures.

Substitute teacher spending was noted as lower than prior years, which was viewed as a positive sign, partially attributable to improved teacher hiring and reduced vacancy rates, particularly at DS-managed schools.

Capital Expenditures: Beth reported that the Finance Committee has recommended a significant increase in capital expenditures for the coming year, targeting \$3.5–\$4 million (up from approximately \$1.75–\$2 million historically). The average age of CICS buildings is over 90 years, and deferred maintenance has accumulated. Danny and his facilities team have worked with SMOs to identify priority projects, including items required for charter renewal. The Finance Committee expressed support, and a detailed capital plan will be included in the FY2027 budget to be presented to the full board in June.

Real Estate: Beth shared that CICS has accepted an offer to sell the Irving Park Rectory. Proceeds will fund a new playground for the Irving Park campus. CICS is also seeking a commercial real estate broker to market and sell additional empty buildings.

Board members discussed the presentation of investment gains/losses in the P&L, noting that nonprofit accounting standards require these to be



shown on the income statement. The Finance Committee is working to present operating performance separately for clarity.

Craig Henderson commended Elizabeth and her finance team for the significant improvements in dashboards and financial reporting.

Meaghan Jennings and Allison Sussna presented updates on recruitment and enrollment, noting that the lottery is scheduled for the following week (early March 2026). This year's lottery was moved earlier to align with CPS timelines.

Recruitment Priorities: Key priorities for FY2026 include a referral program, maximizing community presence (including street pole banners), improving the website user experience, and strengthening communications. A new enrollment platform, Final Site, was rolled out this year, requiring significant investment in training and support for office managers and SMO staff.

Enrollment Dashboard: Meaghan presented a more robust enrollment dashboard that tracks not only the 20th-day count but also application targets, year-over-year comparisons, and progress toward goals. Schools projecting more than 5% targeted growth are presenting recruitment plans to the network, and discretionary funds are being invested in those schools with the largest growth targets.

Student Transfers: Allison reported that 763 students (11%) left CICS before the start of the school year, up from 561 (8%) the prior year. Despite this, overall enrollment improved by 1% year-over-year. Mid-year transfer data showed encouraging improvement across the network, with SMOs implementing specific strategies to intervene earlier and reduce transfers. A network-wide intent-to-return survey will be administered in April 2026 for the first time.

Board members discussed the challenges of summer transfers, including housing instability, gentrification, families shopping for the best school fit, and the CPS selective enrollment process. Jacob (Meridian) noted that Longwood Elementary accounted for a disproportionate share of transfers, largely due to a school turnaround in progress and the grade 2-to-3 campus transition from Loomis to Longwood. The board expressed strong interest in improving data capture around transfer reasons and using intent-to-return surveys to enable earlier intervention.

Kevin (Education Committee) reported that the Education Committee has been very active in early 2026, meeting with all CIWP campuses on



mid-year outcomes and reviewing the draft Road to Renewal report. A finalized version will be included in the next board packet. Beth, Meaghan, and Kevin are also meeting individually with each SMO to review reports.

Charter Renewal: Four key metrics hold outsized impact on renewal terms: special education, bilingual education, exclusionary discipline (suspensions), and teacher certification. Kevin reported that CICS has met the teacher certification threshold, with 81% certified teachers network-wide (exceeding the 75% requirement). Several campuses that were below threshold in August have since moved into compliance, reflecting meaningful progress by the SMOs.

Doresah Ford-Bey was recognized as the board's point person for the renewal process, working alongside Claudia and the network team. Doresah emphasized the intentionality of the renewal approach, noting that starting early, engaging partners, and building advocacy with the new school board are critical elements. Two Wrightwood parents recently traveled to Springfield for advocacy, and additional advocacy trips are planned for March.

Discussion addressed the complexity of teacher certification challenges, including CPS policy changes (sub-licenses no longer counting as certified), hard-to-fill subject areas (sciences, math, special education, ELL), and the charter school funding gap (83 cents on the dollar). Various SMO strategies were highlighted, including DS's partnership with AUSL for teacher certification pathways and Teach for America corps members at Ellison.

Claudia provided an update on compliance, noting the creation of standard operating procedures (SOPs) and monthly compliance working group meetings with SMOs. These efforts have included compiling ISBE and CPS resources for schools and working collaboratively to improve certification rates.

Briana Mitchell, Chief Advancement Officer at Change Summer, presented on Camp Ironwood, a two-week sleepaway camp for middle school students. Last summer was the camp's inaugural year, with 85 Regeneration Schools scholars attending at Bradley University in Peoria, IL. For summer 2026, the camp is relocating to a traditional campsite in Eureka, Missouri, and Regeneration is doubling its enrollment target to 200 students, with 150 additional campers from other partner schools (including Intrinsic, Noble, and Legal Prep).

Briana shared data showing that 90% of campers develop in one or more social-emotional learning capacities, and camp attendees show higher



academic averages and college enrollment rates. From Camp Ironwood specifically, 90% of 2025 campers indicated they would return, 80% grew in one or more SEL competencies, and 95% of last year's attendees have already re-enrolled for 2026.

The cost to send a student to camp for two weeks is approximately \$2,000. Change Summer is asking CICS to help raise \$250,000 to fund an additional 100 campers. A host committee and fundraising event are being planned, with details to follow. Beth framed this as an opportunity for CICS to strengthen its fundraising capacity with a concrete, compelling ask.

Beth noted that the charter renewal application will be released in July 2026 and due in September 2026, and that CICS has already begun drafting the application. The organization is targeting a 5-year renewal term.

CICS Ralph
Ellison Academy

Beth Purvis introduced the presentation by noting the significant transformation at CICS Ralph Ellison since Principal Jacob Morgan's arrival. The school environment has become calmer and more focused, and mid-year data suggests stronger ACT and pre-ACT growth than the school has seen in years.

Jacob Morgan, Principal of CICS Ralph Ellison and Meridian Schools, presented on the school's turnaround progress. Key initiatives have included removing cell phones for 100% of the school day, implementing one-to-one Chromebooks with GoGuardian monitoring, upgrading curriculum with aligned formative assessments tied to ACT power standards, and shifting professional development from safety-focused to academically focused.

Interim assessment data showed growth in nearly every subject and grade level, with particularly strong results in 9th grade. For 9th-grade English, 14% more students met their college readiness benchmark compared to the beginning of the year. Suspensions dropped 34% compared to the prior year, translating to 78 additional days of instruction. Jacob emphasized that the decline in suspensions reflects improved student decision-making, not a relaxation of standards.

Board members asked about chronic absenteeism, which increased in 10th grade (+13%). Jacob explained that housing instability, extreme weather, and long public transit commutes (up to 2.5 hours) remain significant barriers, particularly for students staying with different family



members throughout the week. A 10% decline in 11th-grade math meeting/exceeding was attributed to increased rigor revealing prior instructional gaps; the school is responding with targeted remediation and additional instructional time.

INCS CSP Grant: Beth reported that CICS and Meridian submitted a \$1.2 million expansion grant application to the Illinois Network of Charter Schools to create a sports industry career pathway at Ellison. The program would expand athletics offerings, embed sports-related content across the existing curriculum (covering areas such as sports medicine, journalism, data analytics, marketing, and hospitality), and bring in Project Lead the Way as a STEM curriculum. A decision is expected in April 2026.

Ellison Excellence Award: Craig Henderson funded a new scholarship program for Ellison freshmen, awarding up to \$1,000 per year (\$500 per semester) for outstanding performance—split between a gift card and a 529 college savings contribution. Jacob noted that none of the participating families had previously heard of 529 plans, and three students opted to put their full award into the 529. Craig committed to continuing the program for incoming freshmen and expanding it to sophomores. JPMorgan Chase has been engaged to support financial literacy efforts with families.

Doresah Ford-Bey visited the campus and reported a positive, calm atmosphere with engaged students and energized teachers.

Closing Items

Evan Sharp delivered brief closing remarks, thanking the board for their support during his tenure and committing to staying engaged with CICS. The meeting was adjourned by roll call vote. The meeting was adjourned by Evan Sharp at 5:12 pm.