



BRIGHTSTAR
S C H O O L S

Bright Star Schools Board of Directors Minutes of the Regular Meeting

A meeting of the Board of Directors of Bright Star Schools was held on **Tuesday, December 3, 2024** at Stella Elementary Charter Academy and via teleconference, pursuant to notice duly given.

On the meeting agenda, the legislative body noticed each teleconference location of each member participating in the public meeting, each teleconference location was accessible to the public, members of the public were allowed to address the legislative body at each teleconference location, and the legislative body posted an agenda at each teleconference location. At least a quorum of the legislative body participated from locations within the boundaries of the local agency's jurisdiction.

In attendance at the start of the meeting were board members Andrew Murr, Lois Levy, Dr. Marissiko Wheaton-Greer, Dr. Roberta Benjamin, Stephen Green, Alyce Johnson, Jason Rudolph, Louisa Wee, David Chang, Jen Cole, and Marisol Leon.

Bright Star Schools staff in attendance were Ana Martinez, Liliana Bustos, Angelina Calderon, Darryl Garris, China Habte, Sunil Kewalramani, Dr. Eliza KimLy, Alexandra Lee, May Oey, Marni Parsons, Elijah Sugay, Spencer Szabo, and Lydia Garcia. Guests and members of the public included Shilo Gorospe, Ira Gonzalez, James Perreault, and Dolores Mabini.

- 1. Call to Order and Introduction of Guests** - Andrew Murr called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m. after confirming that a quorum was present.
- 2. Public Comment Period for Non-Agenda Items** - Andrew Murr welcomed all members of the public including the representatives from LAUSD that were attending .
- 3. Meeting Kick-off by Cynthia Trigueros, School Principal at Rise Kohyang High School (RKHS):** Cynthia shared updates about RKHS' recent achievements. The school saw a 50% increase in QuestBridge finalists, with 10 students being recognized, and celebrated 5 QuestBridge matches, including students heading to top universities like Stanford, Yale, Rice, Davidson, and Boston University. Additionally, Cynthia highlighted the school's commitment to fostering community, noting the success of the 3rd Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration, which drew over 200 guests, and the upcoming Korean Lunar New Year Community Celebration scheduled for January 2025. Cynthia shared a video of RKHS student Jaqueline Ornelas-Ventura, a QuestBridge finalist, discussing her academic achievements at the school, her scholarship to Yale for a Mathematics degree, and her aspirations to pursue higher education and become a professor.
- 4. Chief Executive Officer Updates by Ana Martinez:** Ana Martinez provided updates on key initiatives from October 21 to December 20. In Teaching and Learning, the academic leadership team streamlined professional development, conducted instructional rounds, and offered extra planning days for core teachers with expert facilitation. In School Culture and Safety, the team collaborated to align and support schools, co-created a rubric to assess support needs, and trained additional SST members. Ana also discussed the Central Team's progress, including Title IX training, Communities of Practice, and 2x2 conversations training. The team hosted LAUSD board members at Stella Elementary, merged HR and Talent Departments, and developed a new Exit Interview survey. A strategy retreat is scheduled for December 19-20, and an organizational health dashboard will launch soon. Ana reported a positive audit for LAUSD findings. She also shared the good news of the approval of Stella Elementary Charter Academy's petition renewal



by LAUSD, thanking all school staff, administrators, SST, students, families, and community partners for their support in making this happen.

5. **Chief Instructional Officer Presentation by Liliana Bustos:** Liliana outlined objectives to enhance coaching effectiveness, with teachers receiving differentiated coaching aligned with the BSS model. Goal 1 focuses on supporting school leaders by creating regular coaching systems, increasing classroom time, and building site leader capacity. Goal 2 aims to develop coach capacity in providing feedback on rigorous, grade-level content using Danielson FCAs and the Instructional Core. She also highlighted monthly Communities of Practice meetings for Principals and Assistant Principals. In Semester 1, coaching efforts covered the 11 Critical Attributes of the Danielson Rubric, Bambrick's 6 Steps to Coaching, and the 2x2 collaboration process. In Semester 2, the focus will shift to ongoing support through Coaching MY meetings to maximize student outcomes. Liliana also shared updates on joint learning walks to calibrate data collection and scoring of Tier 1 instruction and initiative implementation, with visits to two schools per month. In Semester 2, the focus will be on sustaining momentum and involving Teacher Leaders. She mentioned the upcoming Release Days for Kindergarten and First Grade in Q2, supported by McKenzie Scott funds, with a focus on backward planning for ELA, Math, and EL Education. Middle and High Schools will be the focus for Q3 Release Days. Liliana concluded by sharing positive feedback from instructional rounds at Valor Academy Elementary, where students expressed feeling safe and supported.
6. **Independent Auditor's Report by Shilo Gorospe:** Shilo Gorospe provided an overview of the 2023-24 school year. Auditors issued an unmodified opinion, confirming that the financial statements are accurate and compliant. Overall, no material weaknesses or significant deficiencies were found in internal controls, and BSS is fully compliant with federal and state requirements, including ADA and instructional time.
7. **Senior VPs of School Leadership updates:** Dr. Eliza KimLy provided updates on educational initiatives across the organization. At Stella Elementary Charter Academy (SECA), the focus was on small group instruction, social-emotional learning lessons, and a Literacy Night on November 14th. The school also worked on strategies for Multi-Language Learners and continued developing standards-based grading. Valor Academy Elementary School (VAES) hosted professional development on supporting neurodiverse learners, held instructional rounds on November 15th, and addressed staffing challenges with the Parker Anderson Enrichment program for arts and physical education. Rise Kohyang Elementary School (RKES) implemented "Teach Like a Champion" strategies, rewarded improved attendance with soccer uniforms, introduced a new Literacy Specialist, and hosted a well-attended Math Night. Stella Middle Charter Academy (SMCA) advanced the Compass Program, revitalized student leadership, and focused on equity work, including addressing the use of the "N" word. Valor Academy Middle School (VAMS) worked on unit planning, increased academic rigor, optimized the bell schedule with advisory and enrichment blocks, and hosted a lunchtime soccer tournament. Rise Kohyang Middle School (RKMS) celebrated student achievements, hosted a food and essential items drive, and planned holiday snack incentives to boost attendance in December. At the high school level, Valor Academy High School (VAHS) achieved a 90% higher education enrollment rate for the Class of 2024, increased AP enrollment, and hosted a Fall Festival, Senior Summit, and College Experience trip, with after-school participation growing through expanded clubs and new courses like AP Environmental Science. Rise Kohyang High School (RKHS) saw a 50% increase in QuestBridge finalists, with 10 students selected, and had the highest-ever guardian attendance at Student Led Conferences. New courses like AP Physics and AP Spanish Literature were added, and E-Sports participation expanded. Finally, Stella High School Charter Academy (SHCA) partnered with LASC for Dual Enrollment, with one graduate in 2024 and seven projected



for 2025. The school grew in 4 out of 5 categories, added courses like Intro to Engineering, Band, and Orchestra, and continued its Compass program with Staff Circles beginning in January 2025.

8. **Senior Vice President of Student & Family Services Presentation by Marni Parsons:** Marni Parsons provided an update on chronic absenteeism, reporting that all schools have lower rates compared to the same time last year. She also shared that the average daily attendance goal for the year is 95.11%. Attendance trends showed a significant dip after Halloween and the Dodger Parade, with 426 absences recorded that Friday. Additionally, Mondays and Fridays consistently have the lowest attendance rates.

9. **Vice President of People Development Presentation by Nicole Wellman Noble:** Nicole provided an overview of teacher retention and turnover trends from 2016-2024. Retention rates fluctuated between 69% and 90%, with a decline in recent years, while turnover rates ranged from 10% to 31%. The average service with BSS remained relatively stable, around 3.3 to 3.9 years. The data also highlights a significant portion of teachers resigning within their first year, peaking at 45% in 2016-17 and dropping to 15% by 2020-2021, but rising again to 37% in 2023-24. Midyear resignations increased in recent years, with a peak of 17 in 2022-2023. She shared exit survey data, highlighting pay and work-life balance as the lowest-rated factors. A grade span analysis revealed that middle school teachers had the lowest retention rates, while administrators were the least retained among staff. She also outlined key trends from the Talent Stepback, including lack of managerial support, pay issues, and a need for more growth opportunities. There was also significant turnover among teachers in their first two years, emphasizing the need for differentiated support. SLC and Talent Management are addressing these trends. Nicole noted the goal of achieving 100% completion of Mid-Year 2x2s to support employee development, with training for all managers to ensure an equitable process. She also provided an overview of staff touchpoints for reflection and performance management in Q3 and Q4.

10. **Chief Business Officer Presentation by Elijah Sugay:** Elijah provided an overview of the following:
 - **LAUSD Action Plan Progress Update:** Elijah highlighted key improvements in fiscal policies, technology, and compliance. A new fiscal policies and procedures manual was implemented on August 1, 2024, introducing stricter controls over credit card use and centralized payment processing. To enhance efficiency, software was purchased for an electronic purchase order system, replacing manual pre-approvals. Compliance improvements were noted, with fewer exceptions or issues found in accounts payable and credit card transactions under the new policies. Pending items include additional training on fiscal policies and systems, full implementation of the electronic purchasing system, and ongoing monitoring of new controls to ensure sustained compliance and efficiency. Elijah also provided updates on the third party independent review of the evaluation of purchasing and credit card usage, as requested by LAUSD. The review found no systemic issues with credit card charges or purchasing, and legacy transactions were validated as appropriate for schools despite previous heavy credit card use. The conclusion confirmed no inappropriate spending or systemic issues.
 - **First Interim Financials Update:** Elijah highlighted key revenue adjustments and expense variances. Revenue was impacted by a 0.6% shortfall, amounting to \$327,560, due to decreased enrollment and higher Fee for Service costs. Solutions include focusing on ADA stabilization strategies, such as outreach and retention campaigns, and enrolling students after the winter break. On the expense side, occupancy costs increased by



3.38% due to higher facility-related expenses, while professional services costs rose by 3.73% due to higher contractor fees. To address these, an audit of contracts will be conducted, and the staffing structure will be reviewed to evaluate the service provider model.

- **FY25 Forecast - Financials through 10/31/24:** Elijah provided an overview of the budgeted and forecasted net income for Bright Star Schools and the BOT. The forecasted net income for some schools, such as SECA, RKES, and SHCA, shows negative variances compared to their budgeted amounts, while others, like VAHS and VAMS, forecast higher-than-budgeted income. Overall, the total forecasted net income for all entities is \$271,445, a significant variance of -\$446,742 from the target net income of \$806,246.
- **Proposed Expansion of Investment Strategy:** Elijah presented a resolution for board approval at the upcoming board meeting to extend allowable maturities up to 3 years. He shared four key initiatives about the proposed investment strategy. First, the plan is to enhance earnings on reserves by enrolling in Sweeps for Business Office Team (BOT) accounts to earn interest on current funds in checking. Second, the strategy is to transition to the U.S. Treasuries for higher returns, moving funds from Sweeps to Treasuries for all nine schools, opening individual investment accounts for each school, and locking in interest rates for stability. Third, the proposal is to implement stair-step Treasury investments, investing in 1-3 year U.S. Treasuries in a staggered approach, with $\frac{1}{3}$ of investable funds in 1-year, 2-year, and 3-year Treasuries, adjusting based on cash flow forecasts and holding investments to maturity to eliminate risk.
- **Facilities Update:** Elijah presented facilities updates on BSS schools. He shared that construction financing for Valor Academy Elementary School closed in August 2024. Weekly meetings between the BSS team and project manager and architect about this project are ongoing. The new RKMS facility is shovel ready but the project has been stalled for a few years due to zoning exemptions from LAUSD.
- **Board Resolution: Central Office Address Update** - Elijah shared presented a resolution for board approval to update Bright Star Schools' central office address. The previous address, 600 S. LaFayette Park Place, Suite 302, Los Angeles, CA 90057, will be changed to 3435 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 2460, Los Angeles, CA 90010. The new location offers benefits such as improved facilitation of Community of Practice meetings, enhanced team collaboration, and a modern, accessible office space that aligns with the organization's growth needs.
- **Enrollment Update:** Elijah provided an enrollment update by school. The data indicated deficits in 5 out of 9 schools. SECA and VAES are actively enrolling students, while RKES has exhausted its waitlist. SMCA is currently enrolling for 5th grade, and RKHS classrooms are at capacity. In terms of ADA updates, Elijah shared that for month 1, ADA is at 95.31%. He emphasized that senior VPs are collaborating with school teams to enhance attendance year over year.
- **Revised RKES and RKMS Leases at La Fayette Update:** Elijah shared that the leases for RKES and RKMS have been updated to align with the enrollment and ADA distribution for the schools.



11. Senior Vice President of Operations by Sebastian Valdes: Sebastina provided an overview of the following:

- **Enrollment and ADA:** Sebastian reported that four schools are currently under budgeted enrollment, but efforts are underway to actively enroll for the current and new school year. For FY 2025, enrollment will be managed by him and the Director of Enrollment. The team has engaged with Mariposa consulting Group for enrollment and marketing support, and systems have been established to streamline the application process and set unified enrollment targets. He also provided ADA updates, reporting that the rate for November is 95.11%, compared to 94.11% at the same time last year.
- **Contract for Winter Break Lafayette Park Place projects:** Sebastian Valdes outlined the financial status of the Lafayette project, with an original budget of \$660K. The total project costs have reached \$743,449 (\$141,699 of which has not been paid given the not-to-exceed budget), with an additional \$123,250 pending for fence replacement. This results in a total projected overrun of \$206,699. Approval is requested for the full amount of \$206,699. The overrun is due to the contractor underbidding on materials, necessitating mid-project adjustments, including changes to the fence design and deck installation in the 1st floor play area.
- **School Wellness Policy:** Sebastian highlighted the school wellness policy, which requires annual approval by the BSS board. He outlined its six main categories: engagement, physical education, nutritional recommendations, nutritious meals, the national school lunch program, and nutritional and physical education.

12. Vice President of Public Affairs Presentation by Angelina Calderon - Angelina Calderon provided updates on the Conflict of Interest Code and indicated that the certification form with updated tiles has been submitted, though the Disclosure categories remain unchanged. While the responsibilities for each role are largely consistent, the title and personnel in some positions have changed. Additionally, the positions of Chief of Staff and Vice President of School Operations and Safety have been removed. Sebastian Valdes' previous title of Vice President of School Operations has changed to Senior Vice President of Operations, IT, and Data.

13. Manager of Compliance and Special Projects updates by Lydia Garcia - Lydia reported on the monitoring forms that LAUSD requires BSS to submit every year as part of the annual oversight process. The forms have been reviewed by all school administrators and relevant school support team members; they will be submitted to LAUSD after board approval. She also announced that Stella Elementary Charter Academy is seeking board members to support two workshops: a Post-Secondary Cost Workshop to help families prepare for expenses such as 529 plans, with guidance from a financial expert, and a Wills/Trusts/Advanced Health Care Directives workshop focused on estate planning and preparing for unexpected health events. Board members who are interested or available to facilitate these workshops were encouraged to contact Lydia. Lastly, board members were reminded to check their BSS email accounts and were encouraged to create an email forward from their BSS account to their personal emails.

14. Committee Reports: Committee Chairs gave updates from their respective committee meetings and allowed members from other committees to further comment and/or ask questions.

15. Approval of Consent Agenda - Andrew Murr asked board members if they wanted to remove or vote on any items separately from the consent agenda. With no objections, he then called for a motion to approve the consent agenda. Jason Rudolph moved and Dr. Robarta Benjamin seconded the motion to approve the consent agenda as follows:

- **Governance**



- Minutes from BSS Board Meeting on October 8, 2024
- Minutes from BSS Board Retreat on November 9, 2024
- Minutes from Governance Committee Meeting on November 20, 2024
- Minutes from Finance Committee Meeting on November 21, 2024
- Minutes from Academic Committee Meeting on November 22, 2024
- Appointment of Andrew Murr as a member of the Finance Committee
- **Finance and Facilities**
 - 1st Interim Financials (First Quarter Financials, BSS Dashboard, Consolidate P&L, Consolidated BS, Cash Flow)
 - (If available) Independent Auditor’s Report - Final Version
 - Request approval for changes to bank checking and sweeps accounts
- **Operations/Compliance**
 - Local School Wellness Policy
 - Compliance Monitoring Certification Forms for Stella Elementary Charter Academy, Stella Middle Charter Academy, Stella High Charter Academy, Valor Academy Elementary School, Valor Academy Middle School, Valor Academy High School, Rise Kohyang Elementary School, Rise Kohyang Middle School, and Rise Kohyang High School
 - Conflict of Interest Code
 - Contract for Winter Break Lafayette Park Place projects
 - BSS Board Resolution - Change of Address


Board Member	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
Andrew Murr	x			
Dr. Marissiko Wheaton-Greer				x (not present when voting took place)
Jennifer Cole	x			
Lois Levy	x			
Louisa Wee	x			
Marisol León	x			
Stephen Green	x			
Jason Rudolph	x			
Dr. Roberta Benjamin	x			
Alyce Johnson	x			
David Chang	x			



Total	10	0	0	1
Motion Carries?	Yes			

16. Closed session: PUBLIC EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION (Gov. Code section 54957(b)(1).) Title: Lead Executive Officer: At 7:05 pm, all BSS board members entered a closed session. They returned at 7:19 pm with no actions to report.

17. Adjournment: Andrew Murr called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Jen Cole moved and Jason Rudolph seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 7:19 pm.

Signed by:

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Andrew Murr, Board Chair

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Lydia Garcia, Board Secretary