



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, September 9, 2025** at Stella Elementary Charter Academy - Mansfield 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, Dr. Roberta Benjamin-Edwards, David Chang, Stephen Green, Alyce Johnson, Marisol Leòn, Lois Levy, Louisa Wee, and Dr. Marissiko Wheaton-Greer.

Note: Louisa Wee joined the call at approximately 5:30 PM and Marisol Leòn left the call during the first closed session.

Bright Star Schools staff in attendance were Liliana Bustos, Angelina Calderón, Elizabeth Carter, Gene Castro, Michael Coleman, Lydia Garcia, Alexandra Lee, Ana Martinez, Marni Parsons, Brian Perry, Christie Romero, Elijah Sugay, Spencer Szabo, Sebastian Valdes, May Oey and Ana Vargas. Guests and members of the public included Terry Tao, Jeremy Brust, James Perreault, Sunserae Keanton, and Dolores Mabini.

1. **Call to Order and Introduction of Guests:** Andrew Murr called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m. after confirming that a quorum was present.
2. **Public Comment Period for Non-Agenda Items:** None made.
3. **Meeting Kick-off from Valor Academy Middle School (VAMS) by Brian Perry, Principal, and Tessa Rivas, Student:** Brian presented key highlights from the 2024-2025 school year VAMS, including growth among Multi-Language Learners, expanded electives, strong participation in theatre and band, and a 99% parent conference turnout. He noted gains in subgroup performance, with Special Education students reducing gaps in ELA, Math, Science, and 61% of MLL students improving at least one ELPI level. VAMS also met California Charter School growth targets in Reading through iReady. Looking ahead to 2025-2026, the school will focus on renewal preparation, boosting academic support in Math and ELA, launching co-teaching, and expanding electives with courses like Music Creating and Theatre History. Behavioral support initiatives and a new 8th-grade Algebra course are also planned. Eight grader Tessa Rivas shared her positive experiences at Valor and encouraged continued growth through more electives, honors options, and student events.



4. **Academic Committee Report by Dr. Roberta Benjamin-Edwards:** Dr. Benjamin Edwards shared an overview of key updates presented to the Academic Committee. She shared that Ana Martinez introduced the measurable goals for Bright Star in 2025. Liliana Bustos presented preliminary data showing overall growth in CAASPP scores across most schools from 2024-2025, highlighting improvements in both proficiency and Distance from Standard (DFS). She also described a three-tiered academic support plan her team will implement to continue this progress. Additionally, her team requested board approval for a new after-school tutoring partnership with Dynasty's United Youth Association (DUYA). She also shared that Marni shared efforts to improve school culture, focusing on reaching 95% attendance and increasing students' sense of belonging. The HR team reported that all schools are fully staffed, with just two teaching positions remaining open.

5. **Chief Executive Officer/Lead Executive Officer Presentation by Ana Martinez:** Ana Martinez shared Bright Star Schools' 2025–2026 Measurable Outcomes, which are anchored in the organization's commitment to delivering joyful, rigorous, and equitable learning experiences. She highlighted four of the five core outcomes that are foundational to student success. These included: (1) Strengthening Student Voice and Belonging with a target of increasing the percentage of middle and high school students who feel a sense of belonging by 10 percentage points (measured via Panorama survey); (2) Inspire Daily Learning Through Strong Attendance with a target achieving a 95% network-wide average daily attendance, with no school below 93%; (3) Strengthen Literacy Foundations and Achievement by increasing the percentage of K–3 students reading at or above grade level by 10 percentage points (measured by DIBELS); and (4) Building a Mathematical Identity and Achievement by raising the percentage of 3rd, 8th, and 11th grade students performing at or above grade level by 10 percentage points (measured by CAASPP). Ana also shared that her Senior Leadership Cabinet is also aligned around these five outcomes and that a more detailed review of each was provided at each Committee meeting.

6. **Chief Instructional Officer Presentation by Liliana Bustos:** Liliana provided an overview of the preliminary California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) data. In ELA and Math for 24-25 school year, the data shows that proficiency levels generally improved across the elementary, middle and high schools. ELA proficiency in Elementary schools went from 33.73% to 35.45%, and Math from 36.88 to 43.84%. Middle School saw a slight dip in ELA from 41.76% to 40.41%, but an increase in Math from 19.41% to 21.29%. At the high school level (11th grade), ELA rose from 59.51% to 61.2%, and Math from 23.19% to 25.5%. She also presented preliminary CAASPP DFS data for 2024-25, which showed overall improvement. Elementary ELA improved from -39.1 to -34.1, and Math from -24 to -14.7. Middle school ELA moved from -30.1 to -27.4, and Math from -85.4 to -83.8. High school ELA rose from 15 to 16.6, and Math showed strong gains from -90.3 to -79.5. Both Inclusive Ed and EL students saw growth in ELA and Math. Liliana also presented the instructional priorities for the 25-26 school year, grounded in two key frameworks: the instructional core and four targeted areas from the coaching rubric. The four areas include setting clear



expectations for a learning community, engaging students in critical thinking and meaningful learning, using assessments to monitor student understanding, and designing tasks and activities that promote higher-level thinking and student agency. Together, these components ensure that instruction is rigorous, equitable, and aligned to grade-level standards, helping every student succeed. She also talked about the different strategies, tools, and resources to continue to develop and coach teachers and school leaders, specifically principals and assistant principals across all our schools.

7. Senior Vice President of Student and Family Services Presentation by Marni

Parsons: Marni talked about the goals for improving school culture across the organization. The main targets are to increase students' sense of belonging—especially in middle and high school—and to reach at least 95% average daily attendance across all schools. To support this, the Student & Family Services team is focusing on strategies like strong start plans to make students feel safe and connected, building staff capacity through training, defining clear cultural values, and using accurate data to improve response to incidents. The MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports) rollout includes training school leaders, setting up structured meetings, and ensuring consistent implementation throughout the year. Success will be measured by improved student attendance, stronger feelings of belonging, fewer suspensions and referrals, and better academic outcomes. Marni also presented the renewal of the College and Career Access Pathway (CCAP) Agreement, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) and Bright Star Schools that requires board approval every three years. This agreement allows community colleges to offer dual enrollment courses to high school students, either on the high school campus, college campus, or remotely. Current partnerships include RKHS with LACC, VAHS with LAMC, and SHCA with LASWC. The board was asked to approve the updated MOU for the years 2025-2028. Marni's presentation concluded with an overview of the 2025 graduation rates for our high schools. All showed improved graduation rates from 23-24 to 24-25. VAHS reached a perfect 100%, up from 94.92%. SHCA increased from 89.91% to 93.50% and RKHS rose from 86.60% to 91.23%. These increases show strong progress in helping more students graduate across our schools.

8. Vice President of Human Resources Presentation by Ana Vargas, and Michael

Coleman, Senior Director of Talent: Ana Vargas shared updates to the 2025-26 employee handbook, noting slight changes to the Title IX Notice of Discrimination had slight changes. Because these updates were made after the board's approval in June, the revised handbook is now being presented to the board for approval. Michael Coleman provided an update on the overall hiring status for the 2025-2026 school year. Out of 80 total roles, 73 have been filled, resulting in a 91% overall hiring rate. All counselors, school admin, and SST roles have been fully hired at 100%. Teacher hiring is at 95%, with 39 out of 41 positions filled. Support roles are at 75%, with 15 of the 20 positions filled. He also provided longitudinal teacher hiring data, highlighting consistent improvements over the past three years. All schools are fully hired for the upcoming year except for VAHS and RKHS with one teacher position open at each school.



- 9. Manager of Compliance and Special Projects Presentation by Lydia Garcia:** Lydia presented the Resolutions of Sufficiency, a requirement for LACOE's Williams Monitoring visits. Once approved by the board, the resolutions will be submitted to LACOE for all schools on the Williams monitoring list. She also reminded board members to complete the required Ethics and Brown Act training by November 30th. The training is available virtually through CCSA, and certificates of completion should be sent to Lydia. Instructions and links on how to access the training will be sent to all board members after the board meeting.
- 10. Public Hearing: Williams Monitoring:** A public hearing was held to invite comments regarding the LACOE Williams Monitoring visits. Although the public was invited to provide feedback, no comments were made.
- 11. Governance Committee Report by Andrew Murr, Board and Committee Chair:** Andrew shared that the Committee had a more in-depth discussion about the Board Covenant. Their discussion revolved around board member attendance requirements, gift-giving and service expectations, monetary contributions, and also discussed the three charter petitions submitted to LAUSD.
- 12. Chief Executive Officer/Lead Executive Officer Presentation by Ana Martinez:** Ana Martinez shared an update about the annual BSS board retreat, which is now scheduled for Saturday, November 8 from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM. The location is still being finalized, and board members will be notified once confirmed. The retreat will include Board members, Ana, the Senior Leadership Cabinet, and other key BSS staff. She provided a brief overview of the retreat's purpose and shared a draft agenda on topics that will be covered that day. Ana also reported that the Governance Committee had a detailed discussion about the Board Covenant, specifically clarifying the expectation to "give, get, or facilitate" an annual financial contribution of at least \$500. She explained that this could include hosting events, offering a venue, providing consulting, or creating funding opportunities. Ana noted she hopes for a deeper discussion on this topic at the retreat. Lydia Garcia will distribute the revised covenant to board members for review and signature, with a due date of September 19.
- 13. Vice President of Public Affairs Presentation by Angelina Calderon:** Angelina reported on the Annual Performance-Based Oversight Visit scores. In the area of Governance, all schools received a rating of 4 – Accomplished, except RKMS and VAMS. In Student Achievement, all schools except RKMS and VAMS received a rating of 3 – Proficient. For Organizational Management, Programs, and Operations, five of the nine schools received a 3 – Proficient, while the remaining four earned a 4 – Accomplished. In Fiscal Operations, all schools received a 3 – Proficient, showing notable improvement from the previous year's average rating of 2 – Developing. The improvement in Fiscal speaks to the prompt and hard work from Elijah Sugay, CFO, and his department in ensuring all of LAUSD's feedback was addressed in a timely manner. She also shared a high-level comparison of scores across the 2022–23 to 2024–25



school years. The area of Governance has remained consistent with ratings of 3s and 4s. The Student Achievement and Educational Performance area has shown growth, improving from mostly 2s in 2022–23 to primarily 3s in 2024–25. Meanwhile, the Organizational Management area saw a dip from 3s and 4s in 2022–23 to mostly 3s and one 2 in 2023–24, with some slight improvement in 2024–25.

Angelina also gave an update on charter renewals. Rise Kohyang Elementary School, Stella Middle Charter Academy, and Valor Academy High School have submitted charter petitions to LAUSD. The public hearing will be held on October 14, LAUSD's recommendation will be published on November 4, and the final vote is scheduled for the November 18 LAUSD Board meeting.

14. Finance Committee Report by Louisa Wee, Committee Chair: This report was not presented to the board because Louisa was absent during that part of the meeting.

15. Chief Executive Officer/Lead Executive Officer Presentation by Ana Martinez: Ana presented her strategic focus for the year in relation to the Bright Star School's Big Huge Audacious Goals (BHAGs), which outline key priorities for strengthening leadership, instruction, and operations across the network. BHAG 1 focuses on developing well-rounded instructional leaders who can build others' capacity and problem-solve to meet school needs. BHAG 2 aims to improve school culture and implement MTSS so leaders and staff can better support students. BHAG 3, which includes partnering with EdFuel to analyze the scope of work for the Student Support Team (SST), review practices from other organizations in Los Angeles, and determine the structure, responsibilities, and job descriptions for SST roles. Ana also discussed the second phase of the Compensation Study, which is connected to BHAG 4 and which focuses on identifying positions eligible for salary increases, conducting cost analyses, and evaluating long-term financial impact of proposed changes.

16. Chief Financial Officer Presentation by Elijah Sugay: Elijah updated the Board on the following:

- Financial Dashboard Highlights:** Elijah reported that Bright Star Schools (BSS) closed the fiscal year in a stable financial position. Revenues came in approximately \$570K below forecast, primarily due to lower-than-expected SB740 funding after final true-ups. On the expense side, costs ended the year about \$870K above the March forecast, reflecting several operational factors. While some savings were realized through vacancies in core Special Education staffing, expenses increased due to the addition of Behavioral Intervention Implementation (BII) staff and hourly support to meet student needs. Additional cost drivers include higher-than-expected spending in the 4000-series (particularly student activities and end-of-year events), as well as increased costs for substitute staffing and legal/consultant services. Elijah noted that these variances reflect year-end adjustments and continued investment in both student experiences and staff support. Unaudited actual reflected revenue at \$87.7K slightly below March forecast of \$88.2K while expenses were higher than projected at \$84.7K. As a result, net income is at \$2.93K. He also talked about



how the leadership transitions added complexity to the year-end-closeout process, but despite these challenges, the Finance team worked closely with ExED to finalize financials and submit unaudited actuals on time. The results presented a thorough and accurate reflection of FY25 finances, setting the state for a clear audit and strong financial planning moving forward. The focus now shifts to the independent audit process, with ExED and the Finance team actively supporting auditors by providing all required schedules, reconciliations, and documentation. He shared that while today's focus was on consolidated financials, school-level details will be presented at the next Finance Committee meeting. This will include FY25 actuals by school, grant recommendations for schools in need such as RKES and RKMS, and final FY26 budget for review and board approval. Elijah reported that the charter school's overall fiscal condition is strong, with positive indicators across net income, revenues, cash levels, and key financial ratios.

- **Facilities Updates:** Elijah shared that construction at Valor Academy Elementary School has been delayed due to issues with DWP. The expected delivery date of the new site is October 15, 2025. School staff will likely begin moving the week of Fall break. In terms of Stella Elementary Charter Academy, Elijah shared that we are exploring multiple pathways for permanent facility needs as enrollment stabilizes for both campuses. LOI's were submitted and are exploring entitlement. More updates to follow at the next meeting.
- **DUYA:** After School Tutoring: Elijah provided an overview of three after-school tutoring proposals aimed at supporting student learning. The options included Air Tutors, Dynasty United Youth Association (DUYA), and Study Smart Tutors. While all programs vary in cost, session length, and student reach, DUYA was recommended due to its strong alignment with school goals. DUYA offers in-person support across six sites, consistent certificated staffing, structured accountability through regular assessments and progress monitoring, and tailored instruction aligned with each school's curriculum. Elijah asked the Finance Committee to recommend approval of the contract with DUYA for \$442,266 for tutoring services at the elementary and middle schools. After some discussion, the Committee recommended that prior to sharing this update to the board, an additional note or statement that identifies the reasons why DUYA is being recommended as the tutoring services for BSS.

17. Senior Vice President of Operations Presentation by Sebastian Valdes: Sebastian updated the board on the following:

- **Board Resolutions:** Sebastian presented an overview of Proposition 2, which provides \$600 million in funding to CA charter schools to support new construction or rehabilitation of facilities over 15 years old. The application window is open from July 3 to October 30, 2025, and requires a 30-day notice to LAUSD. Bright Star has identified three potential school sites for applications: Rise Kohyang Elementary School for rehabilitation (\$44.3M estimated), Stella Elementary Charter Academy (St. Bernadette) for new construction (\$19.6M estimated cost), and Stella High Charter Academy (new property), also for new construction, with costs still to be determined. He also provided a



funding breakdown by project type, standard state match and maximum state match for high-need districts). His request to the Board was for them to approve the three resolutions so that Elijah Sugay could sign the applications for each school.

- 2025-26 School Enrollment Overview and ADA: Sebastian reported that Bright Star Schools Average Daily Attendance for August 2025 as of 8/22/25 was 96.13%, which is 1.58% higher than August 2024's ADA of 94.55%. This improvement is significant, as each 1% increase in ADA adds over \$550,000 to the organization's bottom line. These early gains in attendance reflect a strong start to the school year. He also presented enrollment data showing that total student enrollment increased from 3,671 in August 2024 to 3,723 in August 2025- an increase of 52 students, or 1.4%. This growth includes adjustments for no-show drops and reflects improved student retention in the first week of school compared to the previous year.

18. Approval of Consent Agenda: Andrew Murr asked if anyone from the board wanted any items removed from the consent agenda. Since there were no requests, Andrew Murr called for a motion to approve all items on the consent agenda as follows:

Governance

- Minutes of the BSS Board meeting (second meeting) on June 24, 2025
- Minutes of the Special Board meeting on August 18, 2025
- Minutes of the Academic Committee meeting on August 25, 2025
- Minutes of the Governance Committee meeting on August 27, 2025
- Minutes of the Finance Committee meeting on August 28, 2025
- BSS Board Covenant

Academic

- Resolutions of Instructional Materials for Educators as part of the Williams Settlement for Rise Kohyang Elementary School, Rise Kohyang High School, Stella Elementary Charter Academy, Stella Middle Charter Academy, Stella High Charter Academy, Valor Academy Elementary School, Valor Academy Middle School, Valor Academy High School
- Approval of the revised VAHS Student & Family Handbook

Finance and Facilities

- FY25 Unaudited Actuals
- Approval of Contract with DUYA: After School Tutoring
- Board resolutions for naming and authorizing district representative(s) to apply for State Allocation Board (SAB) Administered Programs (Prop 2 Grant) and submit applications for Rise Kohyang Elementary School, Stella High Charter Academy, and Stella Elementary Charter Academy

Operations

- Approval of revised BSS Employee Handbook

Lois Levy moved to approve, and Marisol León seconded the motion. Votes were then recorded as follows:

Board Member	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
Andrew Murr	x			
Dr. Marissiko Wheaton-Greer	x			



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	9	0	0	2
Motion Carries?	Yes			

19. Action Item: Approval of College and Career Access Pathways Partnership (CCAP) MOU

Andrew Murr called for a motion to approve the CCAP MOU. Dr. Roberta Benjamin-Edwards moved to approve, and Alyce Johnson seconded the motion. Votes were then recorded as follows:

Board Member	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
Andrew Murr	x			
Dr. Marissiko Wheaton-Greer	x			
Jennifer Cole				x
Lois Levy	x			
Louisa Wee	x			
Marisol León	x			
Stephen Green	x			
Jason Rudolph				x
Dr. Roberta Benjamin	x			



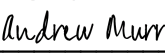
Alyce Johnson	x			
David Chang	x			
Total	9	0	0	2
Motion Carries?	Yes			

20. Closed Session: CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL-ANTICIPATED LITIGATION (Gov. Code section 54956.9(D)(2).) (1 matter): At 6:02 PM all board members in attendance, Terry Tao, Jeremy Burst, Ana Martinez, Elijah Sugay, and Angelina Calderon entered a closed session. At 6:41 PM, Andrew Murr returned and reported there was no action to report on the matter at hand.

21. Closed Session: CONFERENCE WITH REAL PROPERTY NEGOTIATORS (Gov. Code section 54956.8.)
 Property: 4466-4518 Crenshaw Blvd., Los Angeles
 Agency negotiator: Marcus & Millichap
 Negotiating parties: Clark E. Parker and Jeanette E. Parker
 Under negotiation: Terms agreement.
 Although the closed session item was on the agenda, the board did not convene for a closed session on this item.

22. Closed Session: PUBLIC EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION (Gov. Code section 54957(b)(1).) Title: Lead Executive Officer: At 6:41 PM all board members in attendance, Ana Martinez entered a closed session. At 7:12 PM, everyone returned and Andrew Murr reported there was no action to report on the matter at hand.

23. Adjournment: There being no further business, Andrew Murr called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Roberta Benjamin-Edwards moved, and Louisa Wee seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 7:13 p.m.

Signed by:

 Andrew Murr, Board Chair

DocuSigned by:

 Lydia Garcia, Manager of Compliance & Special Projects & Board Secretary