



BRIGHTSTAR
S C H O O L S

Bright Star Schools Board of Directors Minutes of the Special Meeting

A meeting of the Board of Directors of Bright Star Schools was held on **Tuesday, January 28, 2025** 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, Stephen Green, Alyce Johnson, Jason Rudolph, David Chang, Jen Cole, and Marisol León.

Bright Star Schools staff in attendance were Ana Martinez, Liliana Bustos, Angelina Calderon, Thomas Crowther, Darryl Garris, China Habte, Sunil Kewalramani, Dr. Eliza KimLy, Alexandra Lee, Megan Howell, Michael Hoover, May Oey, Marni Parsons, Elijah Sugay, Spencer Szabo, and Lydia Garcia. Guests and members of the public included Terry Tao and Mike Barr.

- 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** - Andrew Murr welcomed all members of the public and acknowledged Spencer Szabo's inquiry regarding the compensation study BSS had previously mentioned. Spencer asked if adjustments to staff salaries would be made this school year or the next. Andrew noted that this was not a topic for deep discussion during the meeting but asked Ana Martinez to provide an update to Spencer. Ana explained that the Senior Leadership Cabinet is still reviewing data collected with the consultant and will determine whether the adjustments can be made in one year or require a longer timeline. Further updates will be shared in future meetings.
- 3. Meeting Kick-off by Dr. Darryl Garris, School Principal at Stella High Charter Academy (SHCA):** Darryl presented on the SHCA Theory of Change, emphasizing the crucial link between student achievement, student culture, and staff culture. He discussed the commitments of both staff and students in creating a successful school environment and highlighted SHCA's focus on academics, athletics, and the arts. Darryl also shared key academic highlights, including growth in iReady scores. He shared that reading is up by +6% and math is up by +14%. He also announced that seven students from the class of 2025 are projected to graduate with Associate of Arts degrees through the LASC program, showcasing the school's commitment to academic excellence. Darryl also introduced senior Alexandra Espinoza Dzul, who shared different academic goals that she has set for herself including pursuing higher education in Psychology. She also highlighted the various extracurricular activities and engaging classes at SHCA that allow students to get involved and stay connected to the school and her peers.
- 4. Chief Executive Officer Updates by Ana Martinez:** Ana Martinez shared that leadership at all levels is focused on taking steps to ensure safety during the city's state of emergency. The operations team continues to ensure that school sites have the most up to date air purifiers/air filters to ensure students are safe. She also reaffirmed the organization's commitment to its



Immigration Policies, emphasizing their importance in maintaining a supportive environment for all. Additionally, Ana highlighted the continued focus on the strategic plan, which includes enhancing two-way communication, providing targeted support for schools, and strengthening or establishing effective systems and protocols.

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

- **2024-25 School Enrollment Overview:** Sebastian reported that as of January 2025, total enrollment is 3,681, 28 students below the final budgeted figures. Despite 228 withdrawals since August 2024, backfilling efforts have added 197 students, limiting the net loss to 28.
- **LaFayette Project Update:** Sebastian provided an update on the status of the project, highlighting that the board previously approved \$123,250 for fence replacement. However, additional cost for ADA and permitting updates could add \$52,335, potentially bringing the total cost to \$175,585, including a 10% contingency.

6. Chief Instructional Officer Presentation by Liliana Bustos: Liliana provided a high level overview on the Bright Star Signature Practice Domain and framework to support Multi Language Learners (MLLs). The presentation highlighted targeted coaching for principals and identified trends. Liliana gave an update on a Problem of Practice (PoP) that is focused on making teacher leadership roles more appealing to drive growth and improve student achievement. She also presented a longitudinal analysis of iReady placement distribution for Fall 2024-2025 to Winter 2024-2025, which involved the assessment of 3,463 students. She reported a 4% growth in reading and a 7% growth in math. She provided a district comparison of Diagnostic 1 (D1) to Diagnostic (D2) results in both reading and math, highlighting positive trends in both areas. Additionally, Liliana noted that schools up for charter renewal have been making greater efforts to improve results in preparation for their renewal processes. For the three schools that will begin their charter renewal process later this Summer, Liliana shared their results in ELA and math for the 2022-2023, 2023-2024, and 2024-2025 school years. She also presented the Universal iReady Goals for reading and math at various grade levels, noting positive gains across all but one school in D1-D2. Winter-to-Winter data showed slight growth in math (17% to 18% to 22%) and stable progress in ELA (22% to 23% to 24%). Significant gains were seen in K-2 reading, especially among students who started two or more grade levels behind. Students are meeting the recommended time for personalized instruction, though a deeper focus is needed for grade 5. Additionally, noticeable placement changes were observed in 9th-grade math from Fall to Winter. Liliana shared plans for the D3 window, emphasizing targeted support through Multi Tiered Support Systems (MTSS) and calendar shifts. Key actions include launching Teacher focused coaching strategies, providing one-on-one support for Tier 3 schools, and conducting content breakouts focused on specific coaching areas. Goals remain centered on academic achievement and leadership culture. Content Directors will provide lesson plan feedback, lead Cadre sessions, and participate in Learning Walks to ensure curriculum fidelity. Other efforts include iterating the service delivery model, increasing stipends for lead teachers, and ongoing professional development.

7. Chief Business Officer Presentation by Elijah Sugay: Elijah provided an overview of the following:

- **Financial Snapshot:** Elijah presented a dashboard snapshot that showed org-wide trends from September 2024 to January 2025. In revenue, there was a slight increase from \$81.34 million in September to \$82.42 million in January, with notable contributions from \$830,000 in expiring state revenue and a \$580,000 federal subsidy through the E-Rate program. However, the organization faced challenges, including a decline in enrollment



(down by 28 students) and fee-for-service deductions. Expenses rose due to a \$400,000 increase in professional services and a \$780,000 rise in occupancy costs, driven by higher utility, communication, and lease expenses. The organization is conducting contract audits, seeking cost efficiencies with service providers, and collaborating with the VP of Inclusive Education to identify additional savings opportunities. Despite these challenges, the financial position has improved, emphasizing the importance of strategic cost management moving forward.

- **FY 25 Forecast - Financials Through November 30, 2024:** Elijah provided an overview of the Board-approved and forecasted budgets as of November 30, 2024, highlighting variances. Operating revenue is projected to exceed the budget by \$1,077,260, while operating expenses are expected to be \$1,322,558 higher, resulting in a net income decrease of \$245,298. The organization is forecasted to have a positive net income balance of \$472,889. There is a revenue-limit shortfall due to decreased enrollment and higher Fee For Service costs, although enrollment efforts continue. Strategic use of expiring funds and ELO-P has helped mitigate some of the impact. Expense variances include higher professional services costs, with solutions being explored, and occupancy costs are higher due to facility expenses and legal fees. Some schools, such as SECA and RKES, face shortfalls due to student withdrawals and higher costs, while others, like SHCA and VAHS, are expected to exceed their budgets. Overall, schools are adjusting to enrollment changes and managing fiscal challenges. The forecast includes conservative ADA projections, which can significantly positively impact finances. The FY25 forecast projects a total net income of \$472,889, and when combined with our robust reserves, it reflects Bright Star Schools' healthy and stable finances.
- **Proposed Expansion of Investment Strategy:** Elijah talked about an investment strategy focused on enhancing earnings and securing higher returns. The plan includes enrolling the Business Office Team (BOT) accounts in sweep programs to earn interest on checking account funds. Funds will also be transitioned from sweep accounts to U.S. Treasuries for all nine schools, with individual investment accounts opened for each to maximize earnings. A stair-step strategy will be implemented, keeping \$18,000,000 in sweep accounts for reserves and allocating \$12,000,000 to U.S. Treasuries in 1-year, 2-year, and 3-year bonds at rates of 4.2%, 4.29%, and 4.32%, respectively. Allocations will be adjusted based on cash flow forecasts, and investments will be held to maturity to minimize risk. A request for a recommendation for Board approval was made to transfer funds and move forward with this strategy.
- **MacKenzie Scott Grant Update:** Elijah presented updates on the MacKenzie Scott Grant that Bright Star School received in Spring 2023. He shared that the BSS Board-approved spending plan allocates the funds as follows: \$4 million for facilities, \$2.5 million for academic initiatives, and \$500,000 for the Career Accelerator program. The \$4 million designated for facilities has been invested as equity in the VAES project. For the 2024-25 academic year, Bright Star Schools anticipates accruing \$47,000 for teacher planning days under academic initiatives. Additionally, \$203,000 was invested in the Career Accelerator program during 2023-24, with an additional \$31,100 expected to be spent in the remainder of 2024-25. Elijah indicated that leadership will return to the board at a later time after we reassess how to allocate the remaining funds based on our strategic plan.

8. Senior Vice President of Student and Family Services Presentation by Marni Parsons:

Marni Parsons presented data on chronic absenteeism for the 2024-2025 school year, showing that BSS' rate of 20.42% is slightly above the target of 19.44%. The data highlights the need for improvement across several schools. She also shared that overall attendance is trending higher across the organization, with notable absences on the Friday after Halloween and the Dodger



Parade, and consistently low attendance on Mondays and Fridays. The LAUSD holiday break starting December 16th impacted our attendance, resulting in an ADA of 83.46% from the 16th to the 18th, with 906 of our students absent on December 18th. December's overall ADA was 91.12%.

9. **Director of Expanded Learning Presentation by Elizabeth Carter:** Elizabeth provided updates on the Expanded Learning Opportunity Programs at Bright Star Schools, highlighting efforts to reduce waitlists, improve safety, and introduce before-school programming at Valor Academy High School. She also compared student attendance data from August to September in 2023 and 2024, showing increased attendance at most schools, especially at RKES, VAES, and VAMS, while RKMS saw some fluctuations. Elizabeth discussed the student selection process for tutoring programs, including DUYA and Study Smart Tutors. For DUYA, post-assessment results showed a 25% average score increase for 2nd grade, a 33% increase for 4th grade, and a 31.13% increase overall. The impact report for Study Smart Tutors is still pending. Lastly, she presented a list of the enrichment activities available at all Bright Star Schools through the enrichment programs.
10. **Vice President of Public Affairs Presentation by Angelina Calderon:** Angelina Calderon provided the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) Mid-Year update which included an overview about the purpose of the mid-year reports, including legal requirements, a high level overview of the data collection and general timeline for approval of the LCAP. She shared that our LCAP goals are the same across all schools and focus on increasing student academic growth through state test scores, English proficiency, iReady assessments; fostering a positive and supportive school culture that supports both social-emotional development and family involvement; and maintaining well-kept school facilities, ensuring properly credentialed staff, and delivering standards-aligned instruction. She also talked about the actions for each goal, their level of implementation and provided an overview of the expenditures linked to each action across all schools.
Angelina also shared that on January 9, 2025, a federal district court in Kentucky ruled that the 2024 Title IX Final Rule and Regulations were unconstitutional and exceeded the U.S. Department of Education's authority under Title IX. As a result, the court vacated the 2024 regulations in their entirety. Our policy will now revert to the 2020 Title IX regulations. A recommendation for approval of the updated Title IX policy will not be made at today's meeting as specific language about the changes is currently not available. However, an official approval will be made by the board at a future board meeting as soon as specific language about the changes becomes available.
11. **Vice President of Data Management Presentation by Jonathan Escobar:** Johnny reported on the School Accountability Report Cards (SARC) for all Bright Star schools, which California public and nonpublic, nonsectarian schools are required to annually provide to the community. The SARC includes data on student achievement, school environment, resources, and demographics, enabling public comparison of schools. Legislation mandates that the board review and approve the SARCs before submission to the California Department of Education (CDE) by February 1. Once approved, the reports will be published on the CDE website.
12. **Senior Vice President of School Leadership Development President by Dr. Elizabeth KimLy:** Dr. Eliza KimLy presented an amendment to the Valor Academy High Schools' Handbook for the 2024-2025 school year, proposing a change to the graduation credit requirement described in the table. The Bright Star Schools standard is 220 credit requirement however, the list of required courses in the table mistakenly added up to 230 credits. This change will ensure



consistency across all BSS high schools by replacing the existing table with the same graduation language and credit requirements used by the other schools in the network.

- 13. Manager of Compliance and Special Projects updates by Lydia Garcia** - Lydia provided general board announcements including reminders to set up email forwarding from their BSS account to their personal email to avoid missing important messages, as BSS emails are publicly listed. Going forward, Board materials will no longer be sent to personal emails. Lydia also warned about phishing emails, advising staff to only trust messages from emails from the BSS domain. Lastly, instead of the March Board Retreat, board members will receive calendar invites for events like Instructional Rounds and opportunities to attend school events, with attendance monitored to prevent a quorum of the board.
- 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 would like 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. Lois Levy moved and Jen Cole seconded the motion to approve the consent agenda as follows:

- **Governance**
 - Minutes from BSS Board Meeting on December 3, 2024
 - Minutes from Governance Committee Meeting on January 22, 2025
 - Minutes from Finance Committee Meeting on January 23, 2025
 - Minutes from Academic Committee Meeting on January 27, 2025
 - Renewal of 2 Year Board Term for Jennifer Cole
 - Renewal of 2 Year Board Term for Marisol León
- **Academic**
 - School Accountability Report Cards (SARCs) 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
 - Approve Changes to the VAHS Handbook for SY 2024-2025
- **Finance and Facilities**
 - Monthly Financials Ending 11/30/2024: Income Statement, Balance Sheet, CashFlow Forecast, and Budget-to-Actuals
 - Approval to transfer funds from Sweeps accounts to Treasury Accounts
 - Approval for additional contingency funds for LaFayette Fence Installation
 - Approval to have BSS serve as the Fiscal Agent for 21st Century Grant

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




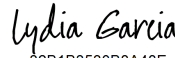
Lois Levy	x			
Louisa Wee				x
Marisol León				x (not present when voting took place)
Stephen Green	x			
Jason Rudolph	x			
Dr. Roberta Benjamin				x
Alyce Johnson	x			
David Chang	x			
Total	8	0	0	3
Motion Carries?	Yes			

16. Closed session: CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL - ANTICIPATED LITIGATION (§ 54956.9(d)(2)-(3)): One Case At 6:36 p.m., all BSS board members, Ana Martinez, Elijah Sugay, and Angelina Calderon entered a closed session. They returned at 7:41 p.m. with no actions to report.

17. Closed session: PUBLIC EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION (Gov. Code section 54957(b)(1).) Title: Lead Executive Officer: At 7:41 p.m., all BSS board members entered a closed session. They returned at 7:45 pm with no actions to report.

18. Adjournment: Andrew Murr adjourned the meeting at 7:46 p.m.

Signed by:

 Andrew Murr, Board Chair

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 Lydia Garcia, Board Secretary