



Storefront Academy Charter School
October 2023 Board Meeting
Thursday, October 19, 2023, 6:30 p.m.
Meeting Minutes

ATTENDEES

Trustees: Richard Bayles, Gretchen Pusch, Peter Low, Amanda Low **Staff:** Aniberca Abreu, Hank Bamberger, Rebecca Brunie, Taleema Chesney, Brian Class, Alison Curry, Nidia Evangelista, Yoselyn Fernandez, Amia Fisher, Nicole Garcia, Yesenia Graham, Maurissa Hankey, Tiffany Henry, Milly Jimenez, Andre Kelley, Staphanie Reeder, Debbie Khelawan, Lashawn Lewis, Marie Lucas, Patricia Martinez, Tanaysia Phillip, Maryleidy Pimentel, Yubdeley Ricardo, Newton Richards, Madeley Sanchez, Carol Singletary, Desire Soulet, Darlene Tejada **Parents:** Latasha B., Yatonnia Corry, Arianny G., Nyla, Vilma P., Mexi Pineda

RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

- Meeting agenda

MEETING MINUTES

1. **(00:00-00:05)** Call to order.
 - a. Richard Bayles called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. EST.
2. **(00:06-00:49)** Adoption of September minutes.
 - a. Motion to approve the minutes.
 - b. September minutes were accepted and approved without changes.
3. **(00:50-3:26)** Richard Bayles made announcements.
 - a. Reby Gulcan submitted a letter of resignation and has officially resigned from the board.
 - b. Financials have remained steady since the September meeting. An in-depth financial discussion will occur at the November board meeting, spotlighting the Harlem campus financial and enrollment deficits. A written financial report may be provided in the interim.
4. **Harlem Report (3:27-22:20)**
 - a. **(3:27-16:33)** Taleema Chesney, principal at the Harlem campus, presented about staffing, culture, and NWEA MAP data.
 - i. Ms. Chesney and Ms. Amia Fisher, assistant principal at the Harlem campus, commended the Harlem staff's performance and prioritization of the students.
 - ii. Ms. Chesney reported that, though Harlem's second-grade teacher quit mid-workday, the other staff members stepped up to ensure student instruction was uninterrupted. Harlem staff will continue filling the gap until the position is filled. The job has been posted on Indeed.
 1. Other vacant positions in Harlem include physical education and music. Ms. Chesney requested assistance in how to proceed considering SUNY's forthcoming campus visit.
 2. Peter Low asked why the second-grade teacher left. Ms. Chesney responded that the teacher had received numerous verbal and written complaints from parents for the way she spoke to and about students. Marie Lucas, director of HR, is aware of the situation and has some written complaints in possession.
 - iii. Ms. Chesney discussed culture at the Harlem campus.
 1. Harlem's partnership with Rodale Pleasant Park Community Garden. The program brings fourth and fifth graders to the garden to learn about food

cultivation. The students were surveyed, and those who were interested took their first trip there on October 13th. They will continue to go on Fridays.

2. She reported that Einstein Tutoring comes in to support third- through fifth-grade students in math. The partnership is working well.

- a. **(18:37-22:20)** Later, Ms. Fisher reiterated the need for this program. She and the staff are working to address Harlem's overall math scores, which have decreased. Harlem and Einstein Tutoring are in close contact about what students are learning. Ms. Fisher will report back about progress.

- i. Amanda Low asked whether Einstein coordinates with Lavinia. Ms. Fisher responded that they do not; they use EnVision, which is Harlem's math curriculum.
- ii. A question arose about incorporating the Lavinia math curriculum. Ms. Fisher responded that they use Lavinia math stories, which is not a curriculum but a creative way to solve math problems.

3. The Extended Day after-school program began. Students can get help with homework, participate in creative movement, or do art under the guidance of Art in the Parks.

4. She said that Ms. Deb comes to the campus to celebrate cultural diversity with the students. She recently held an Indigenous Peoples Day event, for example.

- iv. Ms. Chesney reported on NWEA MAP data.

1. She displayed a bar graph that showed the percentages of students performing at or above grade level.

- a. Kindergarten: 45%; first: 50%; second: 38%; third: 33%; fourth: 50%; fifth: 62%.
- b. Several students are close to qualifying. Ms. Chesney explained that staff will identify these students and develop intervention methods to help these students qualify.
- c. Peter Low requested that, in the future, actual data be presented against goals to provide context for the board. He also requested that modes for improvement be enumerated in the document. This way, at the next board meeting, progress can be measured against efforts as closely as possible until goals are reached, or another problem is identified.

- b. **(16:34-22:20)** Ms. Fisher discussed enrollment, which currently sits at 91 students. Seven students were enrolled in the past 10 days, including a returning student. She attributed two new students' enrollment to East Harlem bilingual. The Harlem staff, notably Sarah Panameno, is continuing strong efforts in this area.

5. **South Bronx Report (22:21-1:03:31)**

- a. **(22:21-45:44)** Carol Singletary, principal at the South Bronx campus, presented about staffing, academics, and culture.

- i. There are three open staff positions, including a third-grade general education teacher, a fifth-grade special education teacher, and a music teacher. Ms. Singletary explained that high demand has made it difficult to find certified teachers. She emphasized that having a full staff of specials teachers would allow general education teachers to collaborate.

- ii. She expressed her excitement for the impending Dean of Students and Culture position to be filled. There are currently many applicants, and interviews will commence soon. She's interested in finding a candidate who shares Storefront's values.

1. Ms. Low asked about Teach for America (TFA) as a candidate pool, and Gretchen Pusch followed by asking about the downsides of working with TFA.



Ms. Singletary explained that it's an accelerated program that doesn't include a full year of student teaching like some other programs do. TFA teachers are generally new to the profession.

- iii. Ms. Singletary mentioned that South Bronx now has a second counselor who works together beautifully with Ms. Milly Jimenez, Storefront's primary school counselor.
- iv. Ms. Singletary displayed a graph showing South Bronx campus ELA scores compared to other schools in District 7 and New York City. South Bronx instituted three new Lavinia programs at the same time, which was a rigorous undertaking for the staff but essential to the program.
 1. ELA stats:
 - a. Third grade overall ("SASB-ALL") missed their goal by one point (49% instead of 50%), but students in their second year at Storefront ("SASB-2yrs") hit 58%. District 7 ("D7") 30%; City (48%).
 - b. Fourth-grade goal: 65%; SASB-ALL 80%; SASB-2yrs 85%; D7 29%; City 53% — this is despite an all-new team.
 - c. Fifth-grade goal: 40%; SASB-ALL 38%; SASB-2yrs 39%; D7 27%; City 50%.
 - i. These numbers are lower historically, potentially due to COVID.
 - ii. Mr. Low asked if this would be remediable by year-end. Ms. Singletary responded that fifth graders return with different levels of emotional maturity and respect for authority. She mentioned that Storefront once considered not offering fifth grade. Most charter schools offer kindergarten through fourth grade because of this change in development, which tends to be more in line with young teenagers than elementary-age children.
 - d. Cumulative: SASB-ALL 58%; SASB-2yrs 63%; D7 29%; City 50%.
 - i. Ms. Low suggested implementing this data publicly.
 - ii. Mr. Bayles suggested sending it to the state senate.
 - iii. Ms. Singletary explained that her staff's mindset shift to independent learning was key.
 2. Math stats:
 - a. Third grade: SASB-ALL 68%; SASB-2yrs 70%; D7 36%; City 55%.
 - b. Fourth grade: SASB-ALL 75%; SASB-2yrs 70%; D7 29%; City 52%.
 - c. Fifth grade: SASB-ALL 39%; SASB-2yrs 39%; D7 28%; City 50%.
 - d. Overall: SASB-ALL 63%; SASB-2yrs 65%; D7 31%; City 52%.
 - i. She noted that the scores are a huge improvement from last year. Ms. Singletary credits Lavinia math stories for the change.
 3. South Bronx NWEA MAP ELA and math achievement comparison (all grades):
 - a. Fall 2022: 38 ELA, 32 math.
 - b. Fall 2023: 39 ELA, 43 math.
 - i. Ms. Singletary mentioned that it's important to break the cycle of "starting all over again each fall" to cultivate dynamic growth.
 - ii. Fifth- and second-grade stats need the most improvement. She requests an investment in Foundations teaching materials, which cannot be bought with a FAMIS grant. Yoselyn Fernandez, assistant principal at the South Bronx campus, found economical Foundations professional development programs for kindergarten, first-grade, and second-grade teachers. This should breed

stronger and more consistent growth.

- b. **(45:45-1:03:31)** Yoselyn Fernandez, assistant principal at the South Bronx campus, presented. She began by acknowledging major cultural initiatives. This focuses on connecting with families, especially new families, in person and via ClassDojo and PowerSchool.
- i. Through the online platforms, parents can see items like report cards and attendance. The goal is to have 100% of parents in ClassDojo to streamline communication. Ms. Singletary reinforced that PowerSchool is exactly what the staff needs as far as attendance.
 1. Ms. Low asked about attendance rates. Ms. Singletary answered that attendance for grades one through five is about 86.16%. (Kindergarten numbers are currently not correct.) The staff is working toward 90%+ attendance across the board — ideally the 93% they averaged pre-COVID.
 - ii. Ms. Fernandez stated that coaching, workshops, shadowing, etc., vary based on each teacher’s experience at Storefront. Lead teachers are presenting about best practices.
 - iii. She said that they’re focusing on comparing baseline data from when students arrive to how they grow. Platforms like Lavinia track students’ progress after each unit, allowing teachers to assess progress and set appropriate goals in real time.
 - iv. In October, South Bronx had its first community meeting, celebrated students of the month, focused on the core value of respect, and held a “Coffee with the Principal” event where parents offered feedback.
 1. Mr. Bayles asked about classroom sizes. Ms. Singletary said that they’re too small. He asked about the positives and negatives of the facility. Ms. Fernandez stated that, as students are learning about spatial awareness, having ample space is very important. At a meeting, parents reiterated the importance of space and aesthetics. Ms. Singletary’s priorities include having open spaces (i.e., a garden), a media room, a larger art studio, and a music room with instruments.
 2. Mr. Bayles asked about how the Extended Day after-school program is going. Ms. Fernandez answered that the program was very well received by the community, and teachers are working well together to help the students. Mr. Low asked how much parents pay for the after-school program. Ms. Fernandez clarified that it’s \$25/week, and 80 students are attending. Alison Curry mentioned that it’s self-financed this year. The goal is to recruit more students for the program, but Ms. Singletary said that this would require more staff. Ms. Curry stated that transportation is also an issue.
 - a. Action item: Mr. Bayles asked for a report about the program: number of kids, cost, activities, and academic impact.

6. Academic Committee (1:03:32-1:05:05)

- a. Ms. Low mentioned that the committee met yesterday for two hours and conducted a valuable open discussion. The committee will continue meeting every month to find ways to help.
- b. Ms. Pusch said that she and Ms. Singletary have been in contact about sourcing music teacher candidates.
 - i. Action item: Ms. Pusch will follow up with Ms. Singletary on this matter.

7. Advancement and Board Development (1:05:06-1:07:29)

- a. Mr. Bayles reiterated the necessity of the expansion of the board, which currently has six members out of its allotted 13+. He implored the community for its input at the board level. He requested that the leadership recruit board members. He mentioned that the board also needs a lawyer, among other things that can be found in an old report that Jonathan Stearns wrote.
 - i. Action item: Storefront leadership will recruit potential board members.



- ii. Action item: Jonathan Stearns will send out his report enumerating the board's needs.
- iii. Action item: Nidia Evangelista will put together a strategic plan to move the development initiative forward. This plan will be discussed at the next board meeting.

8. Enrollment Team (1:07:30-1:13:22)

- a. Ms. Curry stated that the team met to map out the annual goals. The South Bronx team will work with the Harlem team, which will be augmented by a new bilingual individual. When there's an event like the ribbon-cutting (upcoming on October 27th), the whole team will help out. The team will also set up behind-the-scenes initiatives to engage new parents with the Storefront staff throughout the year.
- b. She said that SUNY extended the Storefront audit until December 1st. SUNY asked about facilities, and Ms. Curry stated that they are working through Altaris safety recommendations in the South Bronx.
- c. She mentioned that they are working with a company to analyze the South Bronx campus's facility needs and help with lease negotiations in the event of relocation. Ms. Singletary will take over on the South Bronx relocation. She noted that the feedback they already have from Equity Design and the community can act as a starting point.
- d. She commended Yesenia Graham, Director of Student Services, for her work in organizing Storefront's legal compliance of student services on both campuses.
- e. The team met with Executive Excellence to determine how it can best support the staff and culture. They are now working to implement feedback from an exit survey. Marie Lucas is now holding weekly office hours to mitigate issues at their earliest onset.
- f. A mediator has been to both campuses and is conducting research. She will be ready to report to the board soon.
 - i. Ms. Pusch suggested that the board meet with her before meeting with SUNY. Mr. Bayles is organizing a meeting with her.

9. Open Comments (1:13:23-1:17:05)

- a. There were no comments from the public.
- b. Mr. Bayles commented:
 - i. It is essential that enrollment increases, particularly in Harlem, which currently has 91 students out of its threshold goal of 120. He commended the strong efforts being made while acknowledging the intensity of the problem.
 - ii. He was contacted by a parent about a student-teacher confrontation, and he took a moment to commend the South Bronx leadership for the "marvelous" way they handled the situation.

10. Motion to Adjourn (1:17:06-1:17:22)

- a. The meeting was adjourned at 7:47 p.m. EST.

SUMMARY OF ACTION ITEMS

- 1. Carol Singletary and Yoselyn Fernandez will write a report about the Extended Day after-school program (number of kids, cost, activities, and academic impact) before the calendar year-end.
- 2. Gretchen Pusch will follow up with Carol Singletary about sourcing music teacher candidates.
- 3. Storefront leadership will recruit potential board members.
- 4. Nidia Evangelista will put together a strategic plan to move the development initiative forward. This plan will be discussed at the next board meeting.