



Storefront Academy Charter School
December 2023 Board Meeting
Thursday, December 21, 2023, 6:00 p.m.
Meeting Minutes

ATTENDEES

Trustees: Richard Bayles, Gretchen Pusch, Amanda Low, Peter Low, Jonathan Stearns, Justin Toliver **Staff:** Tim Brown, Taleema Chesney, Brian Class, Nidia Evangelista, Julissa Fernandez, Yoselyn Fernandez, Amia Fisher, Nicole Garcia, Yesenia Graham, Maurissa Hankey, Milly Jimenez, Robert Keogh, Charisse Lewis, Lashawn Lewis, Marie Lucas, Rachel Marshall, Maryleidy Pimentel, Yubdeley Ricardo, Madeley Sanchez, Carol Singletary, Mercedes Soto, Desiree Soulet, Matthew Tiwary, Katherine Vasquez, Wilson Villifana

RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

- Meeting agenda
- Board Re-Vote for SUNY Compliance
- Storefront Academy Financial Dashboard November 2023 Financial Report
- December 2023 Harlem Principal's Report to Board of Trustees
- SASB December 2023 Principal's Report Overview
- Parents' Bill of Rights Third-Party Contract

MEETING MINUTES

1. **(00:00-00:45)** Call to order.
 - a. Richard Bayles called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m. EST.
2. **(00:46-02:27)** Adoption of November minutes.
 - a. Motion to approve the minutes.
 - b. November minutes were accepted and approved without changes.
3. **(02:28-4:19)** Richard Bayles called a re-vote to be compliant with SUNY. He explained that seven meetings were not considered to be proper forums by SUNY.
 - a. Motion to accept the previous minutes was approved.
4. **Financial Report (4:20-19:20)**
 - a. **(4:45-15:26)** Robert Keogh, financial consultant, presented on Storefront's financials. He referenced the Storefront financial dashboard, which depicts actual and projected data in graphical format.
 - i. FY24 estimated revenue and expenses changed from a networkwide deficit to a surplus due to a 10-student (\$250K revenue) uptick in general education enrollment. Special education enrollment also increased. This is despite underenrollment in Harlem. "Enrollment" chart explains that cross-campus enrollment totaled 359 students across the two campuses, missing the budget of 395 students by 36.
 1. Total revenue is down \$972,956 due to underenrollment. This is offset by a forecasted \$611,470 savings in staffing and \$75,000 in contractual expenses.
 2. Net surplus is projected at \$200,618, including the \$150,000 contingency.
 3. Jonathan Stearns asked about the status of contributions. Mr. Keogh responded that the projected \$250,000 is likely not accurate; he will reevaluate the estimate.
 4. Richard Bayles noted that the organization's governance is being reassessed to improve efficiencies.
 5. Due to underenrollment and increased rent costs, a \$295,543 deficit is estimated

- at the Harlem campus. This is offset by a \$496,162 surplus in the South Bronx.
- ii. “Current Ratio” graph indicates that Storefront is estimated to reach 1.03 at the end of FY24, which is below SUNY’s >1.40 benchmark. He clarified that this change is due to a new accounting standard for right-of-use assets. Leases are now counted on balance sheets, inflating right-of-use assets and rent liabilities. SUNY has not yet announced how it will account for this.
 1. “Quick Ratios” is affected by these increased liabilities as well.
 - a. Richard Bayles added that, while this reporting might appear odd, it is what auditors consider to be a generally accepted accounting principle.
 2. “Days Cash” and “Debt to Asset Ratio” numbers continue to look good.
 - iii. Audited balance sheets show:
 1. \$601,397 cash on hand; \$472,480 accounts receivable (grants, etc.).
 2. Uptick in fixed assets due to new building.
 3. \$5,094,712 in right-of-use assets (due to SUNY accounting standards). This number will increase next year because the Harlem lease is not yet included.
 4. Total equity is estimated at \$1,938,751. This number is high because the primary driver of revenue is per-pupil funding, which is based on budgeted enrollment. It is therefore expected to decrease over the course of the year.
- b. **(15:27-19:20)** The Audit Committee met with the auditors, who had an unmodified opinion.
- i. Mr. Stearns asked when the drafts will be circulated. Mr. Keogh answered that SUNY would like a final version by Friday, December 22nd, considering the Harlem renewal.
 - ii. Mr. Bayles moved to accept the Committee’s recommendation to accept the audit subject to the letter being circulated. The motion was approved.
5. **Harlem Report (19:21-41:05)**
- a. **(19:21-41:05)** Taleema Chesney, principal at the Harlem campus, presented about enrollment.
 - i. Enrollment: Two students have been enrolled, and a third is scheduled to start in January. Harlem is still short of its 120-student goal.
 - ii. Attendance: Attendance schoolwide is at 84% versus its 95% stretch goal.
 1. Action plans include:
 - A ticket system, where five days of attendance → extra park time/indoor recess.
 - Field trip for students who attend 34+ of the 37 days between Dec. 1 and Feb. 2.
 - Weekly posts on Dojo informing parents about the importance of attendance.
 2. Ms. Chesney reported that students are more motivated to get to school on time, so parents are moved to do so. This week’s attendance was at 88%, with kindergarten, fourth, and fifth grade exceeding 90%.
 - iii. Exact Path data: 52 language, 144 reading, and 204 math skills have been mastered schoolwide at Harlem.
 1. Ms. Chesney said that If scholars are mastering skills on Exact Path, there is going to be an increase in the NWEA MAP test, which serves as one of the indicators of the school’s academic success. She expressed that students are recommended to use Exact Path for 90 minutes per week to see gains on the NWEA MAP test, but there are no clearer guidelines about how much Exact Path mastery affects growth beyond that.
 2. Mr. Low asked why it is measured in skills mastered instead of time. Carol Singletary answered that, when measuring based on time, students do what they’d like instead of mastering skills and progressing in the program. She personally sees a correlation between skills mastered on Exact Path and NWEA MAP, as evidenced by her school’s math scores. The ELA program is less

- engaging, so students spend less time on it, and their MAP scores reflect that.
- iv. First academic challenge:
 1. 23-24 SAH BOY ELA Academic Challenge: 22% of students are on or above, 24% are approaching, and 54% are below schoolwide.
 2. 23-24 SAH BOY Math Academic Challenge: 27% of students are on or above, 20% are approaching, and 53% are below schoolwide.
 - a. Ms. Chesney says that the biggest factor in these scores is unsuitable teacher staffing — e.g., current third graders (79% below), many of whom have IEPs, had one teacher last year. She wants to hire permanent staff to reduce the number of substitutes. Attendance is another factor, which is why Harlem launched multiple attendance initiatives at once.
 - b. Ms. Chesney said that Harlem provides focus groups for students who are in the “approaching” category. The goal is growth.
 - c. Amia Fisher, assistant principal at Harlem, expressed that she is taking a hands-on approach to math. Leadership met with teachers this week to notify them that expectations are changing in the new year, and they are prepping to ensure teachers are comfortable teaching the material. KPIs were set.
 - d. Action item: Following the second academic challenge, this graph will be updated to show the percentage of students who move from “below” to “approaching” and from “approaching” to “on or above.”
 - v. In an effort to make school exciting, Harlem hosted a spirit week in December.
6. **41:06-48:20** was omitted due to an impromptu executive session.
7. **South Bronx Report (48:21-1:29:26)**
- a. Carol Singletary, principal at the South Bronx campus, presented.
 - i. Enrollment: Down to 270 students after a loss of four students because they moved. Two additional students are planning to start in January.
 - ii. Attendance: Attendance schoolwide is at 84% versus its 93% stretch goal.
 1. Action plans include:
 - An attendance drive from Jan 3. through Feb. 9 → incentive field trip.
 - Grade-level parent meetings on Jan. 9th and 10th will address attendance.
 - The founding of an Attendance Committee, coordinated by Dean Charisse Lewis, who will present to the Academic Committee in January. The Attendance Committee will include the Counseling Team and the Enrollment/Retention Team.
 - PowerSchool communications, including daily automated calls and formal parent letters for each attendance tier.
 - Teacher outreach; formalizing expectations.
 2. Low attendance is a citywide problem that is reflected in both campuses’ attendance rates. Ms. Singletary stated that she would meet with Mr. Keogh to discuss the expectations and potential ramifications of Storefront’s attendance.
 3. Gretchen Pusch asked about the correlation between attendance and proximity to the school. Ms. Singletary answered that there is no direct correlation.
 - iii. Exact Path skills mastery SY 2023-2024
 1. As expected, as soon as the initiative to promote skills mastery ended, ELA/reading numbers dropped dramatically:
 - October: 8 ELA, 90 Reading, 252 Math
 - November (*initiative active*): 173 ELA, 479 Reading, 510 Math
 - December: 88 ELA, 229 Reading, 661 Math

2. Mr. Low asked if there is any data that correlates Exact Path with higher state test scores. Ms. Singletary said yes, adding that Math Stories was a good investment for both students and staff.
 3. Ms. Pusch asked if any of this has to do with language (e.g., nonnative speakers, ELLs, etc.). Ms. Singletary said that it does contribute.
 4. Mr. Bayles asked if the different results between the subjects are a curriculum problem. Ms. Singletary answered that it absolutely is not; everyone in the building is not as familiar with the curriculum as they were in 2022 since there wasn't staff training on the program in 2023. (*See point iv.2. below.*) Ms. Chesney added that students are used to instant gratification, so having to read independently becomes challenging for them.
- iv. November 2023 challenge — interim assessment No. 1
1. Math scores increased (third, fourth, and fifth grades) from 2022 to 2023.
 2. ELA scores decreased (third and fifth graders) from 2022 to 2023.
 - a. ELA goal: 50%; actual 23%, which is 7% less than in 2022 (students within 1 point of proficiency +15%).
 - b. Math goal: 60%, actual 62%, which is 22% more than in 2022 (students within 1 point of proficiency +6%).
 3. Mr. Low asked how much these scores correspond to how well they are being educated. Ms. Singletary said that, while it is not the only factor, it is an indicator.
 4. Ms. Singletary made it clear that fifth graders have to take their tests on the computer, which they are not as adept at (typing, etc.). Improving students' tech skills is a question of staffing, instructional time, structure, and more. Edulastic and Typing.com will help, but there is currently no start date for these programs.
 - a. Mr. Low asked if Matthew Tiwary had the time and resources to improve computer literacy on both campuses for testing grades. Mr. Bayles asked leadership to work on closing this gap and to let the board know if there are resources that are needed that are not in the budget.
 - b. Action item: If time allows, leadership will draft memos for the board outlining the necessary resources for computer literacy and proposing potential trade-offs to acquire those resources.
- v. Disciplinary suspensions: Two in-school suspensions were issued over the last month.
- vi. Middle School Fair (Nov. 12th): Counseling Team supported middle school articulation. Ms. Singletary mentioned that the middle schools that presented are offering more to students (trips, etc.), and Storefront should offer an elementary-level equivalent.
- vii. Holiday traditions: Spirit Week, first major show since COVID, bulletin board contest, free holiday thrift shop, cookie event, Polar Express event, reading event.
- 8. Website Compliance (1:29:27-1:31:39)**
- a. Matthew Tiwary requested that the board approve the “Parents’ Bill of Rights for Data Privacy and Security” contract to assure parents that Storefront and associated vendors are not abusing or misusing students’ data. This contract is based on the state’s recommendation.
 - b. The contract will be voted on at the January board meeting.
- 9. Open Comments (1:31:40-1:38:41)**
- a. Ms. Pusch suggested organizing a leadership retreat, which Ms. Singletary confirmed as an opportunity for staff to engage in vision casting. Ms. Chesney emphasized that the planning process is challenging amid daily teaching responsibilities, and many strategic ideas for the future of Storefront emerge during retreat-like meetings. Mr. Bayles mentioned that advisers are helping leadership develop KPIs, strategies for expansion, and mediation. He said a retreat



might be better after the advisers' suggestions are implemented.

10. Academic Committee Report (1:38:42-1:42:32)

- a. Carol Singletary introduced Charisse Lewis. Ms. Lewis, Dean of Students and Culture, started on Monday, November 20th. She started as a paraprofessional and was the president of the Parents' Association. She worked at a charter school for 12 years and has a passion for the work. Ms. Singletary said that Ms. Lewis is very aligned with Storefront's educational approach. She also said that Ms. Lewis handles problems as they arise and frames conversations in clear ways so mediation can happen organically; she is adaptive in restorative practice. Ms. Lewis will present to the Academic Committee before presenting to the board.

11. Motion to Adjourn (1:42:33-1:43:52)

- a. The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m. EST.

SUMMARY OF ACTION ITEMS

1. Following the second academic challenge, score graphs will be updated to show the percentage of students who move from "below" to "approaching" and from "approaching" to "on or above."
2. If time allows, leadership will draft memos for the board outlining the necessary resources for computer literacy and proposing potential trade-offs to acquire those resources.