



Storefront Academy Charter School
November 2023 Board Meeting
Thursday, November 16, 2023, 6:00 p.m.
Meeting Minutes

ATTENDEES

Trustees: Richard Bayles, Gretchen Pusch, Amanda Low, Peter Low, Jonathan Stearns, Justin Toliver **Staff:** Aniberca Abreu, Angela Applewhite, Catherine Brown, Tim Brown, Rebecca Brunie, Taleema Chesney, Alison Curry, Julissa Fernandez, Amia Fisher, Nicole Garcia, Yesenia Graham, Tiana Guzman, Maurissa Hankey, Debbie Khelawan, Andre Kelly, Robert Keogh, Lashawn Lewis, Marie Lucas, Tanyshia Phillip, Madeline Poweriet, Stephanie Reeder, Yubdeley Ricardo, Newton Richards, Lorena Rodriguez, Mandeley Sanchez, Carol Singletary, Desiree Soulet, Matthew Tiwary, Diondra Wong **Parents:** Alandra Cromer, Arianny G., Michelle Mayfield, Yande Paye

RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

- Meeting agenda
- Storefront Academy Financial Dashboard October 2023 Financial Report

MEETING MINUTES

1. **(00:00-00:01)** Call to order.
 - a. Richard Bayles called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. EST.
2. **(00:02-01:36)** Adoption of October minutes.
 - a. Item 4.iv.1.c. of the October minutes was amended from using the phrase “actuarial data” to “actual data.” This amendment changes the meaning of the item.
 - b. Motion to approve the minutes.
 - c. October minutes were accepted and approved with one amendment.
3. **(01:37-3:32)** Richard Bayles called a vote for the renewal of board service for Peter Low, Amanda Low, and Justin Tolliver.
 - a. Motion to accept the renewal was approved.
 - b. Motion was approved.
 - c. The appointment of a board secretary will occur at the December meeting.
4. **Financial Report (3:33-24:38)**
 - a. **(3:33-6:12)** Richard Bayles reported that the in-depth financial discussion mentioned in Item 3.b. of the October minutes will be postponed.
 - i. He also explained that there’s an apparent hole in the budget that indicates there’s been no change regarding noneducational services. However, this is not actually true. He assured the board that the numbers are close to what is in the provided financial report, and they will be explained in detail at the next board meeting.
 - b. **(6:12-24:02)** 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. The “Balance Sheet” graph indicates a small tick down in projected assets for the end of fiscal year (FY) 2023 and FY2024. He explained that since Storefront is in a slight deficit posture, it stands to reason that this downtick in assets would occur.
 - ii. The “Revenue vs. Expense” graph indicates that expenses (red bar) slightly outpace revenue (green bar), causing a deficit (gray bar).

- iii. The four line graphs (“Current Ratio,” “Days Cash,” “Quick Ratio,” and “Debt to Asset Ratio”) depict Storefront’s standing (dark blue lines) in relation to SUNY benchmarks (light blue lines) and indicate Storefront’s overall financial health.
 - 1. “Current Ratio” graph indicates that Storefront is estimated to reach 1.32 at the end of FY24, which is just below SUNY’s >1.40 benchmark. He clarified that potentially missing the benchmark by this amount would not necessarily be a major issue.
 - 2. “Days Cash” is projected at 42 days for FY24, exceeding SUNY’s 30-day benchmark.
 - 3. “Quick Ratios” is projected at a ratio of 1.19 for FY24, exceeding SUNY’s >1 benchmark.
 - 4. “Debt to Asset Ratio” is projected at 0.50 for FY24, significantly exceeding SUNY’s <1 benchmark.
 - a. Jonathan Stearns asked how long-term contracts (i.e., building leases) are treated in this measurement, especially considering the very large lease that Storefront just signed. Mr. Keogh responded that long-term leases used to be accounted for by carrying deferred rent on a balance sheet, which would’ve been included in the debt-to-asset ratio. With the new lease accounting standard, it becomes a right-of-use asset that depreciates over the course of the year, making it an offsetting liability. SUNY takes right-of-use assets and liabilities off the books and treats them as normal leases. He explained that the leases have both an asset and a liability component, so both components are backed out of the debt-to-asset ratio. This method benefits Storefront, and measuring in this way is the only way the SUNY system can reach reasonable ratios. Richard Bayles added that this is what auditors consider to be a generally accepted accounting principle.
- iv. “Enrollment” chart explains that cross-campus enrollment totaled 348 students across the two campuses, missing the budget of 395 students by 47. This deficit results in a \$856,937 variance in budget and actual revenue per pupil. Cross-campus enrollment for SPED totaled 76 students, missing the budget of 89 students by 13. This deficit results in a \$277,548 variance in budget and actual revenue per SPED pupil.
 - 1. Mr. Keogh explained that this report is as of the most recent per-pupil submission, which excludes a few existing students and a recent enrollment effort in Harlem. The updated enrollment chart, which is due at the end of November, will show a significantly lower variance.
 - 2. The “FY24 Enrollment Summary” breaks out these numbers by campus. As of now, the current enrollment data is outdated. Alison Curry stated that the current enrollment in Harlem is 90, and the current enrollment in the South Bronx is 279.
 - 3. The current all-in enrollment deficit totals \$1,218,660, which is partially offset by \$250,721 in staff savings across campuses.
- v. Mr. Keogh reiterated that no “Other than Personnel” expense projections have been calculated yet. The Finance Department met with school leaders at each campus to review their budgets in detail. Based on their feedback and that of the board, the budget will be adjusted based on anticipated spend.
 - 1. “Facility Expense” includes some savings due to partial rent forgiveness at the new building.
- vi. The net deficit between the two schools, including depreciation and contingency, is

projected to be \$193,334, which is expected to shrink after the enrollment numbers are updated. The net deficit is a result of the Harlem enrollment deficit of \$334,306, which is partially offset by the South Bronx's positive net income of \$140,971.

1. Jonathan Stearns asked why the contingency totaled \$100,000. Mr. Keogh answered that \$100,000 in contingency was set aside at the Harlem campus, and it didn't make sense to carry that contingency when the campus' revenue deficit reached nearly \$800,000. Zeroing out the contingency offers a purer number that the campus is expected to lose this year.
 2. Mr. Stearns stated that he believed SUNY required a segregated contingency budget in cash. Mr. Keogh explained that it's not necessarily a contingency on a profit and loss (P&L) basis but an amount carried in escrow in the event that the school faces a closure and needs to pay for wind-down expenses. Storefront does have \$100,000 in cash to remain compliant with SUNY guidelines. This is different from the \$100,000 contingency, which is a proactive budgeting measure that's meant to cover unexpected costs.
- vii. Mr. Keogh reported that Storefront was granted an audit extension until the end of December. The audit is in progress, and a draft audit report is expected shortly.

5. Harlem Report (24:39-45:01)

- a. **(24:39-31:17)** Taleema Chesney, principal at the Harlem campus, presented about hiring. She explained that there are positions open in first, second, and fifth grades, and candidates are interviewing.
 - i. One candidate, who is already familiar with Lavinia, did a demo that showcased best practices. This candidate has been offered a position in second grade, and Ms. Chesney is awaiting her response.
 - ii. Mr. Rodriguez, Harlem's ELLs teacher, is currently teaching the fifth-grade class. A demo was supposed to be held, but the candidate did not show up. There are a few more candidates in line.
 - iii. Ms. Chesney highlighted Harlem's collaboration with a substituting company, which is providing three substitutes. Some are repeats, which helps them forge relationships with students, understand the culture of the school, and better support teachers in the classroom.
 - iv. A part-time music teacher position has been posted on Indeed. Art in the Parks is currently providing art lessons to students in the after-school program. Ms. Chesney will meet with Art in the Parks to discuss the possibility of them coming in part time to teach students during regular school hours as well. Harlem will also get started with a creative movement/dance instructor, whom Ms. Chesney met with yesterday.
- b. Ms. Chesney discussed enrollment, which she called Harlem's number-one priority. She explained that they had their first collective enrollment meeting. Harlem will conduct a read-aloud at an apartment complex that is home to 446 units and over 100 children. Fliers promoting the event to tenants have already been distributed.
- c. **(31:18-34:46)** Amia Fisher, assistant principal at the Harlem campus, presented about culture and climate.
 - i. She stated that Einstein Tutoring is coming in to help the third through fifth graders in math. The garden plot looks great — no weeds! The after-school program is providing creative movement and Art in the Parks to students. For World Kindness Day, students were rewarded for performing random acts of kindness. There's a food drive upcoming, as well as a reading buddy program and a partnership with Chase Bank and Costco. Students will soon go to the Jefferson Library, where library staff will host read-aloud

and visual activities. Career Day is upcoming, and students will hear from various people, including a ballerina, an author, a mental health counselor, and an NFL representative. At an upcoming community meeting, Scholars of the Month and students with perfect attendance will be recognized. A staff appreciation event is also upcoming.

- d. **(34:47-44:13)** Peter Low reiterated that, in every campus report, actual data should 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. He made it clear that the board is data-driven and results-oriented. He shared that there is a strategy document that explains, from the board's perspective, the essential things that have to happen. The document ensures that management is on the same page and provides implicit key performance indicators (KPIs) for what the leadership aims to accomplish.
- i. Jonathan Stearns added that they should come up with certain KPIs that can help measure each metric.
 - ii. Carol Singletary, principal at the South Bronx campus, added that these metrics should be agreed upon to ensure that the provided information is clear to all.
 - iii. Action item: Alison Curry will send the strategy document to the principals.

6. South Bronx Report (45:02-1:19:14)

- a. **(45:02-1:19:14)** Carol Singletary, principal at the South Bronx campus, presented about teaching strategies, school metrics, and future planning.
- i. Teaching strategies:
 1. Fourth graders evolved from a “guided reading” approach to a “strategic reading” approach. Strategic reading has three forms: 1) Focusing on foundational reading skills, including phonics, word awareness, and coding; 2) Comprehension, which is more rigorous; and 3) A hybrid approach.
 2. Humanities combine social studies and comprehension reading skills. The basics of this (including understanding what makes a story using labeling) are taught as early as kindergarten.
 3. Ms. Singletary expressed that she is particularly proud of the ELLs program, which includes students of a range of ages. This program doesn't only account for teaching students English; it also accounts for each student's developmental stage. These students are mostly Spanish-speaking, but there are some students who speak French and several African languages.
 - ii. School metrics:
 1. With 279 students, the South Bronx campus' enrollment is at its highest since its return from COVID closures. Ms. Singletary credits the enrollments and operations teams, referrals, Schola leads, and Harlem staff for this success. She noted that she is cognizant of having enough room for students to ensure that they are in an ideal learning environment.
 2. The South Bronx campus is aiming for 90% attendance to align with pre-COVID numbers. As of November 13th, enrollment was at 82%.
 - a. At the October board meeting, kindergarten attendance was reading at an inaccurate 12%. The updated and more accurate number is 79%.
 - b. Ms. Singletary reported that there are approximately 41 students who have missed more than 10 days of school (approaching 20 days missed). A few students' cases have been reported for educational neglect and



Child Find laws.

- i. Using PowerSchool Attendance Suite, the South Bronx staff has reached out to parents, and the communication has made some difference. Parents are more often reaching out to the school to explain their child's absence. More correspondence with the parents of these children is to be implemented by the principals.
 - ii. Ms. Singletary noted that, in addition to reminders, the school can educate parents about why it's important for their child to come to school and remind them of the resources that the school offers to ensure the child gets to school.
 - iii. She also stated that it would be helpful to incentivize students to attend school. Once they're at school, the staff does well to keep them engaged.
 3. Ms. Lewis, Dean of Students and Culture, is starting 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.
 - a. Amanda Low asked to invite her to the next Academic Committee meeting to discuss strategies.
 4. Ms. Singletary expressed that the students work very well with the math curriculum, but they do not like the ELA and reading programs. To incentivize students, Ms. Singletary and Ms. Fernandez arranged a friendly competition between grades two and three and grades four and five. The two grades with the highest reading and ELA skills mastery for the month (third and fourth graders) earned a home-cooked lunch provided by the staff.
 - a. Gretchen Pusch asked why the students do not like the ELA or reading programs. Ms. Singletary answered that the graphics and stories are not very exciting or engaging.
 - b. Jonathan Stearns asked if the kindergarten and first-grade numbers were unusually low. Ms. Singletary responded that it's a slow process to get each child individually on the program. She stated that a resource called Clever would help students to get on the program themselves. Marie Lucas stated that they are looking into Clever. Matthew Tiwary stated that Clever costs \$7 per student per month.
- iii. Future planning:
 1. The South Bronx is starting a five-year unconditional renewal.
 2. Students are showing strong student outcomes on state tests.
 3. The building lease at 609 Jackson Avenue ends in July 2025.
 - a. Parents desire the following programs and facilities for the new space:
 - i. Gymnasium, auditorium/performance space, courtyard/outdoor space, art studios, music studios, dance studios, media center, STEM lab, teachers' makerspace/workroom, and a space for teachers to rest and recharge.
 - ii. The Equity Design staff surveys align with parent requests and offer pragmatic suggestions.
 - b. Regarding the new lease, Ms. Singletary requests avoiding gentrification corridors and dense areas that are already saturated with charter schools.
 - c. Ms. Singletary met Dan Pasek, who has more than 25 years in education



and a record of guiding small, independent charter schools (“indies”) in effective strategic planning to improve outcomes yet stay true to their unique key design elements. Strategic alliances are in the works.

- d. Indies are forming alliances to compete with larger charters. Ms. Singletary wants Storefront to think outside the box in order to root in the right geographic area and retain its key design elements.
 - i. Storefront could become a district unto itself by partnering with a charter school that serves grades 6-12. This way, students attend just two schools that align ideals and methods, and schools share and support each other’s enrollments.
 - ii. Richard Bayles mentioned that the charter school world is breaking into two parts: the major organizations and the smaller, community-oriented schools like Storefront.
 - iii. Ms. Singletary mentioned that, while Storefront is becoming known, it’s important that it’s widely known.
4. Richard Bayles asked that Ms. Singletary report on the Extended Day program at the December board meeting. Mr. Bayles stated that running the school from approximately 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. serves the community the way it needs. This supports the students’ growth and enriches their academic lives. He noted that teachers can’t work 12-hour shifts, so he recommends having a separate staff. This way, the teachers can have time without their students to do adequate prep. The Extended Day can be a significant benefit to students and teachers alike.

7. Academic Committee Report (1:19:15-1:22:01)

- a. Gretchen Pusch mentioned the joint holiday party and the holiday show.
- b. She said that there was a lot of interest in developing a senior leadership retreat, so this is a high priority.
- c. Ms. Pusch also reported that feedback about [1:20:45 someone] is very positive thus far.
- d. Amanda Low stated that Einstein Tutoring is ending due to their own financial hardship. They will now charge. If everyone agrees that it’s important, she said that the board should consider covering the costs.

8. Governance Committee Report (1:22:02-1:28:38)

- a. Jonathan Stearns reported that SUNY has a handbook that suggests how Storefront’s processes should be managed. The issue that Storefront faces is about renewals. This makes it difficult to recruit strategically for the board. He makes it clear that this doesn’t mean that they shouldn’t try to recruit, just that it may be difficult because SUNY is looking for a long-term commitment. Mr. Stearns explained that the board currently has six of its allotted 13 members.
- b. There are a few elements that are outlined for potential board members. One potential board member should represent community outreach and community connection. One should be proficient in legal elements, including contract law.
- c. Amanda Low asked if the board could add the “friends of” names to the board to add more names to the list. Mr. Stearns answered that, optically, there’s no reason why not.
- d. Carol Singletary brought forward two candidates who Mr. Stearns considers quite good.
 - i. Action item: Two members of the Governance Committee will interview these two candidates and report back at the December board meeting.
- e. Peter Low asked that Mr. Stearns send out the outline that was made a few years back outlining categories, etc., that are needed on the board.
 - i. Action item: Jonathan Stearns will send out his report enumerating the board’s needs.

9. Interim Executive Director Report (1:28:39-1:42:52)



- a. Alison Curry presented about grants, security, accounting, and enrollment.
- b. Storefront was awarded an EFC grant put in place by Stuart Wolf, which will provide new computers for all students and staff on both campuses.
 - i. Grant facts: \$10,000 was budgeted for Harlem; \$25,000 was budgeted for the South Bronx. \$1,200 will be sent by Storefront out of pocket in Harlem, but the South Bronx campus will be up \$17,000.
- c. There was a security incident at the South Bronx campus.
 - i. NYPD has been on campus on an as-can basis.
 - ii. Altaris was secured to provide people training.
 - iii. At Altaris' recommendation, Storefront is looking into upping from unarmed to armed security with Allied. From July 1st through November 1st, Storefront has spent \$49,729 on security. Signing a contract with armed security would cost \$155,000 for three armed security guards. These guards would wear collared golf shirts to look less intimidating than police officers or people in suits.
 1. Ms. Curry requests board support for a contract for armed security at the South Bronx for the school year, including summer school and summer PD.
 2. Carol Singletary explained that there's a survey open. There are currently 19 responses, but she expressed that more are needed.
 3. Ms. Curry explained that there have been three security incidents since she joined Storefront in October 2022.
 - iv. Richard Bayles requested that Ms. Curry write up a report, specifically about the efficacy of armed guards on campus, to be discussed at the December meeting.
 1. Action item: Ms. Curry will write up this report for the December meeting.
 - v. Gretchen Pusch asked what other charter schools in the area are doing regarding security guards. Ms. Curry answered that one of the benefits of charter schools co-locating in a Department of Education building is that it comes with armed security. Marie Lucas added that most charters have at least one armed security guard on site. They are typically retired law enforcement who have experience assessing certain situations. She added that they do not show their weapons on them.
 - vi. Tiana Guzman expressed that it's important to have a staff meeting in person to give everyone a chance to voice their opinion. Peter Low emphasized that the staff meeting is essential.
 - vii. Ms. Curry requested that the board and staff take and share the safety survey.
- d. Alison Curry, Marie Lucas, and Stuart Wolf are the names with access to Storefront's checking account. Storefront's credit card is in Stuart Wolf's name. Mr. Wolf's name must be removed and replaced — likely by Yubdeley Ricardo, since she manages most of the finances with Bob from Fourth Sector.
 - i. Action item: Alison will prepare this motion for the December meeting.
- e. Regarding enrollment, there's a lot of activity in Harlem, and with 46 students on the waitlist, the lottery has opened up for the South Bronx. There's a mail campaign that includes almost 10,000 families with children within a mile of the new Harlem campus. Three postcards are on the way. Between the Harlem team and the South Bronx team, there are many people on the street spreading the word about Harlem, and many events, such as open houses, are to come. Storefront has acquired a dedicated Google Voice number for enrollment to better track the effectiveness of Storefront's Google ads. As a result of all of this activity, two new families are coming to enroll in Harlem.

10. Open Comments (1:42:53-1:43:23)

- a. No comments were made.



11. Motion to Adjourn (1:43:24-1:43:52)

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

SUMMARY OF ACTION ITEMS

1. Alison Curry will send the board's strategy document to the principals for review.
2. Two members of the Governance Committee will interview the two candidates brought forth by Carol Singletary and report back at the December board meeting.
3. Jonathan Stearns will send out his report enumerating the board's needs.
4. Alison Curry will write up a report about the efficacy of potentially having armed guards on a school campus.
5. Alison Curry will prepare a motion that will remove Stuart Wolf's name from the Storefront checking account and the Storefront credit card. Alison Curry, Marie Lucas, and Yubdeley Ricardo will be on the Storefront checking account, and Yubdeley Ricardo and Richard Bayles will be on the Storefront credit card. This motion will be addressed at the December meeting.