

MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF SOMERSET ACADEMY OF LAS VEGAS
FEBRUARY 3, 2025

The Board of Directors of Somerset Academy of Las Vegas held a public meeting on February 3, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. at 4650 Losee Road, North Las Vegas, NV 89081.

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 5:01 p.m. by Board Chair Travis Mizer. The following Board members were in attendance: Travis Mizer, John Bentham, Matt Hurley, Sarah McClellan, and Matt Morris.

Board Members LeNora Bredsguard and Renee Fairless were not in attendance.

Also present were the following principals: Lee Esplin, Jessica Scobell, Shannon Manning, Cesar Tiu, Kate Lackey, and Mindi Palomeque. Other attendees included Assistant Principal Jennifer Steele; Grant Manager Tiffany Lewis; Bernie Montero and Suzette Ruiz from the Somerset system; and Academica representatives Gary McClain, Ryan Reeves, Travis Keys, and Marla Devitt.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

3. CONSENT AGENDA

- a. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE JANUARY 11, 2025 STRATEGIC PLANNING MEETING**
- b. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE OCTOBER 4, 2024 FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING**
- c. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE OCTOBER 8, 2024 EVALUATION COMMITTEE MEETING**
- d. APPROVAL OF REVISED TEST SECURITY PLAN**

MEMBER BENTHAM MOVED TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA AS PRESENTED. MEMBER HURLEY SECONDED THE MOTION, AND THE BOARD VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE.

5. ACTION & DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. SCHOOL INITIATIVE REPORT BY SOMERSET ADMINISTRATORS

The principals of Somerset Academy addressed the Board, providing updates on student achievement, intervention strategies, and extracurricular activities at their respective schools. Principal Manning reported strong academic progress, with elementary students trending at 81 points (4 stars) and middle school at 90 points (5 stars). She noted the success of targeted math interventions and tutoring for students struggling with proficiency gaps. She also highlighted Somerset Aliante's national recognition in the NASA TechRise Challenge, where students were

selected to design a balloon experiment to study the magnetic field for solar panels. Additionally, the middle school cheer team placed third in its first-ever competition.

Principal Palomeque shared that her school was projected at 64.5 points (4 stars) based on winter data, with significant improvements in student proficiency and attendance. Math interventions were a focus, with all available staff members providing small-group instruction to help students reach the next proficiency level. She noted that chronic absenteeism had decreased from 18.3% to 12.5%, and additional reductions could further improve the school's rating.

Principal Esplin reported that both elementary and middle school were on track for a high 4-star rating. His school continued to focus on small-group interventions and one-on-one tutoring for struggling students. Teachers were using resources provided by Jessica Barr to align instruction with state standards and testing requirements. He also highlighted recent student achievements in the arts and athletics, including state-level performances in theatre, cheer, dance, and guitar.

Principal Lackey noted that her school was implementing a "Crunch Calendar" boot camp to help students prepare for testing, which teachers found useful. She expressed concerns about a lack of communication regarding data availability, as she had been unable to schedule a meeting with Jessica Barr to receive official performance projections. Despite this, her team had analyzed internal assessment data, showing steady proficiency rates in reading and math. She also shared updates on sports and school events, including an undefeated basketball season and a staff-led Super Bowl barbecue.

Principal Scobell explained that math remained an area of concern, prompting her school to adjust intervention strategies by shifting to 40-minute focused sessions in ELA and math. Writing instruction was also a priority, as she anticipated that written performance tasks would have a greater impact on SBAC scores. She noted that while middle school students showed growth, many were still struggling to meet high targets. In athletics, she highlighted that her girls' basketball team was ranked first in 4A, and her football team won the state academic championship for highest GPA.

Principal Tiu reported high winter assessment scores, with 93.8% for elementary and 92.2% for middle school. He noted the importance of prioritizing key standards and using the Crunch Calendar to help teachers focus on critical skills. He also shared updates on upcoming leadership events and competitions at his campus.

Assistant Principal Steele stated that the Stephanie campus was projected to earn a 5-star rating for elementary for the first time since before COVID-19, with middle school maintaining a 5-star status. She attributed these gains to the implementation of Wit & Wisdom, a curriculum that increased rigor and required students to engage in deeper, analytical thinking through higher-level questions and Socratic seminars. Additionally, her school saw a 60% decrease in behavioral incidents after implementing MTSS. She noted an increase in IEP and EL enrollment, which could impact future data.

Board members discussed concerns regarding SBAC testing changes, including the reduction in the number of test questions, which could limit the availability of claim data for targeted interventions. Principals noted that they were relying on internal assessments to guide instruction.

b. FINANCIAL REPORT

Mr. McClain reviewed enrollment data, highlighting that the lowest enrollment rate across campuses was 98.2%, which was strong overall. Member Bentham asked if budgeting was still based on 96% enrollment. Mr. Ryan Reeves addressed the Board and explained that budgeting varied by campus depending on trends, with high schools typically experiencing more variability than elementary schools. He noted that Somerset originally budgeted at 95% enrollment when it started 14 years ago but had since increased that estimate.

Mr. McClain then briefly reviewed financial updates, stating that pages 47 and 48 listed grants and incoming funds, totaling over \$2 million at the mid-year mark. He noted that the following pages contained account ledgers, and the balance sheet began on page 56.

c. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF THE 2025/2026 MAXIMUM ENROLLMENT

Mr. McClain stated that after consulting with principals, no changes to enrollment numbers were requested. As a result, enrollment would remain the same year over year, with a total of 9,583 students.

MEMBER BENTHAM MOVED TO ACCEPT AS PRESENTED. MEMBER MCCLELLAN SECONDED THE MOTION, AND THE BOARD VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE.

d. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF ALIANTE MARQUEE FROM SGF

Mr. McClain reported that Principal Manning had been fundraising through APEX fun runs and other efforts to purchase a video display board for the north side of the building. Two bids had been secured for a 7-foot by 10-foot sign, including electrical work and third-party fees, with a total cost of \$44,700.

Member Bentham inquired whether there had been discussions about angling the marquee to improve visibility from the car line, as the current placement made it difficult to see until a vehicle was directly in front of it. Mr. McClain confirmed that no adjustments had been discussed but acknowledged the suggestion to pitch it outward.

MEMBER MCCLELLAN MOVED TO APPROVE PATRICK SIGNS AS THE VENDOR FOR THE ALIANTE MARQUEE FROM SGF. MEMBER HURLEY SECONDED THE MOTION AND THE BOARD VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE.

4. ANNUAL MEETING

a. RE-ELECTION OF BOARD MEMBER JOHN BENTHAM

Mr. McClain stated that Member Bentham was eligible to be elected for his final five-year term.

MEMBER HURLEY MOVED TO RE-ELECT JOHN BENTHAM AS A BOARD MEMBER. MEMBER MCCLELLAN SECONDED THE MOTION, AND THE BOARD VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE.

b. ANNUAL ELECTION OF BOARD OFFICERS

Mr. McClain stated that Member Mizer had reached the term limit to serve as chair. All other officers could be re-elected.

MEMBER McCLELLAN NOMINATED THE FOLLOWING FOR OFFICERS: JOHN BENTHAM AS BOARD CHAIR, LENORA BREDSGUARD AS BOARD VICE-CHAIR, TRAVIS MIZER AS BOARD SECRETARY, AND MATT HURLEY AS BOARD TREASURER. MEMBER MORRIS SECONDED THE NOMINATION, AND THE BOARD VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE.

6. LONG RANGE CALENDAR/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. McClain stated the next meeting was scheduled for April 7th.

Mr. Reeves provided an update on legislative developments affecting charter schools. He noted that the Governor's budget included permanent funding for charter school transportation, increasing from \$7 million per year (previously grant-based) to \$8 million next fiscal year and \$9 million the following year. Funding would be allocated per pupil for schools that provide transportation, but schools without transportation would not receive funding.

Mr. Reeves stated that the Governor included teacher pay raises for charter schools in his budget, contingent on securing \$30 million in funding. If approved, charter schools would receive an additional \$250 per teacher, which was previously excluded in the last legislative session. He noted bipartisan support for this measure.

Mr. Reeves explained that a letter of intent had been submitted for Henderson and North Las Vegas to reserve a spot for potential applications, though there was no obligation to proceed. He also clarified that, under current law, schools authorized by Henderson would still fall under the SPCSA's Local Education Authority (LEA) for Title and Federal funds. However, the SPCSA has submitted a bill to remove this oversight, which could change how authorizations function in the future.

Mr. Reeves addressed concerns about At-Risk funding, which falls under regulatory authority rather than the legislative session. The State Board of Education had delayed further action until after the session, which could result in next year's funding being based on the current flawed system, costing charter schools \$25 million statewide. He indicated that if the Board of Education did not correct this issue in its March meeting, he may recommend legal action and request charter boards to participate in nonpublic litigation discussions to prevent funding losses.

7. MEMBER COMMENT

During the member comment section, several board members expressed gratitude to Member Mizer for his leadership as the board chair.

Member Morris noted that the State Public Charter School Authority would be presenting to the Assembly Education Committee the following afternoon. He encouraged anyone interested to watch or monitor the session and apologized for not being able to attend the board meeting in person.

Mr. Montero commended the Somerset principals in Nevada for their dedication and daily efforts to achieve 5-star ratings across all schools. He acknowledged the challenges they face and expressed excitement about the recent reaccreditation process, noting that the data from Nevada was impressive. He thanked both the principals and the Board for their leadership and contributions.

Ms. Ruiz echoed his sentiments, congratulating the principals on their hard work and recognizing the ongoing challenges of maintaining high scores and achievements each year.

Principal Esplin thanked Mr. McClain for his commitment to the campus, ensuring that repairs were completed quickly when issues arose.

8. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

9. ADJOURN MEETING

THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 5:48 P.M.

Approved on: March 31, 2025



**Secretary of the Board of Directors
Somerset Academy of Las Vegas**