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Sylvia Lazos, Treasurer
Dr. Alain Bengochea, Secretary
Nicole Thompson, Officer
Jaime Gonzales, Officer
Dachresha Harris, Officer
Dr. Alee Moore, Officer
Heather Nay, Officer

Miriam Benitez, Executive Director



Strong Start Academy Board Meeting Minutes
October 13, 2022
5:00 PM

Lorna: Thank you, everybody, for joining us tonight. We'll call the meeting at Strong Start Academy Elementary School charter school board to order at this time. We'll start with roll call tonight. Lorna James-Cervantes is present. Alain Bengochea.

Alain: Present.

Lorna: Sylvia Lazos.

Sylvia: Present.

Lorna: And Sylvia answered present. Alee Moore, not present at this time. Dachresha Harris, not present. Nicole Thompson.

Nicole: Present.

Lorna: Heather Nay, not present. Jaime Gonzales.

Jaime: Present.

Lorna: Okay. Thank you. We do have quorum at this time, so we will go ahead and begin the meeting. In compliance with the Open Meeting Law, I will announce that we are recording this meeting. And now, we will move to item number three, public comment. During this portion of the agenda, it must be limited to matters on the agenda for action. If you wish to be heard, come forward and give your name for the record. The amount of discussion, as well as the amount of time any single speaker is allowed, will be limited to two minutes absent board approval. Is there any public comment at this time? And I don't see anybody in the room. Did we receive any written public comment?

Woman: No.

Lorna: Okay. So it looks like there's no public comment at this time. So we will move to item number four. This is to approve the final minutes by reference of the September 8, 2022 and October 6, '22 board meetings. You have both of those sets of meetings, and they were sent out ahead of time. Is there anybody who needs extra time or a little bit of time to go through those, or were you all able to go through ahead of time? It looks like I'm getting a

thumbs up that people were able to go through ahead of time and do not need additional time. Is that correct? And because it is, would anyone like to move that we approve the minutes as submitted?

Jaime: Jaime Gonzales, for the record. I move that we go ahead and submit the minutes for the September 8 and October 6 meetings to the record.

Alain: Alain Bengochea. Second.

Lorna: Thank you. It's been moved and seconded that we accept the minutes as written. All those in favor?

Everyone: Aye.

Lorna: All those opposed? None opposed. So that motion passes at this time. All right. At this time, we will move to item number five. This is a report by Kristin Dietz from EdTec on budget and financial reports, including the CSP grant.

Kristin: Good afternoon, board. This is Kristin Dietz, for the record. Let me see if I can share my screen here. There we go. Okay.

So what we have here today is the financial presentation, with actuals through August 31st. And in terms of our current forecast, this middle column here is our forecasted net. We're looking at a small deficit of about 28,563. This slide is comparing to the board-approved budget. And as we recall, the board-approved budget was based on 180 students, and the forecast is currently based on 100 students. So that's really a big part of the reason why we're seeing such a big change from the budget to now.

In the next slide here, I'm showing you just the change from the prior month to the August close. And the only change that we reflected to the forecast here was just to update for rent. We had previously forecasted that the school would be paying some rent, not knowing the timing of closing on the facility. But now, we know there was a little bit of rent, but then that rent number virtually goes away. So we've made that adjustment. And then the other change that we had was to adjust for postage. We had actual costs at the beginning of the year coming in a little bit higher, specifically related to the return of some furniture. So those were the only real changes to the forecast, which gets us to the 28,000 deficit.

I'm gonna go back just a second here to the previous slide to share a carry-over fund balance that we are forecasting is 763,000. So that's about a 22% reserve. So we're looking at a pretty strong end to the year, and this is primarily because of the grant money that we received in the year zero carrying over to this year and allowing us to have this reserve as we move into year one. Was there a question? I heard a little bit of background, just wanna make sure I didn't talk over anybody.

Lorna: This is Lorna. I don't see anybody with a hand raised at this time, no.

Kristin: Okay, thank you. So I did include a couple of slides here specifically related to the grants that the school will be receiving. We do have about seven grants, the largest being the CSP grant. These are all federal. The first five that I have listed here, these are all processed through the authority, the SPCSA. And these applications have been submitted, but we are kind of in a holding pattern. We're waiting for the state to approve the final applications, and we are not able to request reimbursements on any of these at this point, and we likely will not be able to until the December submission time frame. So we are waiting on those. We are starting to spend, but we are not able to request reimbursements on those. That's also the case for the ARP ESSER funding. This is one-time COVID-related funding that the school will be receiving. In terms of the CSP, we do submit reimbursement requests monthly on this, and as of the time of this report, we had two months of reimbursements that were pending. That was about \$89,000.

On the next slide, this specifically talks about the CSP grant and gives a little bit more information. You can see the buckets of budget categories that we have as approved expenses under this grant. The total grant is \$750,000. As of August 31st, we had spent 209,000, and that leaves about 72% of the grant remaining to be spent over the course of the grant period.

In terms of our actuals, as of August 31st, we are only 2 months into the year, and we really had not seen a lot of activity, particularly on the revenue side. We have received one of our state PCFP payments for about \$25,000, and that was pretty much it on the revenue. So we had only received 1% of our forecasted revenue, and we had incurred 12% of expenses. And I will continue to update this each month. We do look in a lot of detail at the actuals compared to the budget and forecast, but this just gives you kind of an overview of where we are at this point in the year.

This next slide is the balance sheet, which shows the total assets that the school owns and the liabilities of what they owe out to others. So as of August 31st, the school had 332,000 in cash. There was a receivable that was related to the CSP grant and other things. So that is money that's expected to come into the school. The asset of 10,000 represented the deposit on the facility. And then we had some accounts payable, and that was pretty much it. So total assets of 487,000 at the end of August.

In terms of cash flow, what you see here is a cash flow forecast by month. We have actuals through August, and the cash balance was 332,000. We do anticipate that, now that we have a consistent pattern with the City of Las Vegas grant and knowing how much we're going to get and when, that allows us to forecast the cash and be able to see that we will likely meet the metric requirements that the authority places in terms of the last day of the fiscal year, June 30th. You should try to maintain at least 30 days of cash on hand. And at this point, we project that you will have about 72 days cash on hand. So that's really good.

And beyond this, I just have some more detailed exhibits, including the budget versus actual by budget category. There is a little more detailed cash projection by month. And then at the back is the check register of all the expenses for the month that we most recently closed. Does anybody have any questions I can help clarify?

Lorna: This is Lorna. I did have one question. You probably answered it before but just for me to remember. Is there a deadline to spending any of the grants, like the CSP grant?

Kristin: Yes, all of the grants do have a grant period, and the CSP grant does have a deadline. And, Miriam, you can correct me. I think it's 2024, right? We've got time. And then all of the federal grants, they have until September of 2023.

Lorna: So yearly, okay.

Kristin: They're annual, yep.

Lorna: All right. Thank you. Are there any other questions? I know, in our last... This is Lorna Cervantes, for the record. At our last meeting, we had asked, is there a need to make any adjustments to the budgets based on the need to spend a little bit more money on recruitment? And we know that we had to do some shifting within our marketing budget so that, if it's within our budget, you know, that's understandable. But is there any need to make any major adjustments to our budget as a whole in order to accomplish what we need to with recruitment, and this would be related...? I think this is the appropriate time to ask that question.

Kristin: As far as I know, I don't think so. Your current forecast has a little over \$40,000 in the marketing budget, and the school has spent 19,000. I think there was about 25,000 remaining in that budget. If you intend to spend much more than that, then we might wanna look at what can be adjusted or shifted. That is an allowable expense under the CSP grant, so you could definitely move some things around there to accommodate any additional costs. And I just wanted to mention too, in terms of considering a revision to the budget, because, as we know, the budget, in its present form, the approved budget really is not reality anymore, as often ends up being the case at this point. What I would suggest is that we wait until the state has approved those federal grants and confirmed the amounts of those, and then we can do a re-budget of the entire set of information.

The other thing is that this forecast, currently, is based on 100 students, and the likelihood is that we will come in probably closer to around 90 in terms of the average quarterly daily enrollment, which is what you will get funded on, ultimately. So we'll have a little bit of adjustment, but it does make sense to wait and probably do that in December.

Lorna: This is Lorna. Thank you for that explanation, Kristin. I think that answers the question that was brought up at our last board meeting. So we appreciate that. Are there any other questions or comments from any of the board members who are present? I don't see

any. So I just wanna say thank you, Kristin. We appreciate you being here with us tonight and sharing this budget update with us. And we will look forward to seeing you at each of our meetings throughout the year. So we can move on to item number six. This is a report by the executive director regarding the fiscal year 2023 Risk Tier Designation of Strong Start Academy by the Nevada State Public Charter School Authority. And you have a copy of that in your meeting backup.

Miriam: Yes. So Miriam Benitez, for the record. I did reach out to the department just so they can clarify for me exactly what this means, and they did say that all first-year charter schools are given this designation. So that's automatic. And then I did receive an email actually today, letting us know that our visit is scheduled for February. And so the intent is to come out. If you look at the risk assessment tool, you'll see there on the side that they'll be looking at, like, our special ed, our Title I, all of our entitlement funds. And so, basically, what she said is, "We come in and just make sure that the school is handling fiscally everything the way that it's supposed to be doing and that things are running smoothly." And they try to come in there as quick as possible in case anything is not moving the way it should so they can give corrective feedback. But we have a charter authority site visit scheduled in November, and they like not to schedule those back to back. Plus, as Kristin pointed out, we don't even have any of these funds yet, and we don't anticipate them till December. So they're probably waiting also till that money actually drops so they can monitor. So, yeah, this is just standard practice, and our visit is scheduled for February.

Lorna: Okay. This is Lorna. Thank you for that explanation, Miriam. Does anybody have any questions at this time? Sylvia?

Sylvia: Yes. I guess my question is, when do you expect to get feedback from these visits that they tell you, "We'll have comments in 30 days or 60 days?" And then those, I believe, should be reported to the board so we should pencil in agenda items to hear what the feedback is.

Miriam: So in our email today, all it said was our site visit...kind of to pencil in and anticipate a visit in February and that within the next two weeks, we should be receiving another email with more information. So that's the extent. And then the additional information I received was from the phone call. So I don't know yet when we can anticipate that follow-up report.

Lorna: This is Lorna. So, Miriam, if we could just request that once you do have that information if you would let us know or when you have the visit, if they don't tell you until the visit, "Okay, within 30 days, you'll get this information," then, when you get that, would you please make sure that we place that on the agenda to share with the board so that we're aware of the outcome to the site visits? And also, we're here to support you with any support that you may have or any resource that you may need as those site visits come throughout the year.

Miriam: Yes.

Lorna: Sylvia, does that answer your request?

Sylvia: Right. That's, you know, where I was going. Thank you.

Lorna: You're welcome. Any other questions or discussion? All right. Thank you very much, and we'll continue to look for those reports throughout the year. All right, at this time, we are ready for item number seven. This is discussion for possible action regarding Strong Start Academy staffing and budget impacts through 2022-'23 school year. Is there discussion on this item? Do we feel that it was handled through Kristin's report? I will say that, at our last meeting, I think we were in agreement of all board members that although our student enrollment was low, we, at this time, are going to make sure that we maintained all staff that was already hired and trained today. So that was discussion at our last meeting. Sylvia.

Sylvia: Yeah. I don't recall whether we have a special ed here. Are there any staff positions that we didn't fill, Miriam? Would that be, like, a special...did we fill the special ed position?

Miriam: We did fill the special ed position. At this time, the only position that has not been filled is the counselor/safe school professional.

Sylvia: And is that something you intend to fill or not fill?

Miriam: Well, I had been trying still to fill until our last meeting that we had talked about revisiting our budget so we can allocate additional funding for recruiting/advertising. So that is part of what's up for discussion for our next board item that I'm presenting, not filling that position to fill outreach coordinator position.

Sylvia: So you are thinking not having a counselor and safety person but rather having a recruiter.

Miriam: It's not that we don't have a counselor or safety person. It's the school is so small. We have the resources within the office, the instructional coaches, myself, that we've been able to handle those types of situations ourselves.

Sylvia: Okay. Let me ask you one more question, and that was the question that I had since we're getting into this outreach conversation, or maybe you want me to wait till you talk about the outreach. But my question was, when are we going to start having adult education classes as a form of outreach?

Miriam: Well, I sent out a survey to parents as to what kinds of classes or parent engagement-type opportunities they would like to see offered at the school, and that was not among one of the choices that they've listed. So I haven't moved forward with offering anything like that because, based on the parent surveys that we received, that was not something that parents were asking for.

Sylvia: Well, I guess what I'm asking, and I don't know if we wanna get into that right now, but I don't know what your survey asked for because your survey always elicits the answer, you know. So there's a relationship there. So I'm not familiar with your survey. But I guess my concern would be that we have adult education, however you wanna call that, and we, I think, had talked about having some English language classes at the planning period. So really I'm following up on the conversations that we had at the very beginning about how we're gonna do outreach.

Lorna: Okay. Thank you. This is Lorna. Thank you, Sylvia, for those questions. I see Nicole's hand. Before we go there, it looks like we may be ready, since there were not a lot of questions on number seven, to move down to item number eight, which is really looking at the marketing services and what our plan is moving forward. Is that correct? I see a lot of positive head shaking in the room, so it does look like we're ready for item number eight. So we can move there, and we're not moving away from Sylvia's questions at this time. There may be further discussion on those, but I just want to make sure that we were in the right place. Nicole, you had your hand up.

Nicole: You know, I guess it was along the lines of piggybacking on Sylvia, as well as heading into number eight, being that we are going to allocate funds towards marketing, you know. Are there plans to include the adult ed program into that marketing, as well as recruitment? So, you know, if we're spending money or allocating money on marketing the school, then why not, you know, amalgamate the adult ed program into the elementary program as well to just make our money worth on that as far as marketing is concerned and budget?

Lorna: And this is Lorna. I think the other thing that came to my mind as that question was asked was that, in our application for the charter school, we said that we would provide adult ESL and other adult learning opportunities for the parents at the school. So I want to make sure that we don't lose track of that as we're moving forward. If we need, this year, to get our students and our staff fully on board with our students and then say, "Okay, beginning next year, we're gonna start the year with adult classes at the beginning of the year, adult ESL classes during the day, or other types of adult ed classes at night," whichever the case may be, I think that can be a discussion. But I don't want to lose track of the fact that it should be there.

But I think what I also heard Miriam say, and I just wanna make sure that this point isn't lost, is that, at this point, the school has a small enough number of children that they feel like, for this year, because she was unable to find a safe school professional or a counselor, that she feels they're meeting that need for students. So perhaps that money could be shifted into the recruitment position for this year and then pull that money back into that position next year maybe. I added that part myself, thinking that's how I might consider doing it. But I wanna make sure that that was what everybody else heard and would be comfortable with. I see

Sylvia's hand, and I can't quite read what it says on the top of your comment, Sylvia. Or was that from Sylvia?

Sylvia: Well, I mean, that's just an FYI, but I mean, kinda going to the adult ed, in my opinion, adult ed can be a recruiting tool. So I don't...you know, to put adult ed and, you know, learning English kinds of full services that we can provide families is, in my opinion, part of outreach and part of recruiting. So you know, maybe when we have more clarity about what the survey was, I also wanna ask Miriam if she could find on her laptop the survey so that she could throw it up and we could see what questions you asked to kind of understand the responses.

Lorna: This is Lorna. She didn't bring her laptop with her to do that. So do you have any access, or was it a lone survey? Are you able to tell us what it may be?

Miriam: Basically, it was a parent survey asking them what they would like to see the school offer as family or parent engagement, what would they like to see. Some parents put things like how to better assist my child at home, how to get on...how to use the parent portal on Infinite Campus. So there was open-ended questions for them to actually write what they wanted. And the survey went out in both English and Spanish, so.

Sylvia: Yeah, it may be too open-ended for our parents because they really don't know what to ask for other than kinda, like, the same old, same old, which is Infinite Campus, like, who configured that out. I mean, my son was in Clark County, two years, and I don't think I ever figured it out. But, yeah, okay. You know, again, I don't wanna...I do think it's important to get the English language for adults piece of it going, but it's a discussion for the entire board as part of our outreach. And the chat comment that I have there is that Olivia Diaz has an event at the East Las Vegas Community Center this weekend, grand reopening of the East Las Vegas Community Center. I didn't know that there was a grand reopening, but it's kind of a big to-do sort of thing. And I'm just putting it out there because we do have community events specially sponsored by Ward 3 where we should be having a presence in terms of telling the community, "Look at this wonderful school." So again, that's kind of questions relating to ongoing marketing, because we do have a lot of beautiful slots that communities should...you know. For me, it's like the golden ticket in Willy Wonka. We have, like, 100 Willy Wonka tickets that are just kinda sitting in the warehouse.

Lorna: This is Lorna. Thank you for that recommendation, Sylvia. So maybe that's an option that we could ask for help to maybe set up a tabling event or something at that event. I also know that there's going to be coming up shortly in October, and I don't know the official date yet, but Olivia is working on another event with CCSD HR to bring community members in to speak about jobs that are available at CCSD, that their support staff level jobs might hit some of the parents that we would be working with. I don't know how much of a cross-over that would be, but maybe it's an opportunity to slip a few flyers in around even if we didn't

have somebody there, because that might be a little bit of a conflict. We do know that's coming.

Sylvia: We would be competing with CCSD. I don't know if they would do the same.

Lorna: They're not recruiting teachers or parents. They're just in a bit to find jobs for people to fill their support staff jobs.

Sylvia: Okay. It wouldn't be a CCSD in their schools event. It would be something more neutral.

Lorna: Correct. Really, it's really way...what they're doing, just for you all to know, in case you know people in this, they're actually dropping the requirements on some entry-level support staff positions from having to have a high school diploma. So that can allow people to come into entry-level support staff jobs where they used to not be able to. Then they will provide the adult ed classes that those people may need to help get their GEDs so that they can then rise through the system. That's at least the idea behind it, which I think comes back around, again, to what an opportunity we might have to provide to adult ed, to our parents. So I wonder if either asking a question like how interested would you be in receiving adult English classes while your child's in school or in the evenings, or other types of adult education classes that might lead to a GED. I think that was in our original plan. All right. This is the time of year to start that or not. Maybe we look at, what about at the semester?

Sylvia: I mean, I just wanna kinda emphasize that adult education at CCSD, in my opinion, is a total disaster, not that Priscilla Rocha was an outstanding citizen, but since she's been gone, adult education is...I mean, it's not even an echo within CCSD and yet we know that, for our community, the community that we are serving, English, learning English is a huge barrier for that family to move forward to success, getting that GED, facilitating adult education, you know. So the open-ended question was, like, you know, the way I, as a parent, would have read it was, "How can I help my child at school?" when really it is, "How can we help your family?" And that's what we put forward, and then I think that's why the City of Las Vegas is investing as much money as it is in this enterprise, is because we're moving families forward. We will be a community hub, a community center, not the same old, same old rewarm crap that CCSD does, which is not enough for our community.

Lorna: Okay. We understand... This is Lorna. We understand that, Sylvia. Let's not use this as an opportunity to speak out against CCSD but just really to maintain what we need to do in school.

Sylvia: Sorry.

Lorna: That's okay. So, yes. Okay, yes. We had a comment from Angela from City of Las Vegas.

Angela: Yeah. I'm Angela Rose, City of Las Vegas, for the record. Just on behalf of the city, just want to provide some context of kind of where we've been for the last couple of months and kind of what our next steps are. And so, I think, when we look at quarter one, July, August, September, a lot of our key focus has been on the facility, the infrastructure, a lot of just those, like, basic foundational ways to start the school. We also are waiting on background checks for a long time for the school staff. And so city provided a lot of support for lunch breaks and other kinds of things, just basic facility school opening type tasks. And so, in that same vein, we have a new management analyst staff person coming on board. They'll be reporting to me, effective starting Monday, and the point of that person is to really be that liaison to provide some relief from some of the current city staff that's working on a lot of the objectives, as well as supporting Miriam and this board.

And so, with that, looking at quarter two, we're really thinking about how to then take those next steps, so talking about the recruitment plan, talking about the marketing. We would love to, in, like, partnership with Miriam, look at what outreach events are available, what we could be doing, and then bring it to either a subcommittee of the board and/or the entire board to say, "Where can we partner together? Here's the upcoming outreach events. Who can make what?" That way, we're really kind of spreading our whole talents. I mean, if maybe you aren't gonna be at that event on Saturday, with the opening of the east community center, we could have somebody who's already there participating in that. So I think that, looking at quarter two, that would be a priority of the city, and I'm sure of Miriam, it sounds like, to make some plans in the recruitment area and then bring it back to the board with feedback, whether it be survey feedback, whether it be ways to move that work forward, whether it be what type of outreach is important, what adult ed would be valuable. That would kind of be the priority for quarter two for one of the city priorities. And we'd look to this board to help support that and/or provide feedback so that it's not just the city and Miriam sitting in a room, trying to figure out what's the best way to reach families, but then you guys could lend your expertise as well.

Lorna: Okay. This is Lorna. Thank you for that, Angela. And so I think, based on some of the discussion we've had tonight, I wonder if you all would be comfortable with this, because this is for possible action. Maybe we could present a motion that would say, "Yes, Miriam. Please go ahead and try to hire a person who is very directly working with student recruitment for the school, at least for the remainder of this school year, and use the marketing services as you need them for an increasing student enrollment for the remainder of this school year." Based on what Angela said, we know that that person would work directly with the person coming from the city and Miriam to help out with some of these recruitment efforts and piggybacking on events like the one that Sylvia talked about. So I would like to make that motion, if it's okay with you, that we allow or ask Miriam to go ahead with that hire of a recruitment specialist, knowing that they will work strongly with the City of Las Vegas and to use her marketing budget as necessary toward that goal. Is there a second to that motion?

Alain: Alain Bengochea, second.

Sylvia: Can we have some discussion, Lorna?

Lorna: Yes, but if it's about adult ed, if we could hold that for a minute, because my thought was to take this in two ways. But yes, go ahead, Sylvia.

Sylvia: Well, my thought really is that we're approving a new position and that I'd like to know exactly what this new position is, right? We're going to say, "We don't want a counselor. Let's put somebody else new." And right now, the job description that I hear is recruitment. And I'm thinking, 40 hours-a-week recruitment, that seems to be only part of the job. So before I'm ready to vote on this motion, I kinda wanna know what that full job description or hear from the board or hear from the executive director what she has in mind for that full 40 hours. Because, I mean, unless you're telling me you need 40 hours a week to do recruitment, which, again, to me, the school should sell itself, it is a Willy Wonka ticket to the middle class. And if we don't communicate that well, then, you know, what are we doing here?

Lorna: This is Lorna. Let me have Miriam speak to exactly what the position is, if it's a full or a part-time position, and what it is that she had in mind for the position. Thank you, Miriam. Please give us a little more detail.

Miriam: So Miriam Benitez, for the record. I first wanna clarify and go on record saying it's not that I don't want a counselor. It's that, at this time, we have not been able to find the right person for the job, and we've been handling things...we haven't had any issues. And we also partner with a special ed support service, and they're the ones that...we hire our nurse through them. We hire our special ed director. So if we found ourselves in need of a counselor or a safe school professional, we could reach out to them, and they could provide whoever we needed, and we would pay them for their consultation fee. And we'd be able to give whatever student would need services. But at this time, we haven't found that...we really were doing fine without a counselor or a safe school professional. We haven't had the need. But if we needed, we can always outsource that to this company that we're already contracted with. So that said...

Sylvia: May I interrupt you? May I interrupt you? What is a safe school professional? I've never heard of this term.

Lorna: A social worker.

Miriam: It's basically someone that has a degree, like, in social work, let's say, but they don't have that master's. So they're not licensed, but the state of Nevada has approved this person to have certain classes under their belt that would qualify them to be a safe school professional. So it's one or the other. You could have a counselor or a safe school professional.

So I met with...so to give you some context on this outreach coordinator, I did meet with a firm, specifically for recruitment, and what they had proposed was basically very much aligned with what Graphicka has already provided for us. So they weren't really offering anything much different, but it was starting all over budget-wise. And then I went back and met with Graphicka, and we looked at our numbers. And what we came up with really is that, when we looked at all of the advertising and their campaign, we had 155 students that had applied by the June 14th date, which June 14th is when we finally had and executed a lease agreement, and we can finally announce what our location was. And of that 155 students, only between 22% and 30%, depending on the grade level, were the students that decided to stay on board that hadn't moved on yet, hadn't committed somewhere else, or whether the school was now too far once we had the location. So they got us the numbers we needed. We had 155 applicants by that point, and since then, we've had more.

So when we met, what we came up with is that we wanted to do a lot more tabling or community events. And with our part-time outreach coordinator, not full-time, part-time, and that person would mainly work on the weekends, going to either grocery stores or these community events, like the one you're speaking of this weekend. And we would have...that person would be an expert about the school. Edgar and I talked about how kind of the target for our Spanish-speaking audience has to change, because a lot of our Spanish-speaking families, they say, "Oh, no, we don't need a bilingual school. We speak Spanish at home. We just want them to learn English." So kind of changing that narrative and letting them know, "No, they're bilingual, but we want to make them biliterate. And these are, you know, why you should consider sending your child, even though they already speak Spanish, to our school."

So we also talked about how this person should be from the community and targeting the ZIP codes 89101 and 89104, which is right in the middle where we're at, the two elementary schools that we're in the middle of, that is their ZIP code. Because we've also found that we've already had three withdrawals, and the three withdrawals that we've had had been because parents are complaining about transportation. And we thought we could do it, but it's just too far, and gas prices. And we've offered the bus pass, and one of the parents took advantage of it, but then, in the end, did withdraw because she said, "It was too much time on the bus," an hour or more in each direction. So we wanna make sure that who we target are families that live near enough to the school that then, later, it's not gonna be an issue that it's too far or if a car breaks down. So Edgar and I have met quite a few times, and we have a plan that we think we'll be able to attract, especially more of the Spanish native speakers, because we wanna make sure that we have the membership we need to maintain our program.

Alain: I'd like to offer something. So I've held information sessions for parents, spelling myths around bilingualism. So if there's ever a need to present that to parents in Spanish, I'd

be happy to do that. Yeah. Like, if you ever wanna have an information session for parents in the community or families in the community, I'd be happy to do that.

Sylvia: So it seems to me that this is pretty fundamental for our Latino parents saying, "Oh, I don't need bilingual." Well, I mean, I can tell you the interactions that I've had with our 89101 parents, is they can't write. I mean, when they write Spanish, it is...you have to use your imagination to figure out what they're writing, you know. So as you're saying, being able to write, speak, and function professionally in Spanish is different from speaking Spanish as our kids are speaking. So I'm with Alain. I mean, I think what you're pointing to is a public education problem that should also be addressed in the marketing planning, can be something like we need to put some videos up, or, you know, again, Alain, I'm looking at you. I mean, what do other communities do to let, again, our parents know they're sitting on human capital, right? You're sitting on human capital, but it can't be utilized if the text that you get requires my creativity to figure out what you're saying.

Alain: So, you know, I'm a transplant from Miami, and this is not a problem in Miami, because parents feel empowered, and bilingualism and biliteracy is the way they survived, basically. You need Spanish. Like, there's a widespread belief among families here that kids need to readily speak English and forgo their home language. So I don't know why that's a widely held perspective in our county. So I think, for that reason, I'm offering to [inaudible 00:44:37].

Lorna: This is Lorna. And I think part of what we're seeing, Alain, is this comes back from...we have a lot of parents who've moved here from California and in the, like, late '80s, early '90s, there was a proposition that went through the legislature there that actually replaced bilingual schools with English only ESL schools, and parents were told, "No, your kids just need to learn English. They don't need to learn their native language because they'll just put them behind." So it was seen as a deficit for parents. And so I think we're still overcoming that deficit model.

I'll backtrack on my motion based on what our board council explained to me, "We should probably have noticed these items slightly differently than we did to discuss a position." Although I fully would support us bringing that back as a position for that part-time position, but because we said, talking about recruitment and marketing services, I would move that we change our marketing plan as recommended by Graphicka and their work with you, Miriam, that we would make that change as soon as possible so that we're meeting our parents' needs and helping them to understand better why these services are so important for their children. And I think utilizing some of the expertise that we have on our board as well.

Sylvia: Look, this marketing plan is really, really important. I am not happy that we don't have something in writing, we don't have something that stretches short-term and then mid-term and long-term, that we're not addressing various pieces of this, you know, which now we're talking about, you know, as Alain is pointing out, this community is racialized.

This community has been told that speaking Spanish is a mark of not being American, of not belonging, of being otherized. I mean, this is like a huge can of worms. And for us to just kinda casually go like, "Well, there's a conversation that happened, and now we want your positive vote on that," I'm not on board with that. Those board of directors' responsibility is to do their due diligence and to really understand and to guide the policy where we're going with a professional presentation. And you know, I'm not gonna say anymore, but the fact that we don't have something in writing to understand we're removing, it's not just marketing. It's building the brand. How are we gonna do that?

Lorna: So this is Lorna. So I hear what you're saying, Sylvia, that you would request, before we voted on this item, that we would ask Graphicka to present a formal presentation on what that would look like, as well as with some clips or some other information that would be presented to the families that we're reaching out to. And I think...

Sylvia: I guess I would say, I see adult education, this evening thing, is part of the brand marketing, you know, and yet, I don't know at what level Graphicka is thinking. So I don't even know that Graphicka is the right, even, contractor to be working with if all you're worried about is weekend events, and you need an outreach person to go knock on doors. You know, I don't know. I'm saying that I'm not happy with what I am hearing, which is developing the brand of Strong Start Academy is a major part of what we need to do in year one. And it needs to be well thought out, professional, it needs to have phases, and it needs to have a budget, you know, etc., etc. That's what I'm saying. If we don't brand this correctly, we're not gonna be successful.

Alain: Well, I have an idea that kind of... Alain Bengochea, for the record. I have an idea that intersects with your idea of including parents and perhaps having adult education, an idea that, you know, really needs the input that you see for families is that we could, perhaps, engage in, like, a family literacy event. I did this kind of work in Ohio when I was at Ohio State where, basically, we helped transition kids that were not yet enrolled and provided, like, supports for families, Central American families that didn't have their kids enrolled, with how to support home literacy in Spanish. We provided text for them. And I led a lot of those workshops on basic, like, referencing books as they're reading to their kids in Spanish, and they would go home with books. So that's related to something that we do, and then we could, perhaps, work with them as they're already enrolled in the Strong Start preschool in those family literacy events. Ideas to kind of...

Lorna: Jaime, we haven't heard anything from you.

Jaime: I don't have anything else to add.

Lorna: Okay. So it sounds like the ask from the board is that, rather than moving ahead very quickly tonight, what we'd like to do is, perhaps, even have a few board members who have done some of this work before work directly with Miriam and Graphicka to come up with what this plan should look like. That doesn't mean any of the ideas that were brought here

tonight are wrong or not good ideas. It just means that we should see more comprehensive and professional presentation of that plan for the board. And it sounds like Alain is offering his services to assist with this. If you need mine, I'm happy to help out as well to work with you. Let's not lose track of the fact that that idea of what we could offer the parents as far as either adult education by our staff that are already at the school or maybe we work with others to bring it into this school, and it's, you know, contracting others to come in and work for us either on evenings or during the day. And when is your person coming on, Angela?

Angela: Starting Monday.

Lorna: Starting Monday. So really the person for the city who's being hired, then, should be a part of this work to bring back to our next meeting a comprehensive plan and presentation of what this could look like for the school. I hear what Sylvia is saying that we need to make sure we're branding and professional in moving this work forward. But I do know that if you need the approval tonight of anything, can we move forward with creating a plan and bringing that back for approval of the board? It sounds like maybe that's the ask that's being made of us tonight. Am I off-base? Am I wrong? No? Okay. So it sounds like we've got a group that's willing to work with Miriam and NCR to provide that help with Miriam and our new employee from the city who's coming on, as well as Graphicka. So if you wanna just let us know when we can work with you. Is anybody in the group opposed to the idea of saying, "Yes, let's provide Miriam, at least, to go ahead to begin the work of exploring what this should look like with all of the elements that we discussed tonight?"

Sylvia: Do we have anybody on the board that has a brand development background, or you know? I mean, it's beyond marketing, because marketing is this big. Brand is really what we do now in the 2020s, you know, what do you stand for, what's your reputation, etc. And it's not just having a logo, which is what Graphicka has done, a beautiful logo. So does anybody...that is not my area. I'm a lawyer, so I'm kinda like a wordsmith person. This concept, does anyone have that experience?

Lorna: This is Lorna. I don't know of anyone on the board that has that specific experience, but I do know that Graphicka was highly recommended by Chris Roman as being able to provide those services. But maybe we haven't asked him in the right way to provide that specific service for us, so.

Jaime: This is Jaime Gonzales, for the record. Perhaps, as I'm processing this, it sounds like we procure Graphicka. We had a marketing plan through Graphicka. Up to this point, it sounds like the ask right now is, looking forward, we need to update that marketing plan. And as part of that, and maybe this is the conversation we have with Graphicka, they got us to this point so far with the logo and all that. Now, let's take a step back and look at what Sylvia is saying. Let's take a look at a bigger picture of what is the brand that we want to establish and how can they help us with that, what resources do they have on staff that can help us move forward in that way, and present that back to the board.

Lorna: This is Lorna. That's exactly, I think, where I was trying to go, Jaime. So thank you for saying that better than I was and more eloquently than I was, because that's exactly where I was going, is maybe our ask has not been...our ask has gotten us to this point, and now maybe we need to go back and just kind of redirect and say, "Do you have this service?" And if they don't, then who can they recommend that does? Sylvia.

Sylvia: Oh, yeah. And we also have to do the little thing, which is to get more bodies in so that we can get those revenues. So it's both big concept and kind of the immediate going up the hill like little ants task, which is to go to these events, get people to come to this. But as a board, we need to have a system that is not just marketing and getting bodies in, but who are we? How do we communicate that to the community? How do we get our parents to lift themselves up and stop thinking that speaking Spanish is a negative?

Lorna: This is Lorna. I think we've heard you loud and clear. And...

Sylvia: Okay. Sorry. I sometimes repeat myself. I apologize.

Lorna: That's okay. I think we've heard you, and we understand exactly what you're saying. And we do also hear that, and I think that's why it was on this agenda tonight, was we know that there is an immediate need as well to get more bodies in the seats. And I think, being able to attend events like the one that's coming up shortly is a great opportunity for us. So we can work on that as well with our new person coming on board. All right. Any further discussion on that item? Alain and I will follow up with Miriam after the meeting today to start working on this and Angela to start working on this and moving forward.

All right. Honestly, I think, unless I'm wrong, Miriam may have already spoken to item number 9. This was a report of the executive director and discussion regarding the status of student enrollment. And, Miriam, did you have more information to provide us with regard to student enrollment tonight?

Miriam: No. We've had a few additional students enrolled. Nothing very significant. But we're up to...as of Monday, we'll be up to 83. I think the last time we met, we were at, like, 78. So they're trickling in.

Lorna: This is Lorna. Thank you for that, Miriam. And I know that it's going to be our goal to have it to get to at least 100 or 120 students, hopefully, by the end of the school year. We will probably have to bring this item back at our November meeting just to see where...or not probably, we will need to bring this item back at our November meeting to see where we are and to see if we need to make any further adjustments at that point in time with the state charter authority or anything else. Alain.

Alain: Yeah. This is Alain Bengochea. So as the students are trickling in, are we taking stock of the kids that speak Spanish, their level of proficiency?

Miriam: Yes. Yes. Yes. So these three that are starting Monday, one of them is Spanish speaking, the other two are not. And so, of course, they have to complete the home language survey, and then we, from there, give them the WIDA. And so, right now, we just validated that Nevada data, and I wanna say that we only have something, like, 11 official ELL students because we have a lot of students that are bilingual. And their English is strong, so they passed the WIDA test, so they're not considered ELL.

Alain: How many were bilingual?

Miriam: So how many for the home language survey? I believe it's only 11.

Alain: Okay. But how many were bilingual that were not ELL? How many bilingual students here speak Spanish?

Miriam: Oh, I'd have to go back and look because I don't have the information on my end.

Alain: Okay. Okay. Because I wonder if we could come up with a plan, like, moving forward. I mean, I know that there's a lot to come. We just want bodies, right? But I wanna know if we can devise a plan where we begin to take stock of kids who have, like, written language, you know, like, written...

Miriam: Oh, no. We don't have...the only ones that are strong Spanish writers are...so we're only up to second-grade, and we have a couple of them that are new to country, and they're literate in Spanish. So they're strong writers in Spanish. But other than that, there's no one that's biliterate, but we have quite a few that are bilingual.

Alain: Yeah. So as we move forward, I'm wondering if we could have an assessment plan for when kids get enrolled, we can determine whether they have oral language abilities to a certain point in Spanish and written abilities, I don't know, if we can come up with a plan in the future at some point. We could revisit this.

Lorna: This is Lorna. I can tell you that, typically, in the students that we've seen coming into the district, those who are at the intermediate grades, at least second grade or above, that are newcomers are typically those who are coming in that are literate in their native language. Otherwise, typically, and I'm saying typically, what we see are most kids are only able to speak maybe in both languages, but usually, the children who are illiterate are older, who had that opportunity for education in their own countries.

Alain: Yeah. Well, and it depends if they're coming from a rural area in their home country. It might not be. [crosstalk 01:00:56].

Lorna: It makes them bilingual. Or monolingual. Yes, that's exactly right. Okay. Thank you, everybody. This was a very robust discussion today, and it's an important discussion because this work is very serious. And we have to make sure that we are meeting the needs of all of our families and students as we move forward and that the view of ourselves as a school and

as a board that we want to put out into the public is that of a high-quality education for all students.

So at this time, at our last meeting, I did request that Miriam would share with us some academic data because we do have academic goals that are set that we must meet for this school this year. So I asked her if she would please share with us where children started, where they are today, and whether or not we believe we're on track to meeting our goals, our academic goals, by the end of the year. So, Miriam, would you please go ahead? And everybody should have had...in their back-up, they should have documentation of data reports that she provided to us.

Miriam: Miriam Benitez, for the record. You should have two separate sets of data. One is i-Ready, and the other set is from MAP. And so the i-Ready is a diagnostic given by the school, and the MAP is another assessment that is standards-based that is required by the state. So what we did is both of these tests are required to be administered within the first 45 days of school. So we gave the i-Ready first, and that was in August. And then we administered the MAP within a four-to-six-week window in between, because we wanted to see if we can see growth. Even though there's two different assessments, it pretty much reports in the same way.

So if you look at...we will start with the i-Ready reading, and when you look at the reading, you see that we had, overall, the school was only 25% on grade level, 65% at tier 2, which is one grade level below, and 10% at tier 3, which means it's 2 levels or more below. And then, when you look at the breakdown by grade level, kindergarten was at 30% proficient and 70% below grade level, so already below even though this was in September. And let me just add that kindergarten was the only grade level that we tested both of these tests in September, because this is all computer adaptive. They have to do it on their own. So we needed some time with them to teach them how to use the computer and how to be able to take this test. So they only had about one or two weeks in between their two tests. First grade, as you can see, 6% in the red, 83% in yellow, and 11% in green on grade level. And second grade, 39% red, 33% yellow, 28% on green.

So then, when we look at the reading in MAP, we can see the difference that, already, in second grade, that 39% what we saw on i-Ready was decreased to 28%. And then the yellow and the orange, so in i-Ready, it's a bigger yellow block, and in MAP, they divide that yellow block into yellow and orange. So we could just lump those two together that would represent the yellow in i-Ready, and we see that that is at, together, 28%, and our yellow in grade 2 was 33%. And then we increased our green, and then, in the MAP, we show the blue, which is Exceeds. So the total of the blue and green is 44% in second grade, and you could see that, on i-Ready, it was at 28% in green. So we're seeing huge growth, and I think a lot of that is attributed to, obviously, the small classrooms, because teachers are able to really work one-on-one with students and give them that individualized attention.

In first grade, we see a lot of the similar growth. That blue and green is at, let me see if I can do this quick math, 42%. Is that right? Forty-two percent in the green and blue combined. And in i-Ready, they were only at 11% proficient. And then the yellow was 83%. And in MAP, it's up 47%. And then we saw, in grade 1, 12% red. Oh, and in the i-Ready, that's 6% red. So I think the other thing that accounts for this are any new students that we would have received that weren't there in August, and we received them first grade, and that might account for the increased red. And then, in kindergarten, like I said, we didn't see very much growth because we gave, administered those tests only about one or two weeks apart.

And then, when you look at the MAP, we have similar results. Second grade, we were at 50% red in second grade, and already, we have no red in second grade, and they've moved up to the orange. And we see an increase in our proficient students from 6% to 55%. In first grade, also, we had a 6% in green, and now, we are at 41%. And again, kind of kindergarten, we didn't really look at for growth because that was only, like, a one-week period in between those assessments. So we're definitely seeing growth, and we don't see any reason with the way things are moving along that all of our kids should be caught up on grade level. The students that are significantly behind, we are offering tutoring on top of everything else. Tomorrow is our parent-teacher conferences, and those conversations will be held with parents to sign them on board to start tutoring.

Lorna: This is Lorna. When will that tutoring take place?

Miriam: Tutoring will start the following week, and it's on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, from 3:15 to 4:30.

Lorna: And provided by teachers and staff?

Miriam: Yes.

Lorna: Thank you. Any questions for Miriam with regards to these really baseline academic results?

Alain: So, yeah, I have a question. Alain Bengochea. So is this growth or current placement? That's what I'm...

Miriam: Current placement.

Alain: Current placement, okay.

Miriam: Yes. But I'm just looking at growth from one assessment to the other.

Alain: Oh, okay, got it, got it. I wasn't sure about that.

Miriam: Yes.

Lorna: And this is Lorna. So these are the fall results. So these same two tests will be given again in winter and then again in spring.

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Miriam: Yes.

Lorna: Okay.

Miriam: So in December, we will do i-Ready, and in January, we will do MAP.

Lorna: Okay. Any other questions for Miriam? Sylvia.

Sylvia: Yeah. I just want it for the record. I don't have this document, and I would like to have it sent to me. I think, next time, if we can have the document shot up on the screen so that we can all follow the briefing, that would be more helpful to me as a board member to understand what the briefing is about. Thank you.

Alain: I have a comment. So historically, Alain Bengochea, you know, as a researcher, I'm putting my researcher hat on right now, when we don't have assessments in both languages, one of the languages, one of my concerns, if we could start to think about, you know, how to assess other languages at some point.

Miriam: So these are available in Spanish, and for our native Spanish speakers, we did give them the assessment in their native language.

Alain: Okay.

Miriam: So this is just a report in English because we only have really one strong native Spanish speaker in second grade. And then our other Spanish native speakers, they have not had formal schooling in Spanish. So we have it available, but at this time, I think it was premature to give that assessment to anyone else, except our one native literate Spanish speaker.

Alain: My thinking is that we would want to follow kids longitudinally, even kids that haven't had exposure to Spanish and begin tracking those kids to see, like, what's going on [inaudible 01:11:10].

Lorna: This is Lorna. I would agree with that, Alain, because that would help us understand. Look, these kids came here, and the whole grade level was in red, because they have been speaking in Spanish at all or have any Spanish literacy skills. And now, after half a year with us, we've already started to see this growth in Spanish. And I think it would be very worthwhile to see that.

Alain: Alain Bengochea. And then another thing we're gonna notice is that sometimes you'll notice a delay in growth across languages for certain grades until they kind of get boosted back up at a later grade when they reach that threshold of becoming literate. So just to think about how we could holistically give a picture of what students are doing linguistically, yeah, that would be important. Yeah.

Lorna: Okay. Thank you. This is Lorna. Sylvia.

Sylvia: I think that Alain's point is fundamental. We need to really...I mean, it goes back to the branding. Who are we? We're not just a CCSD knockoff school. This is a completely different enterprise that we're in. So we can't be using the same old, same old assessment tools or how we think about student achievement and student growth. Of course, we have to have some of the same old, same old, which is governed by regulations, NAC, and the charter authority, but we, as a board, we can set our own student achievement guidelines that parallel what we think the vision of the school is and where we should be going. So I echo Alain's concerns that we have some measurements, I mean, first of all, that we keep track, "We have these many ELL students. We have these many nascent dual language," whatever it is that you wanna use.

Alain: Bilingual.

Sylvia: Thank you. I know there's a fancy term there. I'm not up to all the fancy terms. But we need to be tracking these kinda different categories, you know, how much of these categories are we serving, how much growth and how much literacy is being done in both languages. I think that it is a pain. I mean, what we're asking, or at least what I'm suggesting, echoing Alain's idea, is a lot more work. I don't know if the New Mexico people have tools that we can piggyback on. But we have to be able to, at the end of the year, go back to the City of Las Vegas and say, "Look, we have this really great school. We have really created this many percentage opportunities of biliteracy," or however we wanna put it. It's not just that we're dealing with ELL kids. We're doing something else, and that is creating students that can really function in both languages, you know. And so the student achievement statistics that we look at, and again, I apologize, I don't know what happened to that handout, but it has to be a little bit different from the standard stuff.

Alain: I'd like to chime in. And to that point, I think that what we'll notice is that we won't see the growth we would expect in a regular school if we're only looking at the English outcomes. So we need to, you know, put value on both languages to really capture. You know, we say...because if we see results that, "We aren't seeing growth in English that we could make the case, but guess what, we're seeing growth here." So I think that that's why it's important to have both outcomes.

Sylvia: Right. So, you know, a bilingual child takes longer to develop these literacy skills, because they're thinking in both languages. And I think we had that kinda discussion when we submitted our charter and did the growth goals. But we have to keep telling the charter people, "Look, you can expect us to do 20% growth in English." That's what this other institution is doing, and as they do that, they're squashing down the Spanish-speaking asset piece of it. That's not who we are. We're different here, and this is how we're measuring it.

Miriam: So Miriam Benitez, for the record. I just want to clarify that we do have the IRLA and the ENIL, which is reading Spanish assessment that the teachers are giving the students. But we can't give a Spanish and English MAP or a Spanish and English i-Ready because it

would invalidate, because it's the same thing. We can only give it once in one language, and we have to choose the language, right? Right. So aside from our one boy, everyone else did take it in English, but we are using the reading program that we purchased that comes in both languages. It has its assessment, and that is being assessed in both languages. And they're independent, like, reading levels. So as you can imagine, it's very at the low level for kindergarten, especially, because when we look at the makeup of their day, the 180 minutes in English is all ELA, and with a 20-minute component...or it's a 160 minutes ELA and then 20-minute math. And then, on the Spanish side, it's 80 minutes of math and then the rest of that in Spanish, the social studies, and science. And that's when the GLAD strategies are being pushed in.

Alain: How many total minutes with that?

Miriam: So it's 180 in each. And so 80 of math, so 100 minutes for science, social studies, and that's where the GLAD strategies are coming in.

Lorna: This is Lorna. Thank you for that explanation, Miriam. And so what I would like, and if you wouldn't mind, and I think I'm hearing this reflected in the reports request as well is that, at our next meeting, we would keep item number 10 on our next agenda and have you report on where students are with the Spanish data so that we can look at...both Spanish and English so we can look at where students are with their Spanish literacy, their English literacy, look at them side by side at each grade level, and really so that we're tracking, actually, three sets of data, one being the i-Ready, one being the MAP, and then the second being where our students with their language development. And I know that, when we wrote the academic plan, we specifically wrote in those measures for language development. So I think that's what the request is that I'm hearing, is that we can have that reported to us at the next meeting, if you wouldn't mind. All right.

Sylvia: Is i-Ready only in English, or is that available in both languages?

Lorna: This is Lorna. It's available in both languages, but you can only use it in one or the other language. Otherwise, it invalidates the...

Sylvia: That doesn't make any sense to me if you're doing dual language that you have a tool that you have to actually choose, but it's not a tool that does both. Does that make sense to you?

Lorna: Well, what it's doing is tracking in the child's native language, and so you're tracking that child's primary language development academically throughout. So that's why I think it's never okay to look at only one data source when you're looking at student achievement and progress. You had to look at multiple data sources, such as putting i-Ready, MAP, and then the IRLA or the other test. And you had to look at those three side-by-side to get a full picture of where the child is and how they're progressing over time. And then we're making that doubly hard because we're throwing in a second language. And so we're actually

tracking almost six pieces of data on each child because we're looking at what's their native language achievement and then what's their second language achievement. And we have to look at both of those sets of data side-by-side to really understand, "Is this kid progressing in only native language? Are they progressing in native language and then a bit slower in second language? Or are they progressing not at all in one or the other?" So I hope that...my answer is a little bit from my perspective, but, Miriam, I'm sure you may want to add on, or Alain didn't hear your question, but...

Sylvia: Yeah. I mean, I'm just wondering if, now, you're telling me that they have to do six tests to be able to get six data points.

Lorna: No, no, no. I'm not saying we have to do six tests for six data points. What I'm saying is you're looking at the primary language in i-Ready, the primary language in MAP, and then you're looking at their second language in their language acquisition piece of data. But we're looking at a child more comprehensively than you normally would in any other school because we're not looking at it through a single lens. We're looking at it through a bilingual lens and a biliterate lens. And maybe I didn't say that well, so somebody else can say it better.

Sylvia: I'm just wondering how many tests this means on a poor child.

Lorna: The i-Ready is given three times a year, fall, winter, spring. The MAP is given three times a year, fall, winter, spring. And then how often is the language acquisition test? It's more of a...

Miriam: So that's a reading assessment, and basically, you assess the child where they are in reading. And then you have a plan as to what our next steps are, and you progress monitor until, yeah, formative assessment. And then you continue when you think the child is ready after you've done all the teaching. Then you're progress monitoring, and they're ready to give them that other assessment to see if they're ready to move on to the next level. So it's a reading assessment, not necessarily language acquisition.

Jaime: What components of reading are they addressing in that assessment?

Miriam: They're looking at the phonemic awareness, phonological awareness, sight words, comprehension. Those are the ones I know off the top of my head. Because I just was observing a teacher today giving it.

Jaime: [inaudible 01:22:32] comprehension.

Miriam: Yes.

Lorna: Yes. Yeah, it's all of the five basic areas of literacy. And I think that this was an important point, this is Lorna, for the record, is the idea that it's...we're looking at MAP and i-Ready, they're more summative assessments. They're basically three times a year, more of a

summative assessment. And then the other assessments, the reading assessments, are formative. So teachers are going to be giving those throughout the year. So that comprehensive, sit down, take a big test, no, it's not like that. The only other thing that all the kids, K-2, have to take is the WIDA test, once a year.

Miriam: Okay.

Lorna: And that's required by [inaudible 01:23:16].

Sylvia: How do we assess writing? How do we assess writing in Spanish or the secondary language? Because I heard Miriam be very careful and talk about reading and reading comprehension. You didn't say writing.

Miriam: Yeah. The assessment, that reading, does not include, yeah, at that level, because it's K-1 and K-2. In second grade, there is a lot more writing and assessment there. But in kindergarten and first, a lot of that instruction is guided with support, with guidance, with teacher modeling. So what we're focusing on now is the reading and the language acquisition, language development, I should say.

Lorna: And generally, what's used... This is Lorna, again. Generally, what's used for writing, especially in a formative fashion, is you have a rubric to choose that's usually reflective of a rubric that would be used on the writing portion, say, of WIDA, and the teachers would use that rubric to look at how is the child's writing developing over time. And so you would use that rubric and use that rubric consistently over time throughout the year. And what many schools do, and I don't know that Miriam is doing this, so you could speak to this, is though they might take a sample writing at various times throughout the year and say, "Here's the baseline," just very similar to what we do with i-Ready, "But here's a baseline to where the child was. Here is where they are mid-year. Here's where they are at the end of the year." Or what I think maybe a lot of other teachers, and I know for a fact our primary teachers do this, is they'll keep a portfolio of the child's writing throughout the year.

So maybe even they'll select a piece monthly that the child has done, grade it against that rubric, and then that really more comprehensively shows the child's growth in writing throughout the year. So, and, Miriam, I heard you say that's what you're doing with writing in your primary grades. So that's an excellent way of really tracking students' writing formatively to make sure that they're making growth on a consistent basis. And if they're not, then you intercede, and you see what you can do to assist that child. And with our small class sizes, it's a lot easier for teachers to go in, in the moment, and make those changes to their instruction.

This is really a good discussion about student achievement, honestly. And that's...really, when you look at a school, this is what the main discussion should be. It should be about student achievement and what are we doing in the classroom that's meeting children's needs in a better way than what they've had done before. And I think we're already seeing that

there are some good positive things going on academically. Anyone else? Any other discussion about this?

So, Miriam, next month, if you'll bring back to us some of that formative data that you talked about that helps us see how the children are doing in their second language.

Miriam: Yeah. So observation that I can share that's been just lovely to see is, you know, we have Safekey. So we have kids in there in the afternoon, and I'll walk through, and the Safekey teachers are helping the kids with homework. And math is only taught in Spanish. So even when they're helping them and they'll say, "Okay," so they have whatever homework, math worksheet, and it doesn't matter the student, when the homework says, "Okay, count how many," or "You have to add all of the kids," you hear them always counting in Spanish. So they're learning in Spanish, math. So it's just automatic. They don't even hesitate. They can only count in Spanish. So whenever they're working on their math, you see that, and it's really cool to watch that they just automatically revert to Spanish.

Alain: So to that point, that's why it's also critical to use your language across content areas because you have to develop the language discipline, yeah, in both languages. And something to consider, as, like, the years progress, that we should maybe change the balance. So it's, like, math and English, in the alternate year. I don't know how that is supposed to help to devise that plan. And so there's, you know, unequal distribution across content areas across languages, you know.

Miriam: Yeah. We were trying to teach both in both languages, but the time didn't lend itself...

Alain: That gets complicated.

Miriam: And then, when we saw the data, especially, too, when we had so many...we're still recovering from that learning loss from COVID, we figured that, at least to start...

Alain: To build a foundation.

Miriam: Yes.

Lorna: Good points.

Sylvia: I do want to just, again, note that this is innovative, very innovative work that we're doing and that there's a lot thinking that has to be done by the executive director. And I guess I'm gonna suggest here that maybe the executive director wants to have a sounding board of board members, you know, who can, you know, give you some kind of feedback. Because I do think everything we're doing is new, new, certainly, to Nevada. It's really not new to a place like New Mexico. And that there's just a lot of work going on here and that we certainly want to get it right. But I do wanna commend the hard work that's going on and

underscore it and ask, again, whether the executive director thinks that she needs to have more support of the board in that area.

Lorna: Calling McCurdy Board Council. This discussion really sort of suggests that we may be getting to the point where we need subcommittees, which is fine, but just keep in mind, as we're doing that, those things also need to be agendized and noticed when we have those meetings. So it's something to think about, like, maybe what sorts of subcommittees you might wanna form, and you know, happy to support making sure we're compliant with all of that as well. But I think maybe we're getting to that point, if we're not there. Think about. Thank you.

Nicole: Yeah, Nicole Thompson. I love the discussion. My question was I heard a lot about safety teacher. Are they a part of the student achievement team? And again, I know that we have MTSS place that has the RTI team. Is that pretty much equivalent to the RTI team?

Miriam: No. It's Safekey, and Safekey is the after-school program that the city operates at different schools. So we have that Safekey, and the kids are there, can be there up until 6:00, and so that group helps the kids with homework.

Nicole: Okay. Thank you.

Lorna: This is Lorna Cervantes. But, Nicole, I think your question also was, is there RTI and MTSS in place at the school?

Miriam: Yes, of course. That was a big part of our plan. And so the way that we divide it up is I work with the second grade team, and our ELL coordinator works with the first grade team, and our grade three is with the kindergarten team. So we meet with them daily at PLCs, and we look at data. And we sit and we plan with them so that we make sure that we're looking at all students' needs. And so we have those constant conversations. And then I'll come together as a school once a month.

Nicole: Thank you very much. So when we have our next report on student achievement data, that would be really important to include the information that you guys gather from that team, those teams, amalgamate that information to the Safekey, and then we can really have some sound data so we can move forward with our shared decision making. So I appreciate that. Thank you very much.

Lorna: Thank you. All right. So this is Lorna. Miriam, there was a question presented to you. Do you feel that you need more support from the board in the form of maybe a subcommittee or a group of people working with you more consistently on the academic plan or the academic thoughts, or do you feel like you're fairly comfortable with where you are at this point? And/or would you like to get back to us with the answer to that after you've thought about it?

Miriam: Well, yes, of course, school has just started. And as Angela said, we just barely got our background checks, because for the first couple of months, we've been babysitting in classrooms with teachers that can't be unsupervised. So as time goes on, I will let you guys know if and what we need, but certainly, Alain, we could use your expertise starting right away. But, yes.

Lorna: Thank you for that. And, Alain, thank you for reaching out and providing whatever support. I know that, in our plan, it was written that you were a person who could support Miriam in this school, in the formation, in the implementation of our bilingual, dual-language model. So thank you for that.

Alain: And I'd also like to point out that I think that any professional development I provide would grant them CEU units as [inaudible 01:33:49].

Lorna: Oh, okay. I would agree with that. And they can use that for re-licensure.

Woman: That is [inaudible 01:33:58].

Lorna: And this is Lorna one more time. And we do have professional development written into our CSP grant. So if there are those needs and those opportunities, then I'm sure that would be a place that we could go to if that were any type of opportunity or you wanna pay your teachers to attend or anything like that. You could take a look at that because it's already written into the plan and into the budget.

Alain: [inaudible 01:34:25] charged for me.

[crosstalk 01:34:27]

Lorna: Sylvia, I saw your hand.

Sylvia: Yeah. I'm gonna share Alain's academic bias in this, in that, again, I'm gonna emphasize, we're doing something that's very innovative in Nevada. So we really should be careful about or should be conscious that we need to be documenting these innovations and what it is that we're doing here. And again, that's gonna sound like more work to Miriam, who is already overworked. But you know, make me that something for you to consider, Alain, how we do this to really, you know, study this. It's a case study. It's a...

Alain: I would love to. I could do that. I could document it in a very unbiased way, just seeking input and data from all of you, and that could be a research study, yeah.

Lorna: It could be whitepaper.

Alain: Your whitepaper. [inaudible 01:35:25]

Lorna: Very good.

Alain: And then that...I'm sorry. And that'll be a good sell for the school too, to show that you are a research site.

Lorna: That's wonderful. And that also gives us a lot of the credit too as a school and as a school model that this model could be used then as, what do they call it, the eSER, different levels of eSER, that this model could be used at a higher eSER level for use with grant money moving forward once it's been documented in research studies. So excellent ideas.

All right. Thank you, everybody. This is a great, great conversation around the true work of any school, as children, and academic. So thank you for this robust discussion. And unless anybody else has any last thoughts, I think, at this point, we can move on to item number 11. This really is just a report. We want everybody to have the information that the whistleblower protections for test administration, this is for...just basically outlines for you. It's a for-information item that outlines for you the protections that are provided to anybody under the law if they see a testing irregularity and they report it, or anything like that. So this really is an information item. If anyone has a question, we'd be happy to answer it. But I don't know that there's any further discussion on that item at this time. All right. Thank you.

Next is the discussion for possible action to adopt the 2023-'24 Strong Start Academy enrollment/lottery policy. I will just say that, every year, we have to re-adopt the lottery policy for the school. This is the time of the year that we do that so that it is ready for the eventuality that there may be the need for a lottery at any grade level in this coming school year. Miriam, would you please just outline for us if there were any changes to our lottery policy from this past year, for this year, this school year, to next school year?

Miriam: No. The only change that we included was in the original one, we had said that everything would be through mail, but we see that we live in a digital age, and everyone does email. So that's the only change, that we said all notices would be sent electronically. And obviously, the dates, but we kept everything the same, the weighted lottery, so that we could provide additional advantages towards ELL students and students that live within the target ZIP code.

Lorna: Thank you. Are there any questions by any of the board members with regard to this lottery policy or any discussion? And if there is not any, then we'd be happy to hear a motion to approve the policy as written.

Sylvia: I just wanna add that Colleen did a great job in drafting the initial policy, along with Miriam. They spent a lot of time and thought process in that. So it's a very well-done policy, and so, therefore, I would move that we adopt this policy that we're hearing forward because it's a well-done program piece policy.

Lorna: Thank you. Is there a second to that motion?

Alain: Alain Bengochea, second.

Lorna: It's been moved and seconded that we adopt the lottery open enrollment policy for the 2023-'24 school year. All those in favor.

Everyone: Aye.

Lorna: Any opposed? Okay. That motion passes. Thank you very much. We also had mentioned that item number 13, discussion regarding governance benchmarks outlined during the Nevada public charter authority governance training and action plan moving forward, we had put this on to maybe start agendaizing some of the standards that are here for future meetings. I'm going to ask everybody, is this an item we would like to take on at this time? We did put it here. Or would you like to table it for our next meeting due to the fact that we are getting a little bit late tonight? I would go either way. I just wanted to open that up to the group. Sylvia.

Sylvia: I would like to table this as this could be relatively important, and I think we're all...we've had our robust discussion in other areas. So let's just move this to another meeting.

Lorna: Okay. I hear a lot of agreement in the room. So we will table item number 13 for our next meeting and bring it back to you at this time. While we are on the meeting, on the item of the governance training, I wanted to just verify that all of our members did attend the Open Meeting Law and the governance training, is that correct? We have a new one who did not. Okay.

Alain: Yeah, I think so.

Sylvia: I'll be honest, Lorna. I just don't know.

[crosstalk 01:40:55]

Lorna: Which one are you missing? Okay. So, Sylvia, we have some dates for repeat trainings. So Miriam will make sure that those come out to you, just...

Miriam: Or even better, they're all available on the Charter School Authority's website, you can just watch the video, whatever is convenient.

Lorna: Yeah. Watch it in the playback. Okay. I just wanna make sure that we got that information now to anybody who needed it, what to ensure if anyone's in. The next item number 14 is citizen participation. Again, I don't see anybody in the room, but I would like to just take this opportunity to say that we received the delivery at the school today. It was from EdTec, actually, it's a money tree, and it says, "We're proud to call you partners, and we look forward to working together and growing with you. Our very best wishes for a successful school year. Your EdTec family." So they sent this out to us. It was addressed to me, but I really feel like it's for the school and for the board as a whole. So we thought maybe it would be most appropriate to place it in the school so that anyone from the board

who goes into the school and any school members will be there, be able to go in, and to have that opportunity.

So I just wanted to publicly thank EdTec for this. And also just thank everybody else for their work. If there's no other public comments, which I don't see any in the room at this time, then we can adjourn the meeting at this time. Thank you, everybody, and have a great evening.

Miriam: Thank you.

Lorna: You're welcome.