

Lorna James-Cervantes, President  
Dr. Alain Bengochea, Secretary  
Nicole Thompson, Officer  
Jaime Gonzales, Officer  
Dachresha Harris, Officer  
Dr. Alee Moore, Officer  
Heather Nay, Officer  
Meli Pulido, Officer



Miriam Benitez, Executive Director

### **Strong Start Academy Board Meeting Minutes**

January 12, 2023

5:00 PM

### **CLV Strong Start Academy Elementary Schools, Inc. Board Meeting – January 12, 2023**

Lorna: Thank you. At this time, I'll call to order the meeting of Strong Start Academy Elementary School board, and I will start with roll call tonight. Lorna James-Cervantes is present. Jaime Gonzales?

Jaime: Present.

Lorna: Heather Nay?

Heather: Present.

Lorna: Dr. Bengochea?

Dr. Bengochea: Present.

Lorna: Dachresha Harris?

Dachresha: Present.

Lorna: Dr. Alee Moore?

Dr. Moore: Present.

Lorna: Nicole Thompson?

Lorna: Thank you. And Melida Pulido is not able to join us tonight, but she is planning to be here for our February meeting. She'll be our new member. All right. Thank you, everybody. We do have a quorum in the meeting tonight. At this time, I'll just remind everybody that we are recording the meeting tonight in compliance with the meeting law. And at this time, we will open the floor to

public comment. During this portion of the agenda, public comment 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. And I do not see anybody in the room or online. Did we have any public comment emailed in?

Dr. Moore: No.

Lorna: Okay. Thank you. So there is none at this time. So we will go right down to item number four, and everybody should have received all of the backup for the meeting and the minutes in your email earlier. So item number four was the possible action to approve the final minutes from the December 8th board meeting, and you all received those in the last week, hopefully. Is there anyone who didn't have a chance to review those and needs a few minutes to do so? I don't see anybody saying so.

All right. So, at this time, are there any corrections or additions to the minutes? I didn't note any and I don't see anybody saying that they had corrections or additions to add. So, if we have a member who'd like to go ahead and make a motion to approve the minutes as submitted, that would be acceptable at this time.

Dr. Bengochea: Alain Bengochea will make some motion.

Lorna: To approve the minutes? Okay. Is there a second for that motion?

Jaime: Jaime Gonzales, for the record, I second it.

Lorna: Okay. Thank you. It's been moved and seconded. All those in favor.

Together: Aye.

Lorna: Any opposed? All right. So those minutes are approved to be posted at this time. Because she was not able to join us tonight, we'll table item number five. This was to be the introduction of our new board member, Melida Pulido, the Ward 3 Designee, to our February meeting. She had a personal situation that she was working through. So we will look forward to meeting her in February. And that takes us right down to item number six. This is a discussion for possible action to appoint a new treasurer to the Strong Start Academy board. Remember, this would be a position that would go from now until March, which is [inaudible 00:03:33], and we will have a reelection at that point. So, is there a member at this point who has given it thought now for the last few

months and is willing to step up? Really, most of the hard work has been done. We've already completed the 501(c)(3) paperwork, the tax-free information is done, the bank account is started. So it's really just a matter of helping out, as needed, with approvals to purchase orders and/or being available to sign checks or to go to the bank, as needed, which has not been offered. Would anybody like to put their name in? Dr. Bengochea is not able unless he steps down from his role as secretary, and I'm not able unless you want me to step down from my role as president and someone else wants to take this role.

Jaime: It's Jaime Gonzales, for the record. I'll put my name forward.

Lorna: Thank you, Jaime. Is there anybody else who's putting their name forward? No? Okay. So, then, is there a motion to approve Jaime Gonzales as our treasurer by acclamation, meaning there's nobody running against him?

Dr. Bengochea: Alain Bengochea, I'd like to make a motion to approve of Jaime becoming the treasurer.

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

Dachresha: Dachresha Harris, for the record, I second the motion.

Lorna: Okay. Thank you so much. All those in favor?

Together: Aye.

Lorna: Any opposed? I'm sorry. I was too fast. Any opposed? All right. Well, Jaime, thank you so much for stepping up and being willing to do that work. We'll make sure that your name gets added to all of the paperwork and that we move forward with that. Dachresha, I see your hand up. You were clapping, okay. Just to clarify. Just making sure. I wasn't sure. I misread those.

Dachresha: Yes, I was trying to clap.

Lorna: All right. Thank you so much. All right. So, moving right along. We're on item number seven. This is a discussion for possible action to adopt the Amended Charter Contract, which lowers Strong Start Academy's enrollment cap in years one through five. You do have two handouts for this. The first is a chart that looks like this. I don't know if that helps at all for you guys, but it's a chart that has our enrollment amended projections, and it shows that in color. And then the second is the actual amendment itself that was presented to the state charter authority, and they did approve our amendment at their last board

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meeting. And so I'd like to open the floor at this time to...possibly, Miriam could just give a brief overview of what the amendment says and an explanation of it. Well, I know that many of you had the opportunity to speak to Amanda about this ahead of time. So then, if there are any questions, we can answer those at this time too.

Miriam: Miriam Benitez, for the record. When we were asked to complete the amendment for the enrollment cap, we sought advice from the charter authority, and what they had recommended is that we're not just copying and pasting what we previously had. We had to really look at where we were at now, what our projections were, and be realistic about what we're moving forward with. So that's kind of the approach that we took when we did the amendment.

So we're looking at the enrollment amendment projection, the visual. We see that, for this year, currently, we capped at 85. So 45 students in kindergarten, 20 in the first grade, and 20 in the second grade. And just as a reminder, our kinder and our first grade, those are full dual-language classrooms that are receiving instruction 50% of their day in English, 50% in Spanish. And in that second grade is where we have that enrichment model where they're getting 50 minutes a day in Spanish because they came to us later than the recommended age to be in a 50/50 program.

So, as we move year to year, next year, we anticipate filling our kindergarten with 60 students. Then we have, if our 45 students are moving up to that first grade, we will have 15 seats open. And then, in second grade, that's where our class of 20 will move up, and it has to remain a class of 20 because, remember, at that point, we are no longer opening up the class to new students, so we have to cap it at 20. So our original 19 that we have this year that are moving up next year to second grade, we have one seat available, essentially. We're capping it at 20 so that we can responsibly continue to serve our students and offer dual language but not open it up so that we have anyone that's a second grader next year or the year after that, third grader, anyone can join the classroom because we need to keep a cap on that.

And then, in third grade, we've opened that to 40, because, again, that was the grade that had the Spanish enrichment. So our goal is we'd love to be at capacity at 60, but in being realistic and seeing what our numbers did this year, we are shooting to fill 2 classrooms. But if we get more applicants, we can always expand that to three classrooms. But we're forecasting that we can fill

two classrooms. So our numbers for next year are at 180, and that's the pattern where we continue to grow by grade level. So, by the time we get to 2027-2028, we see that we will reach our capacity at 360.

Lorna: Are there any questions from any of the board members about this information?

Dr. Bengochea: Yes, I have just one question. Alain Bengochea. So the Spanish enrichment program will continue to receive 50 minutes in Spanish.

Miriam: Yes. Yes.

Lorna: Thank you for that explanation, Miriam. This is Lorna Cervantes, for the record. And I appreciate the fact that everybody took a little bit of time ahead of time to have an individual briefing about this information so that it made sense and you had time to think it through. Are there any other questions about this particular item?

Dachresha: Dachresha Harris, for the record. The question I have is I guess I didn't think it all the way through, that at some point, we won't be able to allow new students into this program, because they won't be dual language. So, what if there's that family that moves to Las Vegas, because we know a lot of people move here annually, and they would like for their children to have this opportunity at this fabulous charter school that's for the inner city kids, and their child is already in the third grade? So they won't be able to...and maybe they have a first grader and a third grader but now is gonna be more...their third grader can't come because they don't have...they can't speak Spanish already. Is that the understanding?

Lorna: This is Lorna, and I'll say what I think is partly the answer to that and then open it up to either Alain or to Miriam. Until 2025, if they were in...next year, if they're in third grade, the following year, fourth grade, the next year, fifth grade, those students could still enter in the Spanish enrichment program because it will still give them that opportunity. If, also, we had a child who was coming in that was already in a bilingual program in another state or county or district, they could join at any of the grade levels that are already dual language because they'll have that background. The main reason that this recommendation is made is because all of the research points out to the fact that it wouldn't be responsible for us to take children into the dual-language classroom portion higher than second grade, second grade and higher, because

it doesn't give them as much opportunity to expand on those two languages and to be prepared academically in those upper grades. But I would open that up and say that's my understanding. Dr. Bengochea, if you'd like to go next, and then, Miriam, add anything.

Dr. Bengochea: And part of it is that you want to build literacy skills early on. So, if they've already missed the boat before the third grade in that language, then it makes it a little bit harder. There's a threshold that needs to be met. So, if students come in past third grade, it makes it harder to catch them up. And then there's also this idea of having kind of a balanced classroom where you have both languages kind of equally represented. So, if you have an imbalance, also, that kind of shifts things for the dynamic of the class if you begin to allow students who don't have high literacy across both languages in later grades.

Miriam: So I would just add that the idea is that we recruit in kindergarten. And as Lorna pointed out, as that Spanish enrichment phases out, the idea is that our parents that are committing for that kindergarten, these are the students that are filling these seats as we move up.

Dachresha: Dachresha Harris, for the record. Completely understand the points that were made. My point is just that...what about as those seats become empty because maybe they leave town, maybe they move and don't have the transportation to get the kid to Strong Start? So, when those seats open up at those higher grade levels, they're gonna be filled only with students that already are dual language.

Miriam: Yeah, they would have to be because it would be... So, obviously, as a school, we wanna set up all students for success, and what the research all points to is that kids would struggle. So, once you allow a student to join a dual program after second grade, they can start to fall behind. There's not really enough time to...because remember, we're only up to fifth grade. So, if a child were to join us in second, third, fourth, or fifth, then after fifth grade, where would they go? And they're spending half of their day learning in English, the other day in Spanish. So we would really be doing an injustice, and we wouldn't have them at our school enough years to really develop that second language and then, potentially, falling behind in their first language because then they're also not getting their full day of instruction.

Lorna: This is Lorna Cervantes, and I will add to your point, Dachresha, that because we are a public school, we do have to accept students who apply. And if there is a lottery system and we have students who are coming in at those upper grades, you know, who didn't get in by lottery, we can't say no to those students. But I think that it's on Miriam, at that point, to make sure that parents understand the academic model of this school before their child would enter at those upper grades and help them to understand how difficult it will be for them to participate. But could we say no to anybody? No, because we're a public school. We can't do that. So that is your point. It's just that this is the academic model that was set up and approved by the charter authority. So that's why we're trying to really work within this model as well.

Dachresha: Dachresha Harris, for the record. Is there opportunity to continue the Spanish enrichment model for those third grades and higher?

Miriam: So, Miriam Benitez, for the record. I did have that conversation with the charter authority, and in order for us to offer Spanish enrichment, that was not part of our original application, we offered Spanish enrichment this year in second grade to be phased out. So, if we did want to offer Spanish enrichment, we would have to go back and amend our original application, because then that would change our model.

Lorna: And this is Lorna. But that doesn't mean it can't happen, it's just that those are the steps we would have to take if that were the decision of the whole board that that was what we wanted to do. And I think I saw... Dachresha, did we answer your questions?

Dachresha: Yes.

Lorna: Were your questions...? And you had the opportunity to... I saw Alee's hand up too earlier, I think.

Dr. Moore: Yeah. And actually, Dachresha asked the very question. That is why I put it down, because she asked the very question I was going to ask. And I was gonna ask also a follow-up question about the enrichment. So, because we are a public school, because we can't turn students away, what is going to be that communication, what is gonna be the message to parents, as students come in who don't fit into this very specific criterion? How are we going to alter our marketing and our communications to the public when we're also saying, "If

you're in the third grade and you come to us, you may not do very well?" Like, what is gonna be that message to parents?

Miriam: So the marketing is gonna be that it's a dual-language school, and so then, presenting...if we do have a parent who is bringing their child with no second language experience in Spanish and they want to enroll their child, they would be presented with the research, "Well, this is what the research says, the recommendation. We do have a vacancy, a spot." So it really, ultimately, is up to the parent, but we have to inform them of what the recommendation is for that program model, and especially the older you get. So it would really be the reversal of our second language students when they arrive to this country and our schools, and they struggle so much with instruction, and they don't receive, for the most part, instruction in Spanish, and they tend to fall behind and lag. It would be very similar. So, on purpose, you wouldn't do that to your child, I don't think.

Lorna: This is Lorna Cervantes. What we could also consider are two different things, because we said "for possible action" here. One is that we could ratify the charter amendment with a change of numbers as it's written. But we could also look at the idea, and it wouldn't even have to happen necessarily next year or the year after, but if we wanted to continue the enrichment model for those upper grades moving forward and we felt, as a board, very strongly that that should happen, that we have one class that offers enrichment at each of the grade levels, second grade and above, we could look into that. And maybe what we do, if that's the desire of the whole board, is to say, "Look at that. Then, at what day would that necessarily have to happen?" would really probably be the question. And we have the enrichment class right now. It would be in third grade next year. It's in second now. It would be fourth and then fifth grade the following year.

But if you all are feeling like, as a board, that's something we need to do, then what we could do is look into that recommendation moving forward, starting either next year or the year after. We could come back and re-address it based on how enrollment questions are coming in for the parents or for the children who are showing an interest in the school, then we could revisit that. And if we need to go back or if there's a desire of the board to go back and change that academic plan at that time and offer the enrichment, then that's really up to the desire of the board and the school as a whole. So I just wanted to point that out.



Dachresha: Dachresha Harris, for the record. I would appreciate that.

Lorna: That we bring a background again?

Dachresha: Mm-hmm, to continue the discussion and based it off of the demographics of interest that we're receiving to make sure that we're continuing as we proceed to provide fair and equal opportunities for students.

Lorna: This is Lorna Cervantes. So, Dachresha, are you recommending that we look at it again after the open enrollment period is over to see what the interest of parents of those upper grades for next year, or are you thinking maybe within the next couple of years, then we bring a background again and take a look at it, or we look at it on an annual basis?

Dachresha: Dachresha Harris, for the record. I think we look at it on an annual basis.

Lorna: Okay, that makes sense, and I don't know why we could not do that. Are other board members also interested in looking at that as our enrollment or our open enrollment numbers are coming forward?

Dr. Bengochea: Yes.

Dr. Moore: Yes.

Colleen: Colleen McCarty, board counsel. We just also wanna consider the timing of when we would have to submit back to the charter school authority in order to make that happen, right?

Lorna: Yes. So this is Lorna. I know that we have certain windows with the charter authority when those amendments have to take place, I think. Is it monthly that you can do that, or is it only four times a year? We could look into that too. We can reach out to the charter authority to double-check that. I can say that one thing that I think would be helpful today, if it's okay with all of you, is that we could have a motion to ratify the enrollment changes we discussed in our last meeting, and it was presented to the charter authority and they improved it. And then, after our open enrollment ends this year, once we get a report from Miriam, then we could see if it's necessary for us to look at that adjustment to our academic plan for the '23-'24 school year and then just make that an annual discussion of the board. So, if that's all right with all of you. Okay.

So, at this point... Go ahead.

Dr. Moore: One more question. Dr. Moore, for the record. Did we get...I know we have spoken at one point about there was some type of assessment or something to gather information about the student's level of "bilingualness," so to speak, because we talked about how, you know, self-reporting thing, right? And so I know we had discussed, there was some type of measurement tool that you were gonna be implementing. Is that the basis and foundation for when we decide if a student is indeed bilingual?

Dr. Bengochea: Alain Bengochea. We had talked about, like, every student has to fill out a home language survey, yes. And those questions trigger whether they have to be assessed and where their placement will be in terms of services as ELLs, English language learners. So I think that we should kind of add questions to that that address the same aspects of, like, levels of literacy or exposure to Spanish. I think those would be, like, important questions to ask at intake, right?

Lorna: Yeah. This is Lorna. And the other thing that we had discussed at a previous meeting was the idea of, is there a Spanish...there's a bilingual test that you can give students to see what is their level of oral Spanish language. And so, then, what is the literacy test that we would give students to see what their literacy level is in Spanish? And I think that's what Alee is referring to is how we come upon the assessment that we're going to use in the academic plan to assess the student's level of Spanish literacy. We have one for English, so.

Miriam: Yeah. Miriam Benitez, for the record. We do have in Spanish their reading level, but actually, Dr. Bengochea and I have previously met, and we're planning professional development at the school so that we could come up with formative assessments that are more geared towards what they're learning in class to assess how much Spanish they're actually learning. And then we also did talk about different assessments that we could use to measure their level of bilingualness since what we have now only tells us if they're ELL or if they're a native English speaker. So we've had those conversations, and actually, we're meeting tomorrow. And then we have PD scheduled for January 23rd. So all of those things are currently in the works.

Dr. Bengochea: I think one of the points that I think, Alee, you're making is how to know when a kid is coming in and their level of bilingualism, right?

[crosstalk 00:27:32]

Dr. Moore: ...deciding whether or not the student is or whether or not they belong in an enrichment class or not. Like, what's the measurement tool?

Dr. Bengochea: Oh, you don't think that it would be possible to kind of follow, like, what the... I guess you do have to assess [inaudible 00:27:52].

Lorna: Yeah. This is Lorna. I understand exactly what the question is, and that is, when a new student is entering, we need to give them a test to see exactly what is that level of English and then of Spanish literacy. The other thing that most schools look at with that regard is, did the child attend school in their home country or in another state? And that's one of the main questions that you would want to ask from the start with the home language survey is, "Did they attend school?" and then also taking a look at what their records were from that previous school to see how the child was doing within that education, whether it be in another country or here in the United States. And so that's something that the school would look at from the start beyond giving those placement tests in both Spanish and English.

But I know that the reason for that question is to talk about what we do moving forward and whether or not we need to review that information to decide in the future whether or not we need to ask for an amendment based on our academic model. At this time, if it's okay with you, I'll make a motion and see if there's a second to it. And my motion would be that we, as a board, would ratify the amendment to our charter application that adjusts the enrollment for the end of the 2022-'23 school year to 85, with the projected enrollments moving forward. So, that would be my motion at this time. Is there anybody who's willing to second that motion?

Dr. Bengochea: Alain Bengochea, second.

Lorna: Okay. Thank you. So it has been moved and seconded. All those in favor?

Together: Aye.

Lorna: Any opposed? Okay. So, that motion does carry. And then I would like to just make a secondary motion, and that is that once we have completed the open enrollment period that we would request that Miriam would please bring us a report of the students who have requested enrollment, whether or not we

have to go through a lottery process so that we would know whether or not we would need to look either this year or in subsequent years and taking an amendment to the charter authority to include enrichment classes for upper grades moving forward. Is there any discussion, or is there a second to that amendment? But I think I would try to make that motion based on the discussion here tonight. Is there a second to it or a discussion?

Dachresha: Dachresha Harris, for the record. I second the motion.

Lorna: Thank you. Any further discussion? All right. At this time, all those in favor of that motion?

Together: Aye.

Lorna: Any opposed? Okay. Thank you very much. So, that helps us out with knowing where to move with the charter contract and the charter amendments. I appreciate your work on that and appreciate your work, Amanda and Miriam, on taking that amendment forward on behalf of the board to the charter authority.

Item number eight is a report by the executive director on the status of ongoing marketing efforts, open enrollment, and recruiting for the school at this time. And, Miriam, we'll open that to you at this time.

Miriam: Okay. Miriam Benitez, for the record. Our open enrollment opened on Monday, January 2nd, and it's open for 45 days. And since then, we've also had a tabling event at Mariana's. We've been trying to schedule tabling events at Walmart, as previously discussed, but we have not had much success getting in touch with their corporate office, because that's who we have to work with to do that. We did contact the organizer of the Martin Luther King Junior parade, and while they did tell us that they won't have any tables or booths, that we were more than welcome to hand out flyers at the parade. So we do have our Navigator and our outreach coordinator planning to attend to hand out flyers. We have another tabling event at Mariana's coming up this Sunday as well. And we are working with Amanda, and she's helping us to coordinate any community events that are being held in the target boards, boards 1, 3, and 5, so we can make sure that we have our outreach coordinator, as well as Graphicka's Navigator is there.

And since we opened open enrollment, we do have 23 applications, and so we're excited about that. We've only been open, I think, at this point, 11 days, and we've got 23 applications. So, so far, it looks like our marketing efforts are going well. I talked to Edgar today, and I asked him how much would it be for us to do some radio ads on 88.1 and then a Spanish channel of his choosing, whoever he has connections with. So he's working on that. And then we also have our Facebook page, which has been attracting some folks, but primarily, as the office manager has been talking to the applicants, finding out, like, where did they hear from us. The majority of what we're getting back is word-of-mouth, "I have a neighbor," or a cousin, or a friend.

So, yesterday, I happen to go to an Opportunity 180 event and meeting a lot of charter principals there. And another charter school that opened, Battle Born, they were telling me that they started 100 students below projection. So it's not unusual to start low, but again, kids are trickling in. And the other more experienced principals that were there from the existing charter schools, they're saying that it's mainly word-of-mouth, what has gotten their enrollment up. So, anyway. So far, I think we're off to a good start, 23 applicants, and we're not even 2 weeks in to our open enrollment.

Lorna: This is Lorna. How long is this open enrollment open?

Miriam: It's 45 days. We close, I believe it's February 16th.

Lorna: Thank you, Miriam. Are there questions by other board members with regard to the marketing efforts or the enrollment and recruitment that's happening right now for the school? None? Okay. Well, thank you so much for that, and continue to monitor and keep us aware of where we are with this and whether or not we'll have a lottery. I'm sure you will have...we'll bring this same item back to our next board meeting because we'll be looking forward to seeing how those seats are filling and how close we are to meeting the numbers that we have set out in our projections for next year.

Heather: Heather Nay, for the record.

Lorna: Yes, please, Heather.

Heather: I know that we've been doing flyers at the mobile pre-K. We handed them out this week also. And I know when I was doing outreach for the mobile pre-K, I do have some people in my area, the 89101 area, that have been willing

to help us get the word out. And I asked her if I could send the flyers for the elementary school as well as the mobile pre-K, and they were gonna post it on their social media as well. I think his name...I don't know his first name, but Flores, and he's the senator for...

Lorna: Edgar.

Heather: Edgar Flores, and he's gonna put it on his social media page also.

Lorna: Oh, good. You know who else I could reach out to if you want me to? If you'll send it to me electronically, Fabian Doñate is one of our state senators too in this area, I just thought of that, and he's a former student of mine. So I just realized that we could do that as well.

Heather: So they were gonna post it here tomorrow, right, Angela? I think they emailed us back today saying they were gonna post both flyers on their social media.

Lorna: Perfect.

Heather: And of course, word-of-mouth by me. I tell everyone, so.

Lorna: Perfect. That's one of the best ways to get information out. All right. Thank you so much for that report. If anyone else has any other recommendations for Miriam or any other suggestions, I'm sure she'd be happy to hear them. But thank you for all of your efforts, and, Amanda, also, for your assistance with that as well.

Amanda: This is Amanda [inaudible 00:37:49], for the record. I've also been working with the Acelero pre-K programs, and I've been handing out open enrollment flyers to them. And then Miriam is actually going to go chat with their graduating pre-K students. So she'll do a presentation there to see if we can funnel some of those Acelero pre-K kids into the charter school as well. Thank you.

Lorna: Excellent. Thank you for that, Amanda. And I know that's where we got a lot of our kinder students who are in the school this year, was from that outreach last year. All right. Thank you. So, at this time, unless anybody has any other comments, we'll move to item number nine, and this is a report from Kristin Dietz from EdTec on the budget and financial reports, including the

CSP grant. And Kristin is here in-person with us tonight. So we will turn it over to her, and you all have a monthly financial statement in your packets as well.

Kristin: Great. Thank you. Hello, board. It's Kristin Dietz, for the record, and I'm really happy to be here in person. What I have for you today is the financial report with actuals through November. If you can turn to page 4 of the presentation, this reflects the current forecast compared to the board-approved budget. And I noticed, we didn't put in the agenda that, for possible action, the idea of possibly approving an amended budget, but I do think that's something that should happen soon. What's happening right now is that the approved budget is from almost a year ago when it's really far off from where you are with the changes in enrollment and everything.

So you can see on slide 4, we've got [inaudible 00:39:34] the variance between the approved budget and our forecast, and it is pretty standard to adopt an amended budget. And why that's important is because, at the end of the year, in the audit report, there is a comparison of the actuals to your approved budget, your latest approved budget, and it's good just for optics to have the approved budget as close to actuals as possible. So it just gives us a better baseline to compare against. So I would recommend that if we could maybe put that in next month for as a possible action item, and then that would be the December forecast that would be considered for adoption.

You can see here though that we've got a deficit of about 119,000 compared to the approved budget that was a change of about 1.2 million, the biggest reason being that the enrollment was reduced by 95 students, in addition to some pretty big changes in the timing of CSP grant funding and when the expenses hit. So those were the biggest adjustments. I do want to point out that at the bottom of the middle column there, you see the ending fund balance is still reflecting 21.5% reserve, which is very strong. We are going into this current year one with a carryover reserve of about 792,000, which was grant funding received prior to June 30th. So your overall financial position is quite strong even though you're reflecting a deficit in this year.

If we can turn to page 5, this just shows the change from last month to this month, and we had about a \$20,000-ish change in the forecast. The main reason was that the Federal Titles I through IV and IDEA funding were adjusted based on actual student counts in the fall. So the SPCSA made those adjustments, and we submitted amended applications. And that did reduce the revenues, and then

we also had some reduction to expenses but not an entire reduction, because there are some expenses that are expected to happen irregardless of the federal funding at this point. And then just a slight change in compensation for some extra time that had not previously been accounted for in the forecast.

Turning to the next page, slide 6, this shows us the year-to-date actual revenues and expenses compared to the forecast. And as of November 30th, we've received 40% of our forecasted revenues, and we had incurred 34% of our expenses. So spending is a little bit slower than we had originally projected, and revenues are pretty much right on target.

Next slide is seven. This is our balance sheet. It shows all of the assets and liabilities of the school as of November 30th. We've had 934,000 in cash, total assets of 967,245. We had a little bit of CSP funding that was awaiting receipt, that's the Current Assets amount that you see there, and a little bit of accounts payable at that time. I think that's it for that slide.

The next slide is our cash flow. As mentioned, we had a balance of 934,000, and our cash balances are remaining steady. And we expect to end the year with over 40 days cash on hand, which is really good.

Slide 9 is our grant summary. I added a couple of columns here to reflect the original federal grant awards and the adjustments and then the amended awards. So you can see the federal grants went down by \$80,700. And we are starting to spend on those funds. So we have a little bit of spending. We have not yet been able to submit reimbursement requests. I was actually just in a meeting prior to this one today with some representatives from SPCSA, and they said that there's some delay in getting approval from the state on these grants. So they're kind of in a holding pattern, and they hope to see approvals in the next couple of months.

One thing that did happen though was the ESSER funding is now available for reimbursement. So, as of November, we hadn't spent much, but as of December, I think we've got a little bit spent, and we will be submitting by the 15th of January on that one. And the CSP grant, we have spent \$235,000 on that grant. We still have almost 70% remaining. We did have a couple of reimbursement requests that were pending receipt as of the date of this report. Opportunity 180 is the administrator on the CSP grant, and it has been a little bit slow. I know they've had some people out, some stuff out. So it's starting to



pick up. I'm seeing some reimbursements starting to come in. So, hopefully, we'll get that caught up this month.

And then, the next slide, 10, just has a little more detail on the CSP grant. The right-hand column reflects the remaining amounts that are available under this grant by budget category. I did want to point out that, at the bottom line there, marketing and recruiting, we have a slide that is related to that. And as of November, we had spent 40,000 of the budget 65,000. So we've got 25,000 available in that line item, and that is available to be amended, if needed, by shifting funds between other budget categories.

The next slide here relates to...I think it's the next agenda item, actually. Just wanted to call out that, as mentioned, there's 25,000 of CSP budget available. There are two different options in the branding campaign that you can see on slide 11 here. And there...yeah, I think that will be discussed later. And then, beyond that, we do have the budget versus actual report in a little more detail by line item, and at the very back is a check register of the checks and payments that happened in the month of November.

Does anyone have any questions on the presentation?

Lorna: Questions from any board members? I don't have any at this time. Thank you, Kristin. All right. Thank you very much. And that leads us into our next question, which is, all of you, we received a presentation from Graphicka I think two months ago regarding a possible branding campaign. We wanted additional time to really consider the proposals, to think it through, decide whether or not this was a place we wanted to go and whether or not we would receive the return on investment that we might hope to get from it, that return on investment especially coming through additional enrollment and students coming into the school. Also, we wanted to get the advice of Kristin on whether or not we have money in our budget to help pay for this or if there would be a negative effect on our budget if we decided to move forward with one of these two options that was presented, or if we wanna table this branding campaign until a further day if we saw the need for it. So, at this time, I will open the floor for discussion regarding the branding proposal and see where you all would like to go with it. And, Miriam, if you could have any recommendations for us regarding this item, we'd like to hear those from you as well.

Miriam: Miriam Benitez, for the record. At this point, I'm of the opinion that perhaps we should consider investing some money in marketing so that we can increase our enrollment and then see where we're at there. I don't know what the branding campaign...I know that that's putting our name out there. But from the conversations that I've had with other schools, really your branding comes with time and with your reputation and word-of-mouth. So I just don't know that it's something that's necessary now. I think what's necessary now is focusing on filling our seats. So, that's just my humble opinion.

Lorna: And recommendation. Okay. So this is Lorna. So I would like to open the floor, at this time, for any further discussion from the board or if there's a board member who, you know, would like to propose the action that we take on this item. I'd love to hear from anyone.

Jaime: This is Jaime Gonzales, for the record. And maybe this is a question for you, Lorna, or Miriam. In terms of when this additional budget would be most useful, isn't it, like, right now, as we're entering this sort of recruiting period or open enrollment period, so by the time... As Miriam mentioned earlier, we're already, what, 11, 12 days in. So 25% of the open enrollment period is already gone. So my thinking is that, if that's the case, if that's when this money, this additional budget, would be most useful, then it's already at a disadvantage in terms of having as much time to put it to use. So just sort of playing off of what Miriam mentioned, if this is something that is or will be anticipated being important, we ought to be looking at how we use these funds in the upcoming year, in the November, December, I guess, January, February timeframe as part of that open enrollment. I guess this is sort of [inaudible 00:50:25], is the branding and marketing budget most...will it have its most impact as it leads into the open enrollment period?

Lorna: Look, because you asked me directly, Jaime, this is Lorna Cervantes, I'll say that I think that what's really of most importance right now is to make sure that our marketing is very strong. We've got \$25,000 left in our marketing budget right now that can be spent directly for advertising on radio or TV or other tabling events. So I think, definitely, continuing to spend down that marketing is very important. The need to spend an additional, you know, \$40,000 to \$60,000 for branding, I'm not sure what that impact will be on top of what we're already spending on the marketing right now.

So I really do, though, agree that this is the time of the year, this is the most important for us to be really strongly advertising the school, getting it out, and that's really, I think, more marketing than it is the branding, as described by Edgar when he gave us this presentation. So I do agree with you. It's timely. If we need to ramp up or, I guess, release additional funding for Miriam to put toward marketing, if she needs. But if she can do that within the budget itself, she can make adjustments to the budget and just add more to marketing without us even approving it, I think. So I think that I'm with you. I think the marketing right now is where our focus should be.

Dachresha: Dachresha Harris, for the record. I had to pull out my old notes, I apologize, because I remember some pretty, you know, detailed discussion when Edgar presented this. And I remember having some concerns with this investment, at this time, because, to your point, I think the money should be more for making sure that we're reaching our enrollment numbers as opposed to some of the branding options that they were recommending. However, I understand that the branding is important, but some of the...I just don't think it's in our best decision right now to spend the money. Maybe we can look at it, you know, in the coming...after we see the results of the current marketing efforts and recruiting efforts that he's doing right now.

Lorna: Thank you. This is Lorna. Thank you for that, Dachresha. And I saw Jaime kind of giving a thumbs up that he was in agreement with what you were saying. Let's hear from other members, other thoughts.

Heather: Heather Nay, for the record. I think that we're doing great, and it would be not a waste of money, because, I mean, anywhere, we can get advertising. But I think that, with what we have going right now, the open enrollment, I know, this weekend, you guys have a thing going on to get more people. I think that we're doing okay. And we should use that money more wisely than that.

Lorna: Thank you.

Alain: I want to hear on more conservative, be more conservative with the funds, if possible, yeah. Reaching out to people rather than branding [inaudible 00:54:16].

Lorna: Thank you. Nicole or Alee, any input?

Nicole: Nicole Thompson, for the record. I think everybody is speaking along the same lines. Just based on the research that we've done from other charter schools, we're hearing that, you know, word-of-mouth is the most effective. I agree with Ms. Dachresha Harris that we should try to wait and see, you know, what the branding has done already and use that money, as they say, more conservatively. So I'm in agreement also.

Lorna: Thank you. This is Lorna. Alee, if you spoke up during the last second or two, we may have missed it because the computer on this end I think froze for just a minute. So, did you also have any...?

Dr. Moore: I didn't say anything. But, yes, I agree with the other colleagues on the board about focusing more on recruitment to impact our enrollment numbers. So, definitely, keeping that with the Navigators and packing things out [inaudible 00:55:30] continuing to push forward with Walmart corporate. I don't think that's an effort that we should let slide. Additionally, with the radio stations, I know you said that you asked Miriam about that. So let's follow up and see what's going on with the radio ad. I don't know if that's going to be a part of the remaining budget that Kristin mentioned. But if that's where we have to put those funds, I think that's a fair and conservative effort. And then, also, continuing with the efforts to move forward with the work they're involved and the ZIP codes in those community events that are coming up in the next few months, I would definitely like to see the Navigators at those events.

Lorna: Thanks. So this is Lorna. It sounds to me like what we are asking for, then, is a motion to, I don't know if decline is the right word but to, at this time, decline moving forward with a branding, either of the branding proposals but to concentrate our effort on marketing and for increasing our enrollment within the current budget but allocating additional monies to the marketing in a conservative fashion if need be. So, that's my synopsis of what the discussion was here tonight. If anyone would like to make a motion, that would be acceptable at this time.

Dachresha: Dachresha Harris, for the record. I motion that we table the discussion of branding and focus more on our recruitment strategies to reach our enrollment numbers.

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

Dr. Moore: Dr. Moore. I second that motion.

Lorna: All right. Thank you very much. It's been moved and seconded that we, at this time, table any branding proposals and focus on marketing to meet our enrollment projections. All those in favor?

Together: Aye.

Lorna: Any opposed? Okay. That motion passes. Thank you. All right. Item number 11, this is a report by the executive director regarding iReady student achievement growth data. And in your backup documentation, you should have seen four different reports from iReady, two for reading and two for math, one for the beginning of the year and then the current level. So, at this time, we will open the floor to Miriam to share this data with us. And can we start with math and then moved to reading?

Miriam: Yes. Miriam Benitez, for the record. So, when we look at our diagnostic results, remember that we presented these initial results a few months ago. So our students took these assessments in August and some of them, kindergarten, in September, and we see that, at the beginning...and this measurement, by the way, is based on standards, so what they're expected to know in kindergarten, first, and second.

So, at the beginning of the year, we had a total of 12% of our kindergarteners already on grade level, and that is broken up to 7% was above grade level, 5% on grade level, 88% is on yellow, which means, if you look up, they're one grade level below, so not quite on kindergarten level. And when you look at now, the middle of the year, we've moved. We're up to 48% on grade level. And if we look closer at that 48%, 31% is performing above grade level, 17% on grade level, and we've been able to reduce that yellow, which is, again, one grade level below, meaning they're not quite on the kindergarten level yet, that's been reduced to almost half, 52%.

When we look at first grade, we started with 6% above grade level and 78% not quite at the first-grade level, so already one year below, and 17% at two grade levels below. Then, at the middle of the year, the growth we saw is we moved from 6% to 34% on or above grade level, 67% not quite at grade level yet, so one grade level below, and we no longer have any students in red. So none of our students are two grade levels below.

Then, in second grade, we moved 6%...so we were 6% proficient on grade level, and that moved to 32%. And in the yellow category, we were able to

decrease that, or actually, it did increase because...I'll skip ahead to the red. We originally had 44% of our students two grade levels below, and we were able to decrease that to 5% and moved those students up to the yellow category that are just one grade level below, and then that increased to 63%. And the two in the middle of the year, the red, that 5%, that is two brand new students that we received that are newcomers to this country, and one we received January 3rd and the other one in November. And that's why we still see that red. Because I was curious after I saw that. I said, "Who's that still on red?" And that's how I happened to know that.

And then, when we move to reading, we see that, at the beginning of the year, we had 31% of our kindergarteners on or above grade level, 69% in the yellow, so not quite at the kindergarten level. And when we look at now, that increased to 64% on or above grade level, and we decreased that yellow to 36%. In first grade, we moved from 12% that were on or above grade level to 37%. We completely removed any kids that were two grade levels or more below. That's at 0. And then we were still able to decrease that middle, that yellow section, on grade level below to 63%. And then, in second grade, we moved from 26% proficient to 50% proficient, combining the above grade level and on grade level group. And then, again, we were able to reduce the red from 42% to 10%. And again, those are our two students that are new arrivals. And then the yellow, we were able...we did increase in second grade, that yellow, because some of those red students moved up to yellow.

So we are very pleased with the growth we've seen so far. This is the iReady, an assessment diagnostic that the school chooses to give. And then, starting next week, we start without MAP testing in it. So we should have another report of data with our MAP results next month.

Lorna: This is Lorna. Thank you for that, Miriam. So this is really showing tremendous growth within half of the year, and so I'm glad to see that. Do you anticipate that given the amount of growth that we've seen in this half-year that we will be meeting our end-of-year goals academically and that we'll be on track for meeting then our future goals by the time we come around to CRT testing next year and the subsequent years moving forward?

Miriam: Yes. Miriam Benitez, for the record. So our RTI process, obviously, everyone is assessed, their progress monitored. The students that were in red, these are all of our tutoring students, that we're giving them extra, because

everyone's working really hard to make sure we are closing those gaps. And so I anticipate this growth continuing. And I also want to point out that, remember, in kindergarten and first grade, we've made all that MAP progress, and MAP is primarily taught in Spanish. So, even though it's taught in Spanish, mainly, the bulk of it, we're still making huge progress. So I don't anticipate anything changing. And then, next year, when we get up to that third grade, it'll continue. The only thing that we have to keep in mind is, as our students move up, we expect this. But as we receive new students, like the two new ones that we received, the newcomers, we obviously need time till those students caught up.

Lorna: Yeah. Thank you. So this is Lorna. And I just think it's also important for all of us to be aware as a board that one of the biggest keys, as we were writing the academic plan for the school, one of the biggest keys we were looking at is that, as we're getting these kids in at the primary grades, kinder, first, and second grade, that we have as few, if any, students leaving those grades below grade level as possible, because we know that third grade should be the target grade for kids to be on grade level with literacy skills in order for them to be as successful as possible moving forward. Not to say kids can't catch up, because they always can, but we just know that that's an important benchmark that we'd like to be seeing academically for all of our students. We want to continue to monitor that. Are there any other comments or questions from any of the board members?

Dr. Bengochea: Alain Bengochea. I just wanna say that this looks great, but then, again, it's only half the picture, right? So, great to see that. What we're not seeing is the progress that they're making in Spanish and progress that's being made in other schools. We don't get that kind of information.

Lorna: Thank you. And speaking for myself, Lorna, I would like to say that since we are able to start monitoring that growth in Spanish too, we would love to have that reported alongside our English growth, because I think that's going to give us a clearer picture of just how well this program of instruction is working for all students. Any other questions or comments? Well, thank you so much for bringing this to us today, Miriam. We'll look forward in February to seeing the MAP results from you and to look to see our MAP results mirroring these iReady results that we saw. That's really going to be the key for all of us, and hence, for Miriam and for the teachers, but for all of us to track it, are all of the sets of data moving and showing progress in the same fashion so that we

know that it's not just one piece of data but all the data is showing the same kind of progress. So we'll be looking forward to that in February. All right.

With that, we can move then to item number 12 on our agenda. This is Citizen Participation. It's time for public comment on this portion of the agenda, which is limited to matters within our jurisdiction as a board. No subject can be acted upon by the board unless that subject is on the agenda and is scheduled for action. So, if you wish to be heard, please come forward. And I see that Angela Rose is here, on behalf of the city. So we'll open the floor to her.

Angela: Thank you. Angela Rose, for the record. I will be brief. On behalf of the City of Las Vegas, most of our leadership, Dr. Malich, [inaudible 01:08:49] office could not attend today due to [inaudible 01:08:52]. But in viewing all of these supporting Word documents and the iReady data, very excited to report that this is what we were hoping to see when opening the school. Lots of conversations went into the academic plan, like Lorna was mentioning, and it's been a lot of contention waiting to see the proof in the pudding, right? And I think we got a lot of questions, what's going to be different about this school, how do we know that we'll be able to serve students better than anybody else out there. And while this doesn't tell the whole story, it's very encouraging, and it's been a really good week for our leadership to see what we know we've been doing this whole time. So, on behalf of the city, I just would like to say thank you to Miriam and her team and this board for the support of the work that she's doing, because it does not go unnoticed, and we're thankful to be partners with you.

Miriam: Thank you.

Lorna: Thank you for that. Any other public comment at this time? All right. Well, we thank you so much for that, and thank you, everybody, for being here today. With that, we will adjourn the meeting at this time. And thank you all. We will see you again in February. I know. I had to think for a minute, what...