

THE SOULSVILLE CHARTER SCHOOL

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

Date: September 3, 2025

Location: The Soulsville Charter School Campus, Memphis, TN

Attendees:

Board Members: *Jeff Barnes , Liz Glotzbach , Steve Guinn , Tom Marino , Deanie Parker , Chris Soper , Deborah Waters Turner.*

Staff Members: *Nadia Barnard , Elizabeth Montgomery Brown , Emmanuel McKinney , Samson Mobashar , Maya Robinson , Pat Mitchell Worley.*

I. CALL TO ORDER & WELCOME

The meeting was called to order by the Board Chair. Attendees were welcomed back for the start of the new school year.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES AND AGENDA

- **Minutes:** The Chair requested a motion to approve the minutes from the previous meeting.
 - *Motion:* Steve Guinn
 - *Second:* Jeff Barnes
 - *Vote:* Unanimously Approved.
- **Agenda:** The Chair requested a motion to approve the agenda for the current meeting.
 - *Motion:* Jeff Barnes
 - *Second:* [Inaudible]
 - *Vote:* Unanimously Approved.

III. SCHOOL DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

School leadership reported an exceptionally strong start to the school year, describing it as the "best start since before COVID." Key highlights included:

- High energy and excitement among staff and students.
- Increased direction and collaboration among leadership regarding academic goals.
- Participation in the Principal's Learning Center (PLC), facilitating community building with other principals across the city.

IV. FINANCE REPORT

Presented by Elizabeth Montgomery Brown

A. Audit Update

- **Change of Auditors:** Watkins Uiberall was unable to perform the audit due to capacity issues. After interviewing three firms and conducting campus visits, **The Marston Group** was selected as the new auditor for both the Charter School and the Foundation.
- **Timeline:** Fieldwork is scheduled for September.
- **Cost:** The new engagement came in under budget.

B. IT & Infrastructure Updates

- **Network Transition:** The school transitioned from VC3 (managed service) to **NextTech** (Network as a Service). This model allows the school to rent the network, avoiding a projected \$100,000 capital outlay for equipment replacement and reducing monthly costs by approximately one-third.
- **Security:** Enhanced firewalls and security measures were implemented, including blocking social media (e.g., TikTok) on campus to preserve bandwidth for educational use.
- **Telephony:** A new cloud-based VoIP phone system was installed.

C. July Financials (Preliminary)

- **Overview:** July represents one month of the fiscal year. No TISA payments were received (payments occur in 10 installments).
- **Revenue:** ~\$7,000 received in registration fees/donations.
- **Expenses:** Payroll expenses were ~\$29,000 under budget, likely due to timing of new hires.
- **Net Position:** Net operating loss of \$755,000 reported (budgeted loss was \$789,000), which is typical for July due to the lack of state revenue distribution in that month.
- **Cash Position:** ~\$4.5M cash on bank; approximately 168 days of cash on hand. Mortgage balance is at \$9.1M.

D. Enrollment & TISA

- **Enrollment:** Budgeted for 672; actual enrollment as of August 30 was 667.
- **Budget Impact:** Anticipating a slight TISA shortfall of ~\$36,000 (less than 1% of the \$8M budget).
- **Retention:** Enrollment efforts were aggressive, with a "24-hour" rule for waitlist acceptance. The 11th-grade cohort is particularly strong.
- **Capacity:** The building is currently over original capacity (built for 420, currently serving ~670 with portables). Science labs are capped at 24 students.

V. ACADEMIC REPORT

Presented by Maya Robinson

A. 2024-2025 Achievement Data (TNReady)

- **ELA (6-12):** 18.2% (Did not meet AMO goal of 22.8%, but showed ~6% growth).
- **Math (6-12):** 14.9% (**Met AMO goal** of 14.3%). This is a significant achievement given staffing challenges in the previous year.
- **Science (6-12):** 19.2% (Did not meet AMO, but showed +0.9% growth).

- **Social Studies:** 29.9% (**Met AMO goal** of 25.3% for the second consecutive year). US History has been added back to the curriculum.

B. TVAAS & CSI Designation

- **Growth:** The school achieved a **Level 5 Composite score** for the third consecutive year.
- **CSI Status:** The school remains on the federal CSI (Comprehensive Support and Improvement) list. To exit, the school must meet specific achievement criteria in ELA and Math. Leadership is awaiting state "Success Rate" data to determine if the school falls in the top 15th percentile of growth to potentially exit the list.

C. Instructional Strategy

- **Coaching:** The school is fully staffed with four content-expert instructional coaches.
- **Consulting:** Partnering with **Jenna Bartkiewicz** (formerly of Instruction Partners), funded by the SIG2 grant, to train coaches and leadership.
- **Focus:** School Directors have taken primary ownership of academic leadership, with increased classroom observation frequency (2-3 times per week for new teachers).

VI. CULTURE AND CLIMATE

A. Chronic Absenteeism

- **Data:** The rate increased to 42.4% last year (students missing 10%+ of school days).
- **Intervention:** Mandatory meetings were held during registration for families of chronically absent students to explain the difference between truancy and chronic absenteeism.
- **Goal:** Targeting a 10% reduction in the chronic absenteeism rate this year.

B. Discipline

- **Suspensions:** The suspension rate decreased by 3% last year (to 31%).
- **Strategy:** Adjusted approach to vaping incidents—starting with shorter suspensions (2-3 days) combined with intervention meetings rather than immediate long-term suspensions.

C. "Commitment to Excellence"

- Implementation of contracts for students at risk regarding behavior, attendance, or academics. These serve as probationary agreements reviewed at the end of the semester.

D. Literacy Initiative

- September is "Literacy Month." Initiatives include weekly book raffles, "Stop, Drop, and Read" with buddies, and an alumni book club.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

- **Board Training:** Members were reminded that board training is due by June 30, 2026.
- With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.