



ELITE ACADEMY SCHOOL BOARD MEETING MINUTES

July 24, 2025

Meeting Time: 6:00 pm

Meeting Location: 1701 Ryan St. – Lake Charles, LA 70601

**I. CALL TO ORDER:**

Cassandra Johnson made the motion to begin The Elite Academy School Board Meeting, and the motion was seconded by Cierra Lemon. The meeting was called to order by Board Chair, Darthester Hall at 6:05 pm. Prayer was rendered by Darthester Hall.

**II. ROLL CALL:**

**Attendees:** Darthester Hall, Ethel Fields, Judge Cynthia Guillory (via phone), Cassandra Johnson, Cierra Johnson Lemon, Mundreun Blackstone, and Stephanie Segura (via Zoom)

**Presenting Guests:** Dr. Cathy S. Banks, CEO/Executive Director and Teri Thomas, EA Finance Director (Acting Secretary)

**Guests/General Public:** Veronica Newsome and Ms. Andrea

**III. DISTRIBUTION & APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM LAST MEETING:**

The minutes of the board meeting held on June 26, 2025 were distributed via email for board review (prior to the board meeting) by Teri Thomas, Acting Secretary.

Cassandra Johnson made the motion to approve the minutes as reviewed. Ethel Fields seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously for the minutes to be approved with the stated correction.

**IV. OLD BUSINESS:**

- A. Darthester Hall thanked the Board members for their participation and dedication with our recruiting efforts.
- B. The Academic, Operational, and Finance discussion items are ongoing and were set to be reviewed for the New Business section of this meeting's agenda.

## V. NEW BUSINESS:

### A. Academic Reporting

1. Student Recruitment Report – as of 07/24/2025:
  - Kindergarteners – 101 in count
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Grade – 50 in count
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade – 33 in count
  - **Grand Total Students Recruited as of 06/26/2025 = 184 (Proposed Enrollment Goal = 270 for Year 1).**
2. Future Recruitment Plans

We are continuously accepting student applications. We estimate that we can reach our goal within the next few months. Our recruitment efforts will include the following projects:

  - Follow-up Calls to Parents who initially signed-up. (Ms. Fields and Ms. Segura) Ethel Fields mentioned that parents are appreciative about receiving consistent updates regarding the progress of the school.
  - 1st Informational Flyers emailed to parents who signed up. Flyers will go out monthly on Elite's progress.
  - Next Step: Recruit for students at Summer Camps & Daycare facilities. (Mrs. Johnson and Ms. Hall started recruitment on July 24<sup>th</sup>.)
  - Mrs. Johnson inquired about being able to recruit in the mall. Dr. Cathy replied that we can set up a recruiting event at the Mall.
  - Resume canvass of Neighborhoods (Next Week)
3. Re-visit the Elite School Calendar (January 2026)

### B. Operational/Organizational Report

1. Our school website is active. There are ongoing projects to continue to update the website with Policies & Procedures, the full set of job descriptions, and other required information (as per LDOE school website guidelines).
2. Marketing Plans:
  - Cierra Johnson Lemon is now the point person (to work with our website administrator) for Elite Academy's Social Media Marketing and Website Content Creation/Updates.
  - Cierra Lemon mentioned that we are seeing traction on social media, getting new followers every day. As of 07/24/2025, we have 31 Facebook followers.
3. Facility Update: Dr. Cathy Banks provided the facility update as follows:
  - We have secured a facility in the prime location of downtown Lake Charles, easily accessible to all parts of the city. Our school is moving forward in a beautiful building with a great opportunity to offer our specialized academic programs.
  - The Fire Marshall has granted a conditional approval, with the requirement to update the sprinkler system.
4. Board Member Tasks:
  - Background Checks for New Board Members: All but 1 has been completed.
  - Next Board Member Training is August 5th – 4 to 6 pm on Zoom.

- Board Member Change Forms for New members have been submitted and completed.
- Board members have the opportunity to participate in LDOE's Monthly Zoom calls to learn more about state requirements for various charter school processes and activities.
- The state also provides an opportunity to listen to training for eSER (Special Education Reporting System).
- Everything that the state had required us to submit for the Updated Pre-Opening Manual has been turned in before the stated deadlines thus far.

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## **VI. EXECUTIVE SESSION – Began at 6:36pm:**

### **A. Financial Report – Grants & Funding Activities in Progress**

1. BESE Start-Up Loan – The BESE Start-Up Loan funds will be disbursed to Elite Academy in June 2026.
2. CSP Grant - The Charter School Program Grant application becomes available in June 2025. Dr. Cathy Banks informed the Board that Elite Academy fits the CSP eligibility criteria due to the fact that our school is located in Calcasieu Parish, where there are "limited school choice options".
  - The Letter of Intent has already been submitted.
  - The CSP Eligibility Form is due August 22, 2025.
  - The deadline for the completed CSP Subgrant application is September 9, 2025.
3. Charter School Growth Fund - The Charter School Growth Fund awards general operating grants, between \$250,000 and \$750,000 for new school operators. The next application cycle for this grant begins in October 2025. Applications are due in December, and the awardees are selected in June 2026.
4. Opening the General Operating Bank Account – This task was completed by setting up a new checking account (our General Operating Account) with JD Bank for Thrive Community Enrichment & Development Corporation dba Elite Academy. The completed LDOE EFT Form has been submitted to the Office of School Choice for their record of our banking information.

### **B. Corporate Expansion Plans**

Dr. Cathy Banks informed the board that there are opportunities for Thrive Community Enrichment & Development Corporation to expand our charter school system in the state of Texas. Board Chair Dartheater Hall has contacted the Texas Education Agency and is compiling information regarding their charter application process. Various educators, education advocates, and community volunteers in Southeast Texas have stated an interest in assisting with the process to move the vision forward. We are excited about this opportunity for growth.

### C. Executive Session Procedures

1. Open discussion was held regarding the possibility of a separate meeting for a closed Executive Session. Board Chair Dartheater Hall & Dr. Cathy Banks mentioned that Executive Sessions must take place while the public is in attendance. At the end of the Executive Session, the Board must return to the public gathering to issue their votes in public (for any items that were presented which required a board vote).
  2. Ethel Fields made a motion to close the Executive Session. Cierra Lemon seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously, and the Executive Session ended at 6:49 pm.
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### VII. REMARKS:

Dr. Cathy Banks made closing remarks to express her appreciation for the diligence and commitment of the Board Members.

### VIII. NEXT MEETING DATE: Ethel Fields provided clarity to the board by verifying the vote (done on 05/22/2025) to schedule the monthly board meetings on the fourth Thursday of each month. **Therefore, the next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, August 28, 2025.**

### IX. ADJOURNMENT: Stephanie Segura made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Cierra Lemon seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 6:57 pm.

Minutes Submitted By: Teri M. Thomas  
Teri M. Thomas, Acting Secretary