



ELITE ACADEMY SCHOOL BOARD MEETING MINUTES

June 26, 2025

Meeting Time: 6:00 pm

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

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Judge Cynthia Guillory made the motion to begin The Elite Academy School Board Meeting, and the motion was seconded by Ethel Fields. The meeting was called to order by Dr. Cathy Banks, CEO at 6:08 pm. Prayer was rendered by Judge Cynthia Guillory.

II. ROLL CALL:

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

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

III. DISTRIBUTION & APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM LAST MEETING: The minutes from the board meeting held on May 22, 2025 were distributed via email (prior to the board meeting) by Teri Thomas, Acting Secretary. The following correction was noted by Ethel Fields:

- The date for the next board meeting should be changed to: June 26, 2025.

Cierra Lemon made the motion to approve the minutes with the date correction (as stated above). Judge Cynthia Guillory seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously for the minutes to be approved with the stated correction.

IV. OLD BUSINESS:

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 06/26/2025:
 - Kindergarteners – 101 in count
 - 1st Grade – 50 in count
 - 2nd 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 seeking to increase our Kindergarten enrollment by adding approximately 2 additional classes in Year 1 to build our foundation of students. Our recruitment efforts will include the following projects:
- Follow-up Calls and Emails will be sent to Parents who initially signed up – to begin asap. It is important to contact interested parents to let them know that we are concerned about their children.
 - Acknowledgement Letters (addressed to the **students**) will be mailed out to inform the students that we are looking forward to them coming to our school.
 - Day Care Centers (to recruit future Kindergarten students)
 - Resume canvassing of Neighborhoods (TBA)

B. Operational/Organizational Report

1. Website is active. Work is still in progress to update the website with Policies & Procedures, the full set of job descriptions, and other required information (as per LDOE school website guidelines).
2. Facility Update: We are still in the process of securing our school location and waiting for the Fire Marshall's approval. An architect will be hired once the facility is secured to draft plans for any necessary renovations or reconfigurations.
3. Marketing Plans:
 - Cierra Johnson Lemon is assisting with Social Media Marketing and Website Content Creation/Updates
 - Dr. Cathy Banks commended the Board (along with additional volunteers) for their successful student recruitment and advertising efforts for the City-wide Juneteenth Celebration Week.
4. Background Checks for New Board Members: Background checks for the new board members are currently in process through the Louisiana State Police online service.
5. Next Board Member Training is July 23rd.
6. Board Member Change Forms will be submitted to the Office of School Choice to report board member changes, including resignations and new board members.
7. Updated Pre-Opening Manual with Revised dates were distributed to the board members.

C. Financial Report

1. BESE Start-Up Loan – Thrive Community Enrichment & Development Corporation has applied on behalf of Elite Academy for the \$100,000 (no-interest) BESE Start-up Loan to take care of the upfront costs necessary for the pre-opening phase of launching the school. The BESE Startup Loan will be paid back in 3 equal installments over a 3-year period, to be deducted annually from the Per-Pupil funding total received from the state (Louisiana Dept. of Education). The loan funds will possibly be disbursed to Elite Academy in June 2026.
2. New State Start-Up Loan (as per Regulation SB71) – We are researching information regarding a recent bill that was passed by the Louisiana Legislature, regarding Regulation

SB71. This bill gives authorization for facility loans to be offered to new charter schools for up to \$5,000,000.

3. CSP Grant - The Charter School Program Grant provides financial assistance to charter school developers to enable them to open and prepare for the operation of new charter schools. New Louisiana charter schools can apply for up to \$2,000,000 (to be disbursed to the school in annual installments.) The Board is eager to pursue applying for this grant once the application becomes available in June 2025.
4. Charter School Growth Fund - The Charter School Growth Fund is a national nonprofit that awards general operating grants, between \$250,000 and \$750,000 to help promising leaders open their next one to three schools. Once awarded, these grants are disbursed over a two- to three-year period. The next application cycle for this grant begins in October 2025. Applications are due in December, and the awardees are selected in June 2026.
5. Opening the General Operating Bank Account – A new checking account (our General Operating Account) has been established 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.
6. Additional Funding Options
 - We will be seeking corporate sponsors and Partners In Education by reaching out to the refineries, banks, and other area corporations.
 - Dr. Cathy Banks suggested that we could coordinate a formal fundraising event (such as a fundraising gala or a charity ball), where the children can participate.

VI. **REMARKS:**

- A. Dr. Cathy Banks thanked the Board Members for their dedication, hard work, and for their continual efforts to promote the school and volunteer with student recruitment.
- B. Dartheater Hall mentioned that she would email additional instructions to the new board members.

VII. **NEXT MEETING DATE:** The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, July 24, 2025.

VIII. **ADJOURNMENT:** Cassandra Johnson made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Stephanie Segura seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 6:36 pm.

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