



ELITE ACADEMY SCHOOL BOARD MEETING MINUTES

August 28, 2025

Meeting Time: 6:00 pm

Meeting Location: 1639 Ryan St. – Lake Charles, LA 70601

I. CALL TO ORDER:

The Elite Academy School Board Meeting was called to order by Darthester Hall at 6:03 pm. Prayer was rendered by Judge Cynthia Guillory.

II. ROLL CALL:

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

Absent: Stephanie Segura (excused)

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

Guests/General Public: N/A

III. DISTRIBUTION & APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM LAST MEETING:

The minutes of the board meeting held on July 24, 2025 were distributed via email for board review (prior to the board meeting) by Teri Thomas, Acting Secretary.

Mundreun Blackstone made the motion to approve the minutes as reviewed. Cierra Johnson Lemon seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously for the minutes to be approved as per prior review.

IV. OLD BUSINESS:

The Academic, Operational, and Finance discussion items are ongoing and have been set to be reviewed for the New Business section of this meeting's agenda.

V. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Academic Reporting – Dr. Cathy Banks

1. Student Recruitment Report – as of 08/28/2025:

- The total enrollment number has increased to almost 200 students to date. Dr. Banks emphasized enrollment goals, with our approved charter application listing 270 students for Year 1 and a maximum (provided by the LDOE Office of School Choice) of 324 for Year 1.
 - We would like to have approximately 500 students signed up to ensure that we have enough students on our wait list to guarantee that we meet enrollment goals.
2. Future Recruitment Plans
- We are continuously accepting student applications. We estimate that we can reach our goal within the next few months.
- Informational Flyers for August will be emailed on August 29th to parents who have signed their students up. Flyers will go out monthly on Elite's progress.
 - Dr. Cathy Banks encouraged the Board members to carry a set of sign-up sheets with them to be ready to recruit.
 - Mundreun Blackstone reported on her personal recruiting efforts.
 - Dr. Cathy Banks recommended that the Board could coordinate canvassing the neighborhood near our school address to recruit a diverse group of families who would appreciate the educational opportunities that we offer, as well as the convenience of our centralized location.
 - The Board members also discussed recruiting at La Familia Resource Center in Lake Charles to recruit Spanish-speaking/ELL students.

B. Operational/Organizational Report – Dr. Cathy Banks

1. There are ongoing projects to continue to update our school's website with Policies & Procedures, the full set of job descriptions, and other required information (as per LDOE school website guidelines).
2. Marketing Plans:
 - Cierra Lemon mentioned that we are seeing traction on social media, getting new followers every day. As of 08/28/2025, we have the following social media figures:
 - a. Facebook = 31 Followers and 19 "reaches" on Facebook. (**Reach** is a metric that represents the number of unique people that were exposed and saw a piece of social media content. Therefore, it represents people who have seen a post for the first time.)
 - b. Instagram = 2 New Followers
 - c. LinkedIn = 2 New Followers
 - Dr. Cathy Banks provided instructions to include the Elite Academy social media usernames & information on the monthly Parent Flyer.
3. Facility Update: Dr. Cathy Banks provided the facility update as follows:
 - Our District 7 BESE Board Member, Kevin Berken, took a tour of our school facility and he was impressed with the building and property. He was also pleased about the school's location in downtown Lake Charles, easily accessible to all parts of the city.
 - The facility's owner is interested in donating weekend food bags to Elite Academy students so they could have access to additional food/snacks to supplement their family's needs.

- Judge Guillory asked about the progress of tasks required for the facility. Dr. Banks replied that the Fire Marshall is requiring the installation of a new sprinkler system, which may be covered by the facility's owner.
4. Board Member Tasks – by Dartheater Hall:
 - Background Checks for New Board Members: All but 1 has been completed.
 - All Board Member Training was completed as of August 5th.
 - Board members have a mandatory task to attend LDOE's Monthly Charter School Zoom calls to learn more about state requirements for various charter school processes and activities. All of these meetings are recorded so you can view them on demand if needed.
 - The state also provides an opportunity to listen to training for eSER (Special Education Reporting System).
 5. Corporate Expansion Plans - Texas Education Agency (TEA) - by Dr. Cathy Banks:
 - Dartheater Hall (Board Chair), Cierra Lemon, and Teri Thomas are assisting with initial steps to plan for a school in Texas. The Thrive Community Enrichment & Development Corporation will provide overall governance, supervising the local Texas Board members.
 - Educators and Educational Management executives have expressed interest in Elite Academy for additional states in the future.

C. Financial Report – Grants & Funding Activities in Progress – by Dr. Cathy Banks

1. BESE Start-Up Loan – The BESE Start-Up Loan has been approved for Elite Academy for \$100,000.00 and it will be disbursed in June 2026.
2. CSP Grant - The LDOE Office of School Choice has approved our eligibility to apply for the CSP grant. Dr. Cathy mentioned that the approval process for the CSP Grant requires a Capacity Interview (for the School Principal and those assigned to work on the grant application). There will be 5 Reviewers scoring us and we must have a total score of at least 85.
3. Charter School Growth Fund - We are waiting for the next application cycle for this grant, which begins in October 2025. Applications are due in December, and the awardees are selected in June 2026. The focus on this grant application is the background & leadership of the Principal.
4. New Schools Venture Fund – This grant will be up to a maximum of \$250,000.00. It is a national competition grant, with a connection to the Louisiana New Schools Venture Fund office. The submission for this grant application is due in January of 2026.

D. Governance Update – by Dartheater Hall

1. Dartheater Hall distributed LAPCS legislative information and Title 28 information for the Board to review. She instructed the Board members to place this information and all official documents in a binder for future reference.
2. Judge Cynthia Guillory was asked to review the distributed information to formally present it to the Board at a future meeting. Judge Cynthia Guillory informed the Board that they can view changes in the Louisiana legislative statutes regarding charter schools online under Title 17.
3. Dartheater Hall distributed the Board Assignment Task Sheet, which listed assignments based on their individual skills and strengths.

VI. REMARKS:

1. There will be more information in the future about LEADS training for the Board members.
2. We will provide information to the Board members about attending the National Charter School Conference in New Orleans next year.
3. Dr. Cathy Banks made closing remarks to express her appreciation for the diligence and commitment of the Board Members.

VII. NEXT MEETING DATE: The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 25, 2025 at 6:00 pm.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT: Judge Cynthia Guillory made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ethel Fields seconded the motion. Cassandra Johnson gave the closing prayer. The meeting was adjourned at 7:01 pm by Dartheater Hall.

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