



"To Live, To Love, To Learn, To Leave a Legacy"

www.strideacademy.org

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

September 18th, 2025

Board Conference Room#310

STRIDE Academy Middle School

3701 33rd St. S, St. Cloud, MN 56301

6:00 PM

Board Attendance:

Sara Fromm-Board Chair, Andy Lyman-Vice Chair, Tina Barak-Treasurer, Aaron Lundblad-Director- Absent, Carie Essig-Director, Ashlee Gibson-Director, Kelly Springer- Secretary

Administrative Attendance:

Eric Skanson-Executive Director, Nathan Schwieters-Director of Operations, Erin Tronbak-Director of Innovation and Academics, Heather Ebnet- Middle School Principal, Angie Lichy-Elementary Principal

Guest: Denise Ziebarth: Grant Writing Coordinator

School Mission Statement:

STRIDE Academy nurtures individuals while fostering leadership and empowering students to attain their highest potential in a family-centered environment.

I. Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance, and Roll Call

II. Mission Statement of STRIDE Academy

III. Conflict of Interest Declaration

No member of the board of directors, employee, officer, or agent of a charter school shall participate in selecting, awarding, or administering a contract if a conflict of interest exists.

IV. Approval of Agenda Motion to approve made by Kelly Springer, Seconded by Carie Essig. Motion carried.

V. Consent Agenda - Approved

A consent agenda is a streamlined approach to handling routine matters in meetings, allowing multiple items to be approved together without extensive discussion or debate, saving time for more important topics. Board members have the option to pull specific items from the consent agenda for separate consideration by indicating their request during the meeting.

A. Approval of Meeting Minutes, August 21, 2025

B. Approval of Financial Statements, August 2025

C. Approval of New Hires

1. Laura Jacobson, 2nd Grade
2. Lyndee McClellan, Paraprofessional
3. Emily Rustad, Kindergarten
4. Nimo Jama, Paraprofessional
5. Rahama Hussein, Paraprofessional

D. Resignation

1. Cheyane Holan-Ince, 2nd Grade
2. Makayla Makarrall, Kindergarten
3. Maddie Strang, Paraprofessional
4. Fardowsa Hassan, Paraprofessional
5. Abdi Ismail, Board

VI. Public Comment - No comments

The School Board welcomes input from community members and staff. Each person addressing the council shall give their name for the record. Each person making a public comment is limited to three minutes. Comments should be kept courteous and professional and directed to the board. After the speaker makes their statement, they will be seated without further comment, dialogue, or debate.

V. Reports

A. Executive Director Report

The Executive Director, Dr. Eric Skanson, will provide updates on current programs and key events at STRIDE Academy.

- Thanked the board for support during a busy time. Opening recap: Busy! New food, new transportation, online schooling, second school site, increasing staff 50, bond sale. Staff resources are being taxed, but staff can meet the challenge.
- Been focused on finance, budgeting and bonds.
- PUC is supposed to observe the board, and will be meeting with their staff tomorrow to enrich that connection prior to site visit.
- Operating two sites has been challenging in logistics. As processes refine, optimistic that both sides will operate well.
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- 9/28-29 going to MASA conference, also attending PUC directors meetings and MAC weekly meetings.
- Transportation has been challenging, rocky start with Voigt's. We came on late with them, the program they use has been glitching. Need updated information from parents which is complicating routing. 10 buses is where things are at, hoping to keep it there as it is efficient. Voigt's is great to work with. Busing is getting better each day. Goal to move to a digital check in and out system next year for kids.

B. Leadership Reports

1. *Elementary Principal, Angie Lichy*

- Transportation: even though it's messy, it's still easier working with one company. Parents are generally patient with the mess. Staff are working diligently to get things on track. Staff have been very supportive with busing issues and delay needs.
- Busy start! Culture changes and having staff learn different cultures and backgrounds about each other. Things are working out.
- Fastbridge testing with new kids is coming in low.

- Lost a couple of teachers, have been able to replace them and Angie is pleased with their performance.
- Sorting ceremony next week.
- Food service is good, but still needs some tweaking.
- Working on building hot spots to avoid issues.

2. Middle School Principal, Heather Ebnet

- Transportation: staff have been very helpful/gracious in staying with kids due to delayed bus in afternoons.
- Working on procedures and routines in the new building. Working on adjusting. The digital pass system is helping supervise where kids are, and teachers are learning it.
- SPED has been a challenge, a few kids with expected high needs, but working on putting together the resources. Interviewing for SPED teacher and Para to better support SPED kids.
- Sorting ceremony 9/25, pep rally 9/26
- Conferences next Tuesday.
- Fastbridge testing is done for the vast majority of kids. This will be used for staff guidance and panther time.

3. Director of Operations, Nathan Schwieters

- Shed at elementary school is done. Project complete. Will add solar lights.
- Three organizations have expressed interest in renting space which may net 13K
- All HVAC for middle school is replaced! Cost was high, working on those details with building owners as to cost sharing. Owners taking on a large amount of this.
- LED lights are installed throughout middle school. 17K savings per year. These are also installed in elementary school.
- Fire marshal coming out soon to get what we need for leasing.
- Nathan joined St. Cloud Rotary. Hoping to open avenues for finding for Stride from Rotary.
- Working diligently on building acquisition and to add 9-12. City collaboration is going well and on track for the January decision.
- Food license has been received from the City. Mara did this work.
- Activities 6-8 underway, soccer is popular. First soccer game next week. Volleyball is going well. Basketball scheduled for November.
- Nathan cannot be ABC president due to bylaw change. He will still be involved. Neil will transition into that role.

4. Director of Innovation and Academics, Erin Tronbak

- SVA is off to a good start with 21 students, one non-local student.
- Fastbridge testing is ongoing (next week), can be done virtually or in person.
- SVA twice weekly drop in hours are going well.
- Dyslexia support is going well, with virtual component and parent support.
- A couple SVA students doing activities.
- Curriculum has been eventful, challenging with adding classes. Teachers patient with chaos
 - Language arts: Elementary wonders and you-fly; 7-8 EL education; Phonic and morphology program (U of M) for middle school about to start.
 - Math: STEM Scopes implemented. Different than before, more hands on. Meets updated standards. A lot of adjustment for teachers.
 - Some teachers are frustrated with lack of consumable content. Finding ways to work with this, notebooks, etc.
 - Science: Mystery science and generation genius, TCI for middle school.
 - Social Studies: Newzella, PBS Kids, Northern Lights (6th). Now state standards are coming in this area. Working on meeting those requirements.
 - SEL curriculum for K-8, “random acts of kindness”.

VI. Standing Committee Reports

1. Academic Excellence Committee

- Didn't meet

2. Governance Meeting-9.16.2025

- NONE. See below for policy updates.

3. Finance Committee-9.17.2025

- Things are looking good so far. With a revised budget at 820 ADM, we meet all bond covenants at this time.

- A couple of items are at 100% budget already, but those are expected and there will be balancing in the budget for this as the year progresses.
- Waiting for final state funding allocations.
- RFP for bond support was evaluated, and a recommendation made (see below).

VII. Unfinished Business

A. 702.1 Procurement Policy Discussion - Discussed that spending limits for education directors and operations higher because it is very easy to hit that limit (1K!). Increase to 25K?

- Can cause delays at times if ED sign off is required due to the limit.

Motion to update procurement policy for up to 25K for Education Director & Operations Director made by Tina Barak, Seconded by Carrie Essig. Motion carried.

B. Middle School Building Acquisition Updates

- Lease is favorable, may be in our interest to extend if we can because it is cheaper. Unsure if the landlord is interested in this.
- We can be on track to decide January 10, 2026, and hope to close as slowly as possible.
 - 180K escrow is required, which is challenging to overall finances, but we can meet it if required.
 - Looking at tax exempt bonds due to cost of building.
 - Appraisal should be back shortly. Will come in high, but not quite as high as we had hoped.
 - Owners are majority bond holders on the elementary building. Incentive to a fair transaction.

C. STRIDE Academy Expansion PK and 9-12

- Request made to PUC last May. PUC is under sanction from MDE, so there is a standing order that PUC cannot ask for expansion until

that is lifted. However, PUC is only supposed to be in corrective action for 130 days, we are past that, no guidance. We believe statute would allow an expansion because this is not a new school, just an expansion of the current one. MDE believes PUC has a lot of work to do, PUC thinks they are close.

- We want it to be submitted at least, regardless of outcome, because that is good for the bond process.
- Asked PUC for approval letter for expansion, even if not a MDE yet (for bond process)
- Naveen appears to be interested in new building bonds (they own many current bonds on Stride and the middle school building)
- Expansion not required to meet bond covenants.

VIII. New Business

A. 25-26 Technical Policy Updates

1. 425 Staff Development- Remove 2024-25 only from Paragraph - **Motion to approve made by Kelly Springer, Seconded by Andy Lyman. Motion carried.**
2. 620-Statutory Reference Change - will need to be revised for correct conversion once expansion is approved. **Motion to approve made by Carie Essig, Seconded by Andy Lyman. Motion carried.**
3. 624-Statutory Reference Change - **Motion to approve made by Ashley Gibson, Seconded by Tina Barak. Motion carried.**

B. Grants, Fundraising, and Community Engagement Update

Denise Ziebarth will be present to report on the last year in the position and highlight success stories.

- Fundraisers are -53.93%
- Donations are +1.61%, but business support is +300%
- Grants are: +531.4%
- Student Driven fundraising +183.5%
- Increased community outreach and partnerships
- A lot of environmental initiatives

C. Bond Underwriting Company Selection

- This is the next major step in middle school building acquisition.
- RFP sent, three reasonable responses received.
- Finance/Administration recommends that we choose: Raymond James
 - Lower cost
 - Fresh start
 - Bond representative impressed administration
- We believe that Naveen is highly interested in buying these bonds.
- The market is better this time, and it is a larger bond to sell. Easier to market.

Motion to approve Raymond James as bond underwriter, and to authorize ED to execute relevant documents made by Andy Lyman. Seconded by Ashly Gibson. Motion carried.

Announcements

A. October 2025 Board Meeting: **October 23, 2025, 6:00 p.m.**

Adjourn: 7:31pm

Public Attachments:

-  [Stride August 2025 Supplemental Information.pdf](#)
-  [Stride August 2025 Financial Report.pdf](#)
-  [Underwriter Proposal Comparisons.xlsx](#)
-  [Raymond James - STRIDE Academy Proposal 9.5.25 vF.pdf](#)
-  [Lora Jacobson Grade 2 Teacher .docx \(1\).pdf](#)
-  [Emily Rustad Grade K.docx.pdf](#)
-  [Nimo Jama.docx.pdf](#)
-  [Rahama Hussein Para.docx.pdf](#)
-  [lyndee McClellan.docx.pdf](#)
-  [624 Charter Redline 061625.docx](#)
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STRIDE Academy Underwriter RFP 2025 8-19-25.pdf



Holan-Ince, Cheyane STRIDE Academy Mail - Resignation Letter.pdf



STRIDE Academy Underwriter RFP 2025 8-19-25.pdf