

Lorna James-Cervantes, President  
Dr. Alain Bengochea, Secretary  
Nicole Thompson, Officer  
Jaime Gonzales, Officer  
Dachresha Harris, Officer  
Dr. Alee Moore, Officer  
Heather Nay, Officer



Miriam Benitez, Executive Director

**Strong Start Academy Board Meeting Minutes**  
December 08, 2022  
5:00 PM

**CLV Strong Start Academy Elementary Schools, Inc. Board Meeting –  
December 8, 2022**

Lorna: Okay, good evening, everybody. Thank you so much for joining us tonight for the meeting of the Strong Start Academy Elementary School board of directors. We'll begin the meeting tonight promptly on time at 5:00 with roll call. This is Lorna James-Cervantes for the record. Jamie Gonzales?

Jamie: Present.

Lorna: Heather Nay.

Heather: Present.

Lorna: Alain Bengochea.

Dr. Bengochea: Present.

Lorna: Dachresha Harris.

Dachresha: Present.

Lorna: Alee Moore.

Alee: Present.

Lorna: Thought that was you. Nicole Thompson is not present at this time. But we do have a quorum at this time, so we will go ahead and start our meeting. At this time, I just like to remind everybody that we're recording the meeting in compliance with Open Meeting Law. And we'll begin tonight with public comment. Comment during this portion of the agenda must be limited to matters on the agenda for action. If you wish to be heard, come forward and give your name for the record. The amount of discussion as well as the amount of time any single speaker is allowed will be limited to two minutes absent board approval. Is there anybody for public comment? I don't see anybody in the room. Was there anything sent in by mail or any other way? Okay. Well, then we'll go on to item number five. So, I see that we forgot to just put the...oh, sorry, item number four. I was going too fast for myself.

Jamie: You really want to get out of here.

Lorna: Yes, I'm just trying to be aware of everybody's time. Item number four, this is a possible action to approve the final minutes by reference of the November 10th meeting. Thank you. That's what I was thinking, "Wait, did we miss putting it on the agenda?" So, did everyone have an opportunity to review the minutes prior to the meeting tonight? Yes? All right, if there is...are there any corrections to the minutes or additions that need to be made to the minutes? If there are none, then...

Alee: [inaudible 00:02:30]

Lorna: Alee, was that you?

Alee: Yeah, I was just saying no correction.

Lorna: No corrections? Okay. Would anybody then like to make a motion to approve the minutes as presented?

Jamie: Jamie Gonzales for the record, I move that we approve the meeting minutes for the November 10th board meeting.

Dachresha: Dachresha Harris for the record, [inaudible 00:03:00].

Lorna: Thank you. It's been moved and seconded to approve the minutes as presented. All those in favor?

Together: Aye.

Dr. Bengochea: Abstain.

Lorna: One abstention. Any opposed? Okay. Thank you very much, then that motion passes and we will approve those minutes as presented. And now we'll move over to item number five. At our last meeting, we explained that we are in need of a treasurer for our board of directors and everybody wanted a little bit of time to think about the role and whether or not this was something that they thought that they could do. Is there anybody on the board currently who would like to take on this role of the treasurer moving forward?

Dachresha: Dachresha Harris for the record. I thought we talked about tabling the treasurer position until we got new...

Lorna: This is Lorna, we did talk about that, tabling it until January when we got new members but we knew everyone had a month to think about it, so we thought we should go ahead and put it back on the agenda again. Okay, we'll go ahead and continue to table that to our January meeting. But in January, we do need to have a person that is willing to be treasurer. And so, hopefully, we will have our new members at that time and either one of them or a member who's continuing with us will be willing to serve in that role. Thank you. All right, so that takes us to item number six. This is a report by the City of Las Vegas regarding the status of appointments for the vacant board member positions. So, Dr. Malich, do you have that or does...hello.

Dr. Malich: Hi, everyone. Dr. Tammy Malich, City of Las Vegas for the record. We do have our council item is on agenda. We will go to agenda staff on Monday for the replacement position and the continuing. So, Jamie and Nicole will be continuing, have agreed to continue with us, and then our new appointee Councilwoman Diaz's seats, our recommendation to City Council is Mellie...I won't give too much information only because it still has to go to City Council for approval. So, it's set for our December 19th or 21st...when is that board meeting? Is that Wednesday for those?

The 21st, December 21 City Council meeting. And pending approval of the City Council, Amanda will work with her to get her bio and do all of the things and notify the Charter Authority, etc. She comes to us with a background in HR. She used to work for the City of Las Vegas. She's retired, but she has another great experience that I think is really valuable. She's done a lot of philanthropy work. She stood up the vision of Project 150 in schools. Many of you probably know of Project 150. So, super excited about her joining. And Councilwoman Diaz and I have met with her, we've talked to her about the board, the expectations, the hope that she leaned in on the work, that board members that can contribute to the work are very helpful. And so, I will have a better report in January post-counsel. And then I have another comment during public comment because it wasn't another update that wasn't agendize specifically to this. And I'm guessing Colleen would want me to wait and give that update until we get to public comment, question mark. It's not an action item anyway, so either way.

Lorna: Thank you for...

Colleen: And also I wanted to ask, do we have an update on the seat for Councilman Crear?

Dr. Malich: Yeah, we have no name still. We're still legitimate because the only required positions are the five, the two experts, the parent, the teacher administrator. So, our articles do this whole Councilwoman Diaz will do this and Councilman Crear will do that, the Charter Authority doesn't care about that. All SPCSA cares about is we have those five positions representative on our board. Anything we do above and beyond is at our pleasure. And so, he has not given us the name. Amanda and Miriam and I talked last week, we have a strategy for how we might help him come to that decision or help him determine and he'll actually out visiting the school next...

Woman: Monday.

Miriam: Monday. Monday.

Woman: Oh, he's coming?

Lorna: Thank you. This is Lorna Cervantes. So, thank you for that, Tammy. And hopefully, he will, after visiting the school, see the importance of providing with the name of somebody. So, we would appreciate an update on that at our next meeting, if you wouldn't mind. And also, you said that Jamie and Nicole were continuing, you know that I said that I would...

Dr. Malich: Oh, Lorna, sorry.

Lorna: Okay, just making sure.

Dr. Malich: So, all four of those names are going to City Council.

Lorna: Thank you, I just wanted to double-check because I thought if there's something I should know, you'd let me know.

Dr. Malich: No, no.

Lorna: Okay. All right, thank you. Any other questions for Tammy on that update? Thank you. So, our next item number seven is a report by Kristin Dietz from EdTec and financial records including the CLV grant. Oh, Kristin, you forgot to unmute your...

Kristin: There we go. Hi, everybody. Hope you can hear me okay. This is Kristin Dietz for the record. Let me see if I can share my report. Here we go. Okay, we have the financial presentation with actuals through October to share with you today. And overall, I'm going to go straight to slide four, which shows

our total current forecast compared to the original board-approved budget. We did originally have a pretty large budgeted net income, and that was based on significantly different enrollment and some other large adjustments that have shifted over time and now the current forecast is based on our latest information. The biggest change here this month is that we adjusted enrollment to 85, which is more in line with what's actually going on.

And we have adjusted the CLV grant for timing and for the amounts that we're expecting to hit in this fiscal year. So, those are the biggest changes that are resulting in a net deficit of 96,552. Now, I do say deficit but this is an operating deficit for this fiscal year. We do have a carryover from last year, which was the startup year. We have a carryover of 792,000, and that was CLV grant funding that came in at the end of June, I believe it was, that is being carried over to be utilized for current year operations. So, it looks a little bit kind of wonky when you look at it, you know, one year at a time. But overall, the most important thing is that we are looking at a fund balance at the end of this fiscal year of 695,000, which is about a 21.8% reserve. Very strong, it's very good in terms of financial strength.

So, I didn't want to...I wanted to make sure to point out that the deficit is not something to be alarmed about, it's really a timing issue. And in terms of the changes that happened from last month to this month, our biggest change was that we did adjust enrollment. It had been adjusted down to 100 previously, but we adjusted it to 85 in terms of ADE, and all of the state funding is based on that number so we did see a reduction in the PCFP state funding. We also adjusted the CLV grant timing based on we got some updated information about ongoing grant funding and when that will hit, so we adjusted the revenues to match more appropriately over time with expectations on the grant timing of the drawdowns. And then the federal revenue, we had a \$10,000 reduction there. That was really just tied to the enrollment reduction.

Next month, we will have an additional adjustment to the federal revenue. We received notification of the amended federal Title I through IV and IDEA awards about five days ago, so they did not get into this presentation. But we do have amended federal grants that will result in a reduction in that revenue and some adjustments that will include in next month's presentation. And then the adjustment here for supplies, this was really just an adjustment for some large supply purchases that were tied to enrollment. So, with the enrollment going down, some of those expenses have gotten down as well. And our overall

change from last month to this month was a reduction of about 80...what was it? Let's see here, it's a reduction of about \$83,000. In terms of our year-to-date actuals, we have received about 29% of our revenues and we have expended 27% of our expenditures forecasted to date and this is as of October 31st. We are seeing a consistent inflow of the CLV grant drawdown, it's coming in at about...it's 250,000 per month and we're getting those consistently now, so that's really helping with the revenues and the cash flows.

In terms of our balance sheet, we ended October with a cash balance of 839,177 and total assets of 876,096. So overall, our financials, in general, are looking strong at this point. And here on slide eight is a cash flow forecast by month just to show you kind of what we're expecting in terms of cash balances. Thankfully, we do not have any cash flow issues expected anywhere in the foreseeable future. We do expect to see the revenues...or, excuse me, the cash balances go down a little bit as we approach the end of the year because we did have the timing of the CLV grant being spread across the first nine months of the year. So, we don't expect to have drawdowns in the last couple of months and that would mean that we're utilizing the reserves during those months. So, overall, still expecting to have a reasonably strong cash balance with about 36 days cash on hand at the end of June.

And the SPCSA does like to see days cash on hand of at least 30 days, so you would be well within their acceptable metrics with what we're seeing right now. In terms of our grants, I did mention that the federal grants, we will adjust next month, so the amounts that you see here were the original awards. They are expected to go down for all of the first five that you see here on the list because they are based on enrollment and demographics, and the enrollment came in lower than what we originally expected. So, we will be making those adjustments here and to the forecast next month. Our largest federal grant is the CSP grant at \$750,000. And at this point, we've spent about 236,000 of those funds and we have about 69% of that grant remaining. In terms of the reimbursements, they are coming in a little bit slower.

We have three months' worth of reimbursements that we were waiting on at this point. They are starting to come in but they have been taking a little bit longer, the turnaround time is about 60 to 70 days right now. This next slide gives a little bit more detail on the CLV grant. And I did want to point out that I was not here last month, but I understand there was some discussion about the marketing expense. And when we went back and reviewed the actuals, we found there was



a marketing bill that had gotten coded to the wrong funding source, so it was not included in last month's schedule. But it has been corrected here and the total marketing costs spent to date is 40,000, which leaves a balance in that line item of 25,000. Just wanted to point that out...excuse me, just wanted to point that out. And that's it for the presentation summary. There are some detailed schedules at the back of your presentation. If you have any questions, I'd be happy to try to answer them for you.

Lorna: This is Lorna Cervantes. Thank you, Kristin, for that report to us. Are there any questions by board members regarding the financial report? Kristin, I do just have one question for you. Although we had 65,000 of the CSP grant earmarked for marketing and we've spent about 40,000 of that, can we make an amendment if a decision by the board was made in the future to use additional CSP grants for marketing, say for creating our image for the school and that kind of work, if that is a decision in the future?

Kristin: Yes, that is something that you can do. You would just need to be shifting it out of another line item, another budget category, but yes, that is an option.

Lorna: Okay, so that's a good thought for us to keep in mind as we're considering some of the work that we're going to do maybe in January to know that it is acceptable to move things within these line items moving forward. All right, any other questions or comments for Kristin regarding the financial report?

Dr. Malich: I have a comment. Tammy Malich from the City of Las Vegas. I just want to thank Kristin, we have a really good flow now where this is happening, which was my vision from the get-go, instead of, you know, getting this large chunk and then having to go to council and doing all of this process. It's much easier now, her and Roe have a really good system where she sends us the information, we release the funds, and it just happens quite naturally so that you guys have a better balance of money coming in and she can anticipate and we can anticipate. So, thank you to Kristin because that makes our lives easier here at the city with getting that money out. And the other comment I would make is...that the Board may or may not be aware of, is the city also released a grant for charter schools and private schools within the city through some of our ARPA money and our team is working with Miriam to submit for that grant. So,

there are possibly some additional monies coming in through the city kind of in a different way that could also be used for marketing or whatever.

Lorna: This is Lorna Cervantes. Thank you for that, Tammy. That helps us also to know that we have some additional funding possibilities moving forward and I know it makes me feel good to know that we do have the options if that is something that the board decides to do in the future. And also, I want to thank you at the city and Kristin both for getting this relationship together to move that money very quickly, and now that the systems are in place, it is very quick. So, thank you both for that. Any other questions or comments regarding financial plan...or financial report? Okay. Seeing none, thank you so much, Kristin. We appreciate you being here with us and we hope you have a Merry Christmas, and we will see you back here in January. All right, at this time, we will move to item number eight. This is a report by the executive director regarding Strong Start Academy's student transiency. This was a request by Nicole Thompson to have information regarding withdrawals at this school, how many students have withdrawn, and what reasons they have given for their withdrawal from the school. So, Miriam, we'll turn it over to you at this time.

Miriam: Thank you. Miriam Benitez for the record. So, there's a handout that's titled, "Student Withdrawals." And what I just realized, as I'm looking at this is that it doesn't have the total number of enrollees. So, we currently have 81 students and we've had 6 students withdraw since we started. And four of those students are in kindergarten, one of them was transportation issues. And that student, we're able to provide bus passes to, and so they stayed the full month of school in August, and then the mom just said, "It's just so far even on the bus, it's taking me almost an hour to get here and then get back home." So, she tried it and said it was just too much. And then another kindergarten parent said she had a third grader. And so, she tried having the third grader at the homeschool and then the kindergartner there.

And then she also said it was just too much trying to be in two places at the same time and it wasn't working out. The third kindergarten student is a sibling to the first grader and they had been homeschooled. They were trying to get the students into public school and they were very happy. However, they kept getting sick. And so, I think that was part of why they wanted to go back to homeschool because the kids were constantly sick, so they ended up withdrawing. And then our last two students, which was one kindergartner and one second grader, these two students live in Henderson and they tried it. And



the second-grade parents, she was honest and said she thought her child struggled with behavior and she thought a smaller school would help. And then when she said that the kind of issues continued, that it wasn't worth the extra drive to come out if it was going to still be the same issues. And then our kindergartener, mom works past 6:00, so Safe Key couldn't accommodate her schedule. But she did say and she just called us the other day that her schedule is looking like it was going to be adjusted. And so, if that did happen, she wanted to bring him back because she really didn't want to move him anyway, but it was a work thing and she just didn't have daycare. So, those are the reasons that we've received for our six withdrawals.

Lorna: This is Lorna Cervantes. Thank you for that report, Miriam. Do any of the board members who are present have questions about this?

Dr. Bengochea: These are the total withdrawals from the beginning of the year?

Miriam: Yes.

Lorna: Okay, seeing no other questions or hearing no other comments from any of the board members, we appreciate this report, Miriam. And we know that you're really working to retain the students who are on campus and we definitely hope that all 81 who are there right now will roll up with us and remain with us next year. Because really, our plan right now is to build that foundation of bilingualism that then rolled up the subsequent grades so that students in fifth grade will leave the school bilingual and biliterate. And speaking of which, our next item on the agenda is a report and a presentation by our executive director, Miriam, regarding Strong Start Academy's dual language program.

And we felt that it was important to bring this presentation forward to the board members because although she and I wrote the academic plan together and we know that Dr. Bengochea has a strong background in dual language programs and education, we recognize the fact that not all board members do. So, sometimes it may sound like we're speaking a foreign language even in English to some of you. So, we felt it would be important for us to bring this report forward to really help you understand what it is that makes Strong Start Academy different than other schools and why it's so important to our community that we have this dual language model for our kids. So, Miriam, we will turn the floor over to you at this time.

Miriam: Thank you. Miriam Benitez for the record. So, we were going to start with our vision. And the vision of Strong Start Academy is a culturally diverse learning community that prepares children to excel academically in two languages, and have a positive impact on an increasingly evolving and global society. Then our mission, the work we strive to do daily to accomplish our vision is the mission of Strong Start Academy Elementary School is to provide equitable, high-quality academics, as we prepare our bilingual civic-minded thinkers to maximize their potential in their community and the world. SSAES is committed to building a culture of high academic achievement for all students. All children will engage in dual language education that supports and embraces the development of their home languages and cultures. SSAES will offer rich linguistic and cultural education that values and develops families' cultural heritages and home languages as assets. Providing an enriched multilingual education combined with high expectations will help students attain their greatest potential, and close the achievement gap while preparing them for success in the 21st century. And so, just to make a note there that we purposefully included their cultural...student's home languages and cultures because we know that not everyone that was going to come to Strong Start was going to come from a Spanish...they could be bilingual, but not always be Spanish. And we still want to take that asset orientation approach and make sure that we are honoring everyone's culture. Strong Start goals.

Our goal is to have not just bilingual, but biliterate students, all of our students, ensure that students are at the very least on grade level or above, and promote positive cross-cultural attitudes and behaviors. Our specific bilingual model is a dual language 50/50 model. Two-way, meaning students are learning languages in English and Spanish. So, we have our native English speakers and our native Spanish speakers, or we may have native speakers of another language. Our goal is to get as close to that 50/50 as possible but, you know, we can't guarantee that. Simultaneous biliteracy development, which means that they're learning to read in both English and Spanish at the same time. And language division by time and subject, so we are teaching them pretty much all subjects in both languages, just the time allocation is different, how much time we're spending on each.

So, specifics to the 50/50 model are that both languages are used equally for instruction, that all subjects are taught in both languages starting in kindergarten, that literacy skills are developed in both languages, again, starting

in kindergarten, and content isn't repeated. And by that, it means it's not...so we teach thematically, and so we are...like, right now, the students in kindergarten are learning about endangered animals, and so...no, that's first grade. In kindergarten, it's zoology, they're learning about animals. So, they have specific information that they're learning in the English class, and then there'll be learning information perhaps on the same animal, on different animals, but it's different, so it's not mirrored.

They're not exact lessons but it's thematic and they complement each other. The 50/50 model features continue, teachers and paraprofessionals do not translate, they restate. So, if it's an instruction in Spanish and the students respond in English, the teachers will restate in Spanish, always modeling the language. Teachers maintain a pure language model. And so, that's what we were trained on with our dual language education in New Mexico but we have started doing some work with Dr. Bengochea where he's going to be coming in and giving us some professional development on what's called translanguaging, which is fairly new in the world of dual language. But luckily, he's an expert on it, so...he's an expert in our eyes on it, it's fairly new. And so, he's going to be giving us some professional development to see how we incorporate these strategies. But of course, we don't want to rush into anything because we want to make sure that until we have a deep, clear understanding of what translanguaging is and how to purposefully and intentionally use it in the classroom, we will stick with the pure model language.

Dr. Bengochea: It could be a free-for-all principle in place.

Miriam: Right, so we can control it this way until we know better. Teachers do not teach the same language...the same lesson twice as I stated earlier, so you wouldn't see one lesson in English and then see the exact lesson in Spanish. Again, they complement each other. Lessons offered in partnered classrooms should parallel one another. Then the teacher expectations is that they meet regularly, which at our school, we meet daily for an hour. They plan together, and because it's myself and two coaches, we divide our time up. So, I meet every day with kindergarten, one coach meets every day with first grade, and the third one every day with second grade.

So, there's always kind of a quasi-leadership there to make sure that we're answering questions, that we're facilitating so the time is productively used. Again, teacher expectations is that we have high expectations for students in

both languages and ensure that they have adequate and appropriate materials that support the teaching of the Nevada academic content standards. So, on the next page is our allocation of instructional minutes and we have approximately 320 minutes in our instructional day. So, that's not counting our lunch or recess. And so, the top one is our, let's see, kindergarten.

So, in kindergarten, you can see that if they start in...so, first thing in the morning is we have our social-emotional learning and that happens all in English, 10 minutes. We have a video, we have a conversation, discussion, and then if there's follow-up writing, that may happen in the Spanish or the English class, it just depends on during the planning, who's going to do that extension activity. Then while they are in English, they get 130 minutes of reading. And the reading curriculum, which we'll get a little bit more into in a later slide, it is rooted in science and social studies, so it's all integrated. Then they get 20 minutes of math in English.

In Spanish, they get a 50-minute GLAD unit and GLAD is the training. We'll get into that a little bit more also in the next slide. That's all the training that the teachers received, that's how to deliver instruction for language learners and we, again, integrate that with science and social studies. They get 35 minutes of foundational skills, so this is like our phonics, phonemic awareness, all of that in Spanish, and then 75 minutes in math. So, they add up to 160 minutes in both. In first grade, more or less, it looks the same. The 10 minutes of SEL in English, the 130 minutes of reading and writing, 20 minutes of math, and then in Spanish, we have 35 minutes of the foundational skills, 50 minutes of the GLAD, 75 minutes of math. I didn't add a second grade on there only because second grade isn't dual, we know that.

In trying to plan our program and be responsible, all the research we came across did not recommend starting any student beyond first grade in a dual program, especially with the learning loss that has occurred recently with all of COVID. So, in second grade, they receive a 50-minute enrichment and they will continue to receive that 50 minutes as they move up in grade from second grade to third grade, and then next year when our first graders move up to second grade, then our second grade will be completely dual language. Mirrored classrooms.

Dr. Bengochea: Can I ask a question?

Miriam: Oh, yes, go ahead. I'm sorry.  
Transcription by [www.speechpad.com](http://www.speechpad.com)

Dr. Bengochea: So, I noticed that there's phonics instruction in Spanish, is there phonics instruction in English?

Miriam: It is, we just didn't spell it out, so that's part of our curriculum. It's built into our morning message. We have I'd say no more than 15 minutes, 15, that it's phonemic awareness along with the phonics review daily, and we actually use Haggerty.

Lorna: Yep, that 130 minutes is included.

Dr. Bengochea: That's what I was wondering. Yeah, yeah.

Lorna: That's why it's 130 minutes in the primary language.

Dr. Bengochea: And then another question I had is I know that it's not on here written but there is writing in Spanish?

Miriam: Yes, there is. There is. It's part of the GLAD strategies. Yes.

Lorna: And the writing is included in English in the reading, science, and social studies piece of it, correct?

Miriam: Yes, writing is included in both of the reading. I don't know why we spelled it out in one and not the other but writing is happening in both languages. Then the mirrored classrooms, we introduce new themes concepts in English and then they are visited in Spanish. We're developing academic vocabulary in both languages. And again, our units are thematic. And a lot of our words are cognates, which means that they're very similar in English as they are in Spanish, and the students recognize that and it is very easy for them to remember those words. We established the same routines.

So, the classrooms that are partnering, they have the same classroom rules, procedures, the same rewards and consequences, the same grading policy, so that everything is seamless. It's should be like being in one class, but you spend half your day in one and then half your day in the other. And then our curriculum. We selected our curriculum through a lot of research. We use EdReports, which is a system that evaluates school resources, materials, instructional materials, and it identifies high-quality materials. So, the two core curriculum for reading and math that we selected were rated very highly, ARC, which stands for American Reading Company. And then not only were they rated highly, but their Spanish program was rated very high also because it

wasn't just translated, it was authentic Spanish literature, which is important. So, we use ARC for reading and then i-Ready, again, that came material was available in English and Spanish, and it was very highly rated on EdReports as well. And then our last slide talks a little about Project GLAD, which GLAD stands for Guided Language Acquisition Design.

And this is an instructional model that really focuses on developing language. It's ideally used for second language learners, learning the second language, whether it's in a dual program or for our students learning English. And we provided this training in the summer, all of our teachers were trained. And when we talk about in our schedule our GLAD component, this is what we're talking about. It was a five-day training, where day one, we learned all of the research and the theory behind the strategies and then the next four days, we actually sat during a school day and we watched the trainers that implement these actual strategies and see what they look like. And it's been very successful and the students love that GLAD block. Any other questions?

Jamie: I have one. Jamie Gonzalez for the record. So, early on in the presentation where you referenced the dual language approach and that in terms of our student population, English and Spanish-speaking, and those are the languages that we trained in right now. I guess the first part of my question is, are there any students right now that have English and some other language, and how is that being accounted for in the language approach?

Miriam: So, we do have a couple of students that when they completed the Home Language Survey, they identified Tagalog as a language at home. What we're not sure is how fluent the child was, each student is given an assessment to see if they identify as a second language learner and neither of those students identified. So, their English was strong enough that they were considered like native English speakers, so we haven't seen any issues at all. And I spoke with both parents because before they applied for the school, they did have concerns about that because there was another language different...another different language spoken at home. And I said, "That shouldn't be a problem at all, there's other countries where kids are learning at the same time three and four languages, and that shouldn't impede any learning." And so we haven't seen any issues

Jamie: And my question would be, then, as we move forward, and our student population grows and the potential for that other language...or that situation,



with a third language or fourth language comes into play, what do you envision our approach being? Would we have an instruction in Tagalog for those students or in French, or whatever the other language might be? Is that vision that would be English plus whatever that home language is?

Miriam: Well, the vision that the school was started on was dual language, Spanish and English. As we grow, I don't know, I think that would be a conversation for the board, I believe, I'm not sure. But the main obstacle to grow or even start some of these programs is trying to find the qualified teachers that are bilingual, and that can teach. So, Lorna, do you wanna...?

Lorna: Well, this Lorna, I would just add to that and say we'd have to have a critical number of students in that area. But if we did reach that critical number and it was at a grade level that was appropriate to start an additional language, then at that point, I think that's when we would have to look at seeing, is there a teacher available that we could...and the parallel resources available too where we could branch out in a language.

It does happen, there are schools across the country that are bilingual, Japanese and English, or bilingual Native Hawaiian languages and English, and so on. But I think we'd have to reach for a set critical number, and then come back and really look at it again as a board to say, "Are we at that place now where we have the resources, human and otherwise, that we felt like it would be appropriate to branch out at that time?" But it's a good question and it's a question that we did consider as we were looking at the model for the school.

Jamie: Thank you.

Miriam: Yeah, sure.

Dr. Bengochea: And another thing to add, I mean, if you do get [inaudible 00:44:42] but ideally, we would want all schools, regardless of the people that went to the schools, is leveraging their own language by giving other resources, right, and other text in languages in order to bridge their understandings across languages. That's probably happened in, like, tier two instruction, small group instruction. Yep.

Lorna: This is Lorna again, I was just thinking that there are actually some resources available, online resources, you know, that could be used to do just what Dr. Bengochea was talking about.

Dr. Bengochea: The students review content that they're learning about in their own language in small groups, for instance.

Miriam: Yeah, so Miriam Benitez for the record. The ELL students that we do have that have limited English, they all happen to be Spanish-speaking. And, obviously, they found and sought us out because the great majority of them recent arrivals from Spanish-speaking countries. So, of course, they're very pleased that they can communicate with teachers with no problem, that the students are learning, don't feel lost. So, it's been very beneficial.

Heather: Heather Nay for the record. Can I just say something on behalf of the school? My son, he did have a little head start with pre-K but I feel that when he entered kindergarten, he didn't know how to read, he didn't know certain things. He's already reading in English and in Spanish, which is like, kindergarten, I don't think I learned how to read till I was like in second grade. So, the quality of education that I feel as a parent that my son is receiving...like, I could get emotional, like, it's just immaculate and I appreciate you and all your hard work and all the teachers and everyone here. Thank you, because I didn't get that education as a kid.

Dr. Bengochea: Thank you for sharing that.

Heather: I don't mean to cry. No, like, it's not even half of the school year, and, like, his face light up to be able to read. Like, we're driving down the street and he's reading signs, it's like, "What? How are you doing that? You're only six." You know? So, thank you.

Miriam: Thank you. Love it.

Lorna: That's excellent testimony. Thank you, Heather. I think it speaks to what our goal for the school...and it goes back to the mission and the vision of the school is to provide those opportunities for a number of students. And we know that when students are bilingual, they use a large portion to their brain, they actually have better opportunities in work later in life. And one of the longitudinal studies that I cite all the time was done several years ago, but it still proves to be true that students who are in a dual language bilingual program like this one, actually, by the time they reach 12th grade outperform their monolingual peers pretty much every time.

And it's because of that foundation that they have in two languages. So, it's been a long time coming for children in our district, or in our county, I should say, and I'm glad we're able to provide this opportunity. Was this presentation helpful to those of you who are not career educators and understanding really what the model of the school is? And are there any further questions that you would like to have addressed by Miriam or by this stuff moving forward?

Dachresha: Dachresha Harris for the record. I appreciate the presentation, just to understand how the students are being taught, you know, and I'm glad to hear is not the same curriculum but it is different from when they're learning the English side of the curriculum to the Spanish. So, because I did wonder that, like, how does that work out where they're...you're making sure that they're learning while they're learning the other language as well. So, I think it was beneficial to, like, break that down for those of us who are not.

Dr. Bengochea: I'll make a comment, just so we get [inaudible 00:49:10]. The word, "achievement gap," the only reason we hear the word achievement gap is because the designers for assessments privileged certain students over others and [inaudible 00:49:20], right? So, we hear the word achievement gap, but it's not really an achievement gap, it's an opportunity gap, right? Yeah, that we're not granting to certain kids. Thank God, [inaudible 00:49:32] that they're working with.

Miriam: Well, and we are in the middle of doing our i-Ready assessments and we've seen tremendous growth, but we haven't finished. We started last week, and it's going through next week before we get into our winter break. So, when we come back in January, we'll have i-Ready data to share and then in February, we'll have map data, but we're very excited because we're seeing huge growth. As Heather said, we've got kindergarten kids reading, we have a second-grade student that came to us at a kindergarten level and he's 17 points away from being on a second-grade level. So, he's made those kinds of improvements and we're fairly confident that by the end of the year, the great majority of our students will be on grade level, perhaps with the exception of our, you know, special education students, which are still showing tremendous growth, but we are very excited.

Dr. Bengochea: On grade level and able to perhaps read in Spanish as well and on grade level in English with an additional asset. Yeah.

Lorna: This is Lorna, I appreciate that update too, Miriam. And I want to say that, to Alain's point, it's not only an opportunity gap but what we've seen in education across this country has been an expectation gap, and that is that we don't expect great things of all students in all of our schools. And I think that what we're doing here at Strong Start is changing that expectation to an expectation that all students should and could be learning at this high level. I still recall in graduate school when I read an article referring to a white child who's learning French and the people around him said, "Oh, my God, that kid is so gifted, look, they're already learning French and they're only four years old." And we have, you know, a five years old, we have a Spanish speaker that's sitting right next to them who's learning English and we say, "Oh, this poor baby is so far behind." No, they're both learning a second language, they're both excellent and wonderful students who are learning well, but it's what we expect, it's the opportunities we give, and it's the emphasis we place on the importance of culture that have been the problem so far.

So, sorry, I just couldn't help but say that after Alain got me started. So, thank you, everybody. Any other comments or questions regarding this report? Miriam, thank you so much for bringing this forward. I think it was very helpful to all of us to really just understand this. And I think it helps to also answer that question that we had in a discussion a few months ago, where it was like, "Why do we need to assess children in both Spanish and English, and why are we doing this?" It's so that we know where to help children in both languages at the same time. So, I think this was very helpful. At this point in time, we can move to item number 10, which is citizen participation. And I know that Dr. Malich said that she had an item for this public comment.

Dr. Malich: Sure. Thank you, Dr. Tammy Malich, City of Las Vegas for the record. I just want to give you guys two quick pieces of information. One is the city has contracted with a designer to start putting together a design for the expansion of the campus. We met with Miriam last week, walked the campus, and he's putting pencil to paper to begin that work. Our plan is to build out the building...build out the facility at one time, knowing that we might be able to bring classrooms in individually but do the entire build-out as if we're at full capacity so that we don't keep going back and doing this again. The school is not a historic site but it is in a historic corridor, the Las Vegas High School corridor is historic. And so, there are some court requirements.

They're not terrible. In fact, I think they're great because it would not allow us to just set down portable campuses or whatnot, you have to be consistent with the design and style of the building, which is a beautiful style. And so, working through that, more to come after we actually see a design and whatnot. My team has submitted an additional funding request on our side to get funding to cover expansion. And so, we're looking at that as we speak with the least amount of impact to the school, to the students, to the parents, pick up and drop off, and with the necessity that next year we'll have minimum three more classes coming in, right? Three more kindergartens starting.

And so, how do we do this and make it as least disruptive as possible? We also believe the gym and cafeteria floor will be done by then as well. The floor has been completely moved, they're working on that project as we speak, and the city has set aside funding for that as well, so there will be no impact to the school or to the board or to your fiscal reports. And then final comment I will make is that we will, probably at our January City Council meeting, the conversation about the Clark County School District and will local government get into the game of educating kids. Not all the municipalities have made public statements, they have taken a stance in favor of signatures needed were in abundance of what was required, so we could see a ballot initiative in 2024.

I want you all to know, the city has not taken a formal position on that, which has caused some surprise. And so, I want our board members aware if you have questions like, "The city is running a charter school, why haven't they taken a position?" It's simply that our electeds have not received information on what does that mean, what are the details, what is the impact, and they will do it from the data. So, they will vote in a public forum, and therefore, because they have not done that, we have not taken a stand in favor or in opposition. But I would imagine...and our two new council members were just sworn in on...yesterday on Wednesday, yesterday is Wednesday, one of those new council members is Nancy Brune, who was original board seat for this board.

So, we have two new council people, councilwomen. And so, it will happen probably in our January City Council meeting and then we will get direction as far as whether the city is going to maintain no stance, remain neutral, or a positive or an opposition stance on the impact. But we are looking at the impact to the city in general because I think you all know, but the rest of the world doesn't know, to do education rights is expensive and we're investing a lot of time and money into this as are all of you timewise because we can't just do it at

the same level that it's being done or there's no point, right, if we're going to do it at that level. To do it right, really, in our belief requires a lot of additional resources and that's costly. And doing it at one school is one thing, doing it at 316 of the number of schools in the City of Las Vegas, a whole different ballgame. So, like I said, I just wanted you guys to know in case you question, in case you wonder, that that's basically where we're at with that item.

Lorna: Thank you for that. All right, thank you. Hearing or seeing no other persons here for public comment at this time...

Miriam: I just want to say one thing. Miriam Benitez for the record. It's Tony Hsieh's day on Monday at our school, it is his birthday, and we have planned all kinds of academic and cultural type activities with the Hsieh family. We're very excited. It's gonna be just a fun learning day. So, I just wanted to share that with everybody.

Dr. Malich: And to piggyback off that, Tammy Malich for the record, the mayor will be visiting as well as Councilwoman Diaz will be on sites for the Tony Hsieh festivities with [inaudible 00:59:03], so thank you for that, Miriam.

Lorna: Is there a specific time?

Miriam: They're all going to be there in the afternoon, probably starting at 12:00.

Lorna: But it would be all day long if...

Miriam: So, in the morning, we have certain activities but in the afternoon, we have like traditional Chinese dance and different things, so the afternoon is when we're going to have the majority of the visitors.

Lorna: So, if anyone is available or would like to, please feel free to visit the campus. And with that, I thank everyone for your participation tonight. And I want to wish you all a Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, and we will see you back here in January. Our meeting is adjourned at this time. Thank you.

Colleen: Happy Holidays, everybody.

Alee: Merry Christmas and happy holidays.

Kristin: Happy holidays, good night.

Alee: Bye. Good night.

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Lorna: Good night.