



# **BOARD MEETING NOTES**

**Wednesday, September 24 | 7:00AM**

## **Board Attendees:**

Gerald Fanion III (chairman), Dani Barlow, Mark Yates, Brandon Arrindell, Brack Henderson, Dr. Linda Tharp

## **I. Opening Session**

- Gerald Fanion welcomed members back for the new school year, this board meeting will be combined with our August 2025 meeting due to board members travel schedule.
- Opening Greeting/Affirmation: (Founder)

## **II. Academic Report (Janice Brown, Principal)**

### **Enrollment & Staffing**

- Total students: 477 (Pre-K-8)
  - Pre-K4: 20 (full)
  - K-8: 457
  - Added one new 4th-grade classroom (largest cohort: 71 students).
  - Added two 8th-grade classrooms and new exploratory/learning spaces.
- Staffing highlights: 26 general ed teachers; SPED; educational assistants; RTI interventionists; Assistant Principal (Ms. Cheree Ray); instructional coach; counselor, social worker, behavior/culture specialist; general secretary; director of school operations.

### **Programs & Compliance**

- Continuing Children in Harmony (arts/music/dance); PE in place.
- New TN physical activity law: K-5 receives +40 minutes/day *beyond* PE and transitions; teachers supervising structured activity.
- Middle school: computer science (meets 8th-grade CS requirement), creative writing, advisory period for enrichment/intervention; Jumpstart (RTI) first hour daily.
- Clubs: Beta Club; NJHS induction slated end of semester.
- Athletics: separate elementary vs. middle school teams; middle school joined TWSAA (Class A small school).

## **Achievement & Growth (most recent year)**

- Overall TVAAS composite: 4 (out of 5).
  - Literacy: 4
  - Numeracy: 5
  - Combined Literacy & Numeracy: 5
- Science/Social Studies growth noted; targeted improvements underway.

## **Curriculum & Instruction**

- New math curriculum (enVision Math) and new TN Science curriculum.
- RTI diagnostic complete; tiers set.
- ~10 teachers attended the Memphis Literacy Conference; focused on comprehension strategies across content areas.

## **Subgroups & Attendance**

- Lowest 25% subgroup: achieved Level 5 (significantly exceeded growth).
- Chronic absenteeism reduced from 21.4% → 16.3% (-5.1 pts). Largest drivers: student or parent illness; transportation is a smaller portion. Continued focus on family engagement and support.

## **Key Dates**

- School Improvement Plan approved by the state.
- September scorecard due Oct 10 (district).
- Quarter ends Oct 10; Fall Break Oct 13–17.
- After-school tutoring begins after Fall Break.
- Fall Festival (Oct) coordinated with Urban Roots.

Board discussion: appreciation for progress; Q&A on chronic absenteeism drivers and proportions.



STAR


ACADEMY

CHARTER SCHOOL

Janice R. Brown

CAO/ PRINCIPAL

September 24, 2025



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CHARTER SCHOOL

2025-26

SCHOOL

OVERVIEW

• Enrollment – 477 PreK-8 students

✓ 20 PreK4

✓ 457 K-8

✓ Added 5 new Classroom Spaces

Instructional Staff

✓ 26 Gen Ed teachers

✓ 1 SPED teacher

✓ 6 Education Assistants

✓ 3 RTI Interventionists

✓ Agricultural Advisor

Administrative & School Support Staff

✓ Assistant Principal Cheree Ray


✓ Instructional Coach

✓ Social Worker (Counselor)

✓ Behavior & Culture Specialist

✓ General Office Secretary

✓ Director of School Operations



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PROGRAM

SNAPSHOT

✓ FINE ARTS (ART & MUSIC)

✓ DANCE

✓ PHYSICAL EDUCATION

✓ COMPUTER SCIENCE

✓ CREATIVE WRITING

✓ ACADEMIC ADVISORY

✓ JumpSTART

□ CLUBS (monthly)

□ BETA Club


□ National Junior Honor Society

□ URBAN ROOTS

◆ Basketball

◆ CHEER

◆ Track



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ACADEMY

CHARTER SCHOOL

STATE OF

THE

SCHOOL


ACADEMICS

TNREADY 2025-26

OVERALL SCHOOL

COMPOSITE SCORE

4



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2025 TCAP SCHOOL

COMPOSITE

(vs 2024)

Year	School Wide		School Wide		School Wide		School Wide	
	Composite	Literacy	Numeracy	Literacy & Numeracy	Science	Social Studies		
2024	1	1	2	1	1	2		
2025	4	4	5	5	2	1		



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2025 TCAP Proficiency Rates

(vs 2024)

Test Info				2025 Results	Proficiency Rate Change
Subject	Grade	Student Group	Proficiency Rate 2025	Proficiency Rate 2024	from 2024 to 2025
ELA	All Grades	All Students	19.2%	23.2%	4.0
Math	All Grades	All Students	20.0%	29.9%	9.9
Science	All Grades	All Students	13.0%	22.6%	9.6
Social Studies	All Grades	All Students	9.4%	9.8%	0.4



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CHARTER SCHOOL

STATE OF

THE

SCHOOL

ACADEMICS

TNREADY 2025-26

(Met plus Exceeded)

• ELA 23.2%

• Math 29.9%

• SCI 22.6%

• SOC 9.8%


• New Math & Science Curriculum

• Envision

• TN Science

• RTI - Diagnostic testing to determine tier groupings

• Engaging in Professional Learning



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2025 TCAP SUBGROUP

BREAKDOWN

Student Group	Year	Test	Subject	Level
All Students	2025	Grades 3-8/EOC	Math/ELA	5
Black or African American	2025	Grades 3-8/EOC	Math/ELA	5
Black/Hispanic/Native American	2025	Grades 3-8/EOC	Math/ELA	5
Economically Disadvantaged	2025	Grades 3-8/EOC	Math/ELA	5
Lowest 25%	2025	Grades 3-8/EOC	Math/ELA	5
Super Subgroup	2025	Grades 3-8/EOC	Math/ELA	5

**2025 Chronic Absenteeism**  
(vs 2024)

School Level Chronic Absenteeism Rates - Aug 26				
		2024-2025		
School	Student Group	% of Chronically Absent Student	% of Chronically Absent Student	Rate Change from 24 to 25
Star Academy	All Students	21.4	16.3	-5.1

**School Improvement Plan (SIP) - Sept. 30th**

**September Scorecard - October 10th**

**FALL BREAK October 13th - 17th**

**After School Tutoring Begins - October 20th**

**Report Card 1 goes home - October 22nd**

**Fall Festival**

**UPCOMING IMPORTANT DATES**

### III. Financial Report (Lindsey McGuire, CFO)

#### Prior Year Recap

- Mid-year **budget adjustments** made (deferred fundraising; moved to operate as own school food vendor).
- **Personnel** over plan due to added staffing for RTI and teacher bonuses tied to growth/achievement.
- **Debt service** higher than plan due to renovation down payment (capital outlay kept at \$0 because project is financed).
- **Building** costs lower after accounting changes; **communications/print** consolidated.
- **Outcome:** Prior year ended with a **positive operating result** (subject to final minor reclassifications).

#### Current Year Budget (High Level)

- **Revenue:** TISA (~\$5.4M projected), Title I, and **First 8** funding; other grants/contributions planned.
- **Major expenses:**
  - **Personnel** (increased headcount to serve enrollment and add 8th grade)
  - **Debt service:** a little over **\$1.0M** this year (includes renovation financing)
  - **Programming:** curriculum, security, etc.
  - Building, supplies, communications/insurance, PD (expanded), dues/subscriptions, professional services (architect).
- **Staff growth:** ~38 → 50 (year-over-year).

#### Year-to-Date (through Aug)

- **Revenue received:** \$614k (TISA received; Title I and First 8 reimbursements submitted but not yet received).
- **Expenditures:** \$865k (personnel ~\$500k; debt service YTD ~\$157k; curriculum/security and building readiness significant).
- **YTD balance:** \$(251k) **temporary operating deficit** typical at school-year start; **true-ups** in **Oct** and **Feb** historically level cash flow.
- **Cash on hand:** ~\$1.113M (before imminent payroll).



## Renovation & Capital Items

- Original board-approved contract: **\$937k**; later re-amortized with **UPS Development** (interest paid at end of term).
- Other items: **Architect \$27k**; **new access control** for middle school entry; **unexpected site costs ~\$10k**; paid moving assistance; **pods & overnight security** for stored materials; **campus camera system** replacement required (quotes ranged **\$300k–\$81k**; pursuing right-sized package).
- Emphasis on transparency and documentation.

Board discussion: legal expense posture (maintain cushion; proactive contract/HR diligence); clarification that **October TISA true-up** brings first relief; **February** brings further normalization.

### Financial Report September 24, 2025



### 2024-2025 Financial Recap



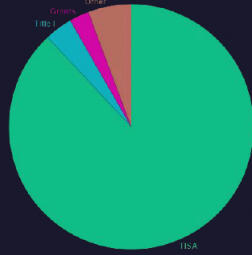
	B-to-A
REVENUE	-3%
EXPENDITURES	
Personnel	5%
Programming	-1%
Debt Service	4%
Capital Outlay	0%
Nutrition Services	0%
Building	9%
Supplies	3%
Repairs & Maintenance	-5%
Communications	-10%
Insurance	2%
Dues and Subscriptions	0%
Professional Services	-2%
Professional Development	-4%
Travel	3%
Marketing & Printing	0%
Total Expenditures	
FUNDING EXCESS/(DEFICIT)	



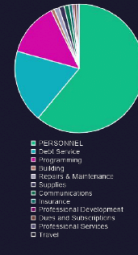
### 2025-2026 Budget



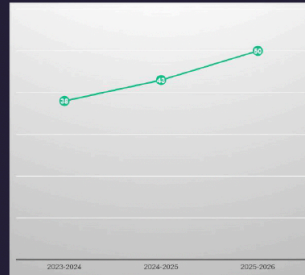
## 2025-2026 Budget (Funding Excess~ \$80k)



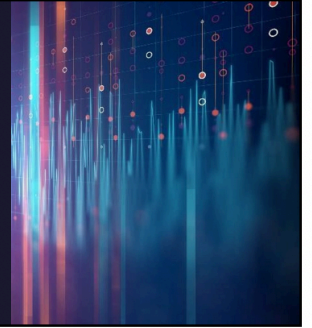
## 2025-2026 Budget (Funding Excess~ \$80k)



## Staff Growth



## 2025-2026 Year-To-Date Comparison



	B-to-A
REVENUE	
TISA Funding	11%
Federal Program: Title-I	13%
Grants	0%
Other Contributions	0%
<b>TOTAL REVENUES</b>	

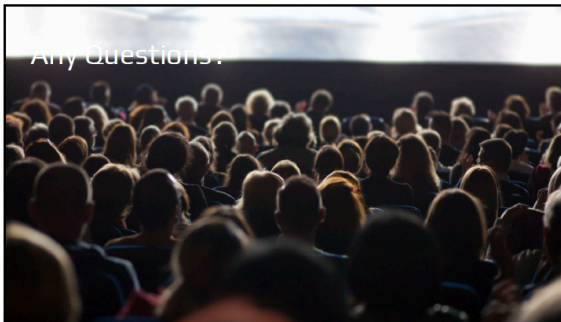
	B-to-A
PERSONNEL	35%
SUPPORT SERVICES	
Debt Service	10%
Programming	18%
Building	15%
Repairs & Maintenance	0%
Supplies	11%
Communications	11%
Insurance	11%
Professional Development	0%
Dues and Subscriptions	0%
Professional Services	54%
Travel	0%
Total Support Services	
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	10%

## 2025-2026 At-A-Glance

- Revenue~ \$614k
- Expenditures~ \$865k
- Funding Deficit~ \$251k
- Cash on Hand~ \$113k



Any Questions?



## IV. Executive Report (Dr. Ed Stephens, Senior Advisor)

### Vision & Phasing

- **Foundational (now):** land acquisition, architectural planning, community engagement; multiple Raleigh sites under review including an **8–10 acre cul-de-sac property** (owner supportive, verbal interest). Exploring **first-right-of-refusal** on adjacent **30–40 acres** to safeguard future surroundings.
- **Launch (2026–27):** break ground on **new campus**; leadership ramp; **high school feasibility** (partner vs. build). Parent demand for continuity beyond 8th grade is strong.
- **Scale (2028–29):** open **1–2 additional campuses**; networked systems/resources; sustained partner investment (non-TISA dollars for real estate/buildouts).
- **By 2030: 2–3 thriving campuses.** Plan envisions **current campus as Pre-K–5 (~500 students)** and a **new state-of-the-art 6–8 middle school** nearby. Targets: **95% family satisfaction**; **18–20:1** student-teacher ratio.

### Urban Roots of Tennessee (separate 501(c)(3))

- Four domains guiding future pathways: **Agriculture, Cybersecurity, Aviation/Aerospace, AI.**
- **Phase 1 agriculture** underway on **~2+ acres**:
  - **Clearwater lake ecosystem** (education + irrigation source; fish habitat tunnel; water plants).
  - **50 cypress raised learning beds** (outdoor lab).
  - **Outdoor pavilion (~200 standing capacity).**
  - **Greenhouse with hydroponics/aquaponics.**
  - **Butterfly/pollinator garden.**
- Produce is already being grown; aiming for a compelling **grand opening** experience.
- Board Chair site visit affirmed momentum; external business leaders expressed interest in partnering.

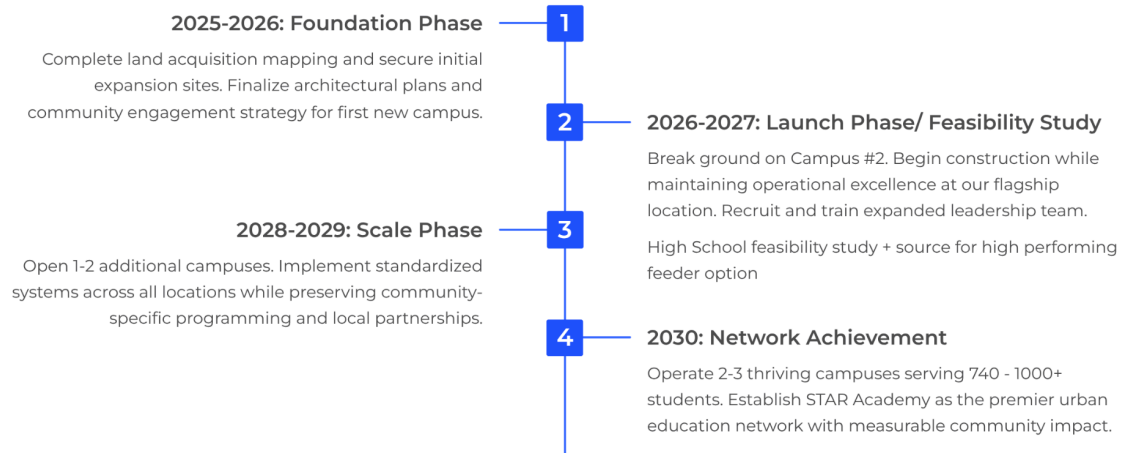
Board Member Tharp suggestion captured: **Explore an all-boys education initiative** as part of growth (short- and long-term scenarios to be brought back for discussion).



# STAR Academy Charter : Executive Report

September 24, 2025

## Road to 2030: Strategic Growth Vision



# Current Campus: Our Proving Ground

**500**

**Student Capacity**

Full enrollment across PK-5 grades

**95%**

**Family Satisfaction**

Annual survey results

**18-20:1**

**Student-Teacher Ratio**

Optimal learning environment

## Operational Excellence Indicators

Our flagship campus demonstrates the scalable systems and community integration that will drive network expansion. Strong academic outcomes, operational efficiency, and deep community roots provide the foundation for replication.

Key strengths include robust family engagement, innovative curriculum delivery, and sustainable financial performance that validates our growth strategy.







# Land Acquisition & Site Strategy

01

## Market Analysis & Mapping

Comprehensive demographic analysis identifying optimal expansion zones. Priority given to underserved communities with strong demand indicators and transportation accessibility.

02

## Site Identification & Evaluation

Active evaluation of 4+ potential properties across target neighborhoods. Focus on 8-10 acre parcels with development flexibility and community integration opportunities.

03

## Community Partnership Development

Establishing relationships with local organizations, district officials, and community leaders to ensure each campus becomes a true neighborhood asset.

04

## Acquisition & Development

Structured approach to property acquisition with phased development plans that align with enrollment projections and operational capacity.

## Maximizing Impact: Network Effects



# Urban Roots : Growing Success

## Student Entrepreneurs

Students develop real business skills through weekly market days, learning sales, marketing, and customer service firsthand.

## Farm-to-Market Impact

We host engaging farm-to-table marketing and community workshops, promoting local food systems and healthy eating habits.

## Hands-on Agriculture Education

Pre-K through 8th-grade students receive hands-on agriculture education, connecting them to food sources and ecological principles.

## Advanced Learning Environments

Our state-of-the-art greenhouse features hydroponics and aquaponics, providing innovative, year-round learning opportunities.



## Urban Roots in Action



### V. Closing Remarks (Gerald Fanion III, Board Chairman)

- **Motion to Adjourn:** Moved by Dr. Linda Tharp, seconded by Brack Henderson.
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