Breakthrough Public Schools

Minutes

BPS & School Board of Directors Meeting

Date and Time
Wednesday September 9, 2026 at 5:00 PM

Location
Hampden Professional Learning Center (10118 Hampden Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio 44108)

Meeting of the Boards of Breakthrough Public Schools, Breakthrough Southeast, Breakthrough Midtown, and Breakthrough Woodland Hills

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Directors Present
A. Amefia, A. Garg, A. Lee, C. Lipscomb, D. Witalec, G. Burrows, J. Freund, L. Mimura (remote), M. Hakim (remote), M. Harris, R. Novak, S. Vyas

Directors Absent
J. LeMay, M. Pena

Guests Present
A. McRae, B. Fisher, D. Sobel, Dr. Youngblood, H. Perkins, J. Kaye (remote), J. Padlan, K. Day, M. Sattler, R. Showalter, S. Ertle (remote)

I. Opening Items

A. Call the Meeting to Order

A. Lee called a meeting of the board of directors of Breakthrough Public Schools to order on Wednesday Sep 9, 2026 at 5:00 PM.

A. Garg called a meeting of the Schools Boards to order on September 9, 2026 at 5:00pm.

B. Record Attendance

C. BPS and School Boards Vote to Approve the Minutes of the June 17, 2026 BPS and School Board of Directors Meeting

J. Freund made a motion to approve the minutes from BPS and School Board of Directors Meeting on 06-17-26.
D. Witalec seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.
M. Harris made a motion to approve the minutes from BPS and School Board of Directors Meeting on 06-17-2026.
R. Novak seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

D. BPS and School Boards Vote to Approve the Minutes of the June 17, 2026 BPS and School Board of Directors Retreat

A. Garg made a motion to approve the minutes from BPS and School Board of Directors Retreat on 06-17-26.
J. Freund seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.
C. Lipscomb made a motion to approve the minutes from BPS and School Board of Directors Retreat 06-17-2026.
M. Harris seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

E. BPS and School Boards Vote to Approve the Minutes of the August 17, 2026 BPS and School Board of Directors Special Meeting

R. Novak made a motion to approve the minutes from Special Meeting of the BPS & School Board of Directors on 08-17-26.
J. Freund seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.
C. Lipscomb made a motion to approve the minutes from Special Meeting of the BPS & School Board of Directors 08-17.2026.
G. Burrows seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

II. Public Comment

A. School Boards Public Comment

No one was present for public comment.

III. School and BPS Boards Approve Consent Agenda

A. School Board Vote to Approve Consent Agenda

M. Harris made a motion to approve the Schools Consent Agenda.
R. Novak seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

B. BPS Board Vote to Approve BPS Consent Agenda

A. Amefia made a motion to approve the BPS Consent Agenda.
D. Witalec seconded the motion.
G. Burrows recused himself from this vote.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

IV. School Board Resolutions

A. Breakthrough Woodland Hills Corrective Action Plan

Dr. McRae explained that as part of our notification based on Woodland Hills' status in the Spring, Buckeye asked us to submit a CAP. This is part of the procedural process, and this plan is a step up on the plan that was submitted last year. The Board read over the document and Dr. Day went over it at the AEC meeting.
G. Burrows made a motion to approve the Breakthrough Woodland Hills Corrective Action Plan.
C. Lipscomb seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

B. SY26-27 EMIS Coordinator Appointment

G. Burrows made a motion to approve the SY26-27 EMIS Coordinator Appointment.
M. Harris seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

V. Sponsor Updates

A. CMSD Updates

Matt Rado provided a couple of CMSD updates -

- Very busy with the start of the school. Pre-opening site visits were done and there were no concerns.
- Every year we are required to get board conflict of interest forms - school board will be receiving that soon. No changes to the form.

- Working in September to get the Fall site visits. They will look at instruction and a majority of the classrooms. CMSD will provide feedback on our instructional approach. Site visits are usually in October/November.

B. Buckeye Updates

Emily Puterbaugh provided a couple of Buckeye updates -

- The board should have received the financial review and sponsor update. BCHF is collecting COI forms and Emily sent a roster over to the board to review
- All Schools meeting - 9/16
- Biannual review - 9/29
- Encouraged all board members to sign up for the Sunshine Laws training 11/7.

VI. FOB Update

A. FOB Updates

Susan informed the board that BOY things are going well including the Alumni and Development team

- The board had a question on the persistence fund and wanted to know if there is a criteria that measures the distribution of those funds
  - There is an application that individuals submit, and it needs to relate to their learning. Parameters around that are within that application that Susan is happy to share. There is a cap with each reward that is applied. And it goes through Beyond Breakthrough through the Alumni Office
- Musa is wondering about a grant for the flock cameras since this has been a charged conversation
  - Matt Sattler chimed in that we wanted to have license plate readers at all the schools, so we currently have LPRs at all of our campuses. We are not sharing any data outside of our existing system. We capture the data in high-res, and we do not share it unless we are subpoenaed or if a crime occurs on property. We wanted to pursue grants in the realm of Safety and Security, but this is aligned with the moves we reviewed in the Spring based on teacher feedback and is not a new item.
- Bill reminded the board there is an election happening soon. There are legislative visits scheduled in the coming weeks (some are candidates, some are with folks already in office) so they can understand who we are and what we do.
- Andrew Lee wants to make sure we have the strongest communication as possible with FOB, so Bill and the chairs are connecting consistently, and Dr. McRae will join the Thursday meetings following board meetings.

VII. Board Updates

A.

Academic Excellence Committee Update

Michelle reminded the group that the general purpose of the AEC is long term strategy, to monitor progress and support the leadership team in their work. One new development is that Dr. Day is serving as the official liaison to the committee. Historically Dr. McRae did this when he was CAO and continued as CEO, but the plan was to always have Dr. Day do so which she has done a fantastic job so far.

They've introduced a year long arc that will have meetings anchored in guided questions. This month the question was, "What outcomes are we looking to achieve and how are we going to meet them?" The conversation was based off of this and the future meetings will align with outcomes.

The structure allowed for accountability on both sides - the committee and the academic team.

There was a question around teacher goals and what they are expected to do and how we will measure them-

- The team had predictive outcomes - teachers will do X and we expect them to do so at this level to reach a goal. This is a research based way to look at step progression in achieving growth. There are weekly observations with feedback and professional development surrounding success and engagement.

Also discussed the Academic Roadmap - there are seven arcs and we are in arc one. Throughout all of the arcs, we'll see high levels of specificity to get us to the strategy.

Dr. McRae discussed the CAP for Woodland Hills prior to the vote earlier in the meeting.

There was a question around the stretch growth data-

- Stretch growth is looking at the amount of students we can get over one year of learning. The percentage is from Fall to Fall, and the insight is that we are getting better at accelerating improvement in students last year.

B. Governance Committee

Cecil started with the update that the GC has been rebuilt - quite a few transitions from last year to now, so the GC has a dynamic group of folks. Thanked the group for being engaged in the first meeting. The GC is supported directly by Dr. Youngblood. Leaders get to sit in on the call and engage. The GC are stewards of the governance process and will be the tip of the spear on Dr. Youngblood's presentation later.

The results from the retreat - sometimes in effective boards the challenges are not technical, they are adaptive. How do we synchronize? What is the momentum we gain from our collective thought? Thanked everyone for being a part and opening up to it.

One of the most encouraging items from Phase 1 is that the board possesses the characteristics of a high performing board. The opportunity before the board is one of evolution, not correction.

After the retreat, what's next? There are three areas of focus that will be the core of Phase 2 that we can leverage when making decisions.

C. CEO Support & Evaluation

Two updates from Sanjay
1) CEO Contract - we worked with outside counsel and external benchmarking.

- Three year extension
- OKRs
- Objectives formulated by Dr. McRae
- Board discretionary that we will discuss near the end of the year
- Should be finalized by the end of September
- New executive committee will take on the work of this committee

2) Eval - we reviewed the board's feedback. Thanked the board and Danielle for their support. People who work closely with Andrew rate him the highest. We focused on strengths and areas of focus, and discussed where we will be spending time. Very productive conversation that was healthy and frank.

If people have more that they would like to discuss, we can spend short time in executive session discussing these personnel matters.

D. Finance Committee Update

Reggie wanted to introduce Rob Showalter - taking over for Celeste and hitting the ground running.

- Before the first finance meeting, Rob and Doug had a quick prep meeting. The team shared that over the summer we were transitioning to a new software and as Rob was working through the new software, all of our school information was being co-mingled.
- We need to have separate reports for each school for their financial reports. We could try and make this system work which would take 5-6 months or a 1 month fix where we go back to the old system.
- Mangen decided to go back to the old system and they are continuing to reconcile the system and any payroll changes are being incorporated into that software.
- There's a meeting on Friday for HR to see if they can use this same software as a sandbox.
- In October, the state software will be the first payroll and then after that comes through, they'll be able to run the financial reports for the previous months.

- Everything is being reconciled and stay tuned for the next update.

Rob's best recommendation is to only to go the new software if we are one IRN; this is why we are going back to what we used to use. In terms of general reporting, that will get resolved in our subsequent meetings throughout the year. We still have monthly conversations with our authorizers, and there are no concerns with materials.

This isn't an auditing or reporting concern. What should have been caught is the conflict between the technical integration.

Question - Is there a third party?

- We use Meta Solutions which host the software and they helped with the conversion to and are helping with the conversation back to the original software,

VIII. Strategic Matters

A. CEO Report

Dr. McRae wanted to discuss the CEO report on summer readiness. This report walks us through the launch of the school year. Our task is to make the promises of Breakthrough real for every scholar in every classroom.

Key Metrics

- 2803 enrolled (99.3% of budget floor)
- 97% staffing filled
- 90% attendance goal

Operational Indicators

- Our campuses are running between 88.6-92.4%
- Strong staffing operation including adding roles to the org

Day-One Operational Readiness

- Facilities: made big investments over the summer and they were ready day one
- Tech: investments strong
- Food Service: improved meal quality
- Safety: expanded investments
- Transportation: WATCH - provider was given late and the procedural changes have lead to slower routing which has had an impact. Weekly trajectory is improving. This continues to be an area where we will need to have expanded conversations

How were these improvements communicated to families?

- Newsletters and we also try to localize this since they are more likely to open communication from their school leadership. Our staff was the target audience for many of our improvements. We are asking a lot of them, so we want their environment to be strong.

Financial Baseline

- Enrollment vs budget floor (2803 vs 2823: -20; -.7%): weekly enrollment, retention and no show monitoring
- Funding exposure: dollar impact not yet defined (we won't be held up on this because of systems issues - we can make projections based on forecasts)
- Staffing plan: 98% filled; 8 open roles and 2 elementary over hires
- Budget action: No amendment proposed in this report.
    - We are tracking expenditures through RAMP and only the monthly upload is what has been held up. This is a systems integration oversight and not a critical issues.

Assurance: Compliance & Risk

- FY2026 external audit: work is in progress; no final conclusion is presented here
- Ohio Report Cards: SY25-26 outcomes are preliminary until 9/16
- Sponsor/Charter Renewal: no new board action is requested in this report
- EMIS Funding Data: Fall enrollment and FTE records remain dynamic

Strategic Review Topics

- Report Card Readout: Final state-validated 25-26 results expected Sept 2026
- Strategic Planning: working with our planning partner Loom, building clarity on key challenges and priorities for evolution
- Board Development Project: Launching Phase 2 of this work, a continuation of the board's retreat in June

Preliminary Results
Headlines

- Seeing meaningful growth that we need to grow into mastery
- Report cards are a reflection of OST results among a number of other indicators that measure school quality
- Report cards show that we are making progress but enough of our students are not yet having a consistent experience
- The goal isn't to come up with a new plan, the goal is to make it so the excellence is the same among all the schools

What we're proud of

- Scholars across BPS showing meaningful academic growth

- Preliminary results show year over year improvement in ELA proficiency

Where we're focused

- Our next chapter is about converting progress into mastery for more scholars.
- Build stronger foundations
- Accelerate Achievement - kids are growing, but we have to be able to translate this to academic outcomes
- Increase consistency and equity - make sure scholars experience and outcomes do not depend on what school or classroom they are in

Looking Ahead

- Our goal is not simply more growth. It is growth that leads to mastery and opportunity.
- Growth to Mastery to Equity
- We have reason to be proud of how far our scholars have come
- Final results are expected in mid-Sept

Questions from the board

- As you raise expectations, as a teacher, that could raise a level of concern. It sounds like you're responding already. Can you dive into that?
    - One of the main concerns from teachers is the lack of time - our response was to adjust the schedule to allow for PD and meetings after school, and we strengthened support through coaches. There was a concern that there wasn't enough time for intervention, so we made that consistent across the schools so all intervention is taking place at the same time. What does support look like? We got a lot of feedback on culture and whether or not there was enough support. We expanded culture support teams by adding assistant and lead DOCs, investing in social workers and counselors, adding focused interventionalists, and lastly we built a differentiated model depending on the specific schools needs.
- Historically, BPS emphasized reading/reading comprehension. Is that something that threads the culture even as we customize the response by school? And what degree does Math get?
    - Reading was somewhere we had to put investments in after covid. We also recognize that we assumed Math was coasting. A series of vacancies in that area also added to this. We made some changes this year to prioritize recruitment and retention. The second thing that we know is that we need to accelerate the improvement which lead to the reformatting of roles. In addition to your core teacher, we have someone who can recognize and work with scholars that need extra help.
- Can you unpack the early literacy, the root causes and what is different this year to ensure the improvements are more consistent across the schools?

  - The gap for us in early literacy is the teaching of phonics in an aligned way. We built a model that gave autonomy to our campuses that wasn't prescriptive enough. We also changed curriculum to allow the teaching of that when we made that change. We were missing a fundamental core, so we are expecting to see that bounce back. There are structural changes we made like adding in an entire phonics period.
- How do we think about success at the mid year?
  - Our midyear indicators include iready data, dibels, and midyear benchmark assessments which can also be found in the packet. One of the questions we get asked a lot is how does iready map to OST data? We will take all of the data and crosswalk those using an assessment that is created by the same folks who created the OST.
- Can we have a tee up of what the communication will look like after report cards?
  - In the back of the packet there are talking points and response points to common questions we get asked. We will also be publishing communication to our families and to the board. We'll create a curated packet for FOB so they have responses to common questions as well. Outside some of our more passionate consumers, we don't get too many questions; however given the context of change in the education system and that attention on report cards in the media is common right now, we have prepared responses. We don't anticipate too much attention, but we have preparations in place in order to respond.

B. Strategic Planning Update

Andrew Lee reminded the board that the strategic process is underway. We're partnering with Loom, so Kesson is going to walk the board through the Strategic Planning Update.

Kesson is a partner at Loom where they focus on education orgs that want to ensure all students have exceptional education.

Objectives:

1. Build a shared understanding of the current state themes and root causes
2. Preview what's ahead

Connecting Phases 1 and 2

- Phase 1 - Current state assessments which helps us answer what is true now
- Rates how far each system is built not how hard people have worked
- Names tensions in the evidence without resolving them

- Loom works with a lot of districts, but they were very impressed in the systems and structures in place at BPS
- Staff who feel known, challenged, and supported
- We want to anchor that BPS is ahead of where many districts find themselves across the country

Key Challenges to Address the plan
- BPS has not yet built a culture of trust, shared ownership, and mutual support between school and home office staff: What indicators are Looms looking at?

- We will name the metrics in a future phase, but the evidence that pointed them in this direction was data that was reported - not feeling heard, not feeling like they're seen for their work, not seeing home office staff in the schools, qualitative feedback
- In a district where this works, you'd see statements like "my best interest is being considered", "I trust the decisions my superintendent is making"
- We believe this is what the home office is doing, but we have to figure out what is causing the gap
- The staff experience isn't equitable (varies by role and identity) - in general, teachers are showing more signs that they aren't valued at the home office. We see wide gaps in satisfaction in race and gender, so what is it about the experience that is leading to this
- Behavior management systems and supports are seen as inadequate - this is primarily teachers but all staff can name this, and the perspective based on role differs
- Student performance is not where is needs to be
- Students are not consistently in school

The board is curious to see if there's AB testing so people can see where there are positive feedback and trust. Is it a personal connection or an administrative understanding? If we can better understand this, the NLT can engage with schools to move that needle.

- Strategic planning committee has different roles to serve as a sounding board. We're also leading ten input sessions to get insight from families and staff to validate a set of root causes. Is this representative of their experiences and would this help you feel better?

From challenges to root causes

- We need teachers and leaders to have the same training
- We need to have a culture of love, joy & belonging
- Opening up the partnership with families
- Responsible use of AI and technology

Priories and Enablers

- Where do we go next?
- Priorities are the high level moves we want to make in the next five years to achieve BPS visions.
- The Enablers are the systems underneath to allow these priorities to happen

What happens next

- Staff input sessions, board feedback, leadership team feedback, strategic planning committee.

C. Board Development Project

Dr. Youngblood walked the board through the retreat findings and what we can expect from the committee meetings coming up
Building High-Performance BPS Governance - Critical Findings Set the Direction for Phase II:

- We've had clients who feel angry and dissonant because everything that went into the process was so intentional, they went through the Hawthorne experience
- Everything in Phase 1 is going to go into Phase 2
- We recognize the sense of urgency, but trust the Khafre methodology so we can capture the complexity of the situation

Critical findings:
93% mission aligned
80% the board understands the importance of governance development
-The board has the right people at the right table and recognizes that if we don't find a proactive way for our development, its going to create an operational drift down the road

What the evidence told us
1) Governance architecture must evolve
2) Info must become governance intelligence
3) Academic performance is the north star
4) The board is ready for the next level

Retreat Experiences Created the Focus for Phase 2

- The retreat was not a one-day event - it was a designed learning environment that converted data into shared language, professional trust, and governance priorities
- We saw that when data is framed in the appropriate contextual way, the board members were already beginning to interrogate the data instead of just responding
- The dialogue and the sharing of info across committees is an essential direction the board needs to go in

- We were able to confirm that adaptability is an essential skill set for this board - focusing on issues and strategic vs adaptive
- Board priority matrix - what happens when the board is able to articulate the changes

What the retreat produced

- Board owned priorities
- Readiness for implementation
- Common governance lexicon

BPS Committee Governance Architecture and Activation
1) Building the board's architecture
2) From oversight to adaptive leadership
3) From Data to Governance intelligence

Build the architecture - develop the people - improve the intelligence
-We will need to build an executive committee design for BPS to meet the needs of this board and where it wants to go

One Operating System for Academic Excellence, Governance, and Finance

- There should be a common structure across all of the committees.
- Specific Khafre solutions team member who will be paired with each committee
- Each committee will have guiding questions

This is going to help streamline processes to make sure the board is hitting the right note at the right time.

Tangible Products and Committee Toolkits
August-October: intentional focus on establishing the infrastructure
Nov-Feb: build capacity and intelligence
Mar-June: Activate and Institutionalize

This model creates the opportunity for far greater collaboration across committees.

Toolkit: revised committee charter & workplan, committee operating manual, committee level issues management guidelines, standardized committee agenda template, redesigned committee reporting template, committee dashboard, data contextualization protocol & toolkit, effective next input to the annual governance reflection

There is a 55 page report from Phase 1, but is that the best way to deliver what the board needs? There's also a 15 page summary delivered in a different way to create an ongoing dialogue.

The purpose of the executive committee is to allow cross committee communication. The appropriate information needs to be shared across committees and the executive committee will help in this cross fertilization, and the committee becomes an essential part in how this is facilitated.

Aditi walked us through the supplementary meeting in August where we proposed a structural solution:
The Tensions We Set Out to Solve
1) Role Clarity - confusion and/or lack of consistency between the responsibilities of a BPS board member, School board member, a committee chair, and a committee member
2) Strategic Bandwidth - current meeting format leaves limited room to move beyond reporting out into real strategic discussion about the current and future state of our schools and BPS org
3) Governance Understanding - incomplete shared understanding of key governance decisions and how the board manages and engages key stakeholders
4) CEO Board Relationship - more desire for a group beyond the chairs to follow whats across the board and committees

What We Heart and Where We Go from Hear

- Proposed in August Supplementary Meeting - change to remove three School board members from the BPS board to create space for strategic discussion
- The desire to sit with the tensions and what can we do in our current structure to help these tensions
- We are holding onto the structural change and how can we maximalize the current structure
- Revisit in November, midway through Phase 2

- Are we making progress with these tensions or do they remain? If they remain, do we go for the structural changes?
    - The plan is to evaluate the tensions - going back to the why, we'll look at how the tensions have been addressed. If they've been mitigated then we'll move forward as is. There will be benchmarks for us to monitor this as well. How will we give the board the space to speak up? If there is a noticeable quiet on the board, we will need to come up with a solution to give voices to those people.
- Will the executive committee be up and running by the November 2nd check in?
    - This body is an important body and if the CEO committee is going to transition to the executive committee, we would think that this would be a priority for the governance committee.

Gap analysis - we want to make sure the executive committee will not create another silo. It can help bridge gap and communication, and we need to be really mindful here. We don't want to displace the current roles and responsibilities that were put into place. We need to understand the why and the analysis.

IX. Executive Session

A. BPS Board Vote to Enter Executive Session

There was no executive session at tonight's meeting.

B. School Boards Vote to Enter Executive Session

There was no executive session at tonight's meeting.

X. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 7:28 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
A. Lee
There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 7:28 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
A. Garg