DRAFT

Brighten Academy

Minutes

Brighten Academy Governing Board Meeting

Date and Time
Monday November 16, 2026 at 6:00 PM

Location
Brighten Academy Media Center

The Brighten Academy Governing Board will meet on Monday, November 16, 2026 at 6:00 pm, in the media center..

Directors Present
E. Hammonds, J. Smith, L. Bryant, M. Vitale, R. Coffee, T. Cabrera

Directors Absent
None

Ex Officio Members Present
S. Wells, T. Washington-Knight

Guests Present
C. Johnson, C. Sparks, Chuck Canady, S. Littles

I. Opening Items

A. Call the Meeting to Order

J. Smith called a meeting of the board of directors of Brighten Academy to order on Monday Nov 16, 2026 at 6:11 PM.

B. Record Attendance

C. Adoption of Agenda

J. Smith made a motion to to adopt the agenda for Nov 16th with amendments.
E. Hammonds seconded the motion.
Amendments include change of order in agenda items
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

D. Approval of Minutes

L. Bryant made a motion to approve the minutes from Brighten Academy Governing Board Meeting on 10-19-26.
M. Vitale seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

II. Public Comment

A. Aknowledgment of Guests

Candy Yu - CFO, Avolon Accounting
Sharon Young - Music Teacher
Tajuan White - Band Director

III. Awards, Proclamations, and Recognitions

A. Award Presentation: Cultural Arts Council Scarecrow Contest Winners

The board recognized the accomplishments of the 8th Grade Art students and acknowledged their contributions and achievements under the leadership of Ms. Luhr, K–8 Visual Art Teacher. Ms. Luhr provided a brief overview of the project, including how it was developed and brought to completion through the dedication and collaboration of students, staff, and school leadership.

During her remarks, Ms. Luhr expressed appreciation to the student participants, school leadership team, and board members for their support and encouragement throughout the process. The board and school leadership congratulated the students and commended them for their creativity, hard work, and representation of the school through the visual arts program.

The following students were recognized: Ivey Jones, Briley Tucker, Jazmine Thomas, Bridget Sanchez, Ryla Moore, Natalie Cellupica, Jayden Bennett, Chloe Sam, Soleia Howington, Harley Timm, Averee Threlkeld, Valerie Zah, Chayse Reynolds, Milani Johnson, Jojo Lauderdale, Alexa Joseph, Maddison Witherspoon, Essie Bryant, and Alice Kalos.

IV. Executive Committee

A. GCSA Conference

The board discussed attendance at the **Georgia Charter Schools Conference (March 8-10)** and the professional development opportunities available for board members. The Executive Director encouraged newly appointed board members to attend if their schedules permit, noting the value of the conference for governance training, charter school best practices, and networking with other charter school leaders.

The Board Chair requested that members notify her as soon as possible regarding their availability and interest in attending so that registration and travel arrangements can be coordinated in a timely manner.

B. Board Retreat II

The board discussed the rescheduling of **Part 2 of the Board Retreat**. Members were informed that an availability survey/email had been distributed to identify a new date and time for the session. Board members were reminded to respond to the availability request as soon as possible to facilitate scheduling and ensure maximum participation.

C. Bylaws Revisions

The board began its review of **Section 3 of the Board Bylaws** and discussed potential revisions. Due to the length and complexity of the section, members determined that additional time was needed to thoroughly review the proposed changes. The board agreed to continue its individual review of Section 3 and provide comments, recommendations, and feedback prior to the next board meeting. No action was taken at this time.

D. Branding & Marketing

Board Chair J. Smith facilitated a brainstorming discussion focused on strengthening and aligning the school's brand identity. The discussion centered on how Brighten Academy is perceived by students, families, staff, and the broader community and what characteristics the school should consistently represent.

Key Themes Identified

- The importance of being recognized for **hands-on learning**, **student achievement**, and a **purpose-driven educational experience**.

- A desire for the school to be known as a place where students are **challenged**, **supported**, and **accepted**.
- Emphasis on creating a school culture that promotes **creativity**, **excellence**, and meaningful learning experiences.
- Recognition that the school should continue building a reputation that reflects strong academics, character development, and student success.

Discussion and Feedback

- Board members discussed what families currently say about the school versus what the board wants families to say in the future.
- Comments highlighted opportunities to strengthen the school's image around **student achievement**, **family engagement**, and the overall school experience.
- Members noted the importance of maintaining consistency in messaging, communications, and stakeholder experiences.
- Discussion also identified areas where the school's mission may not be fully visible, including transitions involving new teachers, leadership visibility, and clearly communicating expectations and school priorities.

Potential Areas for Brand Focus

- Hands-on learning opportunities.
- Creativity and innovation.
- Academic excellence and achievement.
- Student acceptance and belonging.
- Purpose-driven instruction and leadership.
- Strong relationships with families and the community.

Next Steps

- Continue gathering stakeholder feedback regarding the Brighten Academy brand and identity.
- Review current communication materials and touchpoints to ensure consistency in messaging.
- Define and document key brand standards and priorities.
- Clarify roles and responsibilities related to ongoing brand management and communications.
- Revisit branding discussions during future strategic planning and board development activities.

No action was taken by the board. The discussion was conducted as a collaborative brainstorming exercise to support future branding, marketing, and strategic planning efforts.

V. School Leadership Report

A.

Information Only

School leadership presented updates on governance, compliance, operations, student performance, enrollment, and school activities.

- **Staffing:** Leadership reported two instructional resignations affecting fifth-grade and eighth-grade science. The fifth-grade teacher submitted formal notice, while the eighth-grade science teacher left without formal notice. Staffing transitions and classroom continuity are being addressed.
- **Approvals:** The October 5 surplus list remains pending board approval. The November 16 surplus list was presented to the board.
- **Charter compliance:** A possible one-year waiver is being considered to allow current leadership additional time to develop and complete a strategic plan for the upcoming charter renewal. The waiver amendment was signed and submitted to Douglas County School System for approval.
- **Accreditation:** The accreditation process is underway. A small staff team is gathering and reviewing documentation required by Cognia.
- **Safety and security:** Raptor equipment has arrived, installation is scheduled, and staff training is planned for January 4, 2027. Leadership is also implementing a Standard Response Protocol aligned with HB 268, including drills and guidance for responding to critical incidents.
- **Student services and compliance:** Leadership continues to monitor TEKS/LEKS-related requirements and certified 377 F/R students. Monthly checks are being conducted to maintain accurate student records.
- **Strategic planning and finance:** The strategic plan remains in progress, with no new update reported. The finance department continues account reconciliation and preparation of updated financial information.
- **Student performance:** Leadership is reviewing first-quarter assessment data to identify needed interventions and enrichment opportunities.
- **Enrollment and attendance:** Enrollment stood at **792 students**, with one additional student expected. The October attendance rate was **96.66%**, exceeding the school's **97% goal threshold** as reported in the document.
- **Activities and accomplishments:** Basketball season preparations were underway for grades 5–8, and open enrollment activities had begun. Leadership also announced the appointment of Shanice Arce as Administrative Assistant and noted an upcoming Jingle Thru event on December 11.

B. Staff Updates: Areas of Function

VI. Finance Committee

A. Finance Committee

August/September 2026 Consolidated Financial Report

The board received and reviewed the August and September 2026 consolidated financial statements. Management reported that year-to-date revenues exceeded budget by approximately **$35,700**, primarily due to increased field trip revenue. Year-to-date revenues totaled approximately **$2.70 million**, compared to a budget of **$2.67 million**.

Year-to-date expenditures totaled approximately **$2.93 million**, exceeding budget by approximately **$171,700**. Leadership noted that several expenses, including audit services and school nutrition program costs attributable to August, were paid in September, resulting in higher-than-budgeted September expenditures.

As of September 30, 2026, the school reported a **year-to-date operating deficit of approximately $223,000**, compared to a budgeted deficit of approximately **$86,900**. September reflected a monthly deficit of approximately **$264,900**, largely due to the timing of vendor payments, capital outlays, and operational expenditures.

The board also reviewed the school's cash position. Brighten Academy maintained approximately **$4.99 million in cash and cash equivalents**, representing more than **620 days of cash on hand** based on year-to-date expenditures. Leadership reported that the organization remains financially stable with strong liquidity and continued compliance with state financial performance measures. The school earned **85 points**, meeting the State Charter Schools Commission's financial performance standards.

No concerns requiring board action were identified, and leadership will continue to monitor revenues, expenditures, enrollment trends, and cash flow throughout the fiscal year.

Voting will commence at next meeting to approve these financials.

B. Red Rover

M. Vitale made a motion to approve the Red Rover proposal, a platform designed to streamline the management of employee absences, substitute teacher scheduling, and related staff coverage needs.
T. Cabrera seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

C. Avolon Contract

M. Vitale made a motion to approve an extension of the contract with Avolon Accounting Services for continued financial management and consulting services.
T. Cabrera seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

D. E-Rate

The board discussed a proposal for consultant services to manage the E-Rate application process, funding opportunities, requests for proposals (RFPs), compliance requirements, and reimbursement activities. Leadership explained that the consultant would assist the school in maximizing available E-Rate funding and would receive a fee equal to **5% of E-Rate funds received** by the school.
M. Vitale made a motion to approve the engagement of the E-Rate consultant as presented.
R. Coffee seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

E. Closing of Line of Credit

During the meeting, the board received critical real-time information regarding an existing line of credit held in the school's name with Regent Suite Bank. Leadership reported that the line of credit had a **$0 balance** and that the school did not have access to the account. The board discussed the potential risks associated with maintaining an unused line of credit and the need to close the account promptly.

Given the nature of the information received, the board agreed that immediate action was warranted.
M. Vitale made a motion to authorize the immediate closure of the school's line of credit with Regent Suite Bank, which carried a zero balance.
T. Cabrera seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

VII. Governance Committee

A. Policies for Vote

E. Hammonds made a motion to approve Policy G7: Concussion/Return to Play.
L. Bryant seconded the motion.
Prior to discussion and voting, R. Coffee recused himself from both the discussion and vote.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call	
T. Cabrera	Aye
L. Bryant	Aye
J. Smith	Aye
M. Vitale	Aye
E. Hammonds	Aye
R. Coffee	Abstain

E. Hammonds made a motion to approve the following staff policies: F12: Internal Candidates F36: Staff Telework Program F36-E1: Staff Telework Agreement and Schedule F37: Staff Participation in Political Activities F38: Staff Protection F40: Code of Ethics for Staff.

M. Vitale seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

B. Info Only

October Follow-up
F39 - Staff Leave
H7: Food Service Charges

November
B1-E1: Meeting #1
B5-R1: New Board Member Transition
F41: Personnel Evaluations
F41-E1: Professional Development Plan Template - No revisions at this time, will revisit for next school year.
F42: Upgrades in Certification and Pay
F43: Overtime for Non-Exempt Employees
DCSS Policies/Updates - No updates
GADOE Policies/Updates - Advanced Mathematics Requirements, which requires local education agencies to automatically enroll eligible students in Advanced Mathematics courses beginning in the 2027–2028 school year. Eligibility is based on distinguished learner or proficient performance on state mathematics assessments and other approved measures. The policy includes provisions for parental opt-out, support for student readiness and success, and communication with families regarding course access and postsecondary benefits. The policy was adopted on September 23, 2026, and becomes effective October 13, 2026.

The committee discussed proposed policy and procedure updates concerning hiring actions, appointments, and family member contracts. Members to review Section B3 and agreed to remove the language in Section B5-R1.

VIII. Executive Session

A. Exec Session Voting

J. Smith made a motion to to accept the resignation of Alexis Fluellen, 5th Grade Teacher, as presented by school leadership.
L. Bryant seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.
M. Vitale made a motion to not to accept the resignation of Sean Vann, 8th Grade Science Teacher, due to the absence of a formal resignation and the determination that the separation constituted job abandonment.
R. Coffee seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

IX. Other Business

A. Announcements

School Presentation Reminder
The Executive Director announced that a school presentation is scheduled for **Wednesday at 1:15 p.m.** Board members were encouraged to attend if their schedules permit in order to support the school and remain engaged with ongoing academic and program initiatives. No action was taken by the board.

Georgia Chamber/Douglas County Annual Meeting
The board was informed of the upcoming **Douglas County Chamber Annual Meeting**. Members were encouraged to attend the event as schedules permit and to take advantage of networking and community engagement opportunities with local business and civic leaders.

A Season of Splendor – CAC Annual Gala & Auction
The board received information regarding **A Season of Splendor – CAC Annual Gala & Auction**, scheduled for **Saturday, November 21, 2026, from 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.** at the **Douglasville Conference Center**. The fundraising event will feature dinner, entertainment, a silent auction, and recognition through the Arts Advocacy Awards. Board members were encouraged to attend and support the community event if interested.

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 10:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
J. Smith