

APPROVED



Bronx Charter School for the Arts

Minutes

Monthly Board Meeting - In Person at BAE

Board Retreat

Date and Time

Saturday February 7, 2026 at 9:00 AM

Location

In person

BAE

950 Longfellow Avenue

Bronx, NY 10474

Breakfast 8:30 AM - 9:15 AM

Trustees Present

Arlene Bascom (remote), Barbara H. Scott, Charles Whites, David Barnard, Evette Stair-Radlein, Lori Biancamano, Susan Geisenheimer, Zahreen Ghaznavi

Trustees Absent

Denise Brecher, Eric Osorio

Ex Officio Members Present

Kathy Ortiz

Non Voting Members Present

Kathy Ortiz

Guests Present

Joseph Chiofalo, Juan Pimentel, Krisann Vega, Lydia Bremer, Melanie Hok, Patricia Rooney, Ryan McCabe

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

Barbara H. Scott called a meeting of the board of trustees of Bronx Charter School for the Arts to order on Saturday Feb 7, 2026 at 9:14 AM.

C. Approve Minutes

Zahreen Ghaznavi made a motion to approve the minutes from Monthly Board Meeting on 01-13-26.

Lori Biancamano seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

II. Executive Director Report

A. Mid Year Academic Progress report

Kathy Ortiz, opened the meeting with gratitude for staff and leadership. She provided an update on enrollment remains strong above 580 students despite a few families relocating. Attendance dipped due to winter illnesses but is improving.

SPED enrollment is increasing to about 22%, which is roughly in line with the district's 22–23%. However, the ELL population appears lower than the district's 18%, mainly because many students are testing out of eligibility more quickly. Even after testing out, the school must continue providing services for two years, though these students are no longer counted officially as ELLs. As a result, about 20% of students still receive ELL services but are not reflected in official data. This creates a challenge, as the state evaluates targets based on reported numbers, which may unfairly penalize the school despite student progress.

The school gets dinged by the state in meeting our targets, but this happens because students successfully test out of services. To address this, the school tracks how many students test out each year and includes that data in its renewal narrative.

January is a pivotal time for the instructional team. After spending the fall learning about students and adjusting instruction, teachers use January K–8 assessments to reassess

progress and plan for the rest of the year. The focus is intense, aiming not only for strong state exam performance but for students to meet their standards and goals across all subjects, including arts, which are treated as part of the core academic program.

Krisann Vega, provided an update on BAE's winter NWEA data, showing overall improvement in K–5 student performance since the fall, with percentile gains and fewer students in the lowest band. Strong reading growth is seen in kindergarten and third grade, while second grade results were affected by many new student enrollments. Math performance has improved significantly with the implementation of iReady Math, though fourth and fifth grades particularly classes with higher SPED populations remain an area of concern.

The school is addressing these challenges through targeted coaching, strengthened MLL and SPED supports, data-driven instruction, and after-school Prep Club for students nearing proficiency. The action plan also includes frequent progress monitoring, classroom collaboration, and focused data reviews to identify skill gaps and improve outcomes, particularly for upper-grade SPED and MLL students.

Mr. Ryan McCabe, reported that BAM is experiencing its strongest mid-year academic growth to date, with more than 50% of students already meeting their math growth goals by January. Progress is driven by intensive instructional practices, including weekly teacher feedback, student work analysis, targeted coaching, and data-driven instruction. The school has identified writing skills as a key factor in improving ELA proficiency. While gains are significant, the goal remains 100% proficiency for all students.

New supports such as the daily Learning Lab intervention block, after-school test prep, and explicit test-taking instruction are helping address learning gaps, including those for SPED and MLL students. BAE students transitioning to BAM are also showing rapid academic growth. Overall, the school attributes its progress to strong instructional practices, real-time data use, targeted support, and a continued commitment to student success.

Juan Pimentel, highlighted the strength of the Bronx Arts community—leadership, board, teachers, and students—crediting their collaboration for the growing success of the arts program. Student participation continues to rise, including a significant increase in middle school musical auditions. Sixth graders now begin arts majors earlier, increasing engagement, and the school has expanded opportunities through partnerships with organizations such as the Met Opera, Fordham University, and Concerts for Compassion.

A major milestone is the completion of a vertically aligned K–8 arts curriculum aligned with state and national standards, integrating music, dance, theater, visual arts, and STEAM. Students demonstrated exceptional professionalism in the BAM musical, independently managing the entire production. Upcoming events include spring

showcases, Jazz on Longfellow, *Beauty and the Beast Jr.*, and collaborative arts and STEAM exhibitions across campuses.

III. Facilities & Real Estate

A. Update

David Barnard provided an update on facilities and long-term planning. Major building repairs (roof and skylights) are in progress, with HVAC upgrades planned next. The school is working with Ps Wrx to negotiate with Civic Builders to regain repurchase rights to the building. The goal is long-term ownership and possible expansion to address space limitations, such as the lack of recreation and performing arts areas. The board believes its strong track record as a tenant and alignment with Civic Builders' nonprofit mission support its case, though negotiations may be complex. Overall, the board's vision is to establish the school as a lasting academic and community hub.

IV. Break

A. Break

10 - 15 Minutes Break, The meeting then transitioned into a short break.

V. Development & Communications Report + Group work

A. Update

Kathy Ortiz and Joseph Chiofalo led a discussion on fundraising strategy. The board reviewed progress on donor re-engagement, new donor outreach, partnerships, sponsorships, grants, and visibility, noting strong results with past donors but ongoing focus needed on new donor growth and securing sponsors. They brainstormed concrete commitments, including each member providing 10 new donor prospects, personally inviting guests to events, hosting small cultivation events in Manhattan, leveraging professional networks and corporate matching, increasing student performances in new venues, strengthening alumni tracking and testimonials, and enhancing LinkedIn and social media presence through board storytelling and amplification.

The discussion focused on strengthening fundraising efforts by building a clear donor journey, increasing engagement touchpoints, and leveraging board networks more strategically. Board members participated in interactive activities, including a school history trivia game and a gallery walk featuring QR-coded video testimonials from students, families, and alumni to highlight Bronx Arts' impact.

The team also introduced a peer-to-peer fundraising platform through Bloomerang for **Jazz on Longfellow**, encouraging board members to raise at least \$1,000 through their networks. Board members received new board books with key information and branded gifts to support outreach efforts. The meeting concluded with appreciation, reminders

about upcoming events including the March 12 auction and encouragement to continue expanding support for the school's mission.

VI. Upcoming Events

A. Update

Kathy Ortiz shared an overview of upcoming events and reviewed the schedule for upcoming committee meetings, including the Facilities, Executive, Finance, and Program Committees, leading up to the full Board Meeting on March 10. She also highlighted the upcoming Art Auction scheduled for March 12.

VII. 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 12:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Lori Biancamano