Strong Start Academy

STRONG START ACADEMY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AT THE TONY HSIEH EDUCATION CENTER

BOARD MEETING AGENDA 08/14/2025

Published on August 9, 2025 at 2:28 PM PDT

Date and Time

Thursday August 14, 2025 at 5:00 PM PDT

Location

City Hall, 495 S Main St, 1st floor, Las Vegas, NV 89101

Agenda

		Purpose	Presenter	Time
I.	**Opening Items**			**5:00 PM**
A.	Call the Meeting to Order		Lorna James-Cervantes	3 m
B.	Record Attendance		Lorna James-Cervantes	1 m
C.	Public Comment		Lorna James-Cervantes	3 m

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.

		Purpose	Presenter	Time
	The amount of discussion, as well as the amount of time any single speaker is allowed, will be limited to three (3) minutes absent Board approval. Public comment may also be given by calling 1-415-655-0001 and entering access code number 2661 607 3009 followed by the # sign.			
D.	Approve Minutes from May 08, 2025 and July 28, 2025 Board Meetings.	Approve Minutes	Lorna James-Cervantes	1 m
II.	**Finance**			**5:08 PM**
A.	Discussion for possible action to approve the AB398 Plan and Teacher Raise Allocation Workbook for the 25-26 school year.	Vote	Kristin Dietz	7 m
III.	**Executive Update**			**5:15 PM**
A.	Report by the Executive Director on the status of on-going marketing efforts, open-enrollment, and recruiting.	Discuss	Miriam Benitez	5 m
B.	Discussion for possible action to adopt the i-Ready Assessment as the Read by Grade Three (RBG3) Assessment for the 2025–2026 school year.	Vote	Miriam Benitez	3 m
C.	Report by the Executive Director regarding the Summary of Whistleblower Protections for Testing Administration for the 2025-2026 school year.			5 m
IV.	**Governance**			**5:28 PM**
A.	Discussion regarding Board committee updates and calendar events.	Discuss	Lorna James-Cervantes	5 m
B.	Discussion for possible action to appoint a new Secretary based on expressions of interest from board members.	Vote	Lorna James-Cervantes	2 m
V.	**Facilities**			**5:35 PM**

		Purpose	Presenter	Time
A.	Report by the City of Las Vegas regarding status of construction of new building at Strong Start Academy.	FYI	Angela Rose	5 m

VI. Citizens Participation

Public comment during this portion of the agenda must be limited to matters within the jurisdiction of the Board. No subject may be acted upon by the Board unless that subject is on the agenda and is scheduled for action. If you wish to be heard, come forward and give your name for the record. The amount of discussion on any single subject, as well as the amount of time any single speaker is allowed, may be limited. Public comment may also be given by calling 1-415-655-0001 and entering access code number 2661 607 3009 followed by the # sign.

VII. Closing Items

A.	Adjourn Meeting	FYI

Facilities are provided throughout City Hall for the convenience of persons with disabilities.
Reasonable efforts will be made to assist and accommodate persons with disabilities or impairments.
If you need an accommodation to attend and participate in this meeting,
please call Missy Fredriksen at 702-229-6242 and advise of your need at least
48 hours in advance of the meeting. Dial 7-1-1 for Relay Nevada.

THIS MEETING WAS PROPERLY NOTICED AND POSTED AT THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE NOTICING STANDARDS
AS OUTLINED IN NRS 241.020:
Strong Start Academy Elementary School website www.clvstrongstartes.org
City Hall, 495 S Main St, 1st floor, Las Vegas, NV 89101
The Nevada Public Notice website – notice.nv.gov

Coversheet

Approve Minutes from May 08, 2025 and July 28, 2025 Board Meetings.

Section:	I. Opening Items
Item:	D. Approve Minutes from May 08, 2025 and July 28, 2025 Board Meetings.
Purpose:	Approve Minutes
Submitted by:	
Related Material:	DRAFT_Board_Meeting_Minutes_5.8.25 - Copy (1).pdf DRAFT_Board_Meeting_Minutes_7.28.25.pdf

Lorna James-Cervantes, President
Dr. Alain Bengochea, Secretary
Maria Tamayo-Soto, Treasurer
Dachresha Harris, Officer
Dr. Alee Moore, Officer
Astrid Angulo, Officer
Angela Scurry, Officer
Tari Smethurst, Officer

Miriam Benitez, Executive Director

DRAFT Board Meeting Minutes of the Strong Start Academy Board Meeting

Date: Thursday, May 8, 2025
Time: 5:00 PM PST
Location: City Hall, 495 S. Main Street, Fifth Floor, Las Vegas, NV

I. Opening Items

- **A.** The meeting was called to order by Chair Lorna James-Cervantes at 5:04 PM with confirmation of quorum.
- **B. Roll Call**
  1. **Present**: Lorna James Cervantes, Dr. Alain Bengochea, Dr. Alee Moore, Angela Scurry, Maria Tamayo-Soto
  2. **Absent**: Dachresha Harris, Astrid Angulo, Tari Smethurst
- **C. Public Comment**
  1. No public comments were made during this portion of the agenda. No comments received via WebEx, email, or phone.
- **D. Approval of Minutes**
  1. The minutes from the April 10, 2025 meeting was reviewed and approved.
     i. **Motion**: Maria Tamayo Soto; **Second:** Angela Scurry; **Vote:** Approved;

II. Finance

- **A. Financial Reports:** Presented by Kristin Dietz
  1. FY24-25 forecasted net income: $225,991, an increase of $31,276 from prior month.
     i. Adjustments included: rebalanced nutrition program and health benefits expenses.
     ii. Strong cash balance of $2.2M (182 days on hand).
     iii. Grant spending on track; liabilities remain low.

iv. Balance sheet reviewed with GASB non-cash adjustments outlined.

2. FY25-26 Final Budget Approval (Public Hearing and Action Item)
    i. Total revenue: $4,790,704
    ii. Net income: $32,305
    iii. PCFP per student rate reduced to $9,416 as per authorizer guidance.
    iv. Federal and city grants unchanged; staffing increase of 3 FTEs with COLA and PERS adjustments included.
    v. Motion: Lorna James-Cervantes; Second: Dr. Alee Moore; Vote: Unanimous approval, no abstentions

III. Executive Updates

A. Marketing and Enrollment Report: Presented by Miriam Benitez

1. **Enrollment for 2025–2026:** Enrollment stands at 270 students (target: 280); only 30 seats remain open
    i. Outreach via Downtown Project and CCSD neighboring schools.
    ii. Waitlists exist in Kinder, 1st, and 3rd grade. 2nd grade has only 2 open spots.
    iii. Additional marketing (e.g., with Grafica) to be considered if needed.

IV. Governance

A. FY24 Financial Performance Rating

1. All metrics now rated "Meets Standard" after revisions by SPCSA and follow-up from EdTec.

B. FY24 Tax Return (Form 990)

1. Prepared by CLA; reviewed by Kristin Dietz and Miriam Benitez.
2. Informational only; no action required.

C. Committee Updates and Calendar Events

1. Surveys received: 9 (staff), 3 (parents); overall positive feedback.
2. Continued emphasis needed on improving communications.
3. Survey deadline extended one week; outreach methods discussed.
4. Results to inform Director evaluation at the July board retreat.

D. July Retreat Agenda Planning

1. Retreat Date: July 28, 2025 - Includes: board governance training, celebration/deltas discussion, expectation review, year-end data review, staffing metrics, committee work time.
2. Potential board member school shadowing discussed as future option.

V. Facilities:

A. **Construction Update on New Strong Start Academy Building:** Presented by Angela Rose and Tammy Malich, City of Las Vegas
    1. Expansion project began January 2025; estimated completion: late October to mid-November 2025. Delays caused by utility coordination and supply chain issues (notably switchgear).

VI. Citizens' Participation

A. **Public Comment and Adjournment**
    1. No public comments were made during this portion of the agenda. No comments were received via WebEx, email, or phone.
    2. Chair Lorna James-Cervantes informed the board that due to a change in the submission deadline for the board's annual self-reporting checklist—now due in June rather than August—the board may need to convene a brief, one-item meeting in late May or June. This meeting would be conducted virtually, if necessary, to ensure compliance. Board members were advised to monitor their schedules and remain flexible should the additional meeting be required

VII. Adjournment

A. The meeting was adjourned by Chair Lorna James-Cervantes at 5:51 PM

Lorna James-Cervantes, President
Maria Tamayo-Soto, Treasurer
Dachresha Harris, Officer
Dr. Alee Moore, Officer
Angela Scurry, Officer
Tari Smethurst, Officer
Alicia Arroyo, Officer
Roxann McCoy, Officer
Vanessa Mari, Officer

Miriam Benitez, Executive Director

DRAFT Board Meeting Minutes of the Strong Start Academy Board Meeting

Date: Monday, July 28, 2025
Time: 9:00 AM PST
Location: City Hall, 495 S. Main Street, First Floor Training Room 3, Las Vegas, NV

I. Opening Items

A. The meeting was called to order by Chair Lorna James-Cervantes at 9:06 AM with confirmation of quorum.

B. Roll Call

1. **Present**: Lorna James-Cervantes, Angela Scurry, Maria Tamayo-Soto, Dachresha Harris, Dr. Vanessa Mari, Alicia Arroyo Arias, Roxann McCoy, Dr. Alee Moore (arrived during III.A)
2. **Absent**: Terry Smethurst

C. Public Comment

1. No public comments were made during this portion of the agenda. No comments received via WebEx, email, or phone.

D. Approval of Minutes

1. No The minutes from the May 21, 2025 meeting was reviewed and approved.
    i. **Motion**: Maria Tamayo Soto; **Second:** Dachresha Harris; **Vote:** Unanimously approved

E. Introduction of New Board Members

1. New Members Introduced
    i. Dr. Vanessa Mari: Board Representative
    ii. Alicia Arroyo Arias: Board Representative
    iii. Roxann McCoy: Board Representative

II. Finance

- **A. Financial Reports:** Presented by Kristin Dietz
  - **1.** Net income forecast for May: $230,256
    - **i.** Average daily enrollment: 212 students Strong cash balance of $2.2M (182 days on hand).
    - **ii.** Health insurance cost savings and local receipts resulted in adjustments
    - **iii.** Cash reserves > $2 million, well above required 30-day minimum
    - **iv.** All federal grants fully spent except $16K in Title I earmarked for summer PD
    - **v.** No compliance issues reported by authorizer
- **B. Discussion for possible action to approve the AB398 Plan and Teacher Raise Allocation Workbook:**
  - **1.** Plan developed to distribute $78,638 in state-allocated
    - **i.** Tiered allocation based on tutoring and extra-duty hours
    - **ii.** Board members requested alignment between plan narrative and available data
    - **iii.** Legal counsel advised revision and return for August 14 approval
    - **iv.** Action Taken: Item tabled for revision. No vote taken.

III. Executive Updates

- **A. Marketing and Enrollment Report:** Presented by Miriam Benitez
  - **1.** **Enrollment for 2025–2026:** Enrollment stands at 269 students (target: 280); only 31 seats remain open
    - **i.** Grades K, 1st, and 4th full with waitlists; Grades 2nd, 3rd, and 5th still open
    - **ii.** Supports in place: after-school tutoring, Saturday school, Safekey
    - **iii.** Board members discussed additional support ideas and retention factors
- **B.** Parent Handbook and Test Security Plan
  - **1.** Updates presented included changes to names, dates, attendance policy, and appeals
    - **i.** **Motion:** Dachresha Harris; **Second:** Angela Scurry; **Vote:** Unanimously approved
- **C.** Enrollment and Attendance Audit
  - **1.** Annual audit completed with no findings; school was in full compliance
- **D.** Transportation Plan Approval
  - **1.** Revised to reflect SPCSA language and recent guidance
  - **2.** Transportation now includes all students in summer, field trips (2 per grade), and RTC passes
    - **i.** **Motion:** Lorna James-Cervantes; **Second:** Maria Tamayo Soto; **Vote:** Unanimously approved

IV. Governance

A. Executive Director Evaluation Form

1. Chair Lorna James-Cervantes proposed using the same evaluation format used the prior year.
    i. Format consists of a narrative structure covering all required leadership indicators.
    ii. General consensus of the board was supportive of reusing the same tool for the current cycle.

B. Committee Updates and Calendar Events

1. Brief discussion held regarding standing committees and upcoming board calendar.
2. Informational only; no action required.

C. Officer Appointments

1. **President:** Lorna James-Cervantes (re-elected)
2. **Treasurer:** Maria Soto (re-elected)
3. **Secretary:** Position remains open; to be discussed further.

V. Facilities:

A. Construction Update on New Strong Start Academy Building: Presented by Angela Rose

1. Expansion project began January 2025; estimated completion: November 2025.
2. Ongoing challenges: Major concern involves NV Energy's delayed power shutoff schedule and the need for backup generators across campus.
3. Safety, compliance, and operational readiness are being coordinated, including temperature control, fire systems, and building occupancy requirements.
4. Legal counsel confirmed city oversight is in place and additional legal review will follow once the power plan is finalized.

VI. Citizens' Participation

A. Public Comment and Adjournment

1. No public comments were made during this portion of the agenda. No comments were received via WebEx, email, or phone.

VII. Adjournment

A. The meeting was adjourned by Chair Lorna James-Cervantes at 10:49 AM

Coversheet

Discussion for possible action to approve the AB398 Plan and Teacher Raise Allocation Workbook for the 25-26 school year.

Section: II. Finance
Item: A. Discussion for possible action to approve the AB398 Plan and Teacher Raise Allocation Workbook for the 25-26 school year.
Purpose: Vote
Submitted by:
Related Material:
AB398Guidance_FINAL.pdf
Strong Start_AB398 Teacher Raise allocation worksheet -7.29.25 v2.xlsx-redacted names (1).xlsx

AB398 (Teacher Raise) Guidance

ALLOCATION METHODOLOGY & KEY DEFINITIONS

Each school's October 2024 "Employee Information for All Staff" was used to calculate the total number of full-time equivalent (FTE) charter school teachers and educational support professionals in Nevada. For charter holders not in the SPCSA portfolio, the LEA provided this information. This total, excluding administrators, was divided into the FY26 allocation of $19,314,297, resulting in an amount of approximately $3,000.00 per eligible FTE. Each contracted charter holder will receive one allocation of funds, and governing boards will have the flexibility to designate which employees will receive the funds (excluding administrators).

Educational support professional is defined as a person, other than a teacher or administrator, who is an employee of a charter schoo**l**, including, without limitation:

- Paraprofessionals/instructional aides
- School police officers, school resource officers, and other providers of security services
- School nurses
- School counselors
- School psychologists
- School social workers
- School bus drivers
- Secretaries/administrative assistants
- Bookkeepers
- IT specialists
- Custodial and maintenance staff
- Food service staff

A *teacher* is defined as a person licensed pursuant to chapter 391 of NRS who is classified by the governing body of a charter school:

- An individual who spends at least 50 percent of his or her work year providing instruction or discipline to pupils; or
- As instructional support staff, who does not hold a supervisory position and who spends not more than 50 percent of his or her work year providing instruction to pupils. Such instructional support staff includes, without limitation, librarians and persons who provide instructional support.

An *administrator* refers to a person who spends at least 50 percent of their work year supervising other staff or licensed personnel, or both, and who is not classified by the governing body of a charter school as a professional-technical employee. Examples include executive directors, principals, CEOs, vice principals, etc.

TIMELINE

June 15, 2025 - Each charter holder in Nevada shall submit to the State Public Charter School Authority a statement of the number of teachers and education support professionals employed by the charter school on October 1, 2024.

July 15, 2025- SPCSA submits compiled information to the Interim Finance Committee, estimating the total amount of money that the Authority will be authorized to distribute to each charter holder for Fiscal Year 2025-2026 (FY2026).

August 15, 2025- Each charter holder in Nevada shall submit to the State Public Charter School Authority a plan by the charter holder to increase compensation for teachers and education support professionals for each campus.

September 15, 2025- SPCSA shall compile and submit to the Interim Finance Committee the plans submitted by each charter holder for FY2026.

AUGUST 15 PLAN REQUIREMENTS

The SPCSA, alongside this guidance document, has provided the "AB398 Teacher Raise Allocation Worksheet." The SPCSA has completed certain portions of the worksheet, which include: the name of the contract holder, the LEA, the total number of eligible employees (FTEs), and the dollar amount to be awarded to the charter holder. For SPCSA-sponsored schools, eligible FTE counts were based on the October 1, 2024, "Employee Information for All Staff." For charter schools not in the SPCSA portfolio, this information was submitted by the LEA before the June 15, 2025, deadline.

In accordance with AB398, charter holders must describe the manner in which money distributed to the charter school will be allocated among the teachers and education support professionals employed by the charter school. This funding must provide for an increase in compensation for teachers and education support professionals, which does not replace or supplant any other form of compensation that was provided to teachers or education support professionals as approved by the board in the FY26 final budget; therefore, if the charter holders board had, before the passage of AB398 increased salary schedules or negotiated contracts with a salary increase, AB398 money cannot be used to fulfill that obligation. AB398 dollars must be in addition to any already approved raises. To comply with these requirements, the AB398 Teacher Raise Allocation Worksheet also includes several sections that the charter holder is responsible for filling out.

On Tab 1, "Summary Page," any information highlighted in blue must be completed by the charter holder. Specifically, the allocation methodology narrative describing, in detail, how the board authorized the distribution of funds. It is assumed that all eligible employees received these funds unless they are identified in the narrative as not being included. Indicate in the narrative if AB398 dollars will be used to pay the PERS benefit associated with the salary increase or if the school will absorb that expense. Two examples follow:

- "ABC123 Charter School did not include paraprofessional, food service workers, administrative assistants, or bus drivers because the school has competitive salaries for these positions; as such, our board determined to allocate all the funds to licensed teachers and educational support professionals whose salaries were less competitive. In FY25, we lost 13 teachers and counselors to outside entities because we were unable to provide competitive salaries. By using these allocations as outlined, we believe we will be better positioned to hire and maintain a highly qualified staff. One of our campuses qualifies as a Title I school. The board determined that teachers at the Title I school would receive a $ 5,100 raise. Teachers at non-Title I schools would receive a $4,500 raise. Educational support professionals raises varied by position. The school will pay the PERS amount associated with this raise out of the general fund."
- "XYZ Charter School included all employees except the administrative assistants and custodial staff in the raises. Historically, we have not had any issues hiring and maintaining individuals in these positions at current salary levels. The board determined to give licensed employees a slightly higher raise, $3900, than non-licensed employees, $2700. The board will use AB398 funds for the additional PERS benefit resulting from the raises."

The narrative MUST match the detailed distribution list on Tabs 2-11 (the campus detail tabs). For example, you cannot say the school chose to cover the PERS increase with general fund dollars and then mark EE on the campus worksheets, or cite only teachers in the narrative and then include counselors, social workers, reading specialists, nurses, etc., in the campus details.

Additionally, the board chair and the school leader must sign this page, acknowledging the following:

- Pursuant to AB398 Sec.8.7.1 approved during the 2025 Legislative Session, "...allocation to the State Public Charter School Authority to provide money to charter schools for salary increases for teachers and education support professionals...", and, "....money appropriated by subsection 1 must be used to supplement and not supplant or cause to be reduced any other source of funding for the support of charter schools or the salary and compensation of teachers or education support professionals employed by any charter school."
- Funds awarded to each charter holder may only be used for salary increases instituted after the implementation of AB398 in the 2025-26 school year. Funds may also be used for PERS benefits directly associated with said salary increases. However, funds may NOT be used for benefit rate increases or salary increases issued before awarding of funds in the 2025-26 school year.
- Charter holders agree to account for funds separately in accordance with SPCSA and NDE-approved accounting methodology, including designated funds and account codes. Schools that do not allocate and report these funds appropriately will not be eligible for 2026-2027 funding.

Finally, the total utilization amount on line 12 must equal the total award pre-populated on line 11. This amount is tallied from the individual campus totals.

Tabs 2-11 are the campus detail tabs. Each charter holder should complete a separate tab for each charter campus, noting the name of each campus at the top of each tab. The charter holder should fill out only the cells highlighted in blue. Please leave any unused campus tabs blank. **DO NOT DELETE the tabs**.

Charter holders can distribute their allocation to best fit their needs. The dollars do not have to be distributed equally among all eligible employees. Tabs 2-11 should only include the names and positions of employees who are receiving compensation increases utilizing AB398 funds. Detailed instructions are included within the workbook.

If your school has a unique circumstance not contemplated by the "AB398 Teacher Raise Allocation Worksheet," please reach out to Director Mackedon by August 1, 2025, to determine next steps.

Due August 15, 2025

The following is what each charter holder will be required to submit:

- AB398 Teacher Raise Allocation Workbook signed by both the organization's leader and board chair. Each campus must have its own tab. Do not delete unused tabs!
- Agenda for the board meeting where the school board approved the AB398 Teacher Raise Allocation Workbook.
- Draft or final minutes representing the board's approval of the plan for distributing these dollars.
- A copy of the charter holder's standard teacher contract and an education support professional contract, if applicable.

These documents will be due to the SPCSA on **August 15, 2025**. SPCSA staff will not have the capacity to track down these documents or work with schools on corrections. If a charter holder does not submit ALL required documents, they will not be included in the approval process and will not receive funding.

SPCSA-sponsored schools will submit all required documents to Epicenter. The other LEAs are responsible for submitting the required documents for all schools in their portfolio in a single zip drive, if applicable, with a separate folder for each charter holder in the portfolio. These should be emailed to info@spcsa.nv.gov with the subject line "AB 398."

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Please be advised that any school that does not submit timely and accurate reporting as required will be ineligible for funding in the next fiscal year.

Within 45 days of final IFC approval, each charter holder must submit a board-approved FY26 Amended Final Budget that incorporates these dollars through the creation of a new fund. The new fund code will be 220, and SPCSA staff will guide how to further code the expenditures of AB398 funds in accordance with the NDE chart of accounts.

By August 1, 2026, each charter holder that received a distribution from the money appropriated shall submit a report to the State Public Charter School Authority, which includes, without limitation:

- Detailed information on how all the money received pursuant to this section was spent by the charter school during the immediately preceding fiscal year; and
- The actual increase to the salary of teachers and education support professionals employed by the charter school during the immediately preceding fiscal year, and the amount of such an increase for which the money received was spent.

By October 1, 2026, the State Public Charter School Authority shall compile and submit to the Interim Finance Committee the reports received by the Authority.

As these deadlines approach, the SPCSA will communicate the specific requirements.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Is matching required? NO, matching is not required

Can the money be used to cover the PERS rate increase that takes effect in FY26? NO, AB398 funds cannot be used to cover the cost of the PERS rate increase. However, they can be used to cover the cost of the PERS contribution benefit directly associated with the salary increase. Example: Employee ABC receives a $ 1,000 salary increase, and the employee is enrolled in the Employer Pay Contribution Plan (EPC) through PERS. The associated 36.75% contribution associated with the raise ($367.50) can be covered with AB398 funds.

Notice

The following file is attached to this PDF. You will need to open this packet in an application that supports attachments to pdf files, e.g. Adobe Reader:

Strong Start_AB398 Teacher Raise allocation worksheet -7.29.25 v2.xlsx-redacted names (1).xlsx

Coversheet

Report by the Executive Director on the status of on-going marketing efforts, open-enrollment, and recruiting.

Section: III. Executive Update
Item: A. Report by the Executive Director on the status of on-going marketing efforts, open-enrollment, and recruiting.
Purpose: Discuss
Submitted by:
Related Material: August 2025 Enrollment Update.pdf

Recruiting

- In conversations with Graphicka about launching a campaign to increase enrollment and raise community awareness.

25-26 Enrollment

- 260 students enrolled (31 seats available)
  - Asian - .77%
  - African American - 11.54%
  - Caucasian - 4.62%
  - Hispanic - 78.46%
  - Multiracial - 4.23%

25-26 Enrollment

- **260 student registered (40 seats available)**
- Kindergarten - 56 students (4 students in process of registration)
- 1st grade - 62 students (full w/ waitlist)
- 2nd grade - 53 students (7 seats available)
- 3rd grade - 44 students (16 seats available)
- 4th grade - 20 students (full w/ waitlist)
- 5th grade - 25 seats (15 seats available)

Coversheet

Discussion for possible action to adopt the i-Ready Assessment as the Read by Grade Three (RBG3) Assessment for the 2025–2026 school year.

Section: III. Executive Update
Item: B. Discussion for possible action to adopt the i-Ready Assessment as the Read by Grade Three (RBG3) Assessment for the 2025–2026 school year.
Purpose: Vote
Submitted by:
Related Material:
9b_information_discussion_and_for_possible_action_for_the_read_by_grade_three_alternative_assessments_61e4fa0cbd.pdf
RBG3 Guidance Memo 25-05A.pdf

Presentation to the Nevada State Board of Education

Alternate Assessments

Read By Grade Three

Steve Canavero, Interim State Superintendent

Peter Zutz, Administrator

Office of Assessment, Data, and Accountability Management (ADAM)

NEVADA Department of Education

Presentation Overview

Agenda

- 83rd Legislative Session and Changes to RBG3 Program
- Overview of Alternate Assessment Approval Process – not sure if needed
- For State Board Action: Consideration of equivalent achievement level for the iReady assessment as an alternate Read by Grade Three assessment for school year 2025-2026 as per SB 460 (2025)

NEVADA Department of Education

83rd Legislative Session: Read by Grade 3 (RBG3)

Overview

- Past: State Board of Education select assessment and cut score
- 83rd Session: SB 278 and SB 460
- Current: State Board of Education may select more than one RBG3 assessment and associated cut score

    Statewide Assessment: NWEA MAP, full state financial support

    “Alternate” Assessment(s): state financial support (TBD)

NEVADA Department of Education

83rd Legislative Session: Read by Grade 3 (RBG3)

Implementing SB 460

- Department

  Develop Regulations: process, reporting, assessment criteria and approval process, establishing cut score, other topics

- State Board of Education

  Select statewide RBG3 assessment and cut score; approve alternate assessment and cut score

  Note: SBE must determine cut score for an alternate assessment to be utilized

NEVADA Department of Education

83rd Legislative Session: Read by Grade 3 (RBG3)

Implementing SB 460: SY25-26

- Department develops Regulations (anticipate October Workshop)
- State Board may consider immediate action to support Districts and Charter Schools
    - Consider approving i-Ready as an alternate assessment
    - Consider approving i-Ready cut score

NEVADA Department of Education

83rd Legislative Session: i-Ready as Alternative

Consider approving i-Ready as alternative assessment

- i-Ready meets technical and operational criteria* established for RBG3 assessment per evaluation committee to select statewide assessment

**Must deliver and support the Read by Grade 3 Assessment System in the manner that reflects large-scale assessment industry best practices in accordance with the "Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing" (2014).*
Must provide K-3 Reading Assessments that are in alignment with Nevada Academic Content Standards in English Language Arts.
Must include a data interaction reporting tool that staff and other educational personnel can use to view student assessment results.
Must be administered at the same time within each district elementary school or charter school, but each individual district and charter school have the option of selecting a different testing window.

NEVADA Department of Education

Powered by BoardOnTrack

83rd Legislative Session: i-Ready as Alternative and Cut Score

Consider approving i-Ready cut score of 40th percentile

- Unique scenario given WCSD assessed the same student(s) with MAP and i-Ready
- WCSD and NDE collaborated to determine equivalency

NEVADA Department of Education

WCSD Equivalency Study

- WCSD tested all students in grades kindergarten – 3rd grade with both NWEA's MAP Reading Growth Assessment and Curriculum Associate's i-Ready Reading Assessment in 2024-25 within weeks of each other, allowing for an equivalency study on scores between the two assessments.

- Curriculum Associates previously recommended, from national comparison of i-Ready and MAP test content, at or below the 40th percentile on i-Ready as the equivalent score to identify students for Read by Grade 3 (same percentile currently used for MAP).

- Curriculum Associate's psychometric team, using thresholds leveraged for prior equivalency studies recommends:
  - Strong correlations above 0.80 between both assessments as preferable.
  - 80% or more of students identified with the same classification on both assessments (i.e., 80% of students score at or below the 40th percentile, or above the 40th percentile on both MAP and i-Ready).

- Curriculum Associates previously submitted a study indicating equivalency between i-Ready and Smarter Balanced Assessment which met National Center on Intensive Intervention standards.

NEVADA Department of Education

Average Percentiles (Mean), Standard Deviations (SD), Sample Sizes (N), and Correlations (r) of Test-Takers

		Fall				Winter				Spring			
Grade	Test	Mean	SD	N	r	Mean	SD	N	r	Mean	SD	N	r
K	MAP	--	--	--	--	57.76	29.49	3,895	.76***	56.33	29.91	3,911	.79***
	i-Ready	47.56	27.95	3,661		45.95	27.64	3,849		49.74	28.00	3,896	
1st	MAP	47.03	30.97	3,773	.85***	47.20	30.55	3,797	.86***	47.27	29.81	3,808	.86***
	i-Ready	44.29	28.61	3,800		43.69	28.30	3,780		47.00	29.15	3,803	
2nd	MAP	38.62	31.73	4,062	.87***	43.56	33.45	4,085	.88***	46.79	32.41	4,072	.88***
	i-Ready	45.21	29.17	4,102		44.57	28.11	4,072		46.86	28.55	4,089	
3rd	MAP	44.28	31.10	4,564	.90***	45.78	31.39	4,584	.90***	46.58	31.20	4,552	.90***
	i-Ready	46.47	28.62	4,581		46.31	28.11	4,565		46.48	28.73	4,542	

Dark Green: > .80 correlation met, indicating equivalency
Light Green: <.75-.79 correlation, approaching equivalency threshold

Washoe County School District

NDE and WCSD Equivalency Study

- The analysis is based on Nevada student performance
- The correlation between data using the RBG3 indicator (40th PR) in fall, winter, and spring was high in grades 1 through 3
- The correlation between data using the RBG3 indicator (40th PR) in fall and winter in kindergarten was not as high, but was improved by spring
- The sample size for fall, winter, and spring assessment results were more than sufficient for this analysis
- The Department reviewed the analysis and literature and agrees with establishing the 40th percentile cut score.

NEVADA Department of Education

Overview of Process

Process for SY25/26

LEAs and Charters interested in utilizing i-Ready (if approved by SBE) for SY25/26 must submit a declaration stating: The LEA/Charter…

- is electing to use i-Ready as their Read by Grade Three assessment
- is responsible for all financial costs to administer the i-Ready assessment
- will be required to comply with Department data and reporting requirements; and
- The number of students that will be using the i-Ready assessment in K-3.

The process for SY26/27 will be developed/refined through regulation

NEVADA Department of Education

Summary of Possible Action

- **Approve i-Ready as an alternate assessment for RBG3**
- **Approve the i-Ready cut score of 40th percentile**

Note: The State Board may consider approving i-Ready and associated cut score for the SY25/26 only and revisit following the development and approval of regulations

NEVADA Department of Education

Thank You

Thank You.
For more information please contact:
Mike Pacheco at mpacheco@doe.nv.gov

NEVADA Department of Education

Joe Lombardo
Governor

Steve Canavero, Ph.D.
Interim Superintendent of Public Instruction

Southern Nevada Office
2080 E. Flamingo Rd, Ste 210
Las Vegas, Nevada 89119-0811
Phone: (702) 486-6458
Fax: (702) 486-6450

STATE OF NEVADA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
700 E. Fifth St. | Carson City, Nevada 89701-5096
Phone: (775) 687-9200 | www.doe.nv.gov | Fax: (775) 687-1116

GUIDANCE MEMORANDUM 25-05A

TO: All Local Education Agencies

FROM: Dr. Steve Canavero, Interim Superintendent of Public Instruction

DATE: August 4, 2025

SUBJECT: State Board Approval of i-Ready as a Read by Grade Three Assessment

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BACKGROUND

On July 17, 2025, the Nevada Department of Education (Department or NDE) issued Guidance Memorandum 25-05, Updates Regarding Assessments for Read by Grade Three (RBG3). This memo provided information regarding changes to the RBG3 assessment made during the 83rd Legislative Session (2025) and provided a timeline for review of the i-Ready assessment by the Nevada State Board of Education (State Board) in school year 2025-2026 (SY25-26). This memorandum, Guidance Memo 25-05A, is to provide additional updates following the July 30, 2025, meeting of the State Board.

USE OF THE I-READY ASSESSMENT IN SY25-26

At their July 30, 2025, meeting the State Board approved the i-Ready assessment as a valid, reliable, and standards-based RBG3 assessment for SY25-26, in addition to the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) growth assessment. The State Board selected the 40th percentile as the cut score for the i-Ready assessment; this is the equivalent score established by the State Board for the MAP growth assessment. Please note that any local education agency (LEA), whether a school district or the governing board of a charter school, electing to use i-Ready as their RBG3 assessment must administer this assessment uniformly across all schools and/or campuses; this further applies to all LEAs choosing to administer MAP as their RBG3 assessment.

REQUIRED NOTIFICATIONS TO ADMINSTER THE I-READY ASSESSMENT IN SY25-26

LEAs seeking to administer the i-Ready assessment in SY25-26 must submit a notification letter, on letterhead, addressed to the Interim Superintendent of Public Education, signed by the district and/or charter school leader, and dated no later than one week after the first day of school stating that:

- The LEA is electing to use the i-Ready assessment as their RBG3 assessment in SY25-26;
- The LEA acknowledges and accepts responsibility for all financial costs to administer the i-Ready assessment;
- The LEA is required to comply with Department data and reporting requirements;
- The LEA will administer only **one** RBG3 assessment to all students enrolled across all schools and/or campuses under the LEA; and
- The anticipated number of students that will be using the i-Ready assessment in K-3.

Please submit this letter though the i-Ready Assessment form no later than one week after the first day of instruction of SY25-26 for the LEA submitting this form.

CONCLUSION

In the fall, the Department will begin to develop the required regulations as outlined in Guidance Memo 25-05. If you have any questions regarding this guidance, please reach out to Mike Pacheco at mpacheco@doe.nv.gov.

cc: Lisa Ford, Interim Deputy Superintendent, Student Achievement Division
Peter Zutz, Administrator, Office of Assessments, Data, and Accountability Management

Coversheet

Report by the Executive Director regarding the Summary of Whistleblower Protections for Testing Administration for the 2025-2026 school year.

Section: III. Executive Update
Item: C. Report by the Executive Director regarding the Summary of Whistleblower Protections for Testing Administration for the 2025-2026 school year.
Purpose:
Submitted by:
Related Material: Assessment - NDE Whistleblower Protections Memo.pdf

Joe Lombardo
Governor

Steve Canavero, Ph.D.
Interim Superintendent of Public Instruction

Southern Nevada Office
2080 E. Flamingo Road, Suite 210
Las Vegas, Nevada 89119-0811
Phone: (702) 486-6458
Fax: (702) 486-6450

STATE OF NEVADA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

700 E. Fifth Street | Carson City, Nevada 89701-5096
Phone: (775) 687-9200 | www.doe.nv.gov | Fax: (775) 687-1116

MEMORANDUM

TO: **All School District Superintendents**
State Public Charter School Authority
All School District and Charter School Governing Boards
All School District and Charter School Testing Directors

FROM: **Steve Canavero, PhD**
Interim State Superintendent of Public Instruction

DATE: **August 1, 2025**

SUBJECT: SUMMARY OF WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTIONS FOR TESTING ADMINISTRATION

Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) 390.350 through 390.430 provide for specific rights and responsibilities of school district personnel with regard to the disclosure of irregularities in assessment administration and assessment security relative to all state and district-mandated examinations. NRS 390.425 also requires the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) to annually submit a written summary of these rights and responsibilities to the board of trustees of each school district and to the governing body of each charter school. **Upon receipt of this summary, the board of trustees or governing body shall provide a copy of the written summary to all school officials within the school district or charter school.**

Questions related to assessment security can be referred to NDE's Office of Assessment, Data, and Accountability Management at ADAMinfo@doe.nv.gov. Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

cc: Lisa Ford, Interim Deputy Superintendent for Student Achievement,
Nevada Department of Education

Peter Zutz, Administrator, Office of Assessment, Data and Accountability Management
Nevada Department of Education

Protection of School District Personnel Regarding the Disclosure of Testing Irregularities

2025-2026 School Year

Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) 390.350 through 390.430 provide for specific rights and responsibilities of school district personnel with regard to the disclosure of irregularities in testing administration and testing security relative to all state and district-mandated examinations. NRS 390.425 also requires the Nevada Department of Education to annually submit a written summary of these rights and responsibilities to the board of trustees of each school district and to the governing body of each charter school. Below please find those terms defined by NRS 390.350-390.380 with some clarifications followed by the rights and responsibilities of those involved in the state assessment process.

Definitions

- "Examination" means achievement and proficiency examinations that are administered to pupils pursuant to 390.105, 390.600, and 390.610, and includes the following:
  - English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics in grades 3 – 8;
  - Science assessments in grades 5, 8, and High School;
  - College and Career Readiness Assessment;
  - Reading Assessment in grades K – 3; and
  - Any other examinations that measure achievement and proficiency of pupils and which are administered to pupils on a district-wide basis.
- "Irregularity in testing administration" means the failure to administer an examination in the manner intended by the person or entity that created the examination.
- "Irregularity in testing security" means an act or omission that tends to corrupt or impair the security of an examination, including, without limitation:
  - The failure to comply with the department or district security procedures.
  - The disclosure of questions or answers to questions on an examination in a manner not otherwise approved by law.
  - Other breaches in the security or confidentiality of the questions or answers to questions on an examination.
- "Reprisal or retaliatory action" is action that is taken because the school official disclosed information concerning testing irregularities and includes, without limitation:
  - Frequent or undesirable changes in the location of an office;
  - Frequent or undesirable transfers or reassignments;
  - The issuance of letters of reprimand, letters of admonition or evaluations of poor performance;
  - A demotion;
  - A reduction in pay;
  - The denial of a promotion;
  - A suspension;

  - A dismissal;
  - A transfer; or
  - Frequent changes in working hours or workdays.
- "School official" means:
  - A member of a board of trustees of a school district;
  - A member of a governing body of a charter school; or
  - A licensed or unlicensed person employed by the board of trustees of a school district or the governing body of a charter school.

Rights and Responsibilities

- School officials are encouraged to disclose testing irregularities, and it is the intent of the legislature to protect the rights of a school official who makes such a disclosure.
- A school official shall not directly or indirectly use or attempt to use his official authority or influence to intimidate, threaten, coerce, command, or influence another school official in an effort to interfere with or prevent the disclosure of information concerning testing irregularities. "Official authority or influence" includes taking, directing others to take, recommending, processing, or approving any personnel action such as an appointment, promotion, transfer, assignment, reassignment, reinstatement, restoration, reemployment, evaluation, or other disciplinary action.
- If reprisal or retaliatory action is taken against a school official who discloses information concerning testing irregularities within 2 years after the information is disclosed, the school official may file a written appeal with the State Board for a hearing on the matter and determination of whether the action taken was a reprisal or retaliatory action. The written appeal must be accompanied by a statement that specifies:
  - The facts and circumstances leading to the disclosure of information concerning testing irregularities; and
  - The reprisal or retaliatory action that is alleged to have been taken against the school official.
- The State Board may issue a subpoena to compel the attendance or testimony of any witness or the production of any materials needed as part of the appeal investigation.
- If the State Board determines that the action taken was a reprisal or retaliatory action, it may issue an order directing the proper person to desist and refrain from engaging in such action.
- The State Board may not rule against the school official based on the identity of the person or persons to whom the information concerning testing irregularities was disclosed.
- No school official may use the provisions outlined in this summary to harass another school official.
- A person who willfully discloses untruthful information concerning testing irregularities:
  - Is guilty of a misdemeanor; and
  - Is subject to appropriate disciplinary action.
- These provisions do not apply to offenses committed before July 1, 2001.
- Upon receipt of this summary, the board of trustees or governing body shall provide a copy of the written summary to all school officials within the school district or charter school.

Hearing Policy Adopted by State Board of Education
October 8, 2015

Overview

Nevada Revised Statute (391.624) declares to be the policy of this state that a school official is encouraged to disclose, to the extent not expressly prohibited by law, irregularities in testing administration and testing security, and it is the intent of the Legislature to protect the rights of a school official who makes such a disclosure. State law provides this protection for the disclosure of irregularities in testing administration and testing security to all statewide and district-wide test administrations, including the college and career readiness assessment, the criterion-referenced examinations, the end-of-course examinations, and any examination measuring the achievement and proficiency of pupils that is administered district-wide.

A school official may file an appeal with the State Board for reprisal or retaliatory action taken in response to disclosure of irregularity in testing administration and security. The written appeal must be accompanied by a statement from the school official that includes particular information. If the school official is making specific allegations against any individual, that individual must be specifically identified by the school official bringing the appeal. The State Board of Education then determines if the action taken was a reprisal or retaliatory action as defined in law.

State Board of Education Role

The State Board must adopt rules of procedure for conducting a hearing as requested by a school official through a written appeal.

Suggested Hearing Procedures

Based on the procedures for conduct of a State Board hearing related to the suspension of a license, (NAC 391.545) the following guidelines are proposed for the public hearing of a written appeal before the State Board of Education.

- As these hearings may involve character, or professional competence of an individual, the hearings may be closed to the public under NRS 241.030(1)(a). The Board of Education will conduct these hearings in closed session to protect the privacy of the individuals involved unless an open meeting is required by NRS 241.030(2), NRS 241.031 or any other provision of law.
- All participants in the hearing shall conduct themselves in a respectful manner.
- The State Board shall send written notice of the hearing 10 calendar days prior to the hearing.
- Before the hearing, the parties must exchange copies of any evidence that will be submitted as exhibits during the hearing. Not less than 5 days before the hearing, each party shall provide to the assistant to the State Board and all other parties the name of each witness who will testify at the hearing and a summary of his or her anticipated testimony.

- Any objections to written evidence must be communicated to the assistant to the State Board, and the other party 24 hours prior to the hearing or they will be deemed waived. The parties shall use their best efforts to discuss and reach conclusions on the admissibility of disputed items prior to the hearing. Failure to make a good faith effort to resolve the admissibility of any item prior to the hearing may result in the objection that that item being deemed waived.
- All evidence offered at the hearing must be relevant and bear upon the written appeal.
- Each document or material offered in evidence must be marked as follows:
    - Documents or materials presented by the school official bringing the written appeal before the State Board must be marked at the bottom of the page as "Exhibit____" indicated by consecutive Arabic numerals, beginning with the number "1."
    - Documents or materials presented by the entity or school official accused of reprisal or retaliatory action must be marked at the bottom of the page as "Exhibit____" indicated by consecutive letters of the English alphabet, beginning with the letter "A." If the entity or school official accused of reprisal or retaliatory action offers more than 26 exhibits, the 27th exhibit must be marked as "Exhibit AA," the 28th exhibit as "Exhibit BB," and so forth.

- The hearing must be recorded. If requested by the superintendent, Board President, the school official bringing the appeal or the entity or school official accused of reprisal or retaliatory action, an audio copy of the hearing shall be provided.
- The technical rules of evidence do not apply and formal exceptions to Board President's rulings are not necessary. The ground on which a party relies for an objection to or an exclusion of evidence must be briefly stated. Any offer or proof for the record must include a statement of the substance of the evidence to which objection has been sustained. The decision by the Board President on the admissibility of evidence is final.
- A declaration may be admitted as evidence in lieu of oral testimony if the information contained in the affidavit is admissible.
- Each person who provides a declaration or a statement at the hearing shall state his or her name, address, and occupation for the record.
- It is the responsibility of each party to arrange for the appearance of all necessary witnesses. The State Board may request additional witnesses or information as it deems necessary. The State Board is authorized to issue subpoenas as allowed by NRS 391.636.
- Upon proper recognition by the Board President or his or her designated representative, any member of the State Board of Education may ask a question of a party or witness at any time during the hearing.
- The Board President may, upon the motion of a party, order a witness, other than a party to a hearing, to be excluded from the hearing to prevent that witness from hearing the testimony of another witness at the hearing.
- The Board President may approve or reject any stipulation of fact offered by the parties at the hearing, including any written stipulation introduced into evidence as an exhibit or any stipulation in the form of an oral statement. A stipulation is binding on all parties to it and

may be regarded by the State Board as evidence. The State Board may require additional proof of evidence of the facts stipulated.

- The Board President may request the parties to submit briefs on any contested issues of law or fact. If the Board President requires the parties to submit briefs, he or she shall not conclude the hearing until after the briefs are required to be submitted.
- If the school official bringing the written appeal before the State Board fails to appear at the scheduled hearing and has not provided a valid excuse for the failure, the State Board President may vacate the hearing with prejudice. The failure to appear shall be noted in the official transcript of the hearing.
- The Board President may but is not required to grant a continuance of the hearing to enable a party to submit additional proof of any fact.

Order of Statements, Evidence and Arguments

- Statements, evidence and arguments are normally received in the following order, but the Board President may modify the order in his or her sole discretion:
    1. Opening statement by school official bringing the written appeal before the State Board
    2. Opening statement by the entity or school official accused of reprisal or retaliatory action
    3. Evidence by the school official bringing the written appeal before the State Board
    4. Evidence by the entity or school official accused of reprisal or retaliatory action
    5. Rebuttal evidence by the school official bringing the written appeal before the State Board
    6. Closing argument by the school official bringing the written appeal before the State Board
    7. Closing argument by the entity or school official accused of reprisal or retaliatory action
    8. Rebuttal argument by the school official bringing the written appeal before the State Board

- Arguments and evidence may be limited by the Board President in the event the evidence being presented is duplicative or irrelevant.
- The school official bringing the written appeal before the State Board has the burden of proving a preponderance of the evidence that the action taken was reprisal or retaliatory.

At the close of the hearing the Board may discuss whether sufficient evidence was presented to establish that the action taken was reprisal or retaliatory. After discussion the State Board shall vote to determine whether sufficient evidence was presented to establish that the action taken was reprisal or retaliatory. If the State Board determines that the action taken was reprisal or retaliatory, it may issue an order directing the proper person to desist and refrain from engaging in such action.