APPROVED

New Heights Academy Charter School

Minutes

Board of Trustees Meeting

Date and Time
Thursday August 28, 2025 at 7:00 PM

Location
1818 Amsterdam Avenue (Conference Room)
New York, NY 10031

Trustees Present
A. Vasquez, D. Ortiz, M. Vargas, N. Sunshine, N. Weiss, R. Zumaya, W. Council

Trustees Absent
A. Cummings

Guests Present
Dr. Crystal Joye, Fred Givens, K. Valbrun, L. Garcia, W. Ramos

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

C. Approve Minutes

A. Vasquez made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees Meeting on 06-26-25.

M. Vargas seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

II. Distraction-Free School Policy

A. Distraction-Free School Policy

- Presentation on new **Yondr Pouch policy** (Governor's mandate).
- Parents and students notified; roll-out begins with freshmen.
- Concerns raised about parent communication in emergencies.

A. Vasquez made a motion to approve the Distraction Free School Policy.
M. Vargas seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

III. NHACS Organization Chart SY2526

A. NHACS Organization Chart SY2526

Major changes due to downsizing:

- Roles eliminated: Director of Operations, Director of HR & Recruitment, Chief of Staff.
- Compliance Manager (Wendy) now reports to COO.
- HR support: Part-time consultant hired.

It was noted that the Organization Chart was approved when the board voted on the SY2526 budget.

IV. NHACS Handbook Updates

A. Employee Handbook Summary of Changes

- Updated titles to match new leadership structure.
- Laptop policy: no personalization (stickers, etc.).
- Communication policy: restricts private texts with students.
- Social media guidelines: no personal account interactions with families; no posting/tagging without school approval.
- Anti-harassment policy expanded (cyberbullying, annual training).

A. Vasquez made a motion to approve the changes made to the Employee Handbook.
W. Council seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

B. Student Family Handbook Summary of Changes

Student & Family Handbook: aligned updates.

V. Safety Plan

A. Safety Plan Summary of Changes

- Annual update required.
- Only substantive change: **Extreme Heat Response Protocol** (new NYS requirement effective Sept. 1).

A. Vasquez made a motion to approve the changes to the Safety Plan.
M. Vargas seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

VI. School Update

A. School Leaders Presenations

School Updated Shared by Dr. Karen Valbrun, Executive Director

School Updates (Blueprint Theme for 2025–26)

- New school-wide theme: **“Blueprint”** → guiding decisions, accountability, and student focus.
- Shared meeting norms and commitments by role (Board, Leadership, Teachers, Parents, Students).
- Academic focus:
  - MTSS (tiered supports).
  - SEL integration (CASEL).
  - MAP testing schoolwide.
  - Reading initiative and faculty-led meetings.
  - Leveraging AI responsibly.

Enrollment & Staffing

- Enrollment: 616 students (shortfall in grades 6–8).
- Recruitment responsibility shifted to Office Manager and Parent Coordinator.
- Staffing: majority of vacancies filled; remaining in Spanish and English.

Financial and Operations Update shared by Li'Esha Garcia

Audit & Operations

- FY25 audit underway; on track for October completion.
- Building updates: lobby adjustments, central entry only, minor beautification.

Middle School Update shared by Dr. Crystal Joye

- Math proficiency increased from 54% → 66%.
- ELA from 51% → 53%.
- Science small gains (field test year).
- Attendance steady at ~93%.

High School Update shared by Fred Givens

- Strong AP performance (notably AP US History and AP Calculus).
- ELA and math growth despite staffing challenges.
- Science remains area needing improvement (new teachers, new test format).
- Graduation rate pending final state confirmation.

Other Business

- Recognition of alumni employed at NHACS (12 current staff).
- Board commitment to continue supporting recruitment and student outcomes.

VII. Executive Session

A. Executives Session was called to discuss a personnel matter

A. Vasquez made a motion to go into Executive Session.
M. Vargas seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.
A. Vasquez made a motion to exit Executive Session.
N. Sunshine seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

VIII. 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 8:29 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
W. Ramos