

APPROVED



# New Heights Academy Charter School

## Minutes

### Board of Trustees Meeting

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#### **Date and Time**

Thursday August 28, 2025 at 7:00 PM

#### **Location**

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

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#### **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

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### **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 Presentations

#### 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