

APPROVED



# New Heights Academy Charter School

## Minutes

### Board of Trustees Meeting

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#### **Date and Time**

Thursday April 30, 2026 at 7:00 PM

#### **Location**

1818 Amsterdam Avenue  
New York, NY 10031

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#### **Trustees Present**

A. Cummings, D. Ortiz, M. Vargas, R. Zumaya

#### **Trustees Absent**

*None*

#### **Guests Present**

Fred Givens, K. Valbrun, L. Garcia, Michelle Anderson (remote), W. Ramos

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### **I. Opening Items**

#### **A. Record Attendance**

#### **B. Call the Meeting to Order**

A. Cummings called a meeting of the board of trustees of New Heights Academy Charter School to order on Thursday Apr 30, 2026 at 7:00 PM.

#### **C. Approve Minutes from the 2.26.2026 Board of Trustees Meeting**

A. Cummings made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees Meeting on 02-26-26.

D. Ortiz seconded the motion.

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

**D. Approve Minutes from the 3.26.2026 Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees**

A. Cummings made a motion to approve the minutes from Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees on 03-26-26.

M. Vargas seconded the motion.

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

**E. Approve Minutes from the 3.26.2026 Board of Trustees Meeting**

A. Cummings made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees Meeting on 03-26-26.

M. Vargas seconded the motion.

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

**F. Board Election**

M. Vargas made a motion to to vote Dr. Michelle Anderson as a trustee.

A. Cummings seconded the motion.

DOE approval had been received prior to the vote

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

M. Vargas made a motion to to elect Amryll Cummings as Interim Chair.

D. Ortiz seconded the motion.

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

**G. Board Leadership Updates**

- Formal acknowledgment of the resignation of Angel Vasquez as as the former Board Chair
- Recognition of contributions from the former Chair and staff representative

M. Vargas made a motion to appoint Amryll Cummings as the Interim Board Chair.

D. Ortiz seconded the motion.

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

A. Cummings made a motion to appoint Megan Vargas as the Vice Chair.

D. Ortiz seconded the motion.

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

**H. Community Comments**

- No community members signed up for public comment
- Student representative was not present

## II. School Update

### A. School Report

**Presented by: Dr. Karen Valbrun, Executive Director & Leadership Team**

#### **Key Dates & Events (May):**

- May 1: High School Decision Day
- May 8: Caregiver Appreciation Breakfast
- May 14: National Honor Society Induction
- May 16: Kindness Closet & Registration Event
- May 18: Family Zoom Meeting
- May 20: Arts Festival (Dance, Music, Art)
- May 29–30: Parent-Teacher Conferences
- Staff Appreciation Week (early May)

#### **School Culture & Highlights:**

- Continued emphasis on strong school community and family culture
- Student and alumni engagement highlighted through school-produced media
- Successful March events: Literacy Night, college tours, student portraits

#### **Parent Survey Results (April):**

- Overall positive feedback (~90% favorable)
- Strengths: safety, communication, engagement, academic progress
- Identified opportunity for continued improvement toward 100% satisfaction

## **ACADEMIC UPDATES**

**Presented by: Li'Esha Garcia, CFOO**

#### **Middle School:**

- Strong preparation for state exams
- Performance highlights:
  - Math & Science averages ~78–88% on internal assessments
  - ELA proficiency: 55–70% across grades
- Staff collaboration noted as a major strength

**Presented by: Fred Givens, HS Principal**

#### **High School:**

- Regents prep showed growth across most subjects

- 100% college acceptance (pending final CUNY application resolution)
- \$8.2 million in scholarships and financial aid secured
- Notable acceptances include: NYU, University of Michigan, Boston University, Middlebury

#### **Student Survey (Grades 9–12):**

- 67% participation (278 students)
- Majority responses ranged from “somewhat agree” to “agree” across:
  - Engagement
  - Sense of belonging
  - Teacher support
- Areas for growth: perceptions of fairness in rules and consequences
- Board requested qualitative feedback to be shared at a future meeting

#### **Presented by: Li'Esha Garcia, CFOO**

##### **Enrollment & Operations**

- Current enrollment: **593 students**
- Projected enrollment: **630 students**
- Enrollment decline since 2019: **22% decrease**
- District comparison decline: 13%

##### **Recruitment Efforts:**

- Continued outreach to families and community partners
- Follow-up with applicants to secure enrollment commitments

##### **Financial Report**

##### **Revenue & Expenses:**

- Total revenue: ~\$13.45M
- Total expenses: ~\$13.26M
- Operating margin remains extremely tight

##### **Key Financial Concerns:**

- \$1.7M below budget due to enrollment decline
- \$2M annual facility costs
- Limited liquidity despite meeting debt obligations

##### **Year-to-Date Position:**

- ~\$228K surplus (subject to year-end salary accruals)

##### **Conclusion:**

- Financial sustainability requires restructuring and operational changes

**Presented by: Dr. Karen Valbrun Executive Director**

**Strategic Initiative: 6–12 Grade Model**

- Transition to unified **Grades 6–12 structure**
- Goals:
  - Improve academic continuity
  - Strengthen student relationships
  - Provide earlier access to advanced coursework
- Organizational restructuring to begin May–June

**III. Executive Session (if needed)**

**A. Governance Matters**

- Not held

**IV. 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 7:52 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
A. Cummings