APPROVED

New Heights Academy Charter School

Minutes

Board of Trustees Meeting

Date and Time
Thursday May 28, 2026 at 7:00 PM

Location
1818 Amsterdam Avenue
New York, NY 10031

Trustees Present
A. Cummings, D. Ortiz, M. Anderson, M. Vargas, R. Zumaya

Trustees Absent
None

Guests Present
Fred Givens, K. Valbrun, L. Garcia, W. Ramos (remote)

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 May 28, 2026 at 7:00 PM.

C. Community Comments

A parent shared concerns regarding:

- Communication and responsiveness from school leadership;
- Ongoing staff turnover;
- Lack of consistent middle and high school administration leadership;
- Concerns about who families should contact regarding student matters.

Board leadership thanked the speaker for the comments and stated that the concerns would be noted and shared with school leadership.

D. Approve Minutes

A. Cummings made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees Meeting on 04-30-26.
M. Vargas seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

E. Review Board Meeting Dates

A. Cummings made a motion to approve board meeting dates for school year 2026-2027.
D. Ortiz seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

II. School Update

A. School Report

Upcoming Events and Student Activities

Presented by:Li'Esha Garcia, CFOO

- New Heights Honors – June 1;
- High School Pep Rally and Middle School Prom – June 5;
- Middle School End-of-Year Assessments and High School Regents Exams – week of June 8;
- Eighth Grade Senior Trip – June 18;
- Senior Breakfast – June 22;
- Middle School and High School Graduation – June 25.

Additional family and community engagement activities included:

- Kindness Closet reopening and registration event – June 13;
- Family Zoom meeting – June 13;
- Caregiver Appreciation Breakfast – June 18;
- Juneteenth school closure – June 19;

- Middle School Field Day – June 4;
- School exchange event – June 17.

Executive Director Report
Presented by Dr. Karen Valbrun

Key updates included:

- Ongoing interviews for the 6–12 Principal position, with finalists being identified;
- Recruitment efforts underway to fill staffing vacancies for the 2026–2027 school year;
- Continued focus on improving parent communication, responsiveness, and family partnerships;
- Plans to strengthen school culture, student engagement, and academic supports;
- Recognition that the school's upcoming year marks the school's 20th anniversary.

Enrollment and attendance updates:

- Current enrollment: 592 students;
- Projected enrollment for next year: 605 students;
- April attendance rate: 92.3%.

Financial Update
Presented by: Li'Esha Garcia, CFOO

Highlights included:

- School finances continue to be significantly impacted by enrollment levels;
- Total assets were reported at approximately $29 million, reflecting a decrease from the prior year;
- Cash reserves and accounts receivable decreased due to lower enrollment and the reduction of prior COVID-related funding;
- Overall equity was reported at approximately $2.46 million;
- Revenue decreased approximately $405,000 compared to the prior year;
- Expenses were reduced through cost-saving measures, including reductions in salaries, professional services, and fundraising expenses;
- Leadership stated the school continues to meet financial obligations while operating with reduced liquidity.

Middle School Update
Presented by: Li'Esha Garcia, CFOO

Key updates included:

- Completion of computer-based state testing with minimal disruptions;

- Recognition of students with strong attendance, including 63 students achieving 100% attendance during the reporting period;
- Discipline data was reviewed, including in-school and out-of-school suspensions;
- No student expulsions during the reporting period;
- A student vaping awareness workshop was conducted in partnership with the social worker and school nurse, with participation from high school students.

Board discussion included:

- Plans for Chromebook/device collection and maintenance;
- Collection procedures for Yondr pouches;
- Locker clean-out procedures;
- Requests for families to receive student physical forms before the end of the school year.

Administration stated communication regarding collection dates and procedures would be sent to families.

High School Update and Student Feedback Review
FPresented by: Fred Givens, HS Principal

- Completion of AP testing and NYSESLAT testing;
- Ongoing student community meetings conducted throughout the year;
- Student feedback themes centered on:
    - Communication;
    - Fairness in discipline implementation;
    - Leadership and staffing concerns;
    - Student voice and engagement;
    - School culture and morale;
    - Transparency regarding school decisions.

Planned next steps discussed included:

- Reinstating the Honor Roll trip;
- Reviewing the student handbook with input from students, staff, and families;
- Increasing opportunities for student voice and communication;
- Providing additional clarity regarding school operations within legal limitations.

Board members discussed:

- Concerns regarding consistency in discipline implementation;
- Student perceptions around safety and supervision;
- Opportunities to strengthen advisory programming and social-emotional supports;

- The importance of creating spaces for students to process staff departures and school changes appropriately.

Dr. Valbrun stated that staff training and planning for the upcoming year would include guidance on facilitating student conversations appropriately and implementing the Teach Like a Champion framework consistently across grades 6–12.

Legal counsel reminded attendees that personnel matters should remain confidential and discussed only in executive session.

III. 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 9:22 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
W. Ramos