APPROVED

New Heights Charter School Board of Trustees

Minutes

August Meeting

Annual Board Retreat

Date and Time
Tuesday August 26, 2025 at 5:00 PM

Location
New Heights CHareter School of Brockton
1690 Main St.
Brockton, Ma 02301

New Heights Board of Trustees
Starting Time: 5:00pm

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New Heights Charter School of Brockton
1690 Main Street
Brockton, MA 02301

Trustees Present
G. Bengen (remote), G. Phillips, J. Charnel, M. Mollo, S. Bernard, S. Jackson (remote), V. Marturano, W. Lyttle

Trustees Absent
J. Radzevich, N. Christ

Ex Officio Members Present
O. Walker

Guests Present
M. Fernandes, M. Jean, N. Jones, S. Graham (remote)

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

G. Phillips called a meeting of the board of trustees of New Heights Charter School Board of Trustees to order on Tuesday Aug 26, 2025 at 5:10 PM.
G. Phillips made a motion to approve the minutes from June Board Meeting on 06-24-25.
J. Charnel seconded the motion.
Minutes from June Meeting approved unanimously
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

II. 2025 Board Retreat

A. Staffing (Unfilled Positions)

B. Student Enrollment

C. 2025 Board Survey (Areas of Opportunity)

Charter School Strategic Planning Update
OW provided an update on the board-identified areas of opportunity, focusing on strategic planning. The board agreed to engage an external firm by September 30 to develop a comprehensive strategic plan, which will include discussions on board and committee goals, student enrollment, and potential school expansion. OW explained the complexities of charter school enrollment caps and tuition funding, highlighting the challenges of maintaining stable enrollment numbers due to fluctuating district performance metrics. The board will explore expansion options during the strategic planning process, including potential facility upgrades and grade-level increases, while considering the impact on current enrollment and funding.

Charter School Expansion Risks
OW discussed the risks and uncertainties associated with expanding the charter school, highlighting the need for more data and strategic planning. He emphasized that while the school could survive on a reduced tuition rate, expansion may not be sustainable due to various uncontrollable factors. OW also touched on political considerations and the potential impact on relationships with other charter schools. Additionally, he provided an overview of ongoing efforts by teachers unions and school districts to change the funding formula for charter schools, which could affect the school's financial stability.

Strategic Alumni Engagement Planning

OW discussed the importance of expanding educational opportunities and the need for strategic planning to identify growth areas and potential partners. He emphasized the value of involving the board in setting priorities and considering different approaches to alumni engagement, noting the challenges of mobilizing young alumni. GB suggested tailoring alumni outreach to align with alumni career paths, and OW acknowledged the need to explore creative ways to integrate alumni services into existing roles due to budget constraints. The board discussed the potential for board members to participate in alumni events and networking opportunities.

Culturally Relevant Teaching in Urban Classrooms

DNJ discussed the importance of culturally relevant teaching in urban classrooms, emphasizing the need to recognize and incorporate students' cultural capital. She explained that teachers at New Heights are trained to use students' cultural experiences in their teaching practices and that the curriculum is designed to be inclusive and evidence-based. OW highlighted the success of a curriculum developed by Dr. Rachel Daniel (former Humanities Dean) that replaced traditional texts with culturally relevant ones, which was approved statewide and is still used in schools today.

Culturally Inclusive Education Priorities

DNJ discussed the school's commitment to culturally relevant and inclusive education, highlighting their use of diverse curricula, genocide survivor speakers, and anti-racism training. She emphasized the importance of representation, noting the presence of 29 women and 12 men of color in the school staff. OW addressed concerns about potential funding cuts for diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives due to the new federal administration, but assured that state funding would not be affected. The school continues to prioritize civil discourse and respect in teaching, despite political leanings being largely liberal.

School Recognition and Strategic Planning

Chairman GP expressed concerns about the lack of recognition and credit for the school's achievements, particularly in hiring qualified teachers and implementing effective practices. DNJ emphasized the importance of marketing and communication to increase awareness of the school's success. The board discussed the evolving landscape of federal mandates and DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) initiatives, with advocating for continued focus on student impact while staying informed about external changes. The group also considered ways to improve board meeting agendas and discussions to better reflect the school's progress and challenges.

AI Integration and Compliance Updates

The board meeting covered several key topics, including the use of artificial intelligence in schools, staff and teacher demographics, and compliance with charter renewal findings. highlighted the positive impact of AI tools like Gemini, which is being used for meeting

notes and teacher empowerment, while also noting that student access to AI is restricted.

The meeting included a detailed breakdown of staff race and ethnicity, years of employment, and certification status, with KK explaining recent improvements in teacher certification rates. The board also discussed steps taken to address previous compliance issues, including hiring a full time enrollment coordinator and implementing better monitoring processes. The conversation ended with a plan to prepare for an upcoming virtual site visit in October, with JG offering to provide a tutorial on the Board on Track website before the September board meeting.

D. Board Roles and Responsibilities

OW presented several documents related to board governance and responsibilities, including a board expectations document, an organizational structure chart, and a detailed roadmap of functions and responsibilities. The board discussed these materials, with MF noting that a leadership chart was missing and suggesting it be added. The group agreed to review the documents in September, with each standing committee examining the multicolored organizational chart and providing feedback at the October board meeting.

III. SY25-26 Board Calendar

A. BOT Meeting Schedule

MF shared a calendar of board and committee meetings for the upcoming year, which she confirmed would be added to the board tracking system for reminders.

IV. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

J. Charnel made a motion to adjourn the Board Retreat Meeting.
V. Marturano seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.
There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
M. Jean