APPROVED

New Heights Charter School Board of Trustees

Minutes

Board Meeting

Date and Time
Tuesday June 30, 2026 at 5:00 PM

Location
ZOOM LINK

New Heights Board of Trustees
Starting Time: 5:00pm
Location: 1105 West Chestnut Street
Brockton, MA 02301
Join Zoom Meeting

ZOOM Meeting:
Description:
LINK

Trustees Present
G. Bengen (remote), G. Phillips, J. Charnel (remote), J. Radzevich (remote), L. Delgado (remote), S. Bernard, V. Marturano, W. Lyttle

Trustees Absent
N. Christ, S. Jackson

Ex Officio Members Present
O. Walker

Guests Present
Delroy Dennis, J. Geier, Jarred Pacatte (remote), K. Kendrick, M. Fernandes, M. Jean, M. Mollo, Noah Ferreira (remote), R. Lewis (remote)

I. Opening Items

A. Call the Meeting to Order

S. Bernard called a meeting of the board of trustees of New Heights Charter School Board of Trustees to order on Tuesday Jun 30, 2026 at 5:11 PM.

B. Approved Board Members List

C. Roll Call

D. Reading and Approval of Minutes

V. Marturano made a motion to approve the minutes from Board Meeting on 05-26-26.
G. Bengen seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

II. Executive Director's Report

A. Staffing Update: Dr. Johnston as Principal for SY 26-27

Dr. Jess Geier opened the discussion by providing an overview of the principal search process. Similar to the process used during the hiring of Dr. Jones, the search committee included members of the Executive Leadership Team to ensure broad stakeholder representation throughout the process.

More than twenty applications were reviewed, resulting in six semifinalists. Three candidates advanced to the final stage, which included full-day school visits, classroom observations, stakeholder focus groups, family and caregiver webinars facilitated by Maria Fernandes, and an evening dinner with members of the school community.

Following a comprehensive evaluation process, the committee recommended **Dr. Ondrea Johnston** for the position of Principal.

Board members inquired about Dr. Johnston's current professional responsibilities, noting that her résumé did not fully reflect her most recent work. Leadership explained that Dr. Johnston has been serving with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) as a Principal Leader, where she has focused on school leadership, assessment, and instructional improvement. It was also noted that while she began her career as a mathematics teacher in Randolph and pursued her doctoral studies during that time, her professional experience has since centered on educational leadership.

Jeff asked what distinguished Dr. Johnston from the other finalists. Leadership shared that her collaborative leadership style, thoughtful responses, confidence, and ability to

engage authentically with students, staff, families, and school leaders consistently stood out throughout every phase of the interview process. Omari added that the committee intentionally examined potential weaknesses among all three finalists but found none that outweighed Dr. Johnston's strengths, leading to a unanimous recommendation.

B. Philadelphia Service Learning Trip

Dr. Pacatte provided a summary of the recent Philadelphia educational trip attended by students alongside Mr. Noah Ferreira, Ms. Duarte, and Ms. Laurie Casimir.

Transportation was provided by Motorcoach Services, and students traveled approximately seven and a half hours with a scheduled lunch stop along the route. During the three-day experience, students visited several historical and educational sites including Benjamin Franklin's Grave, the President's House, the University of Pennsylvania, the National Constitution Center, Senate hearing chambers within the National Capitol complex, and the Museum of the American Revolution.

Dr. Pacatte thanked the Board and New Heights administration for supporting the opportunity. He shared that students participated in daily reflections and consistently identified the trip as one of the most meaningful educational experiences of the school year.

III. Old Business

A. Paper Crane Strategic Planning

Sarah Glatt presented an update on the strategic planning work completed in partnership with Paper Crane.

The strategic plan has established three overarching priorities:

- Supporting every student.
- Investing in staff and organizational capacity.
- Adapting and strengthening the Early College model to ensure long-term student success.

Sarah explained that the remaining phase of the engagement focuses on completing the final deliverables. Due to recent leadership transitions, the anticipated completion timeline has been extended to Winter 2026–2027. Sarah confirmed that this extension will not result in any additional costs to the school.

J. Charnel made a motion to accept Paper Crane report and extension to existing contract.
V. Marturano seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

IV. New Business

A. Nutrition Program

Dr. Dennis led a discussion regarding the temporary suspension of the school's nutrition reimbursement program.

He explained that the issue originated with the school's current food service vendor, Stock Pot, whose meal documentation failed to meet DESE nutritional compliance requirements. Although New Heights has submitted multiple corrective action plans, DESE rejected the first two submissions due to deficiencies in the documentation provided by the vendor.

A third submission was made on June 17; however, DESE issued a disallowance of more than $2,500 related to snack and vegetable reimbursements while continuing to await an amended compliance document from Stock Pot.

Board members confirmed that students continue to receive meals without interruption. Leadership explained that reimbursement payments remain suspended until DESE accepts the required documentation. Should reimbursement ultimately be denied due to vendor error, Stock Pot would be financially responsible for those losses.

Leadership further reported that DESE has been actively assisting New Heights in identifying alternative vendors and has recommended several approved providers. Administration has decided to proceed with issuing a new Request for Proposals (RFP), with confidence that a new vendor can be secured before the start of the school year. The Board also discussed student participation in meal taste-testing and the variable monthly costs associated with the nutrition program.
J. Charnel made a motion to accept Nutrition Program report.
J. Radzevich seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

B. MCC MOU

Maria Fernandes provided an update regarding ongoing negotiations with Massasoit Community College (MCC) for a revised Memorandum of Understanding.

She shared that leadership has met twice with Dr. Jones-Hyde, Vice President of the Early College Program, and Chris Alves, Associate Dean of Early College. One significant improvement in the revised agreement is a commitment for executive leadership from both institutions to meet two to three times annually.

Maria also informed the Board that MCC determined it was no longer appropriate for one of its associates to serve on the New Heights Board of Trustees.

Discussion also focused on language surrounding future cost increases. Although MCC acknowledged New Heights' request to include language limiting unexpected financial obligations, the requested revisions were not incorporated despite multiple requests from administration.

Board members questioned whether state regulations exist regarding institutional expenses and expressed continued concern that portions of the agreement disproportionately favored MCC. Leadership noted that the school's long-term financial exposure remains unknown, although the Commonwealth may provide approximately $100 per participating student in reimbursement. Bridgewater State University currently follows a different reimbursement model and does not invoice New Heights directly.

Jeff recommended pursuing an addendum to address the Board's outstanding concerns regarding the agreement, and Board members expressed support for that approach.

V. Marturano made a motion to sign the MOU as presented and work towards an addendum to change or improve the MOU in which the board will come back to discuss and vote at a later date.
J. Charnel seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

C. Annual Report

Kaitlin presented the school's Annual Report prepared for submission to DESE.
The report highlights the school's accomplishments in instruction, community engagement, school culture, and organizational goals while documenting progress toward established accountability measures.

Kaitlin requested Board approval of the report with the understanding that minor edits would be made before submission, including updated photographs, year-end financial information, and final accountability data.
V. Marturano made a motion to approve the annual report as written with the understanding that there will be minor changes including the addition of photos and end of year data - such as end of year financials and other accountability data.
J. Charnel seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

V. Finance Committee

A. YTD (through May)

Jason presented the year-to-date financial report through May.

The Finance Committee met earlier that morning to review current financial performance. Revenue stood at 89% compared to approximately 90% of the fiscal year completed, placing the school on track to finish the year in a positive financial position.

Professional Services and Student Activities exceeded their original budgets. Omari explained that when the FY26 budget was approved, an additional $288,000 in projected revenue became available following updated enrollment projections. The Board subsequently approved reallocating those additional funds to expand student enrichment opportunities through the Student Activities budget.

Leadership anticipates both categories will finish the fiscal year within approved spending levels.
W. Lyttle made a motion to accept Finance Report through May.
J. Charnel seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

B. Construction Project

Jason provided an update on current capital improvement projects.
The previously approved Public Address system, gymnasium flooring, and mezzanine improvements total approximately $620,000.

While the PA system continues to move forward, the storage and mezzanine projects, representing approximately $500,000 in planned expenditures, have been temporarily placed on hold while administration researches more cost-effective alternatives that avoid structural challenges.

J. Charnel made a motion to accept the Construction Project Report.
W. Lyttle seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

C. West Chestnut Lease Extension

Leadership informed the Board that the West Chestnut property lease has been renewed. The renewed agreement extends through July 1, 2031. The lease includes an increase of approximately $1,000. Board members agreed the increase was reasonable given that the landlord continues to assume responsibility for utilities, taxes, and additional property-related liabilities associated with the commercial space.
J. Charnel made a motion to accept the West Chestnut Building lease for five years.
V. Marturano seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.
G. Bengen made a motion to accept the full report of the Finance Committee.
J. Charnel seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

VI. Academic Excellence Committee

A. Academic Excellence Report

Steve clarified that due to scheduling conflicts on the day the Academic Excellence Committee was supposed to meet, they could not due to Omari and Maria being on an off-site PD.

Enrollment Report by Ms. Lourdes Pires:

As of June 30, 2026 (724)
6th: 114
7th: 113
8th: 114
9th: 113
10th: 99
11th: 83
12th: graduated 88 students

Brockton: 638
Randolph: 27
Taunton: 39
OOD: 20

Male: 370
Female: 354

for FY27 Applicants and Incoming students
6th: 115
7th: 41
8th: 41
9th: 93
10th: 21
11th 17

Total waitlist students: 181

Vinnie asked if the number of students on the ninth-grade waitlist is typically unusually high?

Response: No. Ninth-grade enrollment typically generates significant interest because many incoming high school students and their families are attracted to New Heights' Early College model and the opportunities and benefits it provides.

Steve Bernard thanked Lordes for her recruitment efforts.

Steve asked Lourdes if she can speak more about the recruitment efforts that contributed to the school's enrollment and waitlist numbers?

Response: Recruitment efforts take place throughout the City of Brockton and include outreach to prospective families, referrals from families of currently enrolled students, sibling recruitment, community engagement, and school marketing. Together, these efforts have contributed to a strong applicant pool and sustained enrollment interest.

Vinnie asked of the 88 students in the graduating class, how many successfully graduated?
Response: All 88 students graduated, resulting in a 100% graduation rate.

Vinnie asked how many graduating students earned an associate degree?

Response: the final number is not yet available because some students are still completing college courses. However, more than 60% of the graduating class earned at least 60 combined college credits through Middlesex Community College and Bridgewater State University. Final associate degree and credit attainment numbers will be available after summer grades are released.

Steve encouraged Board members to continue actively engaging in discussion during future Academic Excellence presentations by asking questions and providing feedback.

Academic Data by Kaitlin Kendrick:
Kaitlin presented on distribution of grades from Spring Semester broken down by high school grade level and college in attendance.

The Spring 2026 college-grade data reflects strong academic performance across all Early College and dual-enrollment programs. Of approximately 845 grades reported, 452 —or about 54%—were an A or A-, while nearly 86% fell within the A through B- range. Only seven failing grades were recorded, representing less than 1% of all grades. MCC accounted for the largest share of course grades, followed by grades earned through the Grade 9–10 MCC program, BSU, and Dual Enrollment at MCC.

Every student passed their class with at least a D- or higher. The total for F's across all grades is .8%. It is an improvement from Fall. Our students are succeeding and passing their college classes and reaching a grade of A- or A.

Bill Lyttle asked if there was a pattern among the courses in which students received grades of D or F?

Response: There is no consistent pattern tied to one specific course. Some lower grades may appear in mathematics courses, but the results can vary depending on the semester, course section, and individual student needs.

Maria commented that when reviewing the data more closely, some trends may be connected to a particular section of a course rather than to the subject area as a whole.

Jeff asked in regard to grades from spring 2026, how did the Spring 2026 grades compare with student performance in prior years?

Students received fewer failing grades in Spring 2026 than in the previous spring semester. At least 50% of students earned an A or A-. This improvement is especially significant because more students were enrolled in college-level courses this year, including students participating in the expanded Dual Enrollment program.

Students' increased participation in courses aligned with their interests did not negatively affect overall academic performance. Instead, the data continued to improve. Within the Dual Enrollment group, only two lower grades were recorded: one C and one F. There were also no incomplete grades issued during the spring semester.

Jeff commented that it would be good to see a regular student in college compared to our students who are taking college classes. Maria responded that MCC's Institutional Research can provide that data so Kaitlin can present at a later date.

Academic Growth by Renee Lewis:
Renee presented an overview of instructional growth initiatives implemented during the school year.

The presentation highlighted the school's analysis of historical MCAS performance, implementation of targeted literacy strategies, emphasis on vocabulary development, note-taking, and reading comprehension, and ongoing instructional observations used to strengthen classroom practice.

Renee also reviewed the continued implementation of PACK Skills to support college readiness and explained how intervention blocks, expanded Early College opportunities, and the Senior Capstone Project contributed to student growth and self-reflection.

NWEA MAP growth data demonstrated positive student progress, while Early College readiness continued to improve.

Notably:

- 93% of sophomores met writing Accuplacer placement requirements.

- The number of sophomores meeting mathematics placement requirements doubled from the previous year.
- 100% of middle and high school students completed a PACK Skills self-assessment measuring college readiness.

Early College Pathways by Dr. Maria Fernandes:
Maria presented several new Early College and Career Pathway initiatives scheduled to launch beginning in Fall 2026.
Highlights included:

- A new Mathematics Pathway in partnership with Roger Williams University allowing qualified students to earn transferable college mathematics credit while enrolled at New Heights.
- An Education Pathway with Stonehill College beginning Spring 2027, including employment opportunities at New Heights.
- A partnership with Brockton Neighborhood Health providing paid internships for successful participants.
- A collaborative trade pathway with South Shore Vocational Technical High School allowing students to participate in vocational programming while remaining enrolled at New Heights.
- New Information Security and Banking Certificate opportunities through Middlesex Community College.

Maria also reviewed updated PACK Skills recommendations for the upcoming school year.
Among rising eleventh graders, 63% were recommended for full-time Early College participation, while 33% qualified for part-time participation.

Among rising seniors, 73 students (88%) qualified for full-time Early College, representing the highest percentage in school history, while eight students qualified for part-time participation.

Jeff asked is the purpose of introducing these pathways to pilot the programs and evaluate how effectively they serve students?

Response: Yes. These pathways are being introduced as pilot opportunities so the school can evaluate student participation, outcomes, and overall program effectiveness. The larger goal is to continue expanding the range of academic, career, and postsecondary pathways available to students.

There is also an Information Security Certificate at MCC piloting next year as well as the Banking Certificate.

For the Fall of 2026, counselors at New Heights have implemented an updated plan of PACK Skills

63% of rising 11th graders have been recommended for full-time early college and 33% have been identified as part-time for Early College.

Rising 12th graders have shown that 73 students full-time EC students (88% - the most we have identified in the history of identifying early-college seniors) and 8 students who will be part-time early college students (10%)

As for Full-Time High School, there will be 3 rising 11th graders on NH campus and 2 rising 12th graders on the NH campus due to not being deemed early college or dual enrollment students because of their behavior and other challenging factors.

Jeff asked how were students identified for full-time Early College, part-time Early College, Dual Enrollment, or continued enrollment primarily on the New Heights campus?

Response: Student recommendations were determined through the PACK Skills framework. The review included attendance, academic performance, behavior, social readiness, demonstrated knowledge, and overall college preparedness.

Question: Are the parents and caregivers of students remaining primarily on the New Heights campus supportive of the behavioral expectations and agreements established for those students?

Response: Yes. The parents and caregivers involved have agreed to the expectations and are supportive of the behavioral agreements developed for their students.

J. Charnel made a motion to accept Academic Excellence Committee Report.
L. Delgado seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

VII. Executive Committee

A. Executive Session

J. Charnel made a motion to enter into Executive Session.
V. Marturano seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.
The Board entered Executive Session to:

- Conduct strategy sessions regarding negotiations with non-union personnel;
- Conduct contract negotiations with non-union personnel;
- Discuss vendor contract negotiations.

W. Lyttle made a motion to come out of Executive Session.

L. Delgado seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

VIII. Good of the Order

A. Special Announcement

Omari West announced that **Dr. Jess Geier** will be departing New Heights Charter School of Brockton. Jess is a founding member of New Heights Charter School Brockton and an instrumental figure in the success of New Heights as Massachusetts first Early College High School.

On behalf of the Board and school community, he expressed appreciation for Dr. Geier's dedicated leadership, service, and contributions to New Heights, and wished her continued success in her future endeavors.

IX. 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 7:10 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
S. Bernard