APPROVED

New Heights Charter School Board of Trustees

Minutes

August Board Meeting

Date and Time
Tuesday August 25, 2026 at 5:00 PM

Location
1105 West Chestnut Street
Brockton, MA 02301

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, L. Delgado (remote), N. Christ (remote), S. Bernard, W. Lyttle

Trustees Absent
S. Jackson, V. Marturano

Ex Officio Members Present
O. Walker

Guests Present

Anthony Wright, Dr. Delroy Dennis, Dr. Ondrea Johnston, K. Kendrick, Lourdes Pires, M. Fernandes, M. Jean, M. Mollo, Michalek Dennis, R. Lewis, S. Graham (remote), Zalikah 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 Aug 25, 2026 at 5:07 PM.

B. Approved Board Members List

C. Roll Call

D. Reading and Approval of Minutes

W. Lyttle made a motion to approve the minutes from Board Meeting on 06-30-26.
J. Charnel seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

II. Executive Director's Report

A. Staffing Update

Marybeth Mollo provided a staffing update, reporting that the school welcomed 14 new hires, including teachers in core subject areas and four Associate Principals supporting STEM, Early College Instruction, and Culture.

Dr. Ondrea Johnston was introduced to the Board following her appointment as Principal. Dr. Johnston provided an overview of her professional background, including prior experience leading and consolidating two schools, working at UMass Boston to develop an Early College program, securing grant funding for a new building, and supporting the development of a Boys and Girls program.

Dr. Johnston shared several initial observations regarding New Heights, including the strong commitment of staff to student success and the school’s sense of community. She also identified areas of focus, including supporting staff through leadership transitions, improving standardized assessment performance, and strengthening communication.

Bill Lyttle welcomed Dr. Johnston to New Heights.

Steve Bernard invited Board members to ask Dr. Johnston any questions they may have.

Jeff Charnel asked whether Dr. Johnston had an opportunity to vet New Heights' Early College program and determine how it compares to the Early College program she previously helped develop**.**

Dr. Johnston responded that one of the primary areas she has been considering is the development of an education pathway. She noted that New Heights' current Early College pathway is primarily focused on Liberal Arts.

B. Update of Summer Programs

Summer School:
8th Grade ELA Teacher, Mrs. Michalek Dennis, Summer School Coordinator, presented an overview of the 2026 Summer School Program, which operated from July 6 through July 30. The program primarily served students requiring credit recovery while also providing opportunities to strengthen academic skills in preparation for the upcoming school year.
Eight educators supported 29 participating students through small-group instruction and individualized academic support.

Program outcomes included:

- 28 of 29 students successfully completed the program.
- Student attendance was 94%.
- 97% of students maintained on-time arrival.
- The program reported a 97% successful completion rate.

Families were required to review and sign the Summer School Student Handbook, and students were expected to comply with school uniform and behavioral expectations. Mrs. Dennis reported that the program was successful overall.

Summer Bridge:
Mrs. Ketsia Faustin-Frejuste presented an update on the Summer Bridge Program, which operated from July 13 through July 31 at Massasoit Community College (MCC).
The program served 98 scholars, including 50 ninth-grade and 48 tenth-grade students. The program initially reached capacity and maintained a waitlist. Of the 100 students initially enrolled, 98 completed the program.

Students participated in hands-on learning experiences facilitated by MCC and Bridgewater State University faculty, strengthened their PACK skills, participated in college visits, engaged in team-building activities and career planning, and visited radio and television stations.

The Board discussed the school's developing relationship with Stonehill College following a student campus visit. Mrs. Faustin-Frejuste reported that efforts are underway to further develop the partnership.

Board members also recognized the positive manner in which New Heights students represent the school during off-campus activities.

DR Service Learning Trip in Dominican Republic

Omari Walker presented an overview of the Dominican Republic Service-Learning Trip. Eleven students and six staff members participated. Programming included work within the Caraballo and Congress communities, with graduating seniors participating during the first session and rising juniors participating during the second session.

Students participated in classroom activities and community engagement opportunities and took active leadership roles in classroom discussions. Mr. Walker also described interviews conducted with community residents and a community gathering sponsored by his foundation that provided Haitian food for approximately 400 residents.

Steve Bernard asked whether the Board's previous approval of the Dominican Republic Service-Learning Trip was for multiple years or on a year-to-year basis.

Omari clarified that the Board votes to approve the trip on an individual, annual basis. He further explained that funding for the trip was not included in this year's budget and that the Board had previously voted for this summer to be the final year in which the trip would be fully funded by the school.

Steve recommended that the school begin exploring how the trip will be funded in the upcoming school year, including potential fundraising opportunities and alternative funding sources.

Steve also asked for clarification regarding Omari's reference to "the Foundation" covering certain expenses associated with the trip and asked which foundation he was referring to.
Omari clarified that he was referring to his foundation.

III. Old Business

A. Nutrition Program

Omari Walker provided an update regarding the school's nutrition program following previous discussion by the Finance Committee.

The school ended its contractual relationship with Stock Pot during the summer and subsequently conducted a competitive procurement process. Two potential vendors were

identified. During contract negotiations, concerns arose regarding whether one vendor could meet requirements outlined in the school's Request for Proposals, particularly the provision of family-style meals.

City Fresh subsequently confirmed its ability to provide family-style meals beginning on the first day of school. Administration presented the City Fresh contract for Board consideration.

W. Lyttle made a motion to accept City-Fresh contract as delivered.
G. Bengen seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

B. Banking and Financing (Construction Loan)

Suzanne provided an update regarding the school's financing process. The school received approval from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and was awaiting action from MassDevelopment regarding a waiver associated with the school's first mortgage.

Steve Bernard asked whether the issue with the MassDevelopment waiver was something the school should have been aware of earlier in the financing process or whether it was an issue that arose unexpectedly**.**

Suzanne responded that the guarantee was part of the existing loan with MassDevelopment. She noted that she could not speak to why the matter was not addressed upfront when the school initially applied for the loan.

Steve followed up by asking whether the Board should be concerned that this represented a significant oversight**.**

Omari responded that it may not necessarily constitute an oversight and asked Jeff Charnel to provide additional clarification.

Jeff explained that this type of requirement is typical and can arise as part of the loan financing process.

C. Construction Project

Administration provided updates regarding ongoing construction projects.
Storage and Additional Seating: The project was reported to be approximately three days behind schedule. The delay was expected to affect athletic programming and physical education classes for approximately two weeks.

PA System: Installation of the new PA system was reported as approximately 60% complete on the first floor and 100% complete on the second floor. Remaining wiring was

expected to be completed within approximately two weeks, followed by issuance of a certificate of completion.

Steve Bernard asked Omari to clarify whether there were any significant cost increases between the amount initially approved by the Board and the actual expenditures associated with the PA system project**.**

Delroy and Gilberto, IT Director, responded that there were no increased costs associated with the project.

They further clarified that the new PA system would not be commissioned by the first day of school but was expected to be operational during the first week of school. The existing PA system will remain in use until the new system is fully operational, at which time the school will complete the cutover and transition to the new system.

The Board discussed whether project costs had exceeded previously approved amounts. Administration and the IT Director reported that there had been no increased costs. The new system was not expected to be commissioned on the first day of school but was anticipated to become operational during the first week. The existing PA system would remain in use until the transition to the new system was complete.

Landscaping: Administration reported that bids received for the proposed front landscaping project exceeded the Board-approved amount by approximately 80,000–90,000.

Administration identified alternative materials that could provide a similar design at a reduced cost. A revised RFP will be issued, with the project anticipated to move from the fall to the spring. Administration expects to return to the Board with an update in January of 2027.

D. MCC MOU Draft Update

Maria provided an update regarding revisions to the Memorandum of Understanding with Massasoit Community College.

MCC's counsel reviewed provisions governing tuition and fee payments. Discussions resulted in proposed language more closely aligned with the structure used by Bridgewater State University, under which fees are based on the DESE-approved per-student rate rather than a predetermined flat fee.

E. International Teacher's Program

Omari provided an update regarding the International Teacher Program, including the six teachers whose H-1B visa processes were funded by the school.

Administration also discussed the status of an international staff member who returned to Jamaica because of an expiring visa. The school hopes the employee may be able to return in January 2027.

Steve Bernard asked whether, in cases where an employee is terminated for cause, there is a provision or policy addressing whether that individual may be reconsidered for future employment.

Omari responded that although the teacher had been a strong educator, the circumstances that led to the termination were considered too serious to allow the individual to remain employed by the school.

The Board will continue reviewing the program and its financial implications. A future consideration may include whether the Board wishes to fund approximately $8,000 per participating employee for the permanent residency/green card process.

IV. New Business

A. HVAC Maintenance Contract

Dr. Delroy Dennis presented information regarding HVAC maintenance needs identified following reports of inconsistent temperatures throughout the building.

An assessment determined that the HVAC system requires balancing and replacement of certain thermostats. The Board was informed that two service visits would cost more than $11,000, while four visits would cost more than $13,000.
J. Charnel made a motion to Finance Committee recommended to the Full Board to go with Cotty and Johnson of four visits for the cost of 17, 986.
L. Delgado seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

B. Security Door Contract

Delroy presented concerns regarding building access and the existing security doors, particularly the potential for parents or other unauthorized visitors to gain access to areas of the building, including second-floor classrooms.

Administration requested authorization to proceed with Cutting Edge to modify the front entrance and strengthen building security.
J. Charnel made a motion to Finance Committee to Full Board for Cutting Edge to move forward with installing new security door.
W. Lyttle seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

C. Approval of 2026-2027 Board Calendar

Dr. Maria Fernandes presented the proposed Board calendar for the 2026–2027 school year. The calendar generally maintains the existing schedule for Board subcommittees, with potential adjustments based on holidays and school vacation periods. The calendar will be distributed electronically to Board members.
J. Charnel made a motion to approve board calendar 26-27 year.
N. Christ seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

D. Accountability Plan

Kaitlin Kendricks presented the school's draft Accountability Plan. The plan was developed internally and had received conditional approval from the Commissioner, pending Board approval. DESE will subsequently issue its version containing the applicable accountability measures.

The five-year plan includes the following key measures:
Early College

- At least 75% of graduating seniors will earn a minimum of 12 transferable college credits prior to graduation, including English Learners, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students.
- At least 50% of graduating seniors will complete 60 or more transferable college credits.

College and Career Readiness

- 100% of students in grades 6–12 will participate in structured college and career readiness programming.
- NHCSB will host four family engagement meetings annually focused on college awareness.

Professional and Community Development

- Annually, 90% of instructional and student support staff will complete a minimum of 120 hours of professional development.

Dissemination

- NHCSB will conduct or participate in at least 10 dissemination activities.
- By the end of the charter term, NHCSB will conduct or present at least five dissemination activities for Boston Public Schools or national educators focused on Early College.

The Board discussed how students in grades 6–12 participate in college-readiness programming. Administration explained that students are assigned an academic counselor who provides exposure to college and career activities and supports students in exploring postsecondary options.

N. Christ made a motion to to accept Accountability Plan.
J. Charnel seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

V. Finance Committee

A. YTD Report (July)

The Finance Committee met at their regularly scheduled time of 4:00 p.m., and most of the topics discussed during that meeting were subsequently addressed under various agenda items during the full Board meeting.

The July Year-to-Date (YTD) financial report was the only Finance Committee item not presented, as the CFO's attention was focused on completing work related to the school's audit report and was unable to prepare the YTD finances through July.

The Committee agreed that the July YTD financial report would be presented at the September Finance Committee Meeting.

VI. Academic Excellence Committee

A. Academic Excellence Report

Lourdes presented the projected enrollment numbers for the 2026–2027 school year:

- Grade 6: 113
- Grade 7: 117
- Grade 8: 118
- Grade 9: 115
- Grade 10: 110
- Grade 11: 98
- Grade 12: 80
- **Total Enrollment: 751**

Enrollment by residence was reported as follows:

- Brockton: 660
- Randolph: 27
- Taunton: 44
- Out-of-District: 20

Student enrollment by gender was reported as 380 female students and 371 male students.

The Committee discussed the importance of maintaining enrollment at or above the school's target of 735 students by October 1 in accordance with applicable DESE enrollment requirements.

The Board recognized Lourdes for her enrollment and community outreach efforts.

VII. Executive Committee N/A

A. Board members go into Executive Session to discuss Basketball Personnel change

J. Charnel made a motion to enter Executive Session to discuss Athletic Personnel Change.
W. Lyttle seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.
Staffing and Contracts: To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel.

- Legal
- Employee Contractural Negotiations
- Vendor Contract Negotiation

J. Charnel made a motion to exit out of Executive Session.
W. Lyttle seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

W. Lyttle	Aye
G. Phillips	Abstain
S. Bernard	Aye
G. Bengen	Aye
J. Charnel	Aye
S. Jackson	Absent
L. Delgado	Aye
J. Radzevich	Aye
V. Marturano	Absent

VIII. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

J. Charnel made a motion to adjourn the August Board Meeting.
W. Lyttle 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 7:15 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
S. Bernard