APPROVED

New Heights Charter School Board of Trustees

Minutes

Academic Excellence Committee Meeting

Date and Time
Wednesday September 23, 2026 at 3:00 PM

New Heights
Academic Excellence Meeting
Join Zoom Meeting

ZOOM Meeting:
https://nhcsb-org.zoom.us/j/71960947850?pwd=UVlZY1RtbU5IZmN2dVR1R2Z5R2VHQT09

Committee Members Present
G. Phillips (remote), J. Charnel (remote), L. Delgado (remote), S. Bernard (remote)

Committee Members Absent
S. Jackson

Ex Officio Members Present
O. Walker (remote)

Guests Present
Dr. Matthew Andrade (remote), Dr. Ondrea Johnston (remote), K. Kendrick (remote), Lourdes Pires (remote), M. Fernandes (remote), M. Jean, R. Lewis (remote)

I. Opening Items

A.

Call the Meeting to Order

S. Bernard called a meeting of the Academic Excellence Committee of New Heights Charter School Board of Trustees to order on Wednesday Sep 23, 2026 at 3:00 PM.

II. Academic Excellence

A. Enrollment

Lourdes presented the year-to-date enrollment report, indicating that New Heights Charter School of Brockton currently has **742 students enrolled**. The report included a breakdown of student enrollment by grade level and municipality of residence.

6th: 113
7th: 117
8th: 115
9th: 115
10th: 106
11th: 96
12th: 80

Brockton: 650
Randolph: 28
Taunton: 48
OOD: 16

Female: 379
Male: 363

During the discussion, Omari provided clarification regarding the school's enrollment funding structure. He explained that although the school is funded for an enrollment capacity of up to 735 students, funding is not determined solely by the number of students enrolled at a particular moment. Rather, enrollment and associated funding calculations are monitored and adjusted throughout the academic year based on actual student enrollment.

Omari further explained that October 1 and February 15 serve as significant enrollment reporting dates, during which enrollment figures are established for funding purposes. Adjustments are subsequently made throughout the year to account for changes in student enrollment.

S. Bernard made a motion to accept the Enrollment Report as presented by Lourdes Pires.
J. Charnel seconded the motion.

The committee **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

B. School Structure and Org. Chart

Omari provided an overview of the school's revised leadership structure and the distribution of administrative responsibilities across grade levels.

Under the current organizational structure, Maria serves as Assistant Executive Director, overseeing Grades 11 and 12 and functioning as the principal-level administrator for the Early College program.

Dr. Ondrea Johnston oversees Grades 6 through 10, with the Chief Academic Officer and Associate Principals reporting directly to her.

Omari explained that this organizational arrangement is intended to serve as a temporary leadership structure for approximately two years. The purpose of the transition period is to provide Dr. Johnston with sufficient time to develop a comprehensive understanding of the school's Early College model, including its academic programming, operational requirements, and unique instructional structure.

Following this transition period, the school anticipates consolidating its academic leadership structure under one principal.

Omari confirmed that an organizational chart illustrating the revised reporting structure will be included in the full Board meeting packet. He also agreed to provide the full Board with an explanation of the temporary structure, its purpose, and the anticipated transition toward a unified leadership model.

C. SY 2026/2027 - First Day of School

Dr. Johnston presented findings from the School-Based Leadership Team's after-action review, conducted on September 3, 2026, following the opening days of the academic year.
The review identified several successful practices as well as operational challenges requiring attention.

Highlights:
Dr. Johnston reported that the opening of school was positively marked by staff and teachers welcoming students into the building. Their presence and engagement contributed to a supportive and welcoming environment for students returning to school.

Challenges:
The leadership team's review identified several operational concerns:

- **Printing and preparation:** Printing-related difficulties affected aspects of the school's opening-day operations.
- **Breakfast and cafeteria capacity:** Limited cafeteria space created challenges in accommodating students during breakfast.
- **Hallway transitions:** Student movement throughout the building resulted in bottlenecks, raising concerns regarding traffic flow, efficiency, and safety.
- **Dismissal and transportation:** Changes to student bus numbers contributed to confusion during dismissal and presented challenges in coordinating student transportation.

Next Steps:
Dr. Johnston outlined several measures intended to address these concerns, including providing students with identification cards displaying their assigned bus numbers to improve dismissal procedures and reduce transportation-related confusion.
The school will also review its operational procedures, hallway traffic patterns, cafeteria transitions, and student movement throughout the building to identify opportunities to improve efficiency and safety.

Dr. Johnston reported that there were no significant operational challenges associated with the UFC program at the start of the school year.

She identified uniform sales as a potential area requiring additional attention, particularly regarding the communication of expectations and purchasing information to families. She emphasized the importance of strengthening family communication to prevent confusion and ensure families receive the necessary information in a timely manner.

EC College (Grades 11 & 12)
Maria provided an update on the opening of the 2026–2027 academic year for students enrolled in Grades 11 and 12.

She reported that student orientations were successfully conducted and that teachers participated in professional development activities in preparation for the academic year. Despite these successful opening activities, Maria acknowledged ongoing logistical challenges associated with student scheduling, classroom availability, and transportation coordination.

She explained that the Early College program continues to require flexible and creative scheduling arrangements to accommodate students' academic programming and the availability of instructional space.

Maria further reported that the school is temporarily operating its Early College program from the Canton campus while maintaining certain programming at the Brockton campus on Fridays.

School leadership continues to address transportation and scheduling challenges as they arise to minimize disruptions to student learning.

Maria confirmed that attendance was recorded during parent orientation back in early September and that student handbooks were distributed to families the following morning.

These measures were intended to ensure families received important information regarding school expectations, procedures, and the Early College program.

D. "What STEM Looks Like at NHCSB"

Grades 6-10 - Renee Lewis

Renee presented an overview of the school's STEM curriculum for Grades 6 through 10, highlighting instructional adjustments informed by historical student performance indicators, assessment outcomes, and academic programming priorities.

She explained that the school has been reviewing its STEM offerings to ensure that instructional opportunities align with student needs and evolving educational expectations.
As part of these adjustments, the school has recently shifted technology education from the middle school grades to the high school level. Renee explained that this change aligns with recommendations and educational priorities advanced by Governor Maura Healey.

The presentation emphasized the school's continued efforts to strengthen STEM instruction through curriculum evaluation and data-informed academic planning.

In connection to what Renee presented around Healey’s recommendations across schools in Massachusetts, Omari discussed the opportunities and challenges associated with the implementation of artificial intelligence (AI) within the school's instructional model. He acknowledged that the growing presence of AI in education has prompted important discussions regarding its appropriate use by students and educators.

The discussion included the potential introduction of AI-supported tutoring and the need to establish clear policies distinguishing appropriate academic assistance from academic dishonesty.

Omari emphasized the importance of approaching AI implementation thoughtfully, particularly as the school considers how emerging technologies may support student learning while maintaining academic integrity.

Next Steps: The school plans to engage an AI education expert as a consultant to provide guidance regarding the instructional use of artificial intelligence, AI-supported tutoring, academic integrity expectations, and the development of appropriate policies and implementation strategies.

Early College - Dr. Matthew Andrade
Dr. Matthew Andrade provided an overview of STEM programming for students in Grades 11 and 12.

His presentation emphasized the importance of providing students with meaningful opportunities to engage in hands-on learning experiences that extend beyond traditional classroom instruction.

Dr. Andrade identified critical thinking, collaboration, and data literacy as essential components of the Early College STEM experience.

He emphasized that these competencies support students in developing the analytical, problem-solving, and collaborative skills necessary for success in college-level coursework and future academic and professional pursuits.

Update on the Roger Williams University Partnership:
The Committee received an update regarding the school's newly established partnership with Roger Williams University.

Maria explained that the partnership was developed to expand access to college-level mathematics coursework for students who did not meet the eligibility requirements established by Massasoit Community College.

Through the partnership, Dr. Matthew Andrade is teaching two sections of College Algebra at a total cost of **$7,500 to New Heights Charter School of Brockton**.

Maria explained that the arrangement provides an alternative academic pathway for students to participate in college-level mathematics instruction while continuing to advance their Early College academic goals.

Students who successfully complete the coursework may have the opportunity to transfer the earned credits through a reverse-transfer process, subject to applicable institutional requirements.

The partnership represents an additional effort by the school to expand access to college-level coursework and provide students with academic opportunities that may otherwise be unavailable because of existing eligibility requirements.

E.

SY 2025-2026 Grade Distribution

Kaitlin presented the school year 2025–2026 grade distribution report, providing an overview of student academic performance across the middle and high school grade levels.

The presentation focused on comparisons between Semester 1 and Semester 2, highlighting changes in the distribution of letter grades.

Kaitlin reported an increase in the percentage of students earning A grades from the first semester to the second semester. Additionally, the data reflected a decrease in the percentage of students receiving F grades during the same period.

These improvements were observed across both middle and high school grade levels. The findings indicated a positive shift in the school's internal grade distribution data over the course of the academic year.

The discussion also addressed the possibility of comparing New Heights' grade distribution results with those of other charter schools. Kaitlin explained that the school does not currently have access to comparable grade distribution data from other charter schools, limiting its ability to conduct an external comparison.

As a result, the presentation focused on internal semester-to-semester performance trends rather than comparisons with other institutions.

S. Bernard made a motion to accept the September Academic Excellence Committee Report.
L. Delgado seconded the motion.
The committee **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

III. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

S. Bernard made a motion to adjourn the meeting.
J. Charnel seconded the motion.
The committee **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 4:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
S. Bernard