



Inwood Academy for Leadership Charter School

Minutes

August Board of Trustees Meeting

Date and Time

Tuesday August 18, 2026 at 7:00 PM

Location

433 West 204th Street, New York, NY 10034

Trustees Present

C. Reyes, J. Almonte (remote), J. Looney (remote), J. Zucker (remote), K. Drezner (remote), S. Santo (remote), V. Singh (remote)

Trustees Absent

C. Talero, M. Rosenthal, R. Khamis

Guests Present

A. Rodriguez (remote), B. Mercedes, G. Thiyagarajah (remote), J. Pichardo, K. Cuateco (remote), Kevin Garcia (remote)

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

S. Santo called a meeting of the board of trustees of Inwood Academy for Leadership Charter School to order on Tuesday Aug 18, 2026 at 7:07 PM.

C.

Approve Minutes

V. Singh made a motion to approve the minutes from July Board of Trustees Meeting on 07-28-26.

J. Zucker seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

II. Board Committee Reports

A. Academic Committee Report

II. 2025-26 School Year Priorities

A. K–12 Academic Priorities

B. Mercedes introduced the school's priorities for last academic 2025–2026 school year. The school is entering the second year of its four-year strategic goals and is focused on maintaining a safe and collaborative culture, ensuring effective teaching in every classroom, and creating a responsive school culture.

Three K–12 priorities:

- Strong and consistent school culture and core instruction;
- Response to intervention and acceleration; and
- Student agency, leadership, and ownership of learning.

The school will continue aligning its work to the vision of Belong, Grow, and Lead. Students will use portfolios to establish goals, monitor academic progress and attendance, reflect on their growth, and prepare to lead conversations with their families.

B. Elementary School Update

G. Thiagarajah provided an update on the Elementary School. The Elementary School will operate as a complete K–5 program for the first time, with approximately 127 students and 16 teachers and new-teacher apprentices.

The Elementary School's 2025-26 priorities included:

- Establishing sustainable and consistent school culture systems;
- Implementing defined behavioral and social-emotional tiers of support;
- Using a social-emotional learning screener to identify student needs;
- Addressing chronic absenteeism through early intervention;
- Strengthening consistent, high-quality reading and mathematics instruction;
- Using student data to adjust instruction and intervention; and
- Expanding student leadership committees, portfolios, service projects, and Leadership Day.

The Board discussed the importance of maintaining a strong sense of belonging and community as the Elementary School continues to grow.

C. Middle School Update

K. Cuateco provided an update on the Middle School's priorities for the 2025–2026 school year.

The Middle School focused on:

- Establishing consistent expectations and practices across classrooms;
- Strengthening the implementation of Leader in Me and the Seven Habits;
- Creating student portfolios to track attendance, academic progress, goals, and reflections;
- Establishing a shared instructional cycle and common instructional practices;
- Prioritizing academic language and student discussion across all subject areas;
- Expanding literacy intervention in sixth and seventh grades;
- Introducing mathematics intervention in sixth and seventh grades; and
- Conducting monthly leadership walkthroughs to monitor implementation and inform coaching.

The administration shared that successful instructional practices identified in the prior year will be replicated across classrooms. The Board discussed the importance of using data and identified instructional bright spots to create consistent practices throughout the Middle School.

D. High School Update

A. Rodriguez provided an update on the High School's three priority areas:

- Strong Tier 1 culture;
- Evidence-driven instruction and coaching; and
- Humanities and STEM intervention labs.

The High School will establish consistent expectations and routines, active adult presence, student recognition systems, stronger advisory and leadership programming, and early intervention and escalation processes.

For 2026-27 The High School is transitioning to 90-minute instructional periods. Teachers and coaches will use evidence of student learning throughout each lesson to adjust instruction and provide immediate support. Intervention labs will be embedded in the school day twice each week. The labs will provide credit recovery, Regents preparation, academic intervention, enrichment, and acceleration opportunities. This approach builds upon the successful model used to support the graduating class during the prior school year.

B. Finance and Facilities Updates

III. Enrollment, Operations, and Finance Reports

A. Enrollment Report

J. Pichardo provided an enrollment update for the 2026–2027 school year. As of the week preceding the meeting, enrollment was reported at 931 students. Enrollment had adjusted to approximately 923 students as of the morning of the meeting due to newly confirmed transfers and some newly enrolled students choosing to remain at their current schools.

The school's approved budget is based on an enrollment of 909 students. Current enrollment therefore remains above the budgeted target. The administration's goal is to maintain enrollment as close to 930 students as possible throughout the school year.

The administration reported that:

- There were 47 confirmed transfers as of the prior week, increasing to approximately 56 by the date of the meeting;
- Families are communicating transfer decisions earlier than they did during the prior year;
- Earlier communication allows the school to open and backfill available seats more quickly;
- Eight previously unconfirmed students had been reviewed and updated;
- The school continues to maintain active waitlists and fill available seats; and
- Enrollment will continue to be monitored closely through the opening of school.

The reported enrollment distribution was:

- Elementary School: approximately 127 students;
- Middle School: approximately 229 students;
- Ninth grade: approximately 154 students against a goal of 157 seats; and
- High School grades 10–12: approximately 422 students.

The 382 students assigned to the Middle School building include the Middle School population and ninth-grade students occupying the third-floor High School wing.

J. Pichardo explained that the school expanded ninth-grade enrollment because of strong family interest and the need to support sustainable K–12 enrollment. The ninth-grade target of 157 students represents the largest ninth-grade class in the school's history.

B. Grade Relocation and Space Utilization

J. Pichardo explained the changes made to grade-level locations for the 2026–2027 school year.

After reviewing enrollment, student needs, space capacity, instructional programming, and the new 90-minute block schedule, the administration determined that the Middle School building was the more appropriate location for ninth grade.

The Middle School building has the capacity to accommodate more than 500 students. With Middle School enrollment at approximately 229 students, the building had sufficient

capacity to house ninth grade on the third floor while maintaining separate and appropriate spaces for grades six through eight.

The final building plan includes:

- Ninth grade located on the third floor in a designated High School wing;
- Sixth and seventh grades located primarily on the second floor;
- Eighth grade utilizing the Annex space; and

The move also allows academic deans, social workers, and other shared staff to support both Middle School and ninth-grade students without traveling between buildings.

The administration shared that separate signage, entrances, exits, staircases, and movement expectations are being established to distinguish the Middle School and High School programs. Emergency procedures and evacuation plans will also be updated to reflect the shared-space arrangement.

C. Operations and Facilities Readiness Report

K. Garcia provided the Operations and Facilities readiness report.

The Operations Team coordinated the movement of classroom materials, furniture, staff belongings, and equipment across the Elementary, Middle, High School, and Annex sites. The work included support from Facilities, Operations Associates, security, kitchen staff, custodial staff, students, and other members of the school community. At the High School, twelfth-grade materials were moved from Leadership Hall back to the main High School building. Ninth-grade materials were moved to the newly designated third-floor High School wing at the Middle School.

The third floor is being redesigned to provide a distinct High School environment. The work includes:

- Painting the floor using High School colors;
- Renumbering classrooms;
- Installing High School signage;
- Assigning dedicated staircases and movement routes;
- Setting up approximately 10 ninth-grade classrooms; and
- Updating emergency and evacuation plans.

At the Elementary School:

- Kindergarten and first-grade classrooms were relocated to the first floor;
- Third- and fourth-grade classrooms were established on the second floor;
- Classrooms were furnished with age-appropriate desks and chairs;
- Classrooms and hallways received full painting and touch-ups; and
- The building was prepared to accommodate the complete K–5 program.

At the main High School building, the major summer-readiness work was substantially complete at the time of the meeting. At the Middle School, the third-floor High School wing was approximately 75% complete, with the overall High School readiness work across both locations reported at approximately 85%.

The remaining work included painting, cleaning, floor preparation, classroom setup, signage, and final work on the first and second floors. The team expected the major readiness work to be completed before staff returned.

K. Garcia also reviewed the school's standard summer-readiness work, including:

- Minor building repairs;
- Deep cleaning and floor maintenance;
- Furniture cleaning and classroom setup;
- Classroom and hallway painting;
- Projector replacement;
- Chromebook preparation;
- Inventory organization; and
- Organization and distribution of teacher materials.

The Board acknowledged the extensive cross-functional work completed by the Operations and Facilities teams to prepare all school buildings for the new year.

D. Finance and Rent Reimbursement Update

J. Pichardo provided a finance update related to the ninth-grade relocation.

The Middle School grades are not eligible for rental assistance. However, because ninth grade will occupy a portion of the Middle School building, the school informed its authorizer and legal counsel that it intends to apply for rental assistance for the High School portion of the building.

The anticipated rental assistance is approximately \$900,000 in additional revenue that was not included in the approved budget.

The Authorizer is expected to provide guidance on the required submission process.

The administration will provide the Board with additional information as the rental assistance application moves forward.

IV. Board Development

A. Board Recruitment

The Board discussed the continued need to recruit additional trustees. Finance expertise remains the highest priority because J. Zucker is currently serving as interim Treasurer. The Board would also benefit from members with education experience and individuals who live in or represent the Inwood community.

Trustees were encouraged to share potential candidates and promote Board service opportunities through their personal and professional networks.

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 10:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
V. Singh