



Bronx Charter School for the Arts

Minutes

Monthly Board Meeting

Date and Time

Tuesday September 9, 2025 at 6:00 PM

Location

Zoom

Trustees Present

Arlene Bascom (remote), Barbara H. Scott (remote), David Barnard (remote), Denise Brecher (remote), Evette Stair- Radlein (remote), Lori Biancamano (remote), Susan Geisenheimer (remote), Zahreen Ghaznavi (remote)

Trustees Absent

Charles Whites, Eric Osorio

Ex Officio Members Present

Kathy Ortiz (remote)

Non Voting Members Present

Kathy Ortiz (remote)

Guests Present

Joseph Chiofalo (remote), Krisann Vega (remote), Loretta Cargill (remote), Lydia Bremer (remote), Melanie Hok (remote), Patricia Rooney (remote), Ryan McCabe (remote)

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

Barbara H. Scott called a meeting of the board of trustees of Bronx Charter School for the Arts to order on Tuesday Sep 9, 2025 at 6:05 PM.

C. Approve Minutes

Arlene Bascom made a motion to approve the minutes from Monthly Board Meeting on 08-12-25.

Lori Biancamano seconded the motion.

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

II. Executive Director Report

A. Update Presented by: Kathy Ortiz, Executive Director

Academic Performance Overview

Executive Director Kathy Ortiz provided an overview of Bronx Charter School for the Arts' performance on the 2025 New York State Assessments, noting continued academic growth and strong results across grade levels. Overall, Bronx Arts students continue to make meaningful gains and outperform peers across multiple benchmarks.

In a significant shift toward digital readiness, **all students in grades three through eight completed their state exams on computers**—a bold step forward, as most schools statewide continue to test only select grades digitally. This decision, implemented at the start of Bronx Arts' fifth charter term, reflects the school's proactive approach to preparing students for the evolving assessment landscape.

For the **second consecutive year**, Bronx Arts **outperformed New York State, New York City, the Bronx, and our local district** in both English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics.

ELA proficiency rose from **51.7% in 2024 to 55.9% in 2025**, a 4.2-point increase driven by early-grade literacy gains. Grade 3 students demonstrated the most remarkable growth, jumping **25 percentage points**, while Grades 5 and 6 also achieved double-digit increases. Although Grades 7 and 8 experienced slight dips, both remain above city and state averages, maintaining Bronx Arts' reputation for strong middle-school performance.

In Mathematics, overall proficiency increased slightly from **56% to 56.7%**, with several notable highlights. Grade 7 achieved an **outstanding 73.6% proficiency rate**, the highest across all subjects and grade levels. Grades 3 and 5 also showed measurable

growth, while the entire Grade 8 cohort took the Algebra Regents exam for the first time—achieving a **50% passing rate**, a milestone in advanced academic access and rigor.

With proficiency levels in both ELA and Math now **above 55%**, Bronx Arts continues to demonstrate steady progress, validating the school's belief that **arts-integrated instruction fuels creativity, confidence, and academic excellence**.

Schoolwide Highlights

In addition to academic growth, Ms. Ortiz shared several operational and community updates that reflect Bronx Arts' ongoing strength and stability.

- **Enrollment** exceeded projections, with **616 students enrolled**, surpassing the target of 580 and affirming the school's strong reputation among Bronx families.
- **Staffing** remains robust; the middle school is fully staffed, and only two positions remain open at the elementary campus.
- **Community engagement** continues to thrive, with successful **Back-to-School Nights** and the **revival of the Parent Ambassadors Committee**, fostering deeper family partnerships and a stronger school culture.
- For the **second consecutive year**, Bronx Arts outperformed state, city, and borough averages in both ELA and Math—underscoring the school's consistent academic and operational excellence.

These accomplishments collectively illustrate Bronx Arts' steadfast commitment to **academic achievement, artistic expression, and community connection**—the foundation of its mission and the driving force behind its continued success.

Alumni and Community Engagement

Ryan McCabe also shared the continued growth of Bronx Arts' alumni and community engagement efforts. Athletics participation is increasing, and preparations for high school transitions are well underway. The **Bronx Arts Alumni Network** remains a powerful extension of the school's mission and values.

Fifteen alumni recently returned to campus to share their experiences and serve as mentors to current students. Additionally, **18 alumni currently enrolled in college** received care packages—among them, students attending **Howard University, Tuskegee University**, and other Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Many of these alumni plan to return for **HBCU Week**, reinforcing Bronx Arts' commitment to long-term student success and community pride.

Alumni involvement continues to showcase the strength of the Bronx Arts family, where graduates remain deeply connected and invested in the school's mission.

III. Facilities & Real Estate

A. Update

David Barnard shared an update on facilities. Bronx Arts successfully reopened on time thanks to the extraordinary efforts of staff members Garcia, Bremer, and Cruz; the leadership team—Ortiz, Rooney, Hok, Vega, West, and Roberts; the support of PSwrx consultants; and the integrity of the roofing contractor, who completed all necessary repairs and replaced all items damaged during the flood. Teams worked around the clock to restore the building, completing roof repairs, skylight replacements, and ongoing HVAC upgrades. The project remained on budget and on schedule—demonstrating the strength, commitment, and resilience of the Bronx Arts community.

IV. Finance Report

A. Update

Ms. Melanie Hok presented the 2024-25 performance bonus accrual proposal, outlining the staff eligibility criteria and tier structure. This bonus will be made possible by the surplus achieved in fiscal year ending June 30, 2025.

Arlene Bascom made a motion to approve the performance bonus accrual of approximately \$200,229 for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, based on the outlined performance bonus criteria, for each qualified employee.

Susan Geisenheimer seconded the motion.

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

V. Development & Communications Report

A. Update Presenter: Joseph Chiofalo

The A.R.T.S. Campaign Launch

On behalf of the The Development and Communications team, Joseph announced the upcoming launch of **The Arts Campaign**, a tiered individual-giving initiative designed to grow and energize Bronx Arts' small but loyal donor base.

Developed by Ms. Ortiz and Mr. Chiofalo, the campaign complements existing grant funding by inspiring broader community participation through structured giving tiers:

- **Ambassador:** \$1–\$100
- **Reclaimer:** \$101–\$500
- **Trailblazer:** \$501–\$1,000

- **Steward:** \$1,001+

Each level includes themed recognition and exclusive donor rewards such as **custom stickers, market bags, aprons, and student art prints**. The campaign will roll out through **digital and physical mailings**, including a prototype mailer with a **QR code** linking directly to the donation portal.

The campaign emphasizes Bronx Arts' identity as **a vital and symbiotic part of the South Bronx community**, reinforcing the school's mission of creativity, connection, and community impact.

Community Partnerships & In-Kind Programs

The **Wave Makers Swim Program** is returning for its second year, offering valuable swimming instruction to all second-grade students beginning around **October 20**. This in-kind partnership, valued at over **\$47,000**, continues to enrich student experiences through access to high-quality physical education opportunities.

Bronx Arts was also invited to represent the school at **Contacts for Compassion's third annual benefit gala**, a strong networking opportunity and a reflection of Bronx Arts' role as the organization's **flagship U.S. partner**.

Events & Engagement Calendar

The team is curating a series of events designed to deepen engagement and build donor connections:

Date	Event
October 23	Beats & Brew
November 6.	Sofrito Social
December 4	Virtual Wine Class
January 15.	<i>The Addams Family</i> — BAE Musical
March 18.	Student Art Auction
May 21.	Jazz on Longfellow!
June 4.	<i>Beauty and the Beast</i> — BAE Musical

Sponsorship Opportunities

Bronx Arts is actively **seeking event sponsors** and encouraging all board members and community partners to share the campaign and **direct interested donors** to the school's **donation page or info email**. One potential sponsor has already expressed interest, signaling strong early momentum for the year's development goals.

VI. Upcoming Events

A. Update

Kathy Ortiz concluded the meeting highlighting upcoming school events and board committee meetings.

VII. 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 7:01 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Lori Biancamano