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**Principal
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AGENDA

Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) Promise Academy II
Board of Trustees Meeting
Thursday, November 20, 2025
at
245 West 129th Street
New York, NY

- I. Acceptance of the Minutes
- II. CEO Report (*Kwame Owusu-Kesse*)
- III. Superintendent's Updates (*Saskia Brown*)
- IV. HCZ Promise Academy II Updates
 - i. Elementary School (*LaKiesha George*)
 - ii. Middle School (*Veroniqua Delva*)
 - iii. High School (*Shannon Ortiz-Wong*)
- V. Financial Report (*Ralph Stefano*)
- VI. Resolution
 - i. Charter Revision - Projected Enrollment (*Candice Ashby*)

**Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) Promise Academy II Charter School
Board Meeting
Thursday, October 23, 2025
245 West 129th Street**

Attendees: Geoffrey Canada, Kwame Owusu-Kesse, Mitch Kurz, Ellanor (Bodie) Brizendine, Stan Druckenmiller, Willie Mae Lewis, Lisa McNear, Keith Meister, DeniLee Peroza, Candice Ashby, Shannon Benson, LaRen Bierria, Saskia Brown, Ari Browne, Celines Castro, Amy Deal, Veronique Delva, Garraud Etienne, LaKiesha George, Jenn Klein, Jazmine Lewis, Stephanie Lilavois, Katherine Martinez, John Macapagal, Liam McCarthy, Kiana Morris, Shannon Ortiz-Wong, Meredith Peckosh-Soffrin, Ralph Stefano, Toya Stille, and Tarik Ward.

Acceptance of Minutes (Geoffrey Canada)

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 PM, and a motion to approve the meeting minutes from September 18 was unanimously approved.

CEO Report (Kwame Owusu-Kesse)

Chief Executive Officer Kwame Owusu-Kesse shared highlights from Power of Place: Pathways to Mobility convening in San Diego, which brought together approximately 780 leaders from across the country, including policymakers, practitioners, and philanthropists. The convening showcased the impactful place-based, cradle-to-career work in Harlem and across the nation, much of it inspired by HCZ's model. Attendees praised Stan Druckenmiller for his authentic and passionate remarks, and Mr. Owusu-Kesse thanked him for his contribution.

Mr. Owusu-Kesse also gathered reflections from staff, who were pleased with the high standard of excellence and professionalism demonstrated throughout the event.

This fall, Mr. Owusu-Kesse, Superintendent Dr. Saskia Brown, and Deputy Superintendent Shannon Benson met with every teacher across the organization after the Superintendent's team implemented revised compensation adjustments. The updated structure benchmarks salaries against the new Department of Education (DOE) scale released in mid-September, with HCZ Promise Academy salaries set approximately 10% higher. Many teachers received significant raises and expressed strong appreciation for the organization's responsiveness. Early feedback suggests improved morale, retention, and recruitment.

Superintendent's Update (Dr. Saskia Brown)

Dr. Brown reported that enrollment as of October 1 is 1,146 for HCZ Promise Academy I and 1,003 for HCZ Promise Academy II.

During the week of September 29, the Leadership Team participated in CEO review meetings, providing an opportunity for staff across the organization to engage directly with Mr. Owusu-Kesse. Dr. Brown expressed appreciation for Mr. Owusu-Kesse's commitment to meeting with hundreds of staff members and noted that his presence and encouragement had a positive impact on morale and collective energy.

Dr. Brown also thanked Chief National Impact Officer Christian Rhodes and Mr. Canada for inviting school and network leaders to this year's Power of Place convening. Principals and Managing Directors valued the opportunity to engage with national peers and reflect on best practices.

Academic teams have been focused on scholar interventions and instructional planning. The i-Ready assessment window closed on September 17, and the teams are using the data to identify targeted scholar groups for additional support during the school day. Intervention efforts now include enhancements to the Academic Hour and Saturday Academy.

HCZ Promise Academy II Elementary School (Kiana Morris)

Principal Kiana Morris reported the Elementary School's attendance was 93% for September.

The Elementary School completed its instructional walkthrough in September and used the findings to develop actionable school-wide goals aimed at strengthening instructional rigor. Teachers also began observations as part of ongoing efforts to support high-quality instruction.

The Elementary School continues to implement Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. Scholars are learning how to save and redeem points at the school store, reinforcing positive behavior and building habits related to responsibility and goal-setting.

The Elementary School held Parent-Teacher Conferences on October 16-17, and it provided families with individualized next steps and academic resources to support their scholars' continued progress.

The Teaching and Learning Team facilitated a visit from Daphne Draws, who gave scholars the opportunity to engage in a live read-aloud and an interactive activity designed to promote early interest in graphing and problem-solving. The character "Daffy" from the activity is now displayed in the principal's office as a symbol of the school's encouragement of mathematical exploration.

HCZ Promise Academy II Middle School (Veronica Delva)

Principal Dr. Veronica Delva reported the Middle School's attendance was 92% for September.

The Middle School launched its Respectful Language Campaign, a community-wide initiative involving scholars, staff, and families in promoting respectful communication

and positive interactions. The Middle School continues to share updates with families to ensure consistent reinforcement at home and school.

The Middle School held Parent-Teacher Conferences this month where the Wealth Builds Team and the Institute for Family Health provided families access to community resources.

The Middle School also hosted its first Dive-In with Dr. Delva event, where families reviewed expectations for the year and discussed ways to partner more actively with the school.

In October, the Middle School and Education Director Dr. Shenequa Foulks opened the Parent Resource Room. The space provides families with academic support and strategies to assist their scholars at home.

The Middle School has begun its first round of instructional coaching cycles, including one-on-one meetings designed to deepen teacher practice.

The Middle School held a pep rally to launch the Helping Young People Excel Program, which includes academic interventions such as Academic Hour. These interventions leverage i-Ready and New York State Exam data to provide tiered academic support.

HCZ Promise Academy After School launched this fall. Principal Delva recognized the After School and Day School Teams for their collaboration, ensuring smooth implementation and high-quality programming.

The Middle School also introduced “Spreading Some Joy Out of the Blue,” a staff morale initiative that featured a scholar-DJ and a mobile cart distributing treats and encouragement to staff.

Finally, the Middle School celebrated eighth-grade scholar Aubrey Bauseman for competing in the Athlos NYC Track and Field Competition. Aubrey competed against over sixty professional and Olympic-level athletes and placed fifth overall, marking a significant achievement for the school community.

HCZ Promise Academy II High School (Shannon Ortiz-Wong)

Principal Shannon Ortiz-Wong reported the High School's attendance was 91% for September.

The High School had a strong start to the year, with a focus on supporting scholars' social, emotional, and academic needs. Dr. Brown, Mr. Benson, and the Teaching and Learning Team conducted classroom observations to assess scholar needs and ensure alignment with the school-wide action plan established earlier this fall.

The High School hosted a well-attended Back-to-School Night with more than 50 families. The High School held raffles and helped families — especially those of seniors preparing for college — connect with staff and receive guidance.

The High School also held its second annual Senior Commitment Ceremony, where seniors wrote letters to their future selves during a mocktail reception. The ceremony

gave scholars an opportunity to practice networking skills and prepare for key milestones in the college application process.

Twelfth-grade scholars continued to participate in National Equity Lab and College Now courses at City College and Hunter College. This fall, scholars enrolled in Math and Everyday Life, and they will attend Pre-Calculus, Calculus, and Physics courses in the spring. These opportunities strengthen scholars' academic profiles and help ensure they remain competitive candidates for selective postsecondary pathways.

Financial Update (Ralph Stefano)

Chief Financial Officer Ralph Stefano reported that HCZ Promise Academy II's preliminary Oct 1 enrollment is 1,003, which is 24 unfavorable versus the budget. The school's revenue through September is \$0.1M unfavorable at \$4.0M. Expenses are \$0.4M favorable, at \$3.4M. HCZ has not made a contribution through two months of FY26.

Harlem Children's Zone Promise Academy II

October 2025 Attendance Report

	HCZ PAII Elementary School			HCZ PAII Middle School			HCZ PAII High School		
Date	Number of Students		% of Students	Number of Students		% of Students	Number of Students		% of Students
	Absent	Enrollment		Absent	Enrollment		Absent	Enrollment	
10/1	17	526	97%	15	268	94%	17	203	92%
10/3	52	525	90%	23	268	91%	8	203	96%
10/6	40	524	92%	20	268	93%	15	203	93%
10/7	23	523	96%	18	267	93%	11	203	95%
10/8	54	523	90%	22	267	92%	23	203	89%
10/9	40	523	92%	20	267	93%	15	203	93%
10/10	34	521	93%	22	267	92%	15	203	93%
10/14	38	519	93%	22	267	92%	21	202	90%
10/15	39	518	92%	19	267	93%	13	202	94%
10/16	38	519	93%	23	267	91%	15	202	93%
10/17	51	519	90%	14	266	95%	15	202	93%
10/21	33	518	94%	15	266	94%	15	202	93%
10/22	110	517	79%	58	266	78%	15	202	93%
10/23	17	518	97%	19	266	93%	15	202	93%
10/24	31	518	94%	19	266	93%	18	202	91%
10/27	38	518	93%	21	266	92%	16	202	92%
10/28	26	518	95%	18	266	93%	13	202	94%
10/29	29	517	94%	21	266	92%	11	202	95%
10/30	60	517	88%	17	266	94%	20	202	90%
10/31	54	517	90%	28	266	89%	22	202	89%
Average	41	520	92%	22	267	92%	16	202	92%



Promise Academy II

FY 2026 September YTD Budget vs. Actual

		Budget	Actual	Fav/(Unfav)	Full Year Budget
Enrollment @ Sept 30	(a)	1,027	998	(29)	1,027
DOE and other gov't funding		\$ 6.2	\$ 5.9	\$ (0.3)	\$ 24.8
Expenses:					
Salaries		3.7	3.7	-	16.3
Benefits		1.1	0.8	0.3	4.4
OTPS		1.0	0.8	0.2	3.9
Total Expenses	(b)	5.8	5.3	0.5	24.6
Expenses in excess of public funding		-	-	-	-
Contribution Components:					
HCZ Contribution		-	-	-	-
per student (whole \$)		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -

(a) Enrollment as of Nov 1: 985

(b) Excludes PA Initiatives, bonus, growth fund, & other HCZ allocations.

October 28, 2025

Dear Mr. Webster,

Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) Promise Academy II Charter School is formally submitting a material revision approved by the HCZ Promise Academy I Board of Trustees on November 20, 2025.

HCZ Promise Academy II Charter School began its first charter in February 2005. The school has had four renewal periods approved by the Board of Regents.

Original Charter: February 16, 2005 - April 14, 2010

Renewal Period 1: April 15, 2010 - April 14, 2015

Renewal Period 2: April 15, 2015 - June 30, 2019

Renewal Period 3: July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2024

Renewal Period 4: July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2029

HCZ Promise Academy II Charter School is applying for a revision to its charter to decrease the enrollment projections for the remaining three years of its current term. We are seeking a material revision to align with current enrollment trends.

HCZ Promise Academy II is deeply committed to serving our most vulnerable populations, as evidenced by our charter, mission statement, and ongoing work in Harlem. Yet, due to a combination of factors, including the pandemic-driven exodus of families from the city, declining birth rates, and increased competition from neighboring charter schools, we've seen a recent decrease in enrollment.

Attached, please find the pages in the HCZ Promise Academy II charter that propose the new enrollment projections for the remainder of the current charter term. If you have any questions, please contact Candice Ashby, Director of Compliance & Reporting, at 212-360-3230 or candice.ashby@hczpromise.org

Sincerely yours,



Dr. Saskia Brown, Superintendent

HCZ Promise Academy Charter Schools and Early Childhood Programs

II.B.4.Student Enrollment

- a. ***Provide a student enrollment growth plan formatted as a chart that includes the following: (1) the total number of students enrolled each year for every year until the school has met its total planned enrollment; (2) the ages, grade levels, and class size to be served in each grade in each year [Ed.L. 52852(2)(l)]; c) the rationale for enrollment decisions.***

The following chart details HCZ Promise Academy II's enrollment plans:

Grade	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
K	125	125	100 125	100 125	100 125
1	125	125	100 125	100 125	100 125
2	125	125	100 125	100 125	100 125
3	95	100	95 100	95 100	95 100
4	90	100	90 100	90 100	90 100
5	90	100	90 100	90 100	90 100
6	85	85	85 100	85 100	85 100
7	85	85	85 95	85 95	85 95
8	80	80	80	80	80
9	75	75	75	75	75
10	70	70	70	70	70
11	65	65	65	65	65
12	65	65	65	65	65
Total	1175	1200	1100 1225	1100 1225	1100 1225

HCZ Promise Academy II is open to children who are eligible for admission to a public school under New York State law. The school does not discriminate on the basis of prior academic achievement, athletic ability, disability, race, creed, national origin, gender, religion, or any other grounds that would be unlawful. The kindergarten program is open to all children who turn five years of age on or before December 31st of the year in which they begin kindergarten classes, as required by law.

The school is divided into three separate physical areas (i.e., “settings”): the elementary setting (grades K-5), the middle school setting (grades 6-8), and the high school setting (grades 9-12). This structure creates smaller and more personalized “school-within-a-school” environments, which help ensure that students and families are given the attention that they deserve. Each setting will have its own teachers, daily schedule, and rituals. Grades K-12 will have class sizes up to 25 students.

In addition to promoting academic achievement, HCZ Promise Academy II strives to develop positive social skills and character in its students. This is done through the cultivation of a culture of respect that emphasizes positive and nurturing student-teacher relationships. The school culture also emphasizes respect among adult peers, so that the adults are effective role models who help scholars see and learn about socially acceptable behavior and attitudes.

Recruitment and Development of Talented and Committed Teachers and Administrators. HCZ Promise Academy II has made and will continue to make the recruitment and support of instructional leaders and teachers a top priority. The school aggressively pursues the best educators in the nation - educators who care deeply about children and are committed to the academic success of their students. It also supports its teachers through an ongoing program of professional development.

Extended School Day— HCZ Promise Academy II offers an extended school day. The academic day runs from 8 AM until 4 PM. Scholars also have the opportunity to participate in extended after-school programming from 4 PM – 6 PM. HCZ Promise Academy II provides a summer program with academics, arts, and athletic enrichment as part of its extended school year.

In addition, HCZ Promise Academy II uses data from a variety of assessments to identify student needs and, based on analysis of such data, tailors interventions to address student needs and learning styles.

I.B.4. Enrollment Planning (see chart below):

Grade	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
K	125	125	<u>100</u> 125	<u>100</u> 125	<u>100</u> 125
1	125	125	<u>100</u> 125	<u>100</u> 125	<u>100</u> 125
2	125	125	<u>100</u> 125	<u>100</u> 125	<u>100</u> 125
3	95	100	<u>95</u> 100	<u>95</u> 100	<u>95</u> 100
4	90	100	<u>90</u> 100	<u>90</u> 100	<u>90</u> 100
5	90	100	<u>90</u> 100	<u>90</u> 100	<u>90</u> 100
6	85	85	<u>85</u> 100	<u>85</u> 100	<u>85</u> 100
7	85	85	<u>85</u> 95	<u>85</u> 95	<u>85</u> 95
8	80	80	80	80	80
9	75	75	75	75	75
10	70	70	70	70	70
11	65	65	65	65	65
12	65	65	65	65	65
Total	1175	1200	<u>1100</u> 1225	<u>1100</u> 1225	<u>1100</u> 1225

I.B.5. Governance and Organizational Design: The HCZ Promise Academy II Board of Trustees is the school’s oversight and policy-making body. HCZ Promise Academy II’s Board of Trustees fulfills the statutory responsibilities associated with