

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Geoffrey Canada
Chairman

Kwame Owusu-Kesse
President/CEO

Mitch Kurz
Secretary & Treasurer

Kenneth Langone
Chairman Emeritus

Ellanor (Bodie) Brizendine
Stanley Druckenmiller
Willie Mae Lewis
Keith Meister
DeniLee Peroza
Alfonso Wyatt

Saskia Brown
Superintendent

Shannon Benson
Deputy Superintendent

Kelly Siddharta
Interim Principal
Elementary School
245 West 129th Street
New York, NY 10027
Tel 212.360.3232

LaRen Bierria
Interim Principal
Middle School
245 West 129th Street
New York, NY 10027
Tel 212.360.3233

Amy Deal
Principal
High School
245 West 129th Street
New York, NY 10027
Tel 212.360.3234

AGENDA

Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) Promise Academy I
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 I Updates
 - i. Elementary School (*Kelly Siddharta*)
 - ii. Middle School (*LaRen Bierria*)
 - iii. High School (*Amy Deal*)
- V. Financial Report (*Ralph Stefano*)

**Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) Promise Academy I 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, Veroniqua 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 Stilley, 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 I Elementary School (LaKiesha George)

Principal LaKiesha George reported the Elementary School's attendance was 93% for September.

This fall, the Elementary School's Instructional work centers on strengthening Common Intellectual Planning (CIP) meetings in partnership with the Teaching and Learning Team, led by Managing Director Katherine Martinez. After teachers identified real-time data integration as an improvement area last spring, the Teaching and Learning Team introduced a new tracker that provides quicker access to quiz and benchmark data.

After-school programming launched on September 29 with strong enthusiasm from families and teachers.

Last week, the Elementary School held Parent-Teacher Conferences with approximately 339 families, over 50%, attending.

A visual display of schoolwide goals and progress is available on the lower level, and Board members were encouraged to view it during their visit.

HCZ Promise Academy I Middle School (LaRen Bierria)

Interim Principal LaRen Bierria reported the Middle School's attendance was 93% for September.

The Middle School held Parent-Teacher Conferences this month with strong family engagement; more than 150 participants attended to discuss scholars' success.

Scholars and staff celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month with a collaborative art display created with the school's new art teacher.

Next week, the Elementary School will host History in the Making, an academic event where history classes will present academic projects for families during a gallery walk.

The Middle School is also preparing for its first One Promise Mentoring Community-Building Trip, designed to strengthen relationships among scholars, staff, and mentors as part of broader positive scholar engagement efforts.

The Middle School recently launched its Peer Mediator Program. Scholars completed training to support peers through low-level conflict resolution and community building.

HCZ Promise Academy I High School (Dr. Amy Deal)

Principal Dr. Amy Deal reported the High School's attendance was 93% for September.

The High School is in peak college-planning season, and has launched a robust calendar of exposure and advising activities. Representatives from Monroe College, Princeton University, Brown University, Marist College, the University of New Haven, and Manhattan College visited HCZ Promise Academy this month, and the school scheduled approximately 15 additional visits with college admissions representatives over the next six weeks. All seniors attended the New York City SUNY College Fair at the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, and staff reported strong momentum reflected in personal-statement drafts and increased advising requests among scholars.

HCZ Promise Academy I and II High Schools partnered with the College Success Office to schedule a fall college tour at the end of the month, in partnership. Staff noted that this remains a signature experience that supports scholars' postsecondary readiness.

Student Government elections were completed this month with high scholar participation. Scholars displayed campaign posters throughout the building, and scholars engaged in issue-based discussions and peer voting processes.

The Administrative Team continued intensive classroom work and coaching cycles aimed at strengthening instructional quality. The team holds frequent one-on-one planning meetings with teachers across Algebra I, Algebra II, Chemistry, Calculus, and other subjects. Staff are collaborating closely with the Central Office to refine CIP meetings and deepen data-driven instruction.

Financial Update (Ralph Stefano)

Chief Financial Officer Ralph Stefano reported that HCZ Promise Academy I's preliminary Oct 1 enrollment is 1,146, which is 14 unfavorable versus the budget. The school's revenue through September is \$0.1M unfavorable at \$4.4M. Expenses are \$0.5M favorable, at \$3.5M. HCZ has not made a contribution through 2 months of FY26.

Harlem Children's Zone Promise Academy I
October 2025 Attendance Report

Date	HCZ PAI Elementary School			HCZ PAI Middle School			HCZ PAI High School		
	Number of Students Absent	Enrollment	% of Students Present	Number of Students Absent	Enrollment	% of Students Present	Number of Students Absent	Enrollment	% of Students Present
10/1	31	617	95%	14	264	95%	17	259	93%
10/3	39	617	94%	15	264	94%	14	259	95%
10/6	38	621	94%	10	265	96%	13	259	95%
10/7	27	622	96%	14	265	95%	14	259	95%
10/8	44	624	93%	20	265	92%	14	259	95%
10/9	36	625	94%	10	266	96%	12	259	95%
10/10	48	626	92%	21	266	92%	19	259	93%
10/14	41	626	93%	15	267	94%	9	259	97%
10/15	38	624	94%	16	267	94%	13	259	95%
10/16	34	624	95%	21	267	92%	15	259	94%
10/17	53	624	92%	17	267	94%	19	259	93%
10/21	43	626	93%	14	267	95%	16	259	94%
10/22	143	626	77%	58	267	78%	23	259	91%
10/23	35	626	94%	14	267	95%	20	259	92%
10/24	41	626	93%	18	267	93%	21	259	92%
10/27	50	628	92%	16	267	94%	20	259	92%
10/28	37	628	94%	12	267	96%	16	259	94%
10/29	49	628	92%	19	267	93%	16	259	94%
10/30	50	628	92%	17	267	94%	16	259	94%
10/31	47	628	93%	22	267	92%	20	259	92%
Average	46	625	93%	18	266	93%	16	259	94%

Promise Academy I

FY 2026 September YTD Budget vs. Actual

		Budget	Actual	Fav/(Unfav)	Full Year Budget
Enrollment @ Sept 30	(a)	1,160	1,140	(20)	1,160
DOE and other gov't funding		\$ 6.7	\$ 6.5	\$ (0.2)	\$ 26.8
Expenses:					
Salaries		3.9	3.8	0.1	17.3
Benefits		1.2	0.9	0.3	4.7
OTPS		1.1	0.6	0.5	4.2
Total Expenses	(b)	6.2	5.3	0.9	26.2
Expenses in excess of public funding		-	-	-	-
Contribution Components:					
HCZ Contribution		-	-	-	-
per student (whole \$)		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -

(a) Enrollment as of Nov 1: 1,154

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