Harlem Children's Zone
Promise Academy I®

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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
Wednesday, February 25, 2026
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
Wednesday, January 14, 2026
245 West 129th Street

Attendees: Geoffrey Canada, Kwame Owusu-Kesse, Mitch Kurz, Stan Druckenmiller, Willie Mae Lewis, Lisa McNear, DeniLee Peroza, Candice Ashby, Shannon Benson, LaRen Bierria, Saskia Brown, Ari Browne, Celines Castro, Veroniqua Delva, LaKiesha George, Natasha Gutierriez, Jenn Klein, Jazmine Lewis, Stephanie Lilavois, John Macapagal, Katherine Martinez, Liam McCarthy, Shannon Ortiz-Wong, Kelly Siddharta, Meredith Peckosh-Soffrin, Ralph Stefano, Sean Sullivan, Toya Stilley, and Tarik Ward.

Acceptance of Minutes (Geoffrey Canada)

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 PM. The board unanimously approved the meeting minutes from November 20 and December 16.

CEO Report (Kwame Owusu-Kesse)

Chief Executive Officer Kwame Owusu-Kesse introduced HCZ's new General Counsel, Sean Sullivan. Mr. Sullivan began his career at a Washington, D.C.–based law firm representing nonprofit organizations. He later served as Vice President of Legal and Compliance at the United Way of New York City. Most recently, he served as General Counsel and Chief Operating Officer of the New York City Criminal Justice Agency, the city's primary provider of pretrial services. Mr. Sullivan earned his undergraduate degree from Brooklyn College and his law degree from Georgetown University Law Center.

Mr. Sullivan's appointment completes the Executive Leadership Team and reflects the organization's continued ability to attract strong executive talent.

Senior leadership convened at the start of the new year to review organization-wide objectives and key results to assess progress, identify areas for adjustment, and recognize achievements.

Mr. Owusu-Kesse closed by underscoring the importance of staff well-being and encouraged leaders to prioritize physical, mental, and emotional health, while maintaining high performance standards.

Superintendent's Update (Dr. Saskia Brown)

Superintendent Dr. Saskia Brown reported that as of January 1, enrollment for HCZ Promise Academy I, is 1,145 and 968 for HCZ Promise Academy II.

HCZ Promise Academy hosted Superintendent's Day on January 2. Approximately 353 staff members from HCZ Promise Academy I and II, After School and Athletics Programs, and Harlem Gems attended the event. The day included staff recognition awards and professional learning sessions facilitated with the Social Work team, Wealth Builds, and Healthy Harlem. Dr. Brown presented the Superintendent's Award to Principal Shannon

Ortiz-Wong. She also recognized the Safety, Facilities, IT, the planning committee, senior leadership, and the CEO for supporting the event.

HCZ Promise Academy Charter Schools are engaged in the Quarter 2 Helping Young People Early (HYPE) intervention period. School leaders have adjusted schedules to incorporate targeted interventions and increase exposure to computer-based testing to prepare scholars for upcoming assessments.

HCZ Promise Academy I Elementary School (Kelly Siddharta)

Interim Principal Kelly Siddharta reported the Elementary School's attendance was 90% for December.

The Elementary School held about 418 parent-teacher conferences over two days, both in-person and via Zoom, focusing on academics, social-emotional learning, and scholar behavior.

The Elementary School launched a tutoring program during the HYPE intervention block to support scholars during the school day, after school, and Saturday Academy. Staff are using attendance-based incentives, including access to the school store, recognition during town halls, and morning announcements, to encourage participation

The Elementary School hired a fourth-grade ELA teacher in December.

The Elementary School hosted staff appreciation activities prior to the holiday break and held Spirit Week for scholars.

The Elementary School achieved a 99% score on its technology scorecard, reflecting strong performance in technology security and scholars' responsible use of devices and programs.

Sixty-three scholars are currently enrolled in the HeyTutor program, which is supported by six tutors. Staff continue to use incentives to increase participation.

HCZ Promise Academy I Middle School (LaRen Bierria)

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

Thirty-six scholars are currently enrolled in the HYPE tutoring program, with an average attendance rate of 57%. To increase scholar participation, staff are using incentive strategies including Positive Behaviors and Intervention Supports points, weekly prize drawings, immediate tangible rewards, and milestone-based celebrations.

The Middle School implemented the Read 180 program, in which staff use i-Ready data to target scholars' reading intervention needs. The Middle School held parent-teacher conferences with 122 participants in attendance and introduced Parent JAM sessions to strengthen family engagement.

The Middle School welcomed a new Assistant Principal, Dr. Crystal Joye.

HCZ Promise Academy I High School (Dr. Natasha Gutierrez)

Assistant Principal Dr. Natasha Gutierrez reported the High School's attendance was 92% for December.

Scholars received college acceptance letters from Howard University, Morgan State University, Temple University, Xavier University, Virginia State University, SUNY Buffalo, Clark Atlanta University, Delaware State University, Old Dominion University, North Carolina A&T State University, SUNY Oswego, SUNY Plattsburgh, and Tuskegee University, and other institutions.

Through the National Equity Lab partnership, 11 scholars are completing a course focused on social innovation at the University of Pennsylvania. An additional cohort of 11 scholars will enroll in a college-level course during the second semester.

Scholars participated in a museum visit focused on contemporary art and identity, history, and social justice. Scholars also studied *Hamlet* and a related film to deepen their understanding of loss and literary influence.

Scholars in Student Government and the National Honor Society organized a winter festival that included activities, snacks, and staff appreciation messages, to promote attendance and improve morale.

Financial Update (Ralph Stefano)

Chief Financial Officer Ralph Stefano reported that HCZ Promise Academy I's November 30 enrollment is 1,146, which is 14 unfavorable versus the budget. The school’s revenue through November is $0.4M unfavorable at $10.8M. Expenses are $0.5M favorable, at $9.5M. HCZ has not made a contribution through five months of FY26.

Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) Promise Academy I
January 2026 Attendance Report

	HCZ PAI Elementary School			HCZ PAI Middle School			HCZ PAI High School		
Date	Number of Students Absent	Enrollment	% of Students Present	Number of Students Absent	Enrollment	% of Students Present	Number of Students Absent	Enrollment	% of Students Present
1/5	68	620	89%	27	265	90%	34	257	87%
1/6	35	619	94%	6	265	98%	10	257	96%
1/7	42	619	93%	15	265	94%	15	257	94%
1/8	41	619	93%	10	264	96%	10	257	96%
1/9	50	618	92%	10	264	96%	12	257	95%
1/12	40	618	94%	11	264	96%	17	257	93%
1/13	37	618	94%	13	264	95%	11	257	96%
1/14	30	618	95%	2	264	99%	19	257	93%
1/15	33	618	95%	7	264	97%	16	257	94%
1/16	54	618	91%	8	264	97%	22	257	91%
1/20	66	618	89%	19	264	93%	12	257	95%
1/21	64	616	90%	14	264	95%	16	257	94%
1/22	58	616	91%	10	264	96%	12	257	95%
1/23	67	616	89%	21	264	92%	1	257	100%
1/26	2	616	100%	44	264	83%	4	257	98%
1/27	77	616	88%	22	264	92%	28	257	89%
1/28	156	615	75%	54	264	80%	49	257	81%
1/29	40	615	93%	14	264	95%	22	257	91%
1/30	60	615	90%	5	264	98%	31	257	88%
Average	**54**	**617**	**91%**	**16**	**264**	**94%**	**18**	**257**	**93%**

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FY 2026 December YTD Budget vs. Actual

		Revised Budget	Actual	Fav/(Unfav)	Revised Full Year Budget	Approved Full Year Budget
Enrollment @ Dec 31	(a)	1,132	1,143	11	1,132	1,160
DOE and other gov't funding		$ 13.0	$ 13.0	$ -	$ 26.0	$ 26.8
Expenses:						
Salaries		8.7	8.1	0.6	19.2	17.3
Benefits		2.4	2.0	0.4	4.7	4.7
OTPS		1.8	1.7	0.1	3.6	4.2
Total Expenses	(b)	12.9	11.8	1.1	27.5	26.2
Expenses in excess of public funding	(c)	-	-	-	1.5	-
Contribution Components:						
HCZ Contribution		-	-	-	-	-
per student (whole $)		$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -

(a) Enrollment as of Feb 1: 1,136

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

(c) Deficit is being funded out of accumulated prior year reserves.