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**Superintendent**

Shannon Benson  
**Deputy Superintendent**

Kelly Siddharta  
**Interim Principal  
Elementary School**  
245 West 129<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10027  
Tel 212.360.3232

LaRen Bierria  
**Interim Principal  
Middle School**  
245 West 129<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10027  
Tel 212.360.3233

Amy Deal  
**Principal  
High School**  
245 West 129<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10027  
Tel 212.360.3234

AGENDA

Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) Promise Academy I  
Board of Trustees Meeting  
Monday, April 27, 2026  
at  
245 West 129<sup>th</sup> 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, February 25, 2026  
245 West 129th Street**

*Attendees: Geoffrey Canada, Kwame Owusu-Kesse, Mitch Kurz, Stan Druckenmiller, Willie Mae Lewis, Lisa McNear, Candice Ashby, Shannon Benson, LaRen Bierria, Saskia Brown, Ari Browne, Amy Deal, Veroniqua Delva, LaKiesha George, Jenn Klein, Jazmine Lewis, Stephanie Lilavois, John Macapagal, Katherine Martinez, 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 January 14, 2026.

**Superintendent's Update (Dr. Saskia Brown)**

Superintendent Dr. Saskia Brown reported that as of February 1, enrollment for HCZ Promise Academy I is 1,136, and 958 for HCZ Promise Academy II.

Dr. Brown invited Assistant Principal of Promise Academy I High School Dr. Natasha Gutierrez, Literacy Coach Katherine Aguero, and K-5 Math Coach Shernice Johnson to briefly greet the Board. Dr. Brown and the Board thanked them for stepping in as lead teachers while continuing their primary roles and responsibilities.

Dr. Brown thanked Director of Compliance Candice Ashby and Director of Business Administration Ari Browne for the completion and submission of the Annual Comprehensive Review, a New York City Department of Education reporting requirement that includes school data and self-evaluations for the 2024-2025 school year. She also thanked Chief Financial Officer Ralph Stefano and the Finance Team for their contributions.

Leadership teams participated in a Data to Action Lab on January 30, reviewed Quarter 2 academic data, and developed action plans for the remainder of the calendar year. Dr. Brown thanked Mr. Canada for attending.

Dr. Brown, Deputy Superintendent Shannon Benson, and the Teaching and Learning Team conducted instructional walkthroughs during the week of February 2 and observed strong scholar engagement and teacher preparedness.

The Elementary and Middle Schools are preparing scholars for upcoming computer-based testing with mock tests scheduled in February and March.

The Schools continue to expand and monitor the HeyTutor program to ensure scholars receive additional academic support when needed. Dr. Brown recognized the schools for increasing scholar participation in the program.

### **HCZ Promise Academy I Elementary School (Kelly Siddharta)**

Interim Principal Kelly Siddharta reported the Elementary School's attendance was 91% for January.

Approximately 40 scholars regularly participated in the HeyTutor program, and attendance increased from 69% to 75% over the past month. School leaders continue to conduct family outreach and provide incentives to increase participation.

The Elementary School hosted its first enrollment Open House of the year and welcomed more than 40 prospective families.

The Elementary School welcomed a new Learning Specialist and a Teaching Assistant in January.

Staff participated in professional development sessions focused on verbal de-escalation strategies, supporting scholars who leave the classroom without permission, and increasing opportunities for scholar participation and input in instruction.

The Elementary School achieved a 100% technology scorecard rating in January.

### **HCZ Promise Academy I Middle School (LaRen Bierria)**

Interim Principal LaRen Bierria reported the Middle School's attendance was 94% for January.

Participation in the HeyTutor program increased from 57% to 66% over the past month, and the school recently added an additional tutor. Ms. Bierria thanked Assistant Principal Dr. Joye for leading parent and scholar outreach for the program .

The Middle School conducted professional development sessions on the ELA curriculum, emphasizing scholar-centered writing and discussion.

The Middle School conducted computer-based testing simulations to prepare for mock exams. Ms. Bierria thanked Data and Assessment Manager Dr. Angie Eugenio for supporting preparation.

The Middle School increased its focus on writing instruction. Scholars completed full argumentative and informational essays to strengthen readiness for high school academic expectations.

The Middle School also hosted Math Mania Night, where families participated in math activities and learned strategies to support scholars at home.

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

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

The High School increased its focus on short-answer and critical-response writing in response to updates to New York State assessments. Teachers are incorporating writing across subject areas and monitoring scholar progress through shared data systems.

The High School is preparing for the next instructional cycle on March 11.

The Teaching and Learning Team partnered with the Metropolitan Opera to bring scholars to a dress rehearsal of *Madame Butterfly*.

### **Financial Update (Ralph Stefano)**

Chief Financial Officer Ralph Stefano reported that HCZ Promise Academy I's December 31 enrollment is 1,143, which is 11 favorable versus the budget. The school's revenue through December is on budget at \$13.0M. Expenses are \$1.1M favorable, at \$11.8M. HCZ has not made a contribution through six months of FY26.

**Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) Promise Academy I Charter School  
Board Meeting  
Wednesday, March 18, 2026  
245 West 129th Street**

*Attendees: Geoffrey Canada, Mitch Kurz, Bodie Brizendine, Lisa McNear, Candice Ashby, Shannon Benson, LaRen Bierria, Saskia Brown, Ari Browne, Amy Deal, Veroniqua Delva, LaKiesha George, Jenn Klein, Jazmine Lewis, Stephanie Lilavois, John Macapagal, Katherine Martinez, Shannon Ortiz-Wong, Kelly Siddharta, Liam McCarthy, Meredith Peckosh-Soffrin, Ralph Stefano, Toya Stilley, and Tarik Ward.*

**Superintendent's Update (Dr. Saskia Brown)**

Superintendent Dr. Saskia Brown reported that as of March 1, enrollment for HCZ Promise Academy I is 1,132, and 953 for HCZ Promise Academy II.

Dr. Brown reported that staff members are planning for the Extended School Year. The Teaching and Learning Team, school leadership, and the After School team, have developed a cohesive summer program focused on reducing summer learning loss.

The HCZ Promise Academy I and II Elementary and Middle Schools have administered mock exams in preparation for upcoming New York State tests. School leaders will analyze the results to inform instructional adjustments and targeted supports. ELA state testing is scheduled for April 21–22 for Elementary School scholars and April 23–24 for Middle School scholars.

The HeyTutor program participation data has only reflected two weeks of attendance due to a technical issue with the vendor's dashboard. This issue has primarily impacted Promise Academy II Middle School. The Promise Academy II team has been working with HeyTutor to resolve the issue, and principals will share complete data with the Board once it becomes available.

**HCZ Promise Academy I Elementary School (Kelly Siddharta)**

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

Approximately 40 scholars, supported by five tutors, participated in the HeyTutor program. The 40 scholars represent an 82% attendance rate, which is a seven percent increase from the previous cycle. School leaders continue to conduct family outreach and provide incentives to increase participation.

The Elementary School welcomed prospective families to its second Open House of the year for the 2026–27 school year. Registration to the school will begin on April 1. Ms. Siddharta thanked HCZ's President and Founder Geoffrey Canada and Dr. Brown for joining the session virtually.

The Elementary School welcomed a new Parent Coordinator, a Teaching Fellow, and a Teaching Assistant.

Staff participated in professional development sessions focused on team building, incorporating scholar voice into instruction, preparing for New York State exam proctoring, and delivering precise academic feedback.

The Elementary School achieved a 99% technology scorecard rating for the month.

The Elementary School hosted a Black History Month Spirit Week.

The Elementary School held an Honor Roll Dinner for scholars in grades 3–5 who demonstrated academic, behavioral, and attendance excellence. Scholars were then taken on a celebratory trip to Sky Zone.

### **HCZ Promise Academy I Middle School (LaRen Bierria)**

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

Scholar participation in the HeyTutor program increased to 68%, a four percent increase from the previous month. School leaders continue to conduct parent outreach and coordinate with the After School program to maximize scholar participation without overlap.

The Middle School provided professional development for Intervention staff on the READ 180 program to strengthen implementation and support scholars performing below grade-level in reading.

School leaders launched targeted intervention supports, including Cusp Camp for scholars performing within the 65–75 range academically. School leadership continues to identify scholars who would benefit from these supports and reach out to their families to increase participation.

The Middle School welcomed a new sixth-grade history teacher.

The Middle School hosted several scholar and family engagement activities, including an African American showcase in celebration of Black History Month, featuring scholar performances in music, dance, spoken word, and art. Additional activities included Valentine's Day flower grams and a scholar-led shout out initiative in partnership with the Social-Emotional Learning team, to promote a positive school culture.

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

Principal Dr. Amy Deal reported the High School's attendance was 91% for February.

The High School hosted a Black History Month Expo in lieu of its traditional programming to ensure inclusivity during Ramadan.

Scholars enrolled in Advanced Placement (AP) African American Studies presented research-based projects aligned with their AP exam requirements, strengthening their analytical and presentation skills in preparation for final submissions.

The High School held its National Honor Society induction ceremony and welcomed nine new scholars. During the ceremony, newly inducted scholars wrote letters to their future selves, which they will read at graduation. Assistant Principal Dr. Natasha Gutierrez and Lead Teacher Leo McMahon supervised the program and presented inducted scholars with pins to memorialize their participation. The High School provided dinner for those in attendance.

The High School continues to expand scholar engagement through athletics, including through One Promise games. The girls' varsity basketball team recently secured a win, and scholar participation and enthusiasm in athletics remain strong.

The High School also reported continued progress in college acceptances, with recent admissions to North Carolina A&T, Pratt Institute, Louisiana State University, Temple University, St. John's University, Georgia State University, Binghamton University, Penn State, and multiple CUNY and SUNY acceptances.

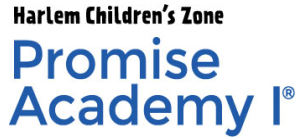
### **Financial Update (Ralph Stefano)**

Chief Financial Officer Ralph Stefano reported that HCZ Promise Academy I's January 31 enrollment is 1,136, which is four favorable versus the budget. The school's revenue through January is on budget at \$15.2M. Expenses are \$1.1M favorable, at \$14.7M. HCZ has not made a contribution through seven months of FY26.

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

Date	HCZ PAI Elementary School			HCZ PAI Middle School			HCZ PAI High School		
	Number of Students		% of Students	Number of Students		% of Students	Number of Students		% of Students
	Absent	Enrollment	Present	Absent	Enrollment	Present	Absent	Enrollment	Present
3/2	40	612	93%	9	263	97%	18	256	93%
3/3	35	612	94%	11	263	96%	24	256	91%
3/4	31	612	95%	8	263	97%	15	256	94%
3/5	51	612	92%	11	263	96%	17	256	93%
3/6	55	612	91%	14	263	95%	24	256	91%
3/9	48	612	92%	11	263	96%	8	256	97%
3/10	33	612	95%	9	263	97%	11	256	96%
3/11	127	612	79%	38	263	86%	27	256	89%
3/12	59	611	90%	14	263	95%	18	256	93%
3/13	62	611	90%	13	263	95%	28	256	89%
3/16	61	611	90%	15	263	94%	31	256	88%
3/17	35	608	94%	5	263	98%	23	256	91%
3/18	47	608	92%	15	263	94%	22	256	91%
3/19	56	608	91%	13	263	95%	25	256	90%
3/23	60	608	90%	20	263	92%	18	255	93%
3/24	49	607	92%	8	263	97%	16	255	94%
3/25	33	607	95%	7	263	97%	22	255	91%
3/26	38	607	94%	15	263	94%	16	255	94%
3/27	62	607	90%	17	263	94%	21	255	92%
3/30	67	607	89%	14	263	95%	12	255	95%
3/31	47	607	92%	13	262	95%	22	255	91%
<b>Average</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>610</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>92%</b>





**Promise Academy I**  
**FY 2026 February YTD Budget vs. Actual**

		<u>Revised Budget</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Fav/(Unfav)</u>	<u>Revised Full Year Budget</u>
YTD Average Enrollment	(a)	1,132	1,141	9	1,132
DOE and other gov't funding		\$ 17.3	\$ 17.3	\$ -	\$ 26.0
<b>Expenses:</b>					
Salaries		12.4	11.6	0.8	19.2
Benefits		3.2	3.0	0.2	4.7
OTPS		2.4	2.3	0.1	3.6
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>(b)</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>16.9</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>27.5</b>
<b>Expenses in excess of public funding (c)</b>		<b>0.7</b>	<b>(0.4)</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>1.5</b>
<b>Contribution Components:</b>					
HCZ Contribution		-	-	-	-
<b>per student (whole \$)</b>		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -

*(a) Enrollment as of Apr 1: 1,124*

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

*(c) Projected deficit is being funded out of accumulated prior year reserves.*