

Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) Promise Academy II Charter School
Annual Board Meeting
Monday, June 22, 2026
35 East 125th Street

Attendees: Geoffrey Canada, Mitch Kurz, Kwame Owusu-Kesse, Stan Druckenmiller, Lisa McNear, DeniLee Peroza, Candice Ashby, Shannon Benson, LaRen Bierria, Saskia Brown, Ari Browne, Amy Deal, Veroniqua Delva, Jenn Klein, Stephanie Lilavois, Katherine Martinez, Shannon Ortiz-Wong, Kelly Siddharta, Liam McCarthy, Meredith Peckosh-Soffrin, and Ralph Stefano.

Acceptance of Minutes (Geoffrey Canada)

The meeting was called to order at 3 PM. The board unanimously approved the meeting minutes from May 21.

CEO's Report (Kwame Owusu-Kesse)

Chief Executive Officer Kwame Owusu-Kesse shared that he and Promise Academy scholars were recently featured on "CBS News Sunday Morning", in a national news segment exploring the impact of obesity in America's children, where he highlighted HCZ's efforts to empower the health and wellness of young people. Mr. Owusu-Kesse noted the feature would be shared with Board members and thanked staff and scholars for participating.

Superintendent's Update (Dr. Saskia Brown)

Superintendent Dr. Saskia Brown reported that as of May 1, enrollment for HCZ Promise Academy I is 1,121 and 939 for HCZ Promise Academy II.

Dr. Brown reported that the schools successfully concluded the 2025–2026 HeyTutor high-impact tutoring initiative. She thanked the Board for its continued financial support of the program and shared that scholars demonstrated positive academic growth throughout the initiative. HeyTutor will resume as part of the Summer Extended Learning Program in July.

HCZ Promise Academy II Elementary School (Dr. Saskia Brown)

On behalf of Principal LaKiesha George, Dr. Brown reported the Elementary School's attendance was 89% for May.

The Elementary School achieved an 87% scholar attendance rate for the HeyTutor program, an increase from 79% during the previous reporting period.

The Elementary School continued to engage scholars and families through end-of-year activities, including educational field trips, an art showcase, and Teacher Appreciation Week celebrations.

The Elementary School also met with families to emphasize the importance of participation in the Summer Extended Learning Program and continued attendance in the 2026–2027 school year.

HCZ Promise Academy I Middle School (Dr. Veroniqua Delva)

Principal Dr. Veroniqua Delva reported the Middle School's attendance was 91% for May.

The Middle School achieved a 90% scholar attendance rate for the HeyTutor program.

The Middle School promoted scholar engagement through a Math State Assessment Pep Rally and continued to strengthen school culture by hosting its first staff versus scholar basketball game.

The Middle School partnered with Promise Academy After School to host a family engagement event and provided scholars with enrichment opportunities, including Mets Educational Day, Career Day, and several end-of-year celebrations recognizing staff and scholar achievement.

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

Principal Shannon Ortiz-Wong reported the High School's attendance was 90% for May.

The High School celebrated Teacher Appreciation Week through scholar-led recognition activities and continued to expand postsecondary opportunities for scholars. Ten scholars enrolled in College Now courses for the summer, and two scholars were accepted into a STEM institute where they will earn academic credit while participating in summer enrichment.

The High School also introduced instruction on the ethical use of artificial intelligence (AI), responsible research practices, and proper citation to strengthen scholars' academic integrity and college readiness.

The High School announced that seven scholars received National Recognition Awards from the College Board.

Financial Update (Ralph Stefano)

Chief Financial Officer Ralph Stefano reported that HCZ Promise Academy II's projected average enrollment for the 12 months ended June 30 is 959, which is 68 unfavorable versus the budget. The school's revenue is anticipated to be \$1.3M unfavorable at \$23.5M. Expenses are anticipated to be \$0.1M unfavorable, at \$24.7M. HCZ has not made a contribution through 11 months and projects to make a \$1.2M contribution in FY26.

FY27 Budget (Ralph Stefano)

A motion was called to approve the HCZ Promise Academy II Charter School budget for the fiscal year 2027. The Board unanimously approved the resolution. A detailed version of the resolution can be found in the June 22, 2026, Board packet on the HCZ Promise Academy website.

<https://hczpromise.org/community/board-meeting-documents/>

PAII Board Elections (Candice Ashby)

A motion was called to re-elect trustees whose terms had expired, designate Stan Druckenmiller as a voting trustee, and designate Dr. Alfonso Wyatt as an advisory trustee. The Board unanimously approved the resolution. A detailed version of the resolution can be found in the June 22, 2026 Board packet on the HCZ Promise Academy website.

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HCZ Promise Academy II By-Laws (Candice Ashby)

A motion was called to approve amendments to the HCZ Promise Academy II By-Laws. Ms. Ashby explained that the amendments modernize the bylaws and align them with current law and Board practices without altering the schools' mission, authority, or governance structure. The motion was approved. A detailed version of the resolution can be found in the June 22, 2026 Board packet on the HCZ Promise Academy website.

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HCZ Promise Academy Family Handbook (Candice Ashby)

A motion was called to approve the 2026–2027 HCZ Promise Academy Family Handbook. Ms. Ashby highlighted revisions including the addition of a Child Safeguarding and Crisis Intervention section and updated visitor procedures designed to minimize disruptions to the instructional day. The motion was approved. The updated handbook can be found on the HCZ Promise Academy website.

<https://hczpromise.org/for-parents/>