Harlem Children's Zone
Promise Academy II®

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Principal
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AGENDA

Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) Promise Academy II
Board of Trustees Meeting
Tuesday, October 20, 2026
at
245 West 129th Street
New York, NY

I. Acceptance of the Minutes

II. Superintendent's Updates *(Dr. Saskia Brown)*

III. HCZ Promise Academy II Updates
   i. Elementary School *(LaKiesha George)*
   ii. Middle School *(Veroniqua Delva)*
   iii. High School *(Shannon Ortiz-Wong)*

IV. Financial Report *(Ralph Stefano)*

Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) Promise Academy II Charter School
Board Meeting
Wednesday, September 30, 2026
245 West 125th Street

Attendees: Geoffrey Canada, Mitch Kurz, Kwame Owusu-Kesse, Stan Druckenmiller, Lisa McNear, Keith Meister, Candice Ashby, Shannon Benson, LaRen Bierria, Ari Browne, Celines Castro, Veroniqua Delva, Kevin Dougherty, LaKiesha George, Alicia Junor, Jenn Klein, Jazmine Lewis, Stephanie Lilavois, John Macapagal, Katherine Martinez, Shannon Ortiz-Wong, Christian Rhodes, Kelly Siddharta, Liam McCarthy, Meredith Peckosh-Soffrin, Ralph Stefano, Sean Sullivan 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 June 22.

CEO's Report (Kwame Owusu-Kesse)

Chief Executive Officer Kwame Owusu-Kesse introduced Deputy Program Officer Alicia Junor and Promise Academy I High School Principal Kevin Dougherty to the Board:

Ms. Junor reflected on her nearly 15 years with HCZ, beginning as a Student Advocate with the A Cut Above program and subsequently serving in several leadership roles across Promise Academy After School and Athletics.

Mr. Dougherty shared highlights of his career in education, including his previous service at HCZ as a Teacher, Assistant Principal, and Founding Principal of Promise Academy II Middle School. He also served as Principal of Elmont Memorial High School and, most recently, in leadership roles at HCZ.

Mr. Owusu-Kesse announced that HCZ Promise Academy I Parent Representative DeniLee Peroza had resigned from the Board and thanked her for her service.

Mr. Owusu-Kesse also shared observations from individual year-end meetings with 215 Promise Academy staff members. He noted increased staff stability and positive feedback regarding compensation changes, including the commitment to compensate LEAD-certified teachers at least 10% above the New York City Department of Education rate. He also noted that staff awareness of the organization's benefits contributed positively to retention and organizational culture.

Superintendent's Update (Shannon Benson)

On behalf of the Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent Shannon Benson reported that as of September 14, enrollment for HCZ Promise Academy I was 1,121 and 971 for HCZ Promise Academy II.

Mr. Benson reported that the 2026–2027 school year began with All Staff Institute. He highlighted the fireside chat with HCZ Founder and President Geoffrey Canada and Mr.

Owusu-Kesse, and noted positive staff feedback regarding Mr. Canada's reflections on the founding and goals of HCZ Promise Academy.

Scholars returned for the 2026–2027 school year on September 9.

New York State Assessment Results (Kwame Owusu-Kesse)

Mr. Kwame Owusu-Kesse presented the 2026 New York State English Language Arts and Mathematics assessment results. He highlighted several areas of strong performance, including Promise Academy I's overall results, which exceeded both New York City and New York State proficiency rates in ELA and Mathematics. Promise Academy I scholars demonstrated particularly strong performance in the middle school grades, including seventh- and eighth-grade ELA and sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade Mathematics.

Promise Academy II scholars outperformed both their New York City and New York State peers in sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade Mathematics, with especially strong results in eighth grade. Promise Academy II also exceeded both NYC and NYS proficiency rates in third- and fourth-grade ELA, and overall Mathematics proficiency improved compared with the prior year.

HCZ Promise Academy scholars with disabilities also outperformed their New York City peers overall in both ELA and Mathematics.

Mr. Owusu-Kesse emphasized the importance of examining results by school, grade level, and student population to identify both strengths and areas for improvement. He noted continued opportunities for improvement, particularly at the elementary level, and reported that lower-performing areas identified in the assessment data generally aligned with key staffing vacancies across the schools.

HCZ Promise Academy II Elementary School (LaKiesha George)

Principal LaKiesha George reported that Elementary School attendance was 86% for June.

During the summer, the Elementary School partnered with the Teaching and Learning Team to provide Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 instruction designed to provide targeted academic support. Staff also participated in professional development focused on artificial intelligence and applications to support instructional planning and school operations.

The Elementary School partnered with the Safety Team to strengthen dismissal procedures for the new school year.

The Elementary School launched a new Meet the Teacher breakfast on September 4, which drew 88 families, and welcomed 161 families to Back-to-School Night on September 16.

The Elementary School celebrated significant progress in filling staff vacancies. The school began the year with nine vacancies and had reduced that number to three by the end of September.

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

Principal Dr. Veroniqua Delva reported that Middle School attendance was 87% for June.

The Middle School began the year with several family engagement activities, including a sixth-grade family orientation, an orientation for families of eighth-grade scholars taking Algebra and Biology, and a Back-to-School Night that allowed families to follow their scholars' schedules. The school partnered with Promise Academy After School and the school-based health center to connect families with additional programs and resources.

The Middle School's professional development theme for the year, "Run the Play," focuses on ensuring that staff take ownership of their roles while working collectively to support scholar success. The school also held a vision-setting town hall to reinforce academic and behavioral expectations for scholars.

Dr. Delva highlighted the school's new "Promise to Keep" ceremony, which welcomed new staff members into the school community and reinforced the school's commitment to supporting staff retention.

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

Principal Shannon Ortiz-Wong reported that High School attendance was 86% for June.

During the summer, scholars participated in college exposure programs at institutions including the University of Michigan, Emory University, Syracuse University, and Georgetown University. These experiences supported scholars as they began preparing for the college application process.

The High School launched a ninth- and tenth-grade reading initiative designed to increase scholars' engagement with books and reading for pleasure. The school added more than 1,600 books to ninth- and tenth-grade classrooms as part of the initiative.

Ms. Ortiz-Wong also reported that eight scholars received nominations for the Posse Scholarship and five advanced to the second round of interviews. One scholar who participated in the University of Michigan summer program received an offer of admission from the University of Maryland.

Financial Update (Ralph Stefano)

Chief Financial Officer Ralph Stefano reported that HCZ Promise Academy II's preliminary September 15 enrollment is 971, which is fifty-four favorable versus the budget. The school's revenue through July is on budget at $2.0M. Expenses are on budget, at $1.9M. HCZ has not made a contribution through one month of FY27.

District-wide and Building Level Safety Plans (Candice Ashby)

A motion was called to approve the District-Wide School Safety Plan and Building-Level Emergency Response Plans for the 2026-2027 academic year. The motion was approved. The District-wide Safety Plan can be found on the HCZ Promise Academy website.

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

Harlem Children's Zone Promise Academy II
September 2026 Attendance Report

	HCZ PAII Elementary School			HCZ PAII Middle School			HCZ PAII 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
9/9	62	474	87%	30	265	89%	15	212	93%
9/10	33	469	93%	23	262	91%	8	212	96%
9/11	31	469	93%	26	262	90%	20	212	91%
9/14	29	470	94%	11	262	96%	13	212	94%
9/15	23	470	95%	16	262	94%	9	212	96%
9/16	28	470	94%	16	262	94%	8	212	96%
9/17	29	472	94%	22	261	92%	15	212	93%
9/18	42	475	91%	13	261	95%	10	212	95%
9/22	50	472	89%	15	261	94%	13	212	94%
9/23	30	473	94%	20	261	92%	21	212	90%
9/24	36	472	92%	20	261	92%	19	212	91%
9/25	32	472	93%	27	261	90%	12	211	94%
9/28	41	472	91%	18	261	93%	17	211	92%
9/29	24	472	95%	13	261	95%	13	211	94%
9/30	25	472	95%	19	261	93%	19	211	91%
Average	**34**	**472**	**93%**	**19**	**262**	**93%**	**14**	**212**	**93%**

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FY 2027 Aug YTD Budget vs. Actual

		YTD Budget	YTD Actual	Fav/(Unfav)	Full Year Budget
YTD Average Enrollment	(a)		917		917
DOE and other gov't funding		$ 3.9	$ 4.0	$ 0.1	$ 23.4
Expenses:					
Salaries		2.6	2.6	-	17.7
Benefits		0.8	0.6	0.2	4.9
OTPS		0.6	0.4	0.2	3.5
Total Expenses	(b)	4.0	3.6	0.4	26.1
Expenses in excess of public funding		-	-	-	2.7
Contribution Components:					
HCZ Contribution	(c)	-	-	-	2.7
per student (whole $)		$ -	$ -	$ -	$ 2,944

(a) Enrollment as of Oct 1: 944

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

(c) Anticipated deficits are to be funded with HCZ Board-approved contribution.