Harlem Children's Zone
Promise Academy I®

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
Alfonso Wyatt

Saskia Brown
Superintendent

Shannon Benson
Deputy Superintendent

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

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

Kevin Dougherty
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
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 I Updates
   i. Elementary School *(Kelly Siddharta)*
   ii. Middle School (*LaRen Bierria)*
   iii. High School *(Kevin Dougherty)*

IV. Financial Report *(Ralph Stefano)*

Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) Promise Academy I 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 I Elementary School (Kelly Siddharta)

Principal Kelly Siddharta reported that Elementary School attendance was 90% for June.

The Elementary School participated in professional development focused on the effective integration of artificial intelligence into classroom instruction and launched Keyboarding Without Tears for scholars in grades two through five, to develop their keyboarding fluency and digital navigation skills.

The Elementary School celebrated significant progress in staffing. All 28 classrooms began the school year with a Lead Teacher and either a Teaching Assistant or Teaching Fellow. Five Teaching Fellows earned their master's degrees and certifications and were promoted to Lead Teacher positions. Of 78 school-based positions, 75 were filled by the end of September.

The Elementary School was fully enrolled in grades two through five and continued rolling enrollment for kindergarten and first grade. More than 300 families attended Back-to-School Night.

Ms. Siddharta also highlighted the school's summer Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 instructional model and thanked the Teaching and Learning, Tutoring, Operations, Food Services, Facilities, and Safety Teams for their support in preparing the school for the new academic year.

HCZ Promise Academy I Middle School (LaRen Bierria)

Principal LaRen Bierria reported that Middle School attendance was 88% for June.

Over the summer, the Middle School focused on strengthening school culture, academic interventions, and teacher development. The school is also expanding family engagement, with plans to host at least one parent activity each month.

The Middle School recognized teachers whose scholars demonstrated strong performance on the New York State assessments and began the school year with scholar town halls focused on expectations, school rules, and the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports framework.

The Elementary and Middle Schools coordinated their Back-to-School Night activities to make participation easier for families with scholars in both schools. More than 100 Middle School families participated.

HCZ Promise Academy I High School (Kevin Dougherty)

Principal Kevin Dougherty reported that High School attendance was 82% for June.

Rising seniors participated in pre-college programs at universities across the country, including Harvard University, the University of Pennsylvania, Duke University, and the University of Michigan.

The High School began the year with strong family engagement, with more than 150 parents attending ninth-grade orientation and Back-to-School Night. The school plans to hold monthly Coffee with the Principal sessions to provide additional opportunities for families who are unable to attend evening events.

In partnership with HCZ Promise Academy II High School and HCZ Promise Academy After School, the High School is developing a debate team and a school newspaper to expand scholar leadership and enrichment opportunities.

Six scholars interviewed for the Posse Scholarship, a prestigious, full-tuition leadership scholarship, with at least two of the scholars advancing to the second round.

Financial Update (Ralph Stefano)

Chief Financial Officer Ralph Stefano reported that HCZ Promise Academy I's preliminary September 15 enrollment is 1,166, which is forty-one favorable versus the budget. The school's revenue through July is on budget at $2.2M. Expenses are $0.1M favorable, at $2.1M. 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 I
September 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
9/9	40	631	94%	11	274	96%	23	261	91%
9/10	39	632	94%	7	274	97%	15	260	94%
9/11	48	633	92%	16	274	94%	15	260	94%
9/14	33	633	95%	19	274	93%	14	260	95%
9/15	32	632	95%	13	273	95%	10	260	96%
9/16	27	633	96%	12	273	96%	8	260	97%
9/17	31	633	95%	12	273	96%	6	260	98%
9/18	32	632	95%	17	273	94%	20	260	92%
9/22	36	632	94%	15	273	95%	12	260	95%
9/23	43	631	93%	8	273	97%	15	260	94%
9/24	47	632	93%	9	273	97%	9	260	97%
9/25	48	634	92%	17	273	94%	9	260	97%
9/28	45	634	93%	30	273	89%	14	260	95%
9/29	27	632	96%	18	273	93%	13	260	95%
9/30	22	633	97%	15	273	95%	10	260	96%
Average	**37**	**632**	**94%**	**15**	**273**	**95%**	**13**	**260**	**95%**

Harlem Children's Zone
Promise Academy I®

Promise Academy I

FY 2027 Aug YTD Budget vs. Actual

		YTD Budget	YTD Actual	Fav/(Unfav)	Full Year Budget
YTD Average Enrollment	(a)		1,125		1,125
DOE and other gov't funding		$ 4.5	$ 4.5	$ -	$ 26.8
Expenses:					
Salaries		2.9	2.9	-	19.7
Benefits		0.9	0.7	0.2	5.6
OTPS		0.7	0.5	0.2	4.2
Total Expenses	(b)	4.5	4.1	0.4	29.6
Expenses in excess of public funding	(c)	-	-	-	2.8
Contribution Components:					
HCZ Contribution		-	-	-	-
per student (whole $)		$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -

(a) Enrollment as of Oct 1: 1,165

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

(c) Anticipated deficits are to be funded out of accumulated prior year reserves.