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
Wednesday, November 18, 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 *(Kevin Dougherty)*

V. Financial Report *(Ralph Stefano)*

Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) Promise Academy I Charter School
Board Meeting
Tuesday, October 20, 2026
Location: 245 West 129th Street

Attendees: Geoffrey Canada, Mitch Kurz, Stan Druckenmiller, Lisa McNear, Keith Meister, Candice Ashby, Shannon Benson, LaRen Bierria, Saskia Brown, 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, Kelly Siddharta, Meredith Peckosh-Soffrin, Ralph Stefano, and Sean Sullivan.

Acceptance of Minutes (Geoffrey Canada)

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 PM. The board unanimously approved the meeting minutes from September 30.

Superintendent's Update (Dr. Saskia Brown)

Superintendent Dr. Saskia Brown reported that, as of October 1, enrollment for HCZ Promise Academy I was 1,165 and 944 for HCZ Promise Academy II.

Promise Academy leaders attended the HCZ's fifth annual Power of Place: Rooted in Purpose convening in New York City, where they connected with educators advancing place-based, cradle-to-career work.

Dr. Brown reported that increasing the teacher sign-on bonus from $6,000 to $10,000 helped strengthen recruitment efforts and attract candidates.

HCZ Promise Academy I and II launched tutoring the week of September 22 , with 18 tutors serving 303 scholars. Each Elementary School has six tutors, and each middle school has three. The revised model provides tutoring during the school day, supplemented by additional after-school support at the elementary level.

Dr. Brown also reported that the schools completed a comprehensive review of state assessment results and developed an improvement plan identifying priorities, goals, and strategies.

HCZ Promise Academy I Elementary School (Kelly Siddharta)

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

The Elementary School continued Keyboarding Without Tears in grades two through five, using Chromebooks to strengthen keyboarding skills and readiness for computer-based assessments. Teachers also used Google Gemini to analyze September i-Ready reading and mathematics diagnostic results, develop differentiated small-group activities, and create checks for understanding. The Board requested periodic updates on the instructional impact of AI tools.

The Elementary School has 75 of its 78 full-time positions staffed and began onboarding a new art teacher.

The Elementary School launched HeyTutor, Academic Hour, and Saturday Academy in September and introduced a daily staff wellness challenge.

Staff Coaching efforts focused on Tier 1 classroom management strategies, contributing to a reported 50% reduction in behavior referrals.

The Elementary School also introduced an attendance outreach protocol requiring lead teachers to contact families shortly after the school day begins when scholars are absent. The Elementary School also reached its 97% daily attendance target three times in October.

HCZ Promise Academy I Middle School (LaRen Bierria)

Principal LaRen Bierria reported that Middle School attendance was 95% for September.

The Middle School held parent-teacher conferences with more than 150 participants.

The Middle School hosted grade-level town halls to reinforce academic and behavioral expectations and build community.

During Back-to-School Night, families visited classrooms, received grade- and subject-specific information, and learned about resources to support scholars at home.

School leaders and the Teaching & Learning team conducted informal humanities classroom walkthroughs to identify instructional trends and prioritize teacher coaching.

The Middle School launched a monthly Principal's Academic Newsletter highlighting instructional practices informed by observation and assessment data. September priorities included anchor charts, small-group instruction, and active monitoring. Future coaching will focus on using monitoring data to improve scholar performance.

The Board recognized the Middle School's strong New York State assessment results and requested further analysis of the factors contributing to its performance.

HCZ Promise Academy I High School (Kevin Dougherty)

Principal Kevin Dougherty reported that High School attendance was 95% in September.

In October, the High School focused instructional coaching on clear, measurable lesson objectives and effective openings during the first ten minutes of class. Teachers used common planning time, assessment analysis, and AI tools to identify standards requiring additional support. School leaders reviewed lesson plans and conducted regular classroom walkthroughs to provide timely feedback.

Twelve scholars participated in a discussion with Ariel Investments Founder John Rogers. Mr. Dougherty thanked the Wealth Builds and Development teams for coordinating the experience.

The High School also introduced monthly scholar recognition awards, including the Principal's Award, Most Improved, Model Citizen, and Resilience awards.

The High School scheduled parent-teacher conferences for October 20, with more than 100 family registrations, and hosted its first Coffee with the Principal event to accommodate families unable to attend evening meetings.

Seniors participated in the HCZ Scholarship Program kickoff and began preparing college applications and essays. Scholars also took senior portraits, and 35 attended a SUNY college fair at the Javits Center.

Financial Update (Ralph Stefano)

Chief Financial Officer Ralph Stefano reported that HCZ Promise Academy I's preliminary October 1 enrollment is 1,165, which is 40 favorable versus the budget. The school’s revenue through August is on budget at $4.5M. Expenses are $0.4M favorable, at $4.1M. HCZ has not made a contribution through two months of FY27.

Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) Promise Academy I
October 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
10/1	24	632	96%	8	273	97%	14	260	95%
10/2	31	632	95%	11	273	96%	12	260	95%
10/5	35	632	94%	13	273	95%	16	260	94%
10/6	24	631	96%	12	273	96%	12	260	95%
10/7	32	631	95%	14	273	95%	11	260	96%
10/8	21	631	97%	7	273	97%	10	260	96%
10/9	39	632	94%	9	273	97%	23	260	91%
10/13	39	633	94%	13	273	95%	16	260	94%
10/14	18	633	97%	13	273	95%	9	260	97%
10/15	22	633	97%	9	273	97%	9	260	97%
10/16	58	633	91%	19	273	93%	20	260	92%
10/19	47	632	93%	17	273	94%	11	260	96%
10/20	29	630	95%	12	273	96%	18	260	93%
10/21	31	632	95%	9	273	97%	12	260	95%
10/22	28	632	96%	11	273	96%	9	260	97%
10/23	62	632	90%	17	273	94%	17	260	93%
10/26	41	635	94%	14	273	95%	17	260	93%
10/27	38	635	94%	8	273	97%	6	260	98%
10/28	40	635	94%	13	273	95%	11	260	96%
10/29	34	635	95%	11	273	96%	12	260	95%
10/30	38	635	94%	14	273	95%	22	260	92%
Average	**35**	**633**	**94%**	**12**	**273**	**96%**	**14**	**260**	**95%**

Harlem Children's Zone
Promise Academy I®

Promise Academy I

FY 2027 Sep YTD Budget vs. Actual

		YTD Budget	YTD Actual	Fav/(Unfav)	Full Year Budget
YTD Average Enrollment	(a)		1,166		1,125
DOE and other gov't funding		$ 6.7	$ 6.8	$ 0.1	$ 26.8
Expenses:					
Salaries		4.4	4.3	0.1	19.7
Benefits		1.4	1.0	0.4	5.6
OTPS		1.1	0.9	0.2	4.2
Total Expenses	(b)	6.9	6.2	0.7	29.6
Expenses in excess of public funding	(c)	-	-	-	2.8
Contribution Components:					
HCZ Contribution		-	-	-	-
per student (whole $)		$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -

(a) Enrollment as of Nov 1: 1,169

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

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