



Northside Charter High School  
424 Leonard Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11222  
(347)390-1273  
www.northsidechs.org

**Northside Charter High School  
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes  
March 19th, 2024, 6:00 pm ET**

**Present:**

Kaley Childs Karaffa - Chair, via video conference  
Danielle Redmond - Trustee, via video conference  
Willie Scott - Trustee, via video conference  
Rizwan Alladin - Trustee, via video conference

**Guest Present:**

Muhammed Chaudhry - CEO, via video conference  
Matt Molloy - Interim Chief Academic Officer (“CAO”), via video conference  
Dwight Thomas - Chief Student Services Officer (“CSSO”), via video conference  
Fahim Ahmed - Director of Technology, via video conference  
Tony Dinh - Chief Financial Officer (“CFO”), via video conference  
Ramlah Malhi - Special Projects Coordinator, via video conference  
Anna Henebeng - Director of College of Readiness, via video conference  
Marisa Proto - Director of Teaching and Learning, via video conference  
Robert Smith - Director of Guidance and Strategy, via video conference  
Ashanti Blackman - Director of Student Life and Community Engagement  
Kevin Mora - Teacher

**Location:** See meeting notice for specific locations and video conference information. All were open to the public.

I. **March Consent Agenda:** The Board discussed the March 2024 consent agenda, which included the February 2024 Board Meeting Minutes, February 2024 Financial Reports, and February 2024 Strategic Plan Dashboard, which had been reviewed in greater detail by the Board in its committee meetings. After discussion, on motion to approve the March 2024 Consent Agenda that was seconded and carried, all were in favor.

II. **Management Reports:**

A. **Post-Secondary Readiness:**

1. **Graduation Requirements:**

a) Mr. Molloy reported on Northside’s approach to measuring graduation readiness, which is aligned to New York State requirements. Northside is actively building its foreign language program to better support students pursuing this advanced diploma. Another metric is performance on Regents Exams. Passing the core exams is mandatory for graduation, while achieving higher scores unlocks the benefits of the Advanced Regents Diploma. Regular



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progress monitoring through credit accumulation ensures students stay on track, while the Regents Exams serve as a final assessment of their mastery. Northside reported strong results in college applications, with a high application rate and a significant number of scholarship offers and early acceptances. These achievements not only reflect individual student success but also contribute to a positive school culture that motivates future cohorts.

- b) Mr. Molloy reported on the School's five credit recovery opportunities for students to date during this school year, which currently includes night school through which nearly 40 credits were recovered for graduating seniors, meaning approximately 25% of those students now meet graduation requirements.
  - c) Mr. Thomas reported on efforts to strengthen caregiver engagement through improved communication. He noted the School launched a new survey to gather feedback directly from caregivers regarding communication strategies in addition to gathering initial feedback through caregiver conferences taking place this week.
  - d) Mr. Thomas reported Ms. Blackman's successful leadership of the summer bridge program, which received positive feedback from staff, students, and caregivers. He noted that incoming freshmen have already been informed about the mandatory summer bridge program attendance requirement, which is intended to foster student relationships and provide an earlier academic touchpoint. Mr. Chaudhry indicated that the Bloomberg grant approval is expected on April 12, 2024.
2. **Postsecondary Pathway Planning for Students with IEP:** Mr. Chaudhry reported Robert Smith, Director of Guidance and Strategy, and Melissa Rivera, School Counselor, attended a workshop on supporting students with special needs transitioning through high school and that they are using this information to inform the post-secondary preparedness plans for the School's students with IEPs. He noted the workshop materials are included in the Board meeting materials.
  3. **College Admissions Data:**
    - a) Mr. Molloy reported that the School has a high college application rate with 1,110 submissions representing 82% of the senior class. He highlighted individual students' achievements including, a Posse Scholarship winner, numerous small scholarships awarded, and nine students who received on-the-spot acceptances to St. Francis College, which he noted reflects a strong college-going culture at Northside.



- b) Ms. Henebeng reported that the Instant Decision Day held with St. Francis College resulted in ten acceptance of the eleven students who met with St. Francis College's admissions staff. She noted this event provided valuable exposure to the college application process for both juniors and seniors and that the partnership with St. Francis College is successful and growing.

**B. Talent Retention and Recruitment:**

1. Mr. Molloy reported that all teachers now have accounts in the certification portal and have either submitted payment or inquired about the process. He reported relevant employees have a clear understanding of certification status and requirements and are making progress to obtain certification through support and oversight of leaders in the Academic Department. The Charter Center is providing guidance and expects to deliver an initial review by March 22, 2024. The Board acknowledged the importance of clearly establishing expectations for teacher certification and ongoing communication and support provided by leadership to ensure the School meets NYSED teacher certification requirements. Additionally, the Board discussed its prioritization of fostering a culture of professional development and growth that cultivates long-term, high-quality educators who can contribute to the School's mission. The Board requested that management provide transparency regarding certification requirements during the hiring process, along with the development of a support system for teachers pursuing certification, including regular progress checks and open communication channels.
  2. Mr. Malloy reported that teacher evaluations are ongoing and will be used to inform employee retention decisions and employee development plans. Mr. Molloy further noted that leadership has begun recruiting teachers to prepare for potential class expansion and vacancies. He noted the leadership team's goal is to maintain a pool of qualified candidates and foster connections by inviting them to upcoming school events. The Board inquired about retention and open positions within Student Services and Finance and Operations Departments, and Mr. Chaudhry reported a significant improvement in stability and high retention within these departments. Mr. Thomas noted there are no vacancies in the Student Services Department, and staff have stated their desire to remain with the School.
- C. Cybersecurity Report:** Mr. Ahmed reported on cybersecurity measures following a recent K-12 cybersecurity conference. The K-12 Cybersecurity Framework is being used as a guide, with existing security protocols including network monitoring, endpoint security tools, and regular website backups. A cybersecurity training program with testing and phishing simulations is planned



for staff starting in April. Cyber liability insurance is in place and will be reviewed for renewal. Data security improvements include limiting privileged accounts, managing departing employee access, and restricting data deletion from school drives. A potential cybersecurity grant is being explored to further enhance security infrastructure.

1. The Board raised a concern about the lack of a cybersecurity awareness training program for students. While staff training is being addressed, the Board emphasized the importance of equipping students with these skills for their future careers. Mr. Ahmed acknowledged the gap and expressed his intent to develop a plan for students alongside the staff training program. The Board also inquired about the mandatory aspects of cybersecurity compliance. Mr. Ahmed confirmed that the K-12 Cybersecurity Framework serves as the mandatory guideline but there's no set deadline for implementation. An initial assessment by New York City for data security is expected by mid-year. While there are infrastructure costs associated with implementing the framework, Mr. Ahmed mentioned a potential cybersecurity grant that the school could qualify for based on a past data security incident.

**III. NYSED CEO Inquiry Update:** Ms. Karaffa reported the Board received communication from Dr. Long, Director of the Charter School Office with the New York State Education Department, dated March 4, 2024, that confirms the Board's practices for hiring the CEO and adhering to conflict of interest policies have met NYSED requirements and that this inquiry is now considered closed by the New York State Education Department.

**IV. Committee Reports**

**A. Finance Committee:**

1. Mr. Dinh reported that the proposed funding changes for special education have been postponed by NYSED to the 2024-2025 school year. He indicated consistency in funding will enable the School to keep fully funded special education programs and supports in alignment with those currently provided.
2. Mr. Alladin reported the School maintains strong financial health and that management obtained additional funding sources that increase the projected revenue by \$400,000, which when coupled with higher than budgeted staff expenses, will result in an expected \$100,000 annual surplus.
3. The Board discussed the 2024 fiscal year audit plan and instructed management to develop a proposed audit plan and timeline with the School's independent auditors to be approved by the Board.
4. The Board discussed School's United Healthcare Oxford health plan costs and coverage details, specifically indicating that based on



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recommendations from management, the plan coverage will remain the same as previously approved by the Board with the School covering 85% of the health plan fees. Mr. Dinh noted cost to the School will be approximately \$47,000 more than the fiscal year 2024 budgeted amount due to increase in costs from United Healthcare Oxford. Mr. Dinh reported the School met the deadline for plan renewal and that the open enrollment period will begin during the week of March 25, 2024.

B. **Executive Committee:** Ms. Karaffa reported that the Executive Committee met and discussed the CEO's mid-year evaluation. She noted the feedback from board members and the CEO's direct reports were aggregated and anonymized to encourage honest feedback. The CEO and Board Chair met to discuss the feedback and areas for improvement.

V. **Public Comment:**

A. A guest asked about potential cut to the Special Education Department budget. Ms. Karaffa clarified that the Board and management are still in the process of developing the budget and no cuts have been finalized. She emphasized the Board's commitment to meeting the needs of all students, especially those with special education needs.

VI. **Executive Session:** There were no actions taken in an executive session; on motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded and carried, all were in favor.