



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  
November 21st, 2023, 6:00 pm ET**

**Present:**

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

**Guest Present:**

Muhammed Chaudhry - CEO  
Matt Molloy - Interim Chief Academic Officer (“CAO”), via video conference  
Dwight Thomas - Chief Student Services Officer (“CSSO”)  
Fahim Ahmed - Director of Technology  
Tony Dinh - Finance and Accounting Consultant, via video conference  
Ramlah Malhi - Special Projects Coordinator, via video conference  
Ashanti Blackman - Director of Student Life and Community Engagement  
Anna Henebeng - Director of College of Readiness  
Robert Smith - Director of Guidance and Strategy, via video conference  
Sheina McClendon - Director of Special Education, via video conference

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

- I. **November Consent Agenda:** The Board discussed the November 2023 consent agenda, which included the October 2023 Board Meeting Minutes, October 2023 Financial Reports, and October 2023 Strategic Plan Dashboard, which had been reviewed in greater detail by the Board in its committee meetings. After discussion, on motion to approve the November 2023 Consent Agenda that was seconded and carried, all were in favor.
- II.
- III. **Management Reports:**
  - A. **Student Data - SAT Scores:** Ms. Henebeng presented an overview of NCHS SAT data, noting that as a post-secondary preparatory school, over the past three years, it has implemented early exposure to the SAT for all students, believing it provides valuable insight into their potential for success in college. She reported that while data reveals underperformance against the national levels on the SAT currently, NCHS remains committed to rigorous coursework and creative solutions for maximizing student exposure to the SAT's format and content. Ms.



Henebeng further reported that due to building space constraints juniors did not take the PSAT this fall, but all students are slated to take either the SAT or another College Board exam in April of 2024. Mr. Molloy added that this cycle of assessments provides longitudinal data and will inform strategies and future programming., Mr. Molloy described the leadership team’s increased attention to student performance and post-secondary education test preparation.

**B. Attendance Data:**

1. Mr. Thomas reported the School's average daily student attendance at 78 percent for the month of October is higher than most other schools in Charter School District 14, and the School has implemented several measures to improve attendance, such as sending certified letters and making home visits to families who are not responsive to outreach. He further noted that the school has also conducted an internal audit of student files to ensure that all student files contain all necessary enrollment documents, and . the audit found that most students have at least two of the required enrollment forms, and the School is developing a new enrollment procedure to ensure that all incoming students have the necessary documents including, but not limited to, birth certificates, transcripts, and parent IDs.
2. Mr. Thomas reported that the School has achieved its goal of ensuring that every student has at least one trusted adult in the building, which is a driver of maintaining full enrollment and driving strong student engagement, academic achievement, graduation rates, and post-secondary education enrollment that are core to the School’s mission. He described through an exercise called relationship mapping, the School identified and paired 95% of students with a staff member they trust

**C. Director Reports:**

1. **Director of Student Life and Community Engagement:** Ms. Blackman, Director of Student Life and Community Engagement, reported that NCHS has established its Caregiver Association, marking a significant step towards fostering caregiver engagement and fostering a sense of ownership among the community. She also reported the first meeting held on November 9th, 2023, with 17 caregivers in attendance and representing caregivers from all grade levels. She noted the enthusiasm among caregivers is palpable, as evidenced by their eagerness to volunteer at the upcoming school-wide popular event. The Board asked whether she was evaluating varied types of events to enable engagement from caregivers who may not be able to participate in in-person events, and she responded that they are anticipating potential challenges, so the Caregiver Association team will utilize a combination of in-person and virtual



meetings and also prioritize the inclusion of non-English speaking caregivers.

2. **Director of Technology:** Mr. Ahmed reported that the Data Analyst team has successfully designed the School's student information system, Jupiter, for collection, analysis, and reporting of student data to enable the School to provide data-driven insights and create a replicable model, one of the School's strategic pillars. He noted the first phase of the team's work focused on utilizing Jupiter for student attendance management and training the staff on the relevant platform features and protocols for accurate data entry and analysis. Additionally, he noted they aim to introduce machine learning algorithms to enhance predictive analytics correlating attendance and student achievement data and will be further developing the software, processes, and staff training on other key student data.

**IV. FY 2023 IRS Form 990 Filing:** Ms. Karaffa reported the Finance Committee approved the IRS Form 990 for fiscal year 2023, aligned with the recommendations of the School's education consultant and the independent auditor, which was filed in advance of the filing deadline. Ms. Karaffa indicated the importance of the Board's transparency in publicly reporting substantive financial reports in public session and exhibiting how the Board exercises its fiduciary duties. After discussion, on motion to approve the FY 2023 IRS form 990, was seconded and carried, all were in favor.

**V. FY 2023 Audit Report:** Ms. Karaffa reported the results of the fiscal year 2023 audit were a clean unqualified opinion with two deficiencies identified by the auditor, specifically, improper revenue recognition and delayed reporting of financial data, and that the Finance Committee met independently with the School's independent auditor, PKF O'Connor Davies, to review the results of the fiscal year 2023 financial statements and audit process. She further noted the Board through its Finance Committee approved the fiscal year 2023 audit in advance of the School's November 15 filing deadline, granted through a 2 week extension approved by the New York State Department of Education ("NYSED"), and that management had prepared remediation plans to address the deficiencies that were also presented to the Board and PKF O'Connor Davies. Mr. Dinh described the management will implement stricter accounting processes, including weekly reconciliations, monthly excellence tagging, and internal auditing to address the deficiencies. Additionally, he noted management will update the Finance Committee on at least a quarterly basis on the progress made in correcting these deficiencies. Mr. Aladdin added that the Finance Committee conducted separate meetings with the Board and the auditors to thoroughly understand the audit deficiencies and seek their insights on potential corrective measures. Ms. Karaffa indicated the importance of exhibiting the Board's fiduciary oversight and providing public transparency on these matters. After discussion, on motion to approve the FY 2023 Audit Report, was seconded and carried, all were in favor.



- **Charter Revision Enrollment Number Increase:** Mr. Thomas reported that management is requesting the Board consider increasing the maximum student enrollment authorized under the School's charter from 420 students to 450 students for fiscal year 2025 through charter revision application due December 1st, 2023, to the New York State Education Department Board of Regents. Mr. Thomas reported the school has witnessed a growing demand for its services within the community evidenced by maintaining maximum enrollment and with 52 student applicants currently on the waitlist, and the management team believes that it has the capacity to serve more students while maintaining its signature small class sizes and fulfilling key design elements of the School's charter. Mr. Thomas described that these would be achieved through expanding its teaching and support staff by 6 teachers with ICT and 2 guidance counselors and increasing investments to support student engagement and holistic growth. He also noted that the School's student recruitment activities include partnership with 7 other middle schools with plans for expanding such partnerships among other organic student recruitment activities. Further, he indicated management has planned for the process to request additional space in the building from the New York City Department of Education ("NYCDOE") and has considered other alternatives for space including, but not limited to, portable space. Finally, Mr. Thomas reported the School collected feedback from students and caregivers anecdotally and through formal surveys, which resulted in positive and supportive feedback on increasing the School's enrollment capacity to 450 students.
- A. The Board reviewed the enrollment presentation materials, five year budget based on enrollment of 450 students, and student and caregiver feedback surveys. The Board questioned management on space constraints, particularly those that may impact the School's ability to administer key student exams including PSAT, SAT, and Regents exams. Management acknowledged the concern about space constraints and noted they would be addressed before more students would be on campus and that they have already initiated discussions with other organizations in the co-located space and understand the process for requesting more space from NYCDOE.
  - B. The Board raised concern about the school's student performance not meeting our goals or district areas in some areas and questioned whether it is prudent to



expand enrollment before addressing the existing performance gap with our current 420 students. Management responded emphasizing the importance of a balanced approach that addresses both fostering strong student performance in order to attain post-secondary education and serving the community through increased enrollment capacity and indicated the five-year budget based on a capacity of 450 students includes increased revenue coupled with the School's operational and financial efficiencies and technological capabilities that will provide opportunities to increase services to meet student needs.

- C. Additionally, management reiterated the strong demand from the community for their services and management's desire to serve more students who seek their unique educational approach that enables academic excellence, personal growth, and attainment of post-secondary education under the School's mission that enables students to have better life opportunities.
- D. The Board questioned whether the community's demand for increase maximum enrollment is driven by a genuine desire for a high school that provides a path to a post-secondary education or by factors like safety and proximity and questioned management on their tactics for describing the School's mission and program in student recruitment efforts to ensure that every student and their caregivers understand the requirements of our program prior to enrollment. The management team acknowledged the importance of alignment between a student's education needs and objectives and the School's model and mission. Management indicated how the School's model differs from other schools in recruitment activities and through ongoing interactions with enrolled students and their caregivers where post-secondary preparation is consistently reiterated and supported through academic and social-emotional programming and support.
- E. The Board acknowledged the growing trend towards supporting community-based schools, which aligns with NCHS core identity and mission. The Board stated that NCHS's unique educational model effectively prepares diverse and economically disadvantaged students for postsecondary education, outpacing the district in graduation rates and postsecondary acceptance. The Board also noted that in conversations with its NYSED Charter School Office Liaison in recent years including through its last charter renewal process, NCHS has received statements of support for continued expansion. Further, the Board noted that it took a measured approach during the last charter renewal application in 2021-2022 requesting an increase of only 20 students (from 400 to 420), because it occurred during the uncertain period of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Board indicated the

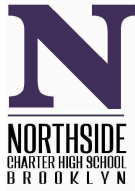


School has successfully served 420 students while also enhancing the School's academic, financial, and operational capacity with focus on increased academic rigor and social emotional program for students and talent development strategies. Finally, the Board described that over the past decade, the Board has maintained and reiterated the perspective that the Board and School have an aspiration and obligation to serve as many students as possible in a high quality and highly effective and impactful educational model.

- F. The Board expressed support for increasing the School's enrollment to 450 students acknowledging the leadership team's maturity and implementation of rigorous processes have significantly enhanced the School's ability to provide both rigorous academics and comprehensive social-emotional support, recruit, retain, and develop employees, and foster caregiver and community engagement. After discussion, on motion to approve the charter revision enrollment number increase from 420 to 450, was seconded and carried, all were in favor.

## VI. Committee Reports

- A. Board Development Committee:** Ms. Karaffa reported that Rizwan Alladin and Danielle Redmond have reached the end of their current three year terms and are eligible for renomination for another three year term on the Board. She noted that Mr. Alladin and Ms. Redmond have made significant contributions throughout their tenure on the Board and that the Board Development Committee recommends the Board renominate Mr. Alladin and Ms. Redmond each for a three year term.
1. Ms. Redmond was rescued from discussion and vote for her nomination for another three-year term. After discussion, on motion to approve Danielle Redmond for her third three year term on the Board of Northside Charter High School, was seconded and carried, all were in favor.
  2. Mr. Alladin was rescued from discussion and vote for his nomination for another three-year term. After discussion, on motion to approve Rizwan Alladin for three year term on the Board of Northside Charter High School, was seconded and carried, all were in favor.
- B. Finance Committee:** Mr. Aladdin reported the Finance Committee reviewed the current financial projections and discussed some of the line items in the financial statements, which included some expenditures that are slightly higher than budgeted and revenue that is slightly lower than budget. He indicated the revenue is driven by the timing of enrollment reconciliation dates, and the expenses are due to the timing of payment for expenses that typically occur at a higher amount earlier in the fiscal year before tapering off. Mr. Alladin further reported that the management team is confident that they will maintain a net income of at least \$20,000 by the end of the year, as projected in the budget approved in June 2023



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and that management is also looking into ways to better balance the use of instructional staff and reduce reliance on substitute services to help manage expenses. Mr. Alladin noted the Finance Committee is committed to providing the necessary oversight to ensure that the School maintains its financial health.

**C. Executive Committee:** Ms. Karaffa reported that the Executive Committee received an inquiry from the New York State Education Department related to the hiring process and practices surrounding the appointment of Mr. Chaudhry as an interim and then permanent CEO. The Committee, with the assistance of outside counsel and consultants, ensured a transparent and comprehensive response to NYSED's inquiry, meeting the submission deadline of November 3rd, 2023. She noted that as of this meeting, no further follow-up has been received from NYSED since the submission of the documentation.

VII. **Public Comment:** No questions or comments were received.

VIII. **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.