

Neighborhood Charter Schools
Minutes of the Meeting of the Board Trustees
January 22, 2025

A regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Trustees (the “Board”) of Neighborhood Charter Schools (the “Education Corporation” or “NCS”) was held on January 22, 2025, at 411 Wales Avenue, Bronx, New York 10454, and via video. The meeting was called to order at 6:03 PM.

Trustees Present:

Heidi Baker
Wylie Fennell (via video)
Stephanie Hubbell
Everardo Jefferson (via video)
Morgan Jenkins (via video)
Walter Rendon
Cliff Schneider (via video)

Trustees Absent:

Patricia Soussloff

Others in Attendance:

Daniel McCormick
Michelle Santos
Michelle Rumph
Martha Vega

Three (3) out of eight (8) seated Trustees were in attendance in person and four (4) out of eight (8) seated Trustees were in attendance via videoconference. All in attendance by video fulfilled the requirement of publishing their physical addresses of the location from which they were attending in advance of the meeting. Seven (7) out of eight (8) seated Trustees were present throughout the meeting, which constituted a quorum for the transaction of business at the meeting.

1. Welcome and Public Comment

Ms. Baker began the meeting and invited public comments. No comments were received.

2. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Ms. Hubbell and seconded by Mr. Rendon to approve the minutes from the December 18, 2024 Board meeting and was unanimously approved.

3. Presentation- Supporting the NCS Community Through Changes in National Policy

Mr. McCormick invited Martha Vega, Director of Multilingual Learning, to provide the Board with information on ways NCS is supporting families through the changes in

policies that the White House has and will be implementing with the transition in administrations. Ms. Vega has been attending training sessions on many topics including local enforcement protocol of any activity by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). She has conducted trainings with leaders at both campuses with the information she has learned and the protocol that NCS will be following and will be training staff in the coming week. The impact that NCS is currently noticing is in school attendance, with parents with uncertain or mixed immigration statuses being afraid of being separated from their children as a result of the ICE raids that have already begun. She plans to conduct training sessions for parents to advise them of their rights and provide them with resources to seek further assistance, counseling and putting together plans for their families in case they are affected by the raids. She is providing families with red cards containing their rights written in different languages to pass on to ICE during any potential encounter.

4. Executive Director's Report

Mr. McCormick invited Ms. Santos to provide updates from Operations. Ms. Santos informed the Board that the Operations teams on both campuses are coordinating with Rachel Viegas, Director of Special Education, to increase the number of applicants to the ASD program, as well as to increase the overall number of applications for next year. To do this, NCS has partnered with Schoolmint for support in recruitment efforts, has begun the use of Google Ads search keywords, is working with parent ambassadors to canvas the neighboring areas to share information about the schools, is holding office hours to support families with sibling applications and is continuing to visit preschools and attend school fairs. Campus tours began in Harlem today and will begin in the Bronx in February.

High School planning continues, with surveys conducted earlier this month with middle school parents and Scholars. Focus groups are being held, and NCS is reaching out to alumni families and students to ask about their experiences after graduation and thoughts on a potential NCS High School. The data that is collected will be shared with the Board during the March Board of Trustees meeting during a presentation by consultant Jenn Lindsay. In terms of preparations for the New York State Exams, a simulation test will be administered to Scholars in grades 3-8 at both campuses. This ungraded test is the method that NCS uses every year to confirm that technology and bandwidth are working appropriately, to allow Scholars and staff member to become familiar with the portal and to identify issues that may affect the administration of the exams later in the Spring.

Mr. McCormick discussed the preparations that have been taking place in New York City for the shift in immigration enforcement tactics happening with the presidential transition, including briefings and trainings from city lawyers and Director of Multilingual Learning, Martha Vega. He also highlighted the feature in this month's edition of Newsweek about NCS as a pioneer in inclusive education practices in NYC. This feature is appearing in both their online and print publications and will be featured prominently on the NCS social media accounts.

Mr. McCormick stated that NYSED has requested that NCS complete corrective action plans for both campuses to address deficiencies in the number of uncertified teachers on staff, which were submitted on Tuesday. The aim is to decrease the number of uncertified teachers by 25% in the next 18 months through full implementation of the teacher salary

schedule that incentivizes teachers to obtain state certification, increasing the tuition reimbursement program for the Relay program, and partnering with the Charter Center to conduct individual transcript reviews to support teachers who are close to meeting certification requirements. He also spoke about the retention bonus that was paid to staff members who worked during SY 2023-2024 and returned for the current year in the sum of \$700 on January 15th. The amount paid matches the retention bonuses paid by the NYC DOE.

Mr. McCormick informed the Board that Rachel Viegas, Director of Special Education, has arranged for NCS has become an official member of the Tri-State Special Education Admissions Leaders organization, a not-for-profit that supports parents and professionals as they navigate special education systems in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. Membership in this organization is allowing NCS to foster relationships with partner schools to provide Scholars with support necessary for their socioemotional and academic development and it is expected that it will help to support student enrollment, student placement, special education staffing and student and family advocacy in the future.

Professional development for leaders took place today in Harlem in the morning and the Bronx in the afternoon on themes of DEI, data collection and plan for Mastery season, and team function and trust. The staff survey that was conducted in December by Attuned saw a 95% participation rate from NCS staff. The results showed that NCS received one of the highest scores across the charter sector on retention, and that staff feel that their basic needs in materials and resources needed to succeed are being provided and that they are satisfied with and feel that their work is rewarding. In contrast, the results also showed that staff do not feel that they matter at work and too much emphasis is placed on their faults instead of their strengths, and there is a need for more professional support and coaching and better communication between staff and leaders.

Other items highlighted by Mr. McCormick include efforts by the DEI Committee in celebrating the achievements of the soccer team with a banquet, shifting leader focus on growth and reflection through a professional development session on self-awareness, fostering a safe and inclusive environment for the NCS community, and strengthening the bonds among staff members as well as the principal reports of celebrations and successes.

6. Finance Update

Mr. Rendon informed the Board that Form 990 for FY24 is completed and has been filed. He indicated that revenue is higher than projected due to student enrollment and higher numbers in the Special Education population and expenses are lower than projected even with increases in expenses for substitute teachers, consultants, and professional development. The projections for the next 2-3 years will change should NCS decide to move forward with the proposed High School expansion. NCS has 4.6 months/138 days of cash on hand, representing a strong and stable financial position.

411 Wales Avenue Building Buyout Project Update:

A kick-off meeting with NCS, NRF attorney, Baird Financial Group, and Kevin Quinn was held on December 23rd to discuss the next steps and application process with Build NYC.

Build NYC Resource Corporation (Build NYC) helps 501(c)(3) organizations and other exempt facilities make real estate capital investments by accessing low-cost debt through tax-exempt bond financing. The deadline to apply to Build NYC was Tuesday, January 21st. All parties are aiming to close the buyout deal by August 2025. Our CPA firm, MMB+Co, is aware of this and will note this project as a disclosure on the audited financial statements.

7. Executive Session

A motion was made by Ms. Hubbell and seconded by Mr. Rendon to enter into executive session to discuss confidential personnel and student matters and was unanimously approved. No votes were taken during the session. A motion was made by Mr. Rendon and seconded by Mr. Schneider to exit executive session and was unanimously approved.

8. Adjournment

There being no further business, Ms. Hubbell made a motion which was seconded by Mr. Jefferson, to adjourn the meeting and the motion was unanimously approved. The meeting was adjourned at 7:12 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Heidi Baker

I, Heidi Baker, the duly qualified Secretary of Neighborhood Charter Schools, a New York education corporation, do hereby certify that I reviewed these Minutes, and that the above is a true and complete copy of the Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Trustees of the said corporation held on January 22, 2025.

Dated: January 22, 2025