Minutes of the Harlem Children’s Zone Promise Academy I Charter School
Board Meeting
October 20, 2010
125 West 125th Street, New York, NY 10035

In attendance: Geoffrey Canada, Stan Druckenmiller, Ken Langone, Arlene Gibson via telephone, O’Donna Hue Osborne, Hope Williams, Kathleen Fernald, Sheryl Ragland, Dennis McKesey, Tonya White, Marquitta Speller, Shakira Petit, Anne Williams-Isom, Mindy Miller, Marlene Fox, Debbie Gonzalez, Tracey Costello, George Khaledun, Betina Jean-Louis, Katie Shoemaker, Conrad Pinnock, Latasha Johnson-Morgan, Lauren Scopaz, Michelle Germaine, Bessie Wilkerson, Jennifer Klein, Brian McClendon, Shana Brodnax, Tiffany Fountain, Sharleen Morris, Jodi-Ann Burey.

Mr. Kenneth Langone called the meeting to order at 7:07 am and called for a motion to approve the June and September minutes. Mr. Geoffrey Canada seconded the motion; the motion was upheld.

Mr. Canada reported on the recent press coverage of the Harlem Children’s Zone’s Promise Academy and the film, Waiting for Superman. In general, the press had been fair as the national interest in the Harlem Children's Zone Promise Academy increases; Mr. Canada has been pushing to ensure the facts discussed are true. Mr. Canada also reported on his trip to England as per the Prime Minister’s invitation. Ms. Mindy Miller and Mr. George Khaledun were also in attendance. Mr. Khaledun commented on the immense concern the Secretary of Education had about students dropping out of their schools, specifically Asian and West Indian students.

Mr. Canada discussed the recent shootings occurring in Harlem, where two children had been murdered—one child had a sister who attends Promise Academy and another who is tangentially connected to the Harlem Children's Zone. Promise Academy high school students are very connected to what is going in the community. A parent meeting was held recently to address issues of violence and inform them of the initiatives the Harlem Children's Zone will take to support families in protecting their children.

Mrs. Anne Williams-Isom reported on Corridors of Safety, a program that positions staff members along designated travelling routes during the students’ dismissal times. Mrs. Williams-Isom and her staff have been developing after school and weekend strategies to protect students, including creating a system where kids can text for help and partnering with local stores to establish safe zones for kids in trouble. The message to parents is that staff at the Harlem Children’s Zone will be hands-on in keeping their children safe. Geoff commented that a multifaceted approach will be necessary to handle the issue. Mr. Langone suggested athletic competitions as a way to channel the tension surrounding the gangs. Mr. Canada responded that the staff will look into that issue and figure out other ways we can actively interfere. Mr. Canada also reported that the staff is working closely with the New York City Police Department (NYPD) to resolve this issue. Mr. Khaledun has developed a dialogue around this issue with his community men’s group and will be working to approach the adult leaders of the gangs for some quite conversation.

Promise Academy I Elementary

Ms. Tonya White reported on the September monthly percentages for her school and assured that she will continue to work with the attendance team to maintain high percentages. Lower attendance days are mostly due to kindergarten parents; a meeting is scheduled with kindergarten parents accordingly.
Ms. White also reported on the raised benchmarks in reading achievement. Ninety minute reading blocks have been implemented into the academic schedule to improve third graders' reading ability. The adult to student ratio is 1:4. Sixty-nine students have registered for Saturday Academy thus far. The staff has reached out to parents weekly to increase Saturday attendance.

Promise Academy I Elementary has partnered with McGraw-Hill in an effort to teach financial literacy to the third grade students. Ms. White also reported on the continuing partnership with Ithaca College, where college students visit the school each year during Columbus Day week to help support students in the classroom.

**Promise Academy I Upper Elementary/Middle School**

Mr. Dennis McKesey reported on the school's high attendance percentages during September. Mr. McKesey also reported on his ongoing search for talented teachers. Families are continuing to be supported by the school with such programs including the grandparents' breakfast and "Dinner with Dads". Mrs. Latasha Johnson-Morgan and the after school program continues to partner with the day school on student academic interventions. Student advocates are also involved in the classrooms to help support the students.

**Promise Academy I High School**

Ms. Marquitta Speller reported that the student whose brother was recently murdered is back in school and is speaking regularly with the guidance counselor and social worker. The high school staff has been working to keep her academically on pace with the class. There was another student who witnessed the young woman who was recently murdered in her neighborhood. Ms. Debbie Gonzalez' social work team has been working regularly with the student.

The high school had recently implemented Friday seminars that will empower students with useful decision-making tools. Ms. Speller also mentioned that four students still have not passed the Global History exam; those students have an Individualized Education Program (IEP). Ms. Speller reported that the high school students were recently administered the Preliminary SAT exam to get students acclimated to the test and give them an idea of how they would score. Ms. Speller is developing a partnership with The Princeton Review for SAT prep classes for the students.

**Financials**

Ms. Tracey Costello requested budget approval. Mr. Langone called for a motion to approve the budget for both schools. Mr. Stan Druckenmiller seconded the motion; the motion was upheld. Ms. Costello reported that Promise Academy I is currently tracking under budget at 22% and credited the principals and Ms. Jodi-Ann Burey for tracking the schools' expenses.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 am.