Minutes of the Harlem Children’s Zone Promise Academy II Charter School
Board Meeting
November 18, 2010
125 West 125th Street, New York, NY 10035

In attendance: Geoffrey Canada, Stan Druckenmiller, Ken Langone, Mitch Kurz, Arlene Gibson via telephone, O’Donna Hue Osborne, Hope Williams, Aisha Tomilson, 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, Margo Wright, 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 8:00 am and requested a motion to approve the October board meeting minutes; the motion was unanimously upheld.

**Promise Academy II Elementary**

Ms. Sheryl Ragland reported that 15-17 students have been cited as having chronic attendance problems. Ms. Debbie Gonzalez and the social work team have been working with students and families to address such issues. Connecting distant families with private bus companies, pairing students of pregnant mothers with neighborhood classmates to travel to school, and soliciting the health center to work with asthmatic students are just some of the solutions offered to improve student attendance. Since most of the students with chronic absences are newly enrolled, Ms. Ragland expects the problem to be remedied soon.

Ms. Ragland highlighted the recent award ceremony held to celebrate student accomplishments. Students received awards for punctuality, attendance and success in reading and character education. Character education is a newly implemented program that aims to build the whole child, where behavior is commensurate with academic performance. Components of the program include monthly vocabulary words and incentive prizes like shadowing a school administrator for a day.

Ms. Ragland highlighted one highly accelerated student reading at a fifth grade reading level. There are six kindergarten, first and second grade students who have individualized schedules that allow them to take classes in the upper grades. Mr. Stan Druckenmiller suggested that the chess program can help students focus and improve their academic performance. Mr. Kenneth Langone questioned the risk of high performing students becoming bored in school. Ms. Arlene Gibson confirmed that the risk is high and commended Ms. Ragland’s work in accelerating students. Ms. Ragland agreed but mentioned the need to balance academic acceleration with students’ emotional and social development. Mr. Geoffrey Canada encouraged schools to offer new opportunities for advanced academic experiences for students that are comparable to those offered at private schools.

Mr. Canada reported that all 10,000 *Waiting for Superman* vouchers granted by the Robin Hood Foundation save 198 had been used.

**Promise Academy II Upper Elementary**

Ms. Kathleen Fernald reported that with a 95% monthly attendance percentage, there are just a few students who have been chronically absent. The general focus regarding attendance has now
been shifted to address chronic lateness. Mr. Canada reported that Dr. Betina Jean-Louis’ research has found no correlation between attendance issues and academic performance.

Ms. Fernald continued to report that fifth and sixth grade sports such as basketball and tennis have increased parent participation in the schools.

Ms. Fernald and the school staff meet weekly to address state test preparation strategies needed for the new exam. Sixty-eight students are enrolled in the Bridging the Gap program. Ms. Fernald has found it impactful to have day school staff working with students during after-school hours as well. Saturday preparatory sessions, offered to targeted students by invitation only, have reported very high attendance.

Teachers and staff are working on building students’ reading stamina, particularly with the sixth grade students whose state exam has been changed to two days, instead of just one. Ms. Fernald has also implemented the “Geoffrey Canada Reading Challenge.” Students who win will be rewarded with $25 towards their 529 account, a $25 gift card and dinner at Mr. Druckenmillers house in Connecticut. Board members are encouraged to attend the dinner as well.

**Financials**

Ms. Tracey Costello reported that Promise Academy II continues to run under budget having expensed 27% of their budget thus far versus 33% budgeted.

Mr. Canada reported that he will work on the transition teams for the new New York Attorney General and Governor. He also expressed his support Mayor Bloomberg’s decision to appoint Cathleen Black as the new Chancellor of the New York City Board of Education.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30am.