Minutes of The Harlem Children’s Zone Promise Academy I Charter School
Board Meeting
May 25th, 2011
35 East 125th Street, New York, NY 10035

In attendance: Geoffrey Canada, Ken Langone, Mitch Kurz, Aisha Tomlinson, Stanley Druckenmiller, Arlene Gibson, Denise Nash-Fuller, Dorlin Reyes, Madeline White, Alfonso Wyatt, Kathleen Fernald, Sheryl Ragland, Dennis McKesey, Tonya White, Marquitta Speller, Shakira Petit, Anne Williams-Isom, Mindy Miller, Marlene Fox, Debbie Gonzalez, Tracey Costello, George Khaled, Betina Jean-Louis, Kate Shoemaker, Conrad Pinnock, Latasha Johnson-Morgan, Lauren Scopaz, Tiffany Fountain, Sharleen Morris, Jenny Lai

Mr. Kenneth Langone called the meeting to order at 7:00 am and requested a motion to approve the May Board meeting minutes; the motion was unanimously upheld.

New Building Update

Ms. Lauren Scopaz reported that the April groundbreaking ceremony was a success. Construction on the foundation has begun and in about two months, the steel beams will go up. Monthly meetings are being held with residents. One Saint Nicholas resident has been hired for an administrative position at Tishman Construction. Additionally, eight NYCHA residents have been hired as security.

Air conditioners have been offered to residents with asthma and other health related issues that may be affected by the construction. To date, the response has been low so another announcement will be made to ensure the needs of the residents are met.

Ms. Shana Brodnax reported that for the 2010 Kindergarten lottery, 33 eligible children from St. Nicholas Houses were identified and they were all accepted into Promise Academy. The Board requested that incoming Saint Nicolas students be assessed before they enter our schools. All 33 will be offered admission into the Harlem Gems program for the 2011-12 school year. The Board encouraged the staff to reach out to these children as early as possible to ensure the students’ academic preparedness for school.

Promise Academy I Elementary School

Ms. White reported that attendance has been consistent. There has been a 14% increase in attendance since she began raffling off laundry baskets to parents of students with perfect attendance and who are always on time.

Promise Academy I Elementary has planned summer professional development for the teaching staff that includes instructional programs on the Common Core State Standards, Singapore math, reading and writing workshops and differentiated instruction.
An individualized professional development plan has been created for every Promise Academy I Elementary School teacher, with their involvement. All but one of the teachers in the school are returning next year; that teacher is moving and has already been replaced.


**Promise Academy I Upper Elementary School**

Mr. McKesey reported that attendance has been consistent at 96%. He expects attendance to increase towards the end of the school year as his school has planned a number of field trips at that time.

He noted that the New York State Exam was fair and that his students were well prepared in part due to the practice exams he gave throughout the year. In the next several months, Mr. McKesey and his staff will be focused on teaching the students to pace themselves during exams.

Additionally, Mr. McKesey and Mr. Dougherty have developed a plan to develop their staff and students this summer. They are also implementing an intense literacy program for Promise Academy 1 Upper Elementary students. The staff will also be engaged in professional development with Promise Academy 1 Elementary.

There will be four vacancies at Promise Academy 1 Upper Elementary School next year and three of those positions have been filled. In addition to working with the Harlem Children’s Zone Human Resources Department, Mr. McKesey and Mr. Dougherty have also worked with the School Professionals and Teach for America to increase the pool of applicants.

Mr. McKesey then introduced Ms. Fleming, the Theater Teacher at Promise Academy 1 Upper Elementary School. Ms. Shandrika Griffin, a Promise Academy 1 Upper Elementary student, joined her and sang Martha and the Vandella’s “Dancing in the Streets.” Shandrika is an accomplished performer and a top student at her school.

**Promise Academy I Junior High School**

Ms. Petit reported attendance has consistently ranged from 95% to 96%. Attendance was perfect on the day of the Math New York State Exam and 99% students were in attendance for the ELA New York State Exam. She noted that students felt very confident during the math portion of the test. She also recognized that her students would benefit from increasing their stamina for the ELA State Exam.

Ms. Petit has implemented an intensive summer program for her students. She plans to have every student at grade level or above by the end of this summer. In addition to developing her current staff, Ms. Petit is hiring new staff for the new incoming grade. Ms. Petit is very excited
about developing a language department for Promise Academy 1 Junior High and has already hired a Mandarin teacher for next year.

**Promise Academy I High School**

Ms. Speller noted that the High School Regents Exam will begin on June 15th. She is utilizing her whole team to prepare for the Regents and she has reached out to Princeton Review for tutors that specialize in subjects relevant to the upcoming Regents test. She reported that the 11th grade students will only need to take the U.S. History Regents Exam.

To encourage her students’ intrinsic motivation, Ms. Speller has allowed her students to run a school “spirit week” independently. Student participation in spirit week was contingent on their participation in test study sessions.

Ms. Speller has developed a seminar class for this summer. The students will be grouped according the SAT results from May. Ms. Speller has also planned a college fair that includes presentations by Arlene Gibson and Geoffrey Canada.

In preparation for next year, Ms. Speller will be hiring a Spanish, social studies, and special education teacher.

**Projected Promise Academy Enrollment**

Dr. Bessie Wilkerson reported on the overall projected Promise Academy Enrollment for the next two school years. Currently, Promise Academy students are located in three different locations: 175 West 134th Street, 35 East 125th Street, and 2005 Madison Avenue. Because the schools are adding grades each year, we need additional space. Until the new Promise I building is finished in the fall of 2012, after the start of the school year, temporary arrangements will be made to hold the expansion of both schools. Once the new building opens, Promise I can move students to the new location and Promise II can move students into the existing building at 35 East 125th Street.

**Waiver for Social Workers**

Ms. Debbie Gonzalez reported that due to changes in New York State law, social workers with a Master’s degree will need to be licensed to practice. Promise Academy will need to fill out an application to be in compliance thereby allowing Promise Academy to employ social workers. As a part of the application, the Board members must complete an attestation form. All Board members voted to pass the resolution.

**Financial Update**

Tracey Costello reported that PAI remains on budget this year. She thanked the principals and Sharleen Morris for their due diligence.
Ms. Costello also reported that there is a change in revenue; the per-pupil allocation has increased from $12,443 to $13,547.

The meeting adjourned at 7:55 a.m.