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


Mr. Kenneth Langone called the meeting to order at 6:57 am and requested a motion to approve the September Board meeting minutes; the motion was unanimously upheld.

New School Building Update

Ms. Kristen Levine reported that the steel frame of the St. Nicholas building has been erected; the project is on track and is expected to be completed by the fall of 2013. Thus far, $21.4 million has been spent and the project is expected to run slightly under the $100 million budget.

The goal is to have 25% of the construction workers on the project come from minority and women business enterprises. The project has surpassed that goal with 35% to date.

Outreach to the residents continues to be strong. The hotline is open to all residents and they are invited to the monthly construction meetings. Ms. Levine noted that 146 air conditioners have been provided to residents thus far.

Ms. Levine then highlighted Barbara Stanley, a resident of St. Nicholas houses who has consistently attended the monthly construction update meetings. During the September update meeting, Ms. Stanley expressed an interest in maintenance work and recently secured a position as a maintenance worker at the Harlem Children’s Zone Baby College site.

NAACP Lawsuit

Mr. Geoffrey Canada reported that Promise Academy has been removed from the NAACP lawsuit over charter school co-locations. There are no updates on the lawsuit filed by Senator Bill Perkins and, thus far, the lawsuit has not impacted the timeline of the school building project.
Promise Academy I Lower Elementary

Ms. Tonya White noted attendance was strong in September. The concerted effort she and her staff made to meet with parents of late and absent students has improved attendance.

Ms. White is focused on training teachers to plan engaging lessons for students. The “Math in Focus” program is designed to engage students and exercise critical thinking skills and derived from teaching methodologies used in Singapore. As an extra support for teachers, Dr. Yeap Banhar, a leader in Singapore math training, will be visiting tomorrow. The math teachers will observe Dr. Yeap demonstrate a lesson to a classroom of students. Afterwards, Dr. Yeap will debrief the team and answer questions. In preparation for the “Math in Focus” program, Ms. White has arranged informational workshops for parents to discuss the program as well as the changes in the Common Core standards.

Recently, the afterschool program, “Bridging the Gap” began; twenty-two students are engaged in small group tutoring or one-on-one tutoring. Additionally, the Saturday school is off to a solid start; Ms. White noted that 75 students attended last Saturday.

Ms. White has been working with Principal Ragland to develop P.A.S.S, the Promise Academy Sunday Sites program to encourage parents and families to explore New York City sites on the weekends. One Sunday a month, the school recommends a place to visit New York City. At the end of the year, there will be an incentive for parents that consistently participate in the program.

The Salem site for the fourth graders is continuing to thrive. Students are participating in all the arts programs which include theater arts, physical education and fine arts. The students will also be performing “Charlie and the Chocolate Factory” later this year.

Promise Academy I Upper Elementary School

Mr. Achil Petit reported that September attendance held strong at 96%. He has continued to call parents of students who are not attending school and is seeing progress in the overall attendance.

Promise Academy I Upper Elementary School began two additional programs to support students. Firstly, Promise Academy I High School students volunteered to tutor students in the Promise Academy I Upper Elementary School which will be happening throughout the year. Secondly, students are attending Saturday school where they receive small group instruction. Of the thirty-eight students mandated to attend, twenty-five students came to the last session. Parent Coordinators have reached out to the parents of students that did not attend.

Furthermore, the staff has created two programs, one for boys and one for girls, to support students during the difficult adolescent years. The programs focus on students who are struggling with their behavior in the classroom. Mr. Petit’s staff has also engaged in bully prevention this month by running an anti-bullying campaign at his school.
Mr. Petit noted that the new staff is adjusting well and that the school year is going smoothly. As an extra support for teachers, Mr. Petit, Ms. Petit, and Ms. Speller led the Teacher Induction Program, a professional development for teachers once a month. This month the program focused on classroom management and next month the principals will be presenting on differentiated instruction. During the last session, Mr. Petit shared a video of his own teaching and led a discussion on best practices. By sharing his teaching, he hopes to create a school culture where all teachers feel comfortable sharing videos of their teaching as well. Furthermore, he would like the whole staff to embrace feedback and growth.

Mr. Petit noted a couple of special events this month. Princess Mary of Denmark visited Promise Academy and took part in a lesson on speed and friction. Additionally, students who score an average between 80 and 100 at the end of the marking period will be rewarded with bronze, silver or gold ties. Their success will be celebrated during a ceremony this month.

**Promise Academy I Junior High School**

Ms. Shakira Petit reported the average attendance to be 91% in the month of September. There was a high incidence of asthma and allergies that kept students home from school. Some students also suffered from the common cold and flu. She reached out to the Health Center for support and has encouraged all the parents to utilize our wraparound services.

In support of Bully Free month, Promise Academy I Junior High has created a system for students to anonymously report bullying and cyber-bullying via Facebook and Twitter. The Junior High School has consistently communicated to parents and students that bullying is not tolerated and students who interfere with the education of other students cannot remain in school. Mr. Canada also met with some students and helped them understand the importance of treating other students with respect.

Promise Academy I Junior High School is honoring one student a month based on academic standing. An honorary luncheon will be held for each student selected.

Promise Academy I Junior High School students are continuing to practice reading and writing in a variety of ways. The students are currently writing books that will later to be shared with friends and family. Additionally, several high school students have volunteered to tutor Grade 7 and 8 students. In November, the high school students will also start mentoring the students.

**Promise Academy I High School**

Ms. Marquitta Speller reported that attendance was high for the month of September. On average, 97% of students were present.

Many high school students expressed interest in applying to Stony Brook College and a trip was arranged for all the senior students. Ms. Speller also reported that 98% of the high school
students will apply to The City University of New York, CUNY. The application fee for the students was waived.

Ms. Speller is continuing to support the junior class by arranging college tours and summer programs as they will start the college application process in the coming year.

Promise Academy I High School has been working in conjunction with the Promise Academy Upper Elementary and Junior High School on a couple of projects. In addition to the high school students tutoring 7th and 8th graders, they will also be tutoring Promise Academy I Upper Elementary School students. They are also facilitating an anti-bullying program at Promise Academy I Junior High School. Moreover, Ms. Speller and the other principals have created a Teacher Induction program. She noted that this program allows her and the other principals to share best practices as the educational leaders of the schools. In the last session, the teachers and principals role played various scenarios. This experience was a practical way of teaching teachers to manage their classrooms.

Financials

Ms. Tracey Costello reported that Promise Academy I expenses from July 1, 2011 to September 30, 2011 ran 1% over budget due to start-up costs including SAT test prep. It was expected that schools would spend more in the beginning of the year and Ms. Costello projected that Promise Academy will run on budget for fiscal year 2011.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 am.