

Board Minutes The New Academy Charter School

Minutes of the general meeting of the Board of Directors of The New Academy Charter School held on December 14, 2023.

- I. The meeting was called to order by Mr. William Nunn. Also present were Representative Joe Preston and Ms. Katie Micco. Mr. Kenneth Curcio participated by telephone. Mr. David Caliguiri and Ms. Susan Creighton were excused.
- II. In accordance with applicable law, Notice of Publication of the meeting was advertised in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette on February 23, 2023 and the meeting was conducted at the 900 Agnew Road facility.
- III. Comments were requested from the public but there were none.
- IV. Minutes from the meeting of September 14, 2023 were reviewed and approved unanimously.
- V. Financial Report

The Financial Report was presented by Mr. Kenneth Curcio. He indicated that the audit for the year ended June 30, 2023 was almost completed and that it would be completed by December 31, 2023. He stated it was clean opinion. He also indicated that there was a favorable variance for enrollment in 2024 but that revenue was down and that there were more regular education students and less special education students than anticipated.

- VI. Report of Executive Director

Ms. Kristen Harpster reported that the current enrollment for New Academy Charter School is at 75 students. The number of Students with programs for exceptionalities is 31. Below is the breakdown:

Total Students: 31 students

Pittsburgh Public Students: 23 students

Exceptionality	# of Students
Emotional Disturbance	2 Students
Emotional Disturbance and Specific Learning Disability	1 Student
Emotional Disturbance and Other Health Impairment	2 Student
Emotional Disturbance/Specific Learning Disability/Other Health Impairment	1 Student

Specific Learning Disability	6 Students
Specific Learning Disability and Other Health Impairment	4 Students
Intellectual Disability	1 Student
Intellectual Disability and Other Health Impairment	1 Student
Other Health Impairment	9 Students
Gifted IEP	1 Student
504 Plan	3 Students

GRANTS

GRANT	AMOUNT	PURPOSE
Title I	\$53,768	Curriculum Enrichment
Title II Part A	\$2,683.00	Professional Development
Title IV	\$10,000	Student Enrichment
School Improvement	\$75,000	Student & Staff Support
ESSER II	\$188,031	School & Safety
ESSER III	\$380,061	School & Safety
Ready to Learn	\$ 9,277	Professional Development/Incentives
ESSER Fund (ARP ESSER) 7% Set Asides	\$29,560.00	Learning Loss due to Pandemic
Highmark Foundation, Supportive Service Health Grants- Child Health and Wellness	\$1000	Personal care/hygiene items
United Way, STEM School Champions	10,000	Preconstruction Program

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT (CSI)

Ms. Harpster also reported that the school continues to work with the School Improvement Facilitators, Holly Pope and Vicki Ryan, regarding this year's goals to focus on Attendance and Graduation pathways. She indicated that the school will meet bi-weekly and quarterly to ensure we stay on track to meet our goals.

She also indicated that the school is currently on time with all of the necessary action steps.

Ms. Harpster indicated that school facilitators are also assisting with a revamp of our curriculum as they provide professional development to our department heads and do classroom observations to provide feedback to the teachers. She indicated this feedback has had a direct positive effect on instruction in the classroom.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT/RETENTION TASK FORCE

Ms. Harpster then reported that a Student Recruitment and Retention task force had been established and will meet regularly to discuss initiatives to increase enrollment. She indicated that these current initiatives include the following:

- The school’s best recruitment/retention strategy is communicating with our families. Parent/Teacher Conferences were held on November 10th, 2023 and 27 families participated. She indicated the school plans to continue to build on those connections. A parent-teacher conference is a great opportunity to: share academic progress and growth based on classroom observations, testing data, assessments, and assignments. It also gives us a chance to learn from parents or guardians so we can be better informed about students' strengths, needs, behaviors, and learning styles.
- The Recruitment and Retention Team meets every 2 weeks. Ms. Harpster indicated that at the latest meeting, an idea to host a “Celebrating Student Success and Enrollment Fair” was discussed and approved. It will be held on December 15th at 11:00 and 1:00. And all families and partners were invited and lunch will be provided. The school is asking our families to come and bring along another family who may want to enroll their child. All of our partners will be present; YAP (Youth Advocate Program), ABC, our pre-apprenticeship program, probation, Wesley Family Services, Café Momentum, HSAO and others.
- Ms. Harpster reported that the school is continuing its strategic plan to increase our enrollment. We have previously discussed our ideas and will continue to follow our plan, which includes:
 - Information in local newspapers (The Home Page, serving Greenfield, Hazelwood and Squirrel Hill)
 - Reaching out to the 412 Youth Zone
 - Geofencing – location based ad placement through smart technology
 - Referral bonus to families if a new student enrolls
 - Meet with local high school principals
 - Continuing to define our brand
 - Looking at our social media presence
 - Simplifying our enrollment process
 - Continue to meet with local magistrates

Ms. Harpster explained that IXL is personalized learning system that uses a comprehensive K-12 curriculum, individualized guidance, and real-time analytics. Each learner has their own learning path designed by IXL based on their diagnostic results. In other words, where our students are academically in ELA and math. Ms. Harpster further reported that once we determine their academic level through the diagnostic test, we then work on how we increase their ability to be successful in both subject areas. Research shows that answering at least 30 questions per week has a measurable impact on student outcomes. She indicated that our students have answered over 3500 questions so far.

Ms. Harpster reported that the school has given the IXL assessment once this year and that it will administer it again in late January and then again in early May. We expect to see growth in both subject areas for every student.

School Safety and Security

Ms. Harpster reported that during the 23-24 School Year, Safety and Security remain a very high priority and that all New Academy drivers are equipped with detailed run sheets and company issued cell phones. They are trained in van safety and there are strict transportation protocols. Students are prohibited from bringing cell phones to school. This not only helps with safety on the way to and from school, but also impacts students' ability to remain focused in their classes. All students enter the school through a designated entrance. Upon their arrival, trained staff members direct each student through a metal detector. Students are then subjected to a pat down to ensure that no weapons and/or contraband enter the campus.

Ms. Harpster also indicated that the school has applied through a PCCD safety and security grant for a one panel body scanner to upgrade the current metal detector.

Mr. Harpster further reported that a threat assessment team consisting of administration, the behavior support team, a mental health therapist, and the EMT has been assembled and fully trained according to the state standards. All staff is trained in First aid/ CPR, Suicide Prevention, Narcan, Safe2Say Something, Mandated Reporter, and Trauma Informed Care. She also indicated that on October 20, 2023, all staff was trained by our in house trainer on Emergency Training Drills.

Ms. Harpster reported that On November 21, 2023, a team of assessors from Pittsburgh Emergency Management and Homeland Security and Allegheny County Emergency Services visited onsite to conduct an Infrastructure Assessment of our campus and the school received the following **commendations:**

- Established emergency plan. Routinely exercised through emergency drills
- Staff have undergone active threat training through the ALICE program
- Staff undergo general security training such as bomb threat awareness

- Established access control and screening procedures. Access control staff is diligent
- Receiving alerts from Allegheny County
- Staff undergo recurring criminal history and child abuse background checks
- Staff are CPR and AED trained
- Emergency egress maps are posted throughout the site
- CCTV images are actively monitored at multiple stationary staff positions
- Majority of staff are issued a radio for site-wide communication
- Supplemental door cameras for additional entrance monitoring. Images are recorded
- 9-1-1 address is accurate
- Background screening system used for all visitors
- Exterior “CCTV In Progress” signage
- Magnetometer screening for all students and visitors
- AED in the main lobby
- Lockers that are not in use are secured with zip ties in order to prevent access
- Panic buttons are present in the mental health office and access control desk
- Established relationships with neighbors for afterhours concern reporting
- Parking lot slide gate to prevent unauthorized vehicle access

Ms. Harpster then reported on the following school happenings:

Monthly Newsletter – We will continue to communicate with our parents. We know that parents and their children feel more connected to the school when they are informed of what's happening. The monthly newsletter will include the Principal's Corner, Student Highlights (perfect attendance, honor roll, student of the month), school counseling information (college tours, financial aid), mental health tips, and upcoming events. Other topics that may be included are a faculty showcase, alum success stories, a technology tip section, and an occasional piece on how to get and stay involved. The newsletter will be emailed to all families and staff, probation, magistrates, and local community members.

Pathway 2 Build - ABC Pre-Apprentice program- The New Academy Charter School will be offering this course in early 2024. ABC stands for Associated Builders and Contractors, a Western Pennsylvania program that provides formal apprenticeship training programs registered with the U.S. Department of Labor Office for Apprenticeships. These programs meet all federal and state requirements for formal apprenticeship and prevailing wage work, including employer-sponsored classroom instruction and on-the-job training. Upon successful completion, craft workers are recognized at the journey level in their trade and are awarded their apprenticeship certificate. The New Academy Charter School hopes this program will instill transferrable skills that will allow students to succeed and have opportunities in the workforce post-graduation.

Student Incentives – Recognizing students who are committed to their growth educationally, socially and emotionally is a foundational piece of The New Academy Charter School. Our “Pride Pays” initiative will be integral to the recognition again this school year. Our committee met this month and has some fresh ideas about how to continue to support our students. Some of the ideas discussed are adding new items to the school store, opening the store every day instead of every two weeks, and clearly defining how we determine who gets rewards. Students will continue to use their Live School points to ‘purchase’ these items. Students continue to earn entries into the monthly raffle for the grand prizes.

Post-Secondary Opportunities- To help students navigate their post-secondary decisions, the New Academy Charter School has taken the senior class on different trips to tour some local trade schools and universities. At the beginning of the school year, the students attended the Pittsburgh Promise College & Career Fair at the August Wilson Center, where they were exposed to different schools in the area. Students had the opportunity to receive instant admission to some of the schools that were there, and we have a few students who have already received acceptance letters to schools such as Thiel College and Pittsburgh Technical College. We have toured two schools thus far; Pittsburgh Technical College and New Century Careers. The senior class is also set to tour Rosedale Technical College this upcoming week. Additionally, we have established connections with a military recruiter who will be coming to speak with the students about the opportunities the military can provide. We are excited about the opportunities that the senior class will have throughout the remainder of this school year and look forward to hearing more about their choices for their future.

At this time, there was a discussion amongst the Board concerning positive changes in school culture.

VII. Principal’s Report

Mr. Jay Moser reported that he was in regular communication with parents, guardians and students and that these connections were critical for student success. He then discussed the Parent/Teacher Conference Day and also indicated that team meetings were being held every two weeks. The improvement in retention and attendance was then discussed. He next noted that the magistrate program to increase student recruitment being performed by Judge DeAngelis was underway. Mr. Moser concluded his report by indicating that average student growth for New Academy Charter received the third highest score of all city high schools.

VIII. Legal

Mr. Norris indicated that there were no new claims. He then indicated that the Board terms of Representative Joe Preston and Ms. Susan Creighton were expiring and requested a motion to extend their Board terms through December 2026. The motion was made, seconded and approved unanimously.

VIII. New Business

A discussion was then held concerning the Board meeting schedule for 2024 and it was determined that meetings would be held on Thursday March 14th, Thursday June 13th, Thursday September 19th and Thursday December 12th. A meeting notice will be published in the Post-Gazette in the near future.

VIV. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made, seconded, and approved unanimously.