



**MINUTES**  
**Board of Trustees Meeting**  
**October 21, 2025**

**PRESENT**

Lourdes Rivera Putz, Trustee  
Sabrina Philson, Trustee  
Marcenia Johnson, Trustee  
John Witherspoon, Trustee  
David Medina, Trustee

**GUESTS**

Valerie Jacobson, Head of School  
Katie Manion, Substitute Transcriber  
Ellen Eagen, School Counsel  
Samuel Rivera, Executive Consultant  
Additional Staff (17)

**1. WELCOME**

The meeting was called to order at 5:30pm. Ms. Putz welcomed everyone.

**2. APPROVAL OF SEPTEMBER MINUTES**

- Ms. Philson made a motion to approve the September 2025 Board Minutes pending counsel review. Mr. Witherspoon seconded. Ms. Rivera Putz and Mr. Medina abstained. All others were in favor.

**3. ACADEMICS**

Ms. Jacobson highlighted recent and upcoming important dates:

- October 21 - Progress Report Grades Due by 9am
- October 22 - PSAT Exam Grades 9 and 11; Remote/Trips Grades 10 and 12
- October 24 - Senior Committee Haunted House Event
- October 28 (4-7pm) and October 29th (2-4pm) - Parent-Teacher Conferences
- October 30 - NHS Pumpkin Carving; Virtual PLC Meeting at 6pm
- October 31- School-wide Costume Contest; Fright Fest Field Trip
- November 4- Election Day - Professional Development Day -No School for Students
- November 8 - Student Recruitment Open House
- November 11 - School Closed - Veteran's Day
- November 13 - Student Council Elections; Credit Recovery Begins
- November 19- Homecoming Rally & Sports Media Day; Hamilton Field Trip
- November 20-21 and November 24 - Trimester 1 Final Exams; November 21 - Homecoming
- November 25 - Final Exam Make-Ups; Last Day of Trimester 1
- November 26-28 - School Closed- Thanksgiving Holiday

Ms. Jacobson presented other academic updates. Department Leader teacher supports include monthly classroom visits with grows and glows; weekly Lesson plan review and feedback; weekly Department co-planning meeting for core subject areas; weekly department meetings for core subject areas; and, monthly department meetings during school-wide PD for non-core subjects. There will be upcoming Lunch N' Learn and/or school-wide professional developments in topics of need, including, ENL and Co-Teaching Strategies, RTI, GoGuardian, PowerSchool, and Canvas. Ms. Jacobson is finalizing the Department Leader Coordinator/Instructional Coach position. Learning Walks are continuing each week with instructional focuses and problems of practice: The WCHS Classroom (Domain 1 & 2), Student Engagement, Questioning and Discussion, and Using Assessment to inform instruction (Domain 3).

Ms. Jacobson reviewed photos from the National Honor Society induction, Hispanic Heritage Month celebrations including advisory boxes and a fashion fusion event.

Senior Data:

Ms. Martin reported that 92/160 seniors are on track. 26 students are slightly off track. The 2025 graduation rate is 84.1%, up from 82% in 2024. 56 students currently have all their Regents. There are currently 61 5th year seniors: 25 from the Class of 2025, 23 from the Class of 2024, 8 from the Class of 2023, 3 from the Class of 2022, and 2 from the Class of 2021.

Ms. Martin reviewed current challenges, focusing on credit recovery eligibility and motivation and attendance. Many seniors do not qualify for credit recovery this year (they must have failed with a 60-69). Eligible students complete APEX online coursework which requires strong attendance and passing grades. A large portion of seniors are ineligible for both Credit Recovery and APEX. Ms. Martin also stated that she is working on ongoing efforts to boost engagement and accountability. Stricter criteria has encouraged improved responsibility but slowed down short-term progress. Her hope is that the stronger accountability will encourage stronger academic habits, better attendance, and more effective summer school for remaining credits.

Ms. Martin provided a description of what has been done so far. She has met with 99 families to review graduation progress and has been holding ongoing virtual and in-person conferences for families unable to attend the senior breakfast. She is continuing to schedule check-ins to monitor grades, attendance, and credit completion. She is also working on individualized support for students utilizing targeted interventions to keep students on track for graduation and is utilizing regular communication with families and collaborating with counselors and teachers. Ms. Martin is also utilizing weekly upper school team meetings to review academic and social emotional progress and identify students for major life and international exemptions. Ms. Martin also strengthened WCHS' partnership with YABC. This allows students to maintain full WCHS schedules while earning additional evening credits. So far two students have enrolled and program expansion is in progress.

#### **4. PARENT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL**

Ms. Pink reported that the next PLC meeting will be on October 30 She invited presenters from the Greenpoint YMCA to discuss their Rowe Academy and other program services. The meeting will also include school news, a raffle, and community resources.

#### **5. OPERATIONS**

Ms. Jacobson requested that the board approve an extension of the Pilot Care Day payout program that was approved in August. 32 staff participated in the pilot. The proposed extension would allow staff to be paid out for up to five accrued Care Days at their full salary rate by August 15, 2026. Staff can still opt to carry over up to three care days, combine options, or utilize all Care Days.

- Mr. Witherspoon made a motion to extend the Pilot Care Day payout program that will allow staff to be paid out for up to five accrued Care Days at their full salary rate by August 15, 2026. Ms. Johnson seconded. All were in favor.

Ms. Jacobson also presented the FY2026 budget for approval. The budget must be submitted to NYSED by November 1. The projected FTE is 605. The revenue is \$15,032,537. The expenses are \$15,923,158. The deficit is \$890,621. The board discussed the budget. Ms. Eagen recommended that the school meet with the authorizer to review the budget and explain the efforts that have been made to reduce the deficit as the school's cash on hand will significantly decrease if the deficit continues at this rate.

- Ms. Johnson made a motion to approve the FY2026 budget. Mr. Witherspoon seconded. All were in favor.

Ms. Jacobson is continuing to work with Finance, Accountability and the Executive Coordinator on exploring additional revenue streams. So far, the school has conducted seven fire drills, two soft lockdown drills, and eight emergency preparedness drills as are required to be completed by December 1. Four more drills will be conducted by June 30, 2026.

#### **6. FINANCE**

Ms. Fernandez and Mr. Rivera presented the budget in further depth. Mr. Rivera summarized efforts that have been made to address the budget:

- The proposed FY 2025-2026 Budget represents a nearly 70% reduction from the actual deficit from FY 2024-2025 and is nearly 65% less than the deficit projected in the annual budget submitted to NYSED in November 2024.
- The greatest weight on the current budget is a lack of revenue, which is the result of lower enrollment due to a higher graduation rate in the summer of 2025, appreciably smaller class sizes compared to the pre-COVID class sizes, and discharges since the school year began.
- For context on how enrollment is impacting the budget, if the FTE was projected at 650 (which was Mr. Rivera's hope based on initial feedback from Operations in June), the School would be projecting a surplus for the fiscal year.
- The School is working on several revenue pushes, including space usage and charitable giving, some of which are being reflected in the existing draft.
- This draft does NOT include an appreciable decrease in full-time employees, however prior downsizing in staffing has been largely maintained.
- Additionally, departments with higher expenses than can be justified are being asked to cost adjust. That said, non-personnel cuts represent much of the majority of decreases.
- WCHS needs to target surpassing 650 FTE at the start of the 2026-2027 School Year to achieve a surplus on its revenue over expenses.
- To achieve this, the following benchmarks must be set for Enrollment and Operations: (1) Ending the 2025-2026 School Year with an average FTE between 615 and 625, (2) Achieving approximately 200 new enrollments by the 2026-2027 School Year, and (3) Minimizing discharges during Summer 2026 to between 25 and 35 students by BEDS Day 2026 (October 2026).
- Additionally, the School is adopting a spending freeze posture for the remainder of the fiscal year. Mr. River has asked that the following safeguards be put in place to curtail spending:
  - Outlays of any kind above \$1K should be summarized and reported to the Finance Committee of the Board on a regular basis, even if it is in the budget, to create awareness of spending. Mr. Rivera will work with Ms. Fernandez on how to report this in a digestible and convenient way. This could help the school align with the expectations of the independent auditors, as well.
  - Non-budgeted expenses of any amount should be brought to the Finance Committee of the Board for review and approval on a monthly basis and approved by the full Board as required.

## **7. FACILITIES**

Mr. James reported that no school visits or inspections were conducted by the FDNY, Board of Health, Environmental Services, or Department of Buildings. The school converted from air conditioning to heat. All used air filters were replaced. The windowsill in Room 425 and the 5th Floor C Stairwell sustained minor water damage due to heavy rainfall. Both areas are being sealed to prevent further damage. An ECB and FDNY hearing scheduled for September 30, 2025 was rescheduled to January 13, 2026 to clear and certify corrections made to the building's self-closing doors.

## **8. SAFETY**

Mr. Guzman stated that arrival and dismissal procedures continue to be successful. Students continue to be dismissed by floor to create a smoother flow of students leaving the building. The Dean's Office, with support from Mr. Dilworth, continues to ensure that students are in compliance with the school uniform policy during morning arrival. Additionally, Ms. Robinson and Ms. Pratt are conducting random uniform checks throughout the day to maintain consistency in student appearance and adherence to expectations. On October 6, WCHS participated in a virtual conference with the 90th Precinct and other local schools to discuss behavioral trends observed by police officers involving adolescents and youth in the community. The meeting with the 90th precinct is recurrent and takes place on Mondays. During the month of October, there have been three incidents resulting in Out-of-School Suspensions, and one 911 call has been made thus far.

## **9. RECRUITMENT AND ENROLLMENT**

Ms. Manion presented on behalf of Ms. Gomez. Enrollment in Powerschool is 591 and 596 in ATS. The estimated FTE is 585. As of October 21, the school has received 348 9th grade applications, 85 10th grade applications, 63 11th grade applications, and 43 12th grade applications for a total of 539 applications. 49 students have been added to the student body since the first day of school.

Recruitment staff attended the Middle Village Prep High School Fair on Thursday, October 16. Two of their alumni are in the Class of 2029. Recruitment staff also attended the Brooklyn Excelsior High School Fair on Friday, October 17 and the school hopes to strengthen the relationship with them. 2026-27 applications opened on October 1. Currently there are 32 applications. The first open house will take place on Saturday, November. So far there are six RSVPs.

Upcoming initiatives include attendance at Community Board 1 meetings - this is where Ms. Gomez is tonight. Ms. Gomez is seeking to develop a relationship with Cypress Hills Local Development middle school programs. Direct mailing postcards via Taradel are being mailed this week. The mailing is targeting 6,000+ households and emails in the Canarsie area. This is part of the school's effort to expand targeted areas outside of the school's immediate neighborhoods.

#### **10. HUMAN RESOURCES**

Mr. Kloss reported that there were six new instructional hires in September and three instructional separations. One employee is currently on leave. He is continuing biweekly HR/Finance meetings and is recruiting for a SPED (Math/Science) Leave Replacement and a Dance Teacher. Extra class agreements for instructors, department leaders, coaching, and after school clubs were issued. Mr. Kloss has modified the orientation process to reduce new employees feeling overwhelmed and added tasks for the Department Leader to complete with new employees on Day One. He has started copying Ms. Manion on TEACH ID communications to help him with certification monitoring.

#### **11. STAFF LIAISON**

Mr. Kronenberg reported that engagement and excitement for community involvement is still high. There has been great experiential engagement with field trips through various content areas. He will begin to look at other ways to engage staff in items and information they'd like to share with Board members as there's been little direct contact to express questions or concerns.

#### **12. ACCOUNTABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT**

Ms. Manion reported that the Annual Report is due November 1. This includes the budget, audit, and progress towards goals. The BEDS IMF report is due November 14.

WCHS did not receive the Walentas grant for \$25,000. Ms. Manion met with a representative from Instrumentl, a grants research platform. It would cost the school \$3,588 for an annual membership. She will be focusing on electeds next. Ms. Manion used a 30-day iMDB trial, Reddit, and NYC Filmmaking FB Groups to reach out to NYC-based location managers for large television and movie productions regarding using the school's space. She contacted 46 Location Managers/Location Assistants in NYC-area and received responses from 10 (21.7% response rate) who are affiliated with Law and Order, Gotham, Anora, Clerks III, The Morning Show, Caught Stealing, Better Sister, and Smile. Ms. Manion also connected with indie producers who would like to use the exterior of the building for a film shoot in January and reached out to the Office Coordinator for Teamsters 817. She also generated a list of NYC-based advertising and creative firms and contacted 41 companies about utilizing the school's space for commercials or photo shoots. Nonprofits, community organizations, and businesses will be contacted next. With permission from leadership and teachers, Ms. Manion may consider renting out studio spaces to local musicians and artists. She is asking staff to provide her with advance notice of school events in order to have costs covered and/or sponsored by local businesses and organizations. Ms. Manion plans on inviting electeds to upcoming events and is seeking in-kind donations from sites like Goods360 and grocery stores. She and Ms. Gomez are meeting with a Mets sales representative to look into additional game opportunities for students and staff in 2026.

#### **13. ADJOURNMENT**

- Ms. Johnson made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Philson seconded. All were in favor.