



MINUTES
Board of Trustees Meeting
February 24, 2026

PRESENT

Lourdes Putz, Trustee
John Witherspoon, Trustee
Marcenia Johnson, Trustee
David Medina, Trustee

GUESTS

Valerie Jacobson, Head of School
Mary Kenny, Transcriber
Additional Staff (21)

EXCUSED Sabrina Philson, Trustee

1. WELCOME

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

2. APPROVAL OF JANUARY MINUTES

- Ms. Johnson made a motion to approve the January 2026 Board Minutes pending counsel review. Mr. Medina seconded. All were in favor.

3. ACADEMICS

Ms. Jacobson summarized important updates at the school:

- February 2 - 6 - Senior Spirit Week
- February 4 - Progress Report Grades Due by 3pm
- February 5 - Black History Month Fashion Show at 3pm
- February 6 - Soft Lockdown Drill - Period 4; Winter Formal Dance 5-7pm; Progress Reports Generated;
- February 9 - DOE Survey Opens;
- February 10-11 - Parent-Teacher Conferences and Parent Resource Fair
- February 12 - Student Dress Down Pass Day (for attending PTC) and Senior Committee Bake Sale;
- February 13 - School-Wide Wear Pink/White/Red Dress Down Day
- February 16-20 - Mid-Winter Recess - No School
- February 23-27 - STAR Testing (during ELA/Math Classes)
- SAVE THE DATE: NYSED Site Visit 3/23

The Board discussed the effect of the recent blizzard on the STAR testing and Ms. Jacobson assured that there will be time for make-up testing.

Ms. Jacobson reviewed preliminary Trimester 1 academic data. The Board discussed how the data is calculated for students entering 9th grade. A significant portion of seniors are off-track for graduation. She provided an overview of interventions for our students, including: credit recovery, Regents tutoring (after-school and during periods 7 and 8), homework help, summer school, Academic Intervention Services for at-risk students, and peer-tutoring. Attendance interventions include: daily phone calls, attendance letters for 5, 10, 15, and 20+ absences, grade team outreach, parent/student meetings, home visits, social worker outreach, biweekly attendance team meetings, and a school-wide attendance committee.

Ms. Jacobson congratulated the January Teacher, Staff, and Advisor of the Month: Guillermo Vargas, Tom Garcia, and Andrew Cizmarik. She also provided an overview of recent school highlights, including the Black History Month College Panel, Black History Month Fat Tuesday events, and the Parent-Teacher Conferences and Resource Fair.

Ms. Martin provided a Senior progress update. 83/160 seniors are on track to graduate. There are 53 5th-year seniors in credit recovery. Eight students graduated in January, four from the Class of 2024 and four from the Class of 2025.

4. PARENT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Ms. Pink provided an overview of the Parent-Teacher Conference and Resource Night. Community Partners from the FBI, Army, and Woodhull Hospital were present. Ms. Pink provided a “Take What You Need Table” for attendees with clothing, shoes, and books for taking. The next PLC meeting will be on February 26. Ms. Pink will be hosting a guest presenter from the Grammy Museum who will discuss opportunities for students to obtain music camp scholarships.

5. OPERATIONS

Ms. Jacobson is collaborating with the Recruitment Department on a marketing proposal for Board approval. Operations staff have generated Trimester 2 Progress Reports for distribution and mailing and created schedules, programming and set-up for the Trimester 2 Parent-Teacher Conferences. 119 families attended February 10 and 11. The NYC DOE Parent/Student/Teacher Surveys have been distributed and will be collected February 9-April 1. 50 Parent surveys were collected at Parent-Teacher Conferences. Student surveys will be administered in Advisory on March 4. Teacher surveys will be administered during professional development. The school held one required Soft Lockdown Drill and one Code Blue Drill led by NYC DOE. Ms. Jacobson is finalizing Trimester 3 student and teacher schedules with the Counseling and Data teams. In March she will update Course Offerings for 2026-27 with the Department Leaders, the Scheduling Team, and Data to prepare for the student course selection process in 2026-27. The First Step Program application was submitted for an Operations/Hallway Monitor intern. No matches were found. Ms. Jacobson is also working with the Technology Department on E-Rate 2026-28 proposals.

6. FINANCE

Ms. Fernandez presented the financial statement as of December 31. The total collected revenue for the period is \$7,118,262. The total expenses for the period are \$7,935,340. The deficit for the period is \$817,078. Ms. Fernandez explained that this is primarily due to low enrollment. She then reviewed assets versus liabilities in detail. Mr. Rivera spoke about student attendance and its impact on overall enrollment. Leadership will continue to focus on this moving forward. Ms. Fernandez hopes to have a 2026-27 draft budget ready by May.

7. FACILITIES

Raymond James reported that there were no visits or inspections from the Fire Department, Board of Health, or Department of Buildings. An elevator access system is scheduled for completion on March 10. A gas piping system was corrected in compliance with Local Law 152. BM Snow Removal, who was recently hired by the school to assist with snow management, failed to shovel on February 24 as contracted. Mr. Rivera said he will discuss this further with Mr. James.

8. SAFETY

Mr. Guzman reported. The Dean’s Office is actively developing and implementing interventions to support students in arriving on time, such as daily check-ins and calls to parents. Mr. Guzman attended virtual conferences with the 90th Precinct and other high schools in the area on February 2 and 9. The Dean’s Office continues to contact parents of students who need to serve Accountability Community Time (detention) for uniform violations, lateness to school and classes, and cutting classes. During the month of February, there were four incidents that resulted in out-of-school suspensions. Hallway sweeps are continuing, and students found in the hallways after the late bell will automatically receive ACT after school to deter lateness to class. Staff are continuing to encourage students to use their lockers to ensure they remain in uniform throughout the school day. Ms. Johnson hosted advisory assemblies during the week of February 9 for all grade levels to reinforce the importance of locker use and to help students understand where their lockers are located. Ms. Martin and Mr. Guzman are working with advisors to ensure students know where their lockers are and have access to their combinations.

9. RECRUITMENT AND ENROLLMENT

Ms. Gomez reported that enrollment is 592 in PowerSchool and ATS. The estimated FTE is 589. There have been 72 discharges this year. The lottery deadline is April 1. There are 189 applications for 2026-27 as of February 24.

The school has yet to declare seats for 2026-27. There have been seven new enrollments. The Board reviewed enrollment by cohort. Nine families attended the February Open House. The next one will be held on March 7, seven families have RSVP'ed. Ms. Gomez organized a visit with Hyde Middle School. 31 8th graders attended, five of whom have applied so far. Middle school outreach continues. Bus shelter ads are up and will run through until March 15. Six ads have been strategically placed near Uncommon Bedstuy East, Philippa Schuyler, AF Bushwick Middle, MS 267, Bushwick Ascend Middle, and AF Apollo Middle. An ad is running in the Daily News Charter School Showcase.

Ms. Gomez presented a proposal to contract with UnderDog, a student recruitment agency that would support the Recruitment Department with digital marketing, canvassing, and direct family outreach. The Board reviewed comparable bids from SchoolMint and Staffing Boutique. The Board discussed having the Finance Committee meet to discuss this and E-rate items.

Mr. Rivera made a proposal to the Board. He suggested that the school move forward with the creation of an Audit Committee to review enrollment and discharges from August 2025 through January 2026. This audit would be utilized to understand how systems, policies and experiences influence student persistence. The goal is to identify patterns, root causes and preventable factors contributing to student withdrawals and to inform retention strategies grounded in equity, safety and student experience. The audit would collect information pertaining to:

- Any formal or informal complaints by students or families relating to exiting (e.g. exit interviews, parent communications, etc.)
- Report of students enrolled/Report of student exited/exiting
- Report of ATS reporting with codes of why students transferred
- Processes in place of reviewing exit interviews
- Any raw data/reporting of exit interviews completed by students/families
- Review of advertising/public relations/media strategies/contract and to make a recommendation to Board re: Underdog and other requests by Recruitment Manager (within first week).

Mr. Rivera stated that the audit would be due March 10 and regular updates would be provided in the process. He stated any reduction in discharges would benefit the school as a whole. Ms. Eagen added that this work is key to the school's sustainability and that she would like Ms. Manion to oversee the committee. Ms. Putz agreed that this is a step in the right direction and she thanked the dedicated people working hard on enrollment at the school.

- Mr. Medina made a motion to approve the creation of the Audit Committee. Ms. Johnson seconded. All were in favor.

10. ACCOUNTABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Manion confirmed she would begin working on the enrollment audit. The NYSED Check-In Visit is scheduled for March 23. Updates to the WCHS Action Plan are due March 16. CSBM completed and submitted Title I, Title II and Title IV amendments after the school received final allocations. She worked with leadership on a memo to the community with reminders about morning arrival, uniform, and locker usage policies. The next Board meeting is tentatively scheduled for March 17. Two film shoots in February raised \$690. There are a few potential film shoots in the pipeline but nothing else is confirmed. \$11,593 have been raised through filming so far this year and \$11,993 total has been raised. Ms. Manion continues to seek additional grants and funding. She will work with Ms. Johnson and Ms. Gomez to highlight Friday karaoke and bingo at the school. The New York City Charter Center reached out about a newspaper who wants to highlight charter alumni who work at their former schools. Ms. Manion connected them with a few staff members.

11. HUMAN RESOURCES

Mr. Kloss reported that there was one instructional hire in January and zero separations. Two employees are currently on leave. All roles have been filled at the school and he will begin placing general postings for 2026-27. Contracts were issued for After School Clubs, the Interim Science Department Leader, and two internal roles changes for Carlyle James and Reuben Dilworth. Mr. Kloss worked with Ms. Johnson to streamline Athletics department systems and worked with Mr. Guzman to draft a responsibilities memo for Safety Officers. HR has begun enforcing one-day suspensions under the school lateness policy, is working with Bri Benefits on an audit of the school's FSA and Commuter benefits, and is working with leadership on student safety, attire, arrival and departures.

12. STAFF LIAISON TO THE BOARD

Mr. Kronenberg has weekly discussions with Mr. Rivera about school culture, staff inquiries, and other instructional and operational information. Some staff have reported a bit of “volunteerism burnout”. Mr. Kronenberg will be assisting with the creation of a Mid-Year Climate Survey. He will refer to the previous year’s survey and liaise with Ms. Manion and Mr. Rivera (and any others who would like to provide input). Mr. Kronenberg welcomed feedback from the Board as well. .

13. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Johnson made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Medina seconded. All were in favor.