

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES

April 21, 2026

6:00 PM | Via Zoom Videoconference

1. Roll Call / Sign-In

The meeting was called to order by Board Chair Latoya Massey. A quorum was established. The meeting was accessible via Zoom videoconference link, consistent with Innovation's Procedures Governing Public and Member Participation at Board Meetings. Chair Massey noted a technical issue with the original meeting link, which delayed the start of the meeting.

Trustees Present	Trustees Absent
Latoya Massey, Chair Joseph Colarusso, Vice Chair / Secretary Callie Hull, Treasurer Julia Baly, Trustee	Yani Peña, Trustee Eric Reyes, Trustee

Administration / Staff Present	
Kezena Brown, Principal / Head of School Michelle Ott, Assistant Principal	Tereena Somayya, CCR Program Jenisis Ayala, Teacher

2. Filing of Notice of Meeting

Chair Massey confirmed that the meeting was filed as required by the Open Meetings Law.

3. Consent Agenda: Approval of March 2026 Board Minutes

Chair Massey called for approval of the March 2026 Board of Trustees meeting minutes. A motion to approve was made and seconded. The minutes were approved without objection.

4. School Management Team Presentation

Principal Brown and members of the school leadership team presented a comprehensive update to the Board covering enrollment and recruitment, attendance, enrichment programming, mock Regents results, and a deep dive into the College and Career Readiness (CCR) program.

a. Enrollment and Recruitment Update (Principal Brown)

Current enrollment is holding steady at 300 students. Post-spring break, no additional new enrollment will be accepted for the current school year, as there are approximately

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36 instructional days remaining and insufficient time for teachers to accurately assess new students. One exception was made for a ninth-grade student under special circumstances.

Lottery and Recruitment Results:

- The lottery was held on April 2, 2026. A total of 251 ninth-grade seats were offered.
- As of the meeting date: 21 families have accepted, 18 have registration in progress, and 36 have declined. Some applications were cancelled due to duplicate submissions or out-of-state residency.
- Tenth-grade applications are being reviewed individually; transcripts are assessed for appropriate credit levels before admission. Approximately 3 of the 10th-grade applicants have been approved to date.
- Every family who received a seat has been contacted by phone. The next phase involves follow-up with families who declined to understand their reasons and potentially re-engage them.

Ongoing Recruitment Efforts:

- Weekly virtual open houses every Thursday through the end of the school year. Principal Brown attended the most recent session, which drew six families.
- A May in-person registration event is being planned to replicate the successful open house format from earlier in the year, including opportunities for families to tour the facility and complete registration on-site.
- Julia Baly and Brenda, supported by an external enrollment consultant, are developing a neighborhood canvassing strategy targeting local businesses and community-based organizations.
- Additional efforts include mailing postcards, middle school drop-offs, a planned barbecue event, a “refer-a-friend” pilot program, and strengthening social media presence across Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

Board Discussion: Trustee Colarusso asked about characteristics of families attending the virtual sessions, what motivates early acceptances, and the strategy for following up with families who declined. Principal Brown reported that among the 21 accepted families, word-of-mouth referrals and personal connections to the school community were the most common factors. One accepted family included a former Innovation graduate who attributed her post-secondary success to the school’s SEL support. Regarding declined families, the approach is two-pronged: gathering data on reasons for declination and highlighting Innovation’s distinctive features, including small school size, strong SEL team, and personalized pathways.

b. Attendance Update (Principal Brown)

Cohort attendance rates continue to hover in the low-to-mid 80s. Notably, Cohort 2028 achieved 90% on-time attendance for the month of March, which represents a new milestone. However, the reimagined enrichment week saw a significant attendance decline, averaging only 54% compared to 73% the prior year.

Enrichment Week Redesign:

This year’s enrichment week was restructured from a multi-day, fully non-instructional experience (previously costing approximately \$121,000) to a more cost-effective format

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consisting of two days of mock Regents examinations, grade-wide field trips, and a half-day of workshops. While participating students reported positive experiences, the overall attendance drop signals the need for further refinement. The leadership team is evaluating whether workshops should continue or whether enrichment experiences should be integrated more organically into the regular instructional program throughout the year.

Board Discussion: Trustee Hull emphasized the motivational value of out-of-classroom experiences and strongly supported developing a more robust plan for next year that maintains real-world connections to curriculum. Trustee Baly suggested strategically organizing experiences around CTE career pathways rather than concentrating them in a single week, proposing a month-long model where different career houses offer targeted real-time experiences connected to post-secondary outcomes. Principal Brown endorsed both ideas and committed to reflecting on how to make enrichment programming more intentional and connected to student interests.

c. Mock Regents Results (AP Michelle Ott)

During the enrichment week, students sat for full-length mock Regents examinations in the subjects they are projected to take in June. The exams were designated as mandatory and counted as a formative assessment grade for Quarter 4. AP Ott presented pass rates for each exam, noting that curriculum delivery is not yet complete in most subject areas, so results should be interpreted as a baseline for targeted intervention rather than a final indicator.

Key Points:

- The school is using the New Visions portal for data analysis, enabling teachers to review results by standard, analyze multiple-choice and constructed-response performance, and generate Individual Student Reports.
- Teachers are creating targeted Regents prep plans with differentiated groups based on skill gaps. These plans are submitted to school leadership for approval.
- Regents prep will begin the first week of May with after-school and Saturday sessions.
- Some mock scores already exceed prior-year June pass rates in certain subjects, suggesting an upward trend.
- Geometry was flagged as a particularly low-performing area; AP Ott committed to developing a targeted plan with the geometry teaching team.

Board Discussion: Trustee Colarusso asked how current results compare to prior years and requested data on the percentage of students who actually sat for each exam. Principal Brown noted that this is the first year of full mock Regents administration in this format, so no year-over-year comparison exists. She emphasized that the primary purpose was to give teachers actionable data with enough time to affect June outcomes. Teacher Jenisis Ayala provided a classroom perspective, explaining how the data is driving changes in daily instruction, including embedding more Constructed Response Questions (CRQs), targeting students for small-group support, and refining Warrior Work Room interventions during lunch periods.

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d. College and Career Readiness Deep Dive (Tereena Somayya)

Tereena Somayya presented a comprehensive overview of the CCR program, covering curriculum, partnerships, post-secondary data, and student spotlights.

CCR Program Structure:

- CCR 9 has been restored after a multi-year hiatus, allowing the current cohort to receive all four years of college and career instruction.
- The curriculum includes career exploration, self-interest and learning-style inventories, goal setting, college and career research, guest speakers, and partnership with Union Settlement's TRIO program.
- Out-of-classroom programming includes annual college visits, career fairs, partnerships with Hunter College and the University of Delaware, College Now courses, financial aid counseling, and instant decision days.

CCPCI Index (College and Career Prep Course Index):

The school's CCPCI score has improved from 22% to 37%, though it remains below the citywide average. Contributing factors include the end of Regents waivers, limited AP course offerings (currently AP Computer Science Principles and AP English Literature), senior-year engagement challenges, and the small school size limiting the unduplicated count of students in advanced courses. The school is actively expanding college course options and encouraging retesting for students who scored between 65 and 74 on prior Regents.

Post-Secondary Enrollment Data:

- Six-month enrollment rate improved from 36% to 52%.
- Eighteen-month enrollment rate is approximately 44%.
- College persistence rate improved from 24% to 29%, though additional alumni support is needed.
- Most students enroll in CUNY and SUNY institutions due to affordability; HBCU schools are a growing area of student interest.

Work-Based Learning and CTE:

- InnoCafe (the school's culinary arts catering program) has resumed services, hosting events for Women's History Month, the East Harlem Legislative Town Hall, and fundraising activities.
- 136 guaranteed SYEP slots are secured through the CareerReady partnership with Union Settlement; additional students participate through the public lottery.
- The Work, Learn, Grow program provides school-year internships with a Kingsborough Community College online course component, enrolling 20–25 students annually.

Student Spotlights:

- The 2026 Valedictorian earned a full ride to Stony Brook University through the Top 10% Promise Program.
- Two freshmen were accepted into the highly competitive SEO Scholars program.
- A junior was accepted into Cornell's Health Professionals in Training (HPIT) paid summer internship.

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- Students from the University of Delaware entrepreneurship course competed at the St. John's University high school pitch competition.
- The HBCU Keys to the Kingdom college tour departed on April 28, with students currently visiting campuses and returning April 30.
- Seniors completed their annual Service Day, engaging in community service across Harlem and the Bronx, including food pantries, Meals on Wheels, park cleanups, and elder care visits.

Board Discussion: Trustee Colarusso acknowledged the strong student demand evidenced by 165+ SYEP applicants for 136 slots, calling it a meaningful indicator of student motivation. He noted that the post-secondary persistence data, while showing improvement, reflects a significant structural gap, with approximately 82% of New York City schools outperforming Innovation on this metric. He urged the team to identify the two or three highest-leverage interventions and pushed back on the framing that limited staffing was the primary barrier to building an alumni support program, noting that “resources often follow success instead of preceding it.” Principal Brown added that a culture shift is needed in how staff communicate with students about post-secondary plans, emphasizing that accepting low ambition without challenge is not an acceptable outcome.

Upcoming CCR Events:

- Senior Decision Day: May 20, 2026 (lunchtime)
- Annual CCR Showcase: End of May (date TBD)
- HBCU Tour student-led college fair (following tour return)

5. Committee Reports

a. Academic Excellence Committee (Trustee Baly)

No current update. Trustee Baly indicated the committee plans to connect one to two times before the next Board meeting to begin planning for the next school year.

b. Finance and Audit Committee (Trustee Hull)

Trustee Hull reported that the committee is working with Principal Brown and CSBM on the FY 2026-2027 budget. The committee aims to bring the full budget for a Board vote at the May 2026 meeting. Additional detail on the budget was discussed in Executive Session (see Section 8).

c. Personnel Review Committee (Chair Massey)

Chair Massey noted that the PRC has a meeting scheduled for the current week to finalize evaluation tools and metrics. These will be presented to the Head of School upon completion.

6. Other Business

a. Authorizer Update: Non-Material Revision Approvals

Principal Brown informed the Board that the NYC DOE authorizing team (Virginia Williams) has approved the school's non-material revision requests, specifically:

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- Elimination of the Executive Director role and creation of a Principal/Head of School role with two Assistant Principals and a Director of School Operations.
- Addition of High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) for ELA, Math, Social Studies, and Science.
- Removal of the LEAP and IPGP programs from the educational design.

b. Enrollment Capacity Discussion

The authorizer did not approve a reduction from 460 to 400 authorized enrollment as part of the current revision package. However, the authorizer indicated willingness to support an appeal directly to the Chancellor over the summer, noting this pathway may have a better chance of approval than going through the Board of Regents. The authorizer cautioned that any reduction in authorized enrollment would make future increases more difficult to obtain. Trustee Colarusso flagged this item for Board awareness. The package will now go to the Board of Regents in May rather than the initially targeted April deadline.

7. Public Comment

No public comments were received.

8. Executive Session

The Board entered and exited Executive Session multiple times during the meeting as follows:

Purpose	Entered	Exited	Action Taken
FY27 Budget	7:51 PM	7:52 PM	Motion by Trustee Hull to approve the staffing and salary portion of the FY 2026-2027 budget, noting the proposed reductions in force and vacancies. Seconded. Vote: Colarusso – Aye; Massey – Aye; Hull – Aye; Baly – Aye. Peña and Reyes absent. Motion carried.
Charter Renewal	7:52 PM	7:57 PM	Discussion of charter renewal revisions, authorizer correspondence, and days-of-cash methodology. No vote taken.
Succession Planning	7:57 PM	8:06 PM	Discussion of board recruitment strategies and current trustee capacity. No vote taken.
Personnel & Budget	8:06 PM	8:18 PM	Discussion of a personnel matter. Reviewed staff budget, scenarios, scheduling. No vote taken.

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Massey at 8:18 PM.

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Next Board of Trustees Meeting: May 19, 2026 at 6:00 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Joseph Colarusso

Secretary and Vice Chair, Board of Trustees
Innovation Charter High School