



Innovation Charter High School

Board of Trustees, August 2026 Meeting Minutes

APPROVED by the Board of Trustees on September 15, 2026

Date	August 18, 2026	Time Called to Order	6:05 PM
Meeting Type	Regular Board Meeting	Time Adjourned	9:00 PM
Location	Virtual (Zoom) and the physical locations listed on the notice of meeting, held in accordance with the Open Meetings Law		
Board Members Present	Innovation Team / Staff Present		
Latoya Massey (Chair) Joseph Colarusso (Vice Chair and Secretary) Callie Hull (Treasurer) Julia Baly Eric Reyes	Kezena Brown (Principal/School Leader) Portia Stanley Michelle Ott Tyree Jackson (Summer School Coordinator) Tereena Somayya		
Board Members Absent	Also Present		
None. Trustee Hull departed early due to illness and submitted her Finance report to the Chair in writing.	Mike Jolley (consultant). Eight prospective trustees.		

1. Call to Order

Latoya Massey, Board Chair, called the August 2026 meeting of the Board of Trustees to order at 6:05 PM. The meeting was accessible in person at all of the locations listed on the notice of meeting, in accordance with Innovation's Procedures Governing Public and Member Participation at Board Meetings, and was also accessible by Zoom videoconference. Roll call confirmed the presence of a quorum. The Chair confirmed that the filing of the Notice of Meeting had been completed in accordance with the Open Meetings Law.

2. Approval of Minutes

Motion: Approval of the July 2026 Board Meeting Minutes, moved by Chair Massey.

Seconded by: Joseph Colarusso.

Outcome: Approved.

3. North Star & School Leader Report

The School Leader presented the August North Star Update. The August deep dive topic was staffing. New staff members began the New Staff Institute on the day of the meeting; students had not yet returned.

3.1 Enrollment Update

- 43 rising ninth-grade students have verified their registration, with 13 registrations in progress. Within the prior week the school received 7 new ninth-grade applications, 12 for tenth grade, 9 for eleventh grade, and 5 for twelfth grade.
- Of families surveyed on intent to return, 115 indicated yes, 15 indicated maybe, 26 indicated they would not return, and approximately 49 did not respond.
- Waitlists stand at 74 families for tenth grade and 64 for eleventh grade. The principal barrier to converting waitlisted families is receipt of transcripts and IEP documentation. The school will shift strategy to pull credit, exam, and program history from ATS rather than waiting on family-supplied records, in order to place students appropriately and avoid enrolling students too far off track for the program to support.
- Recruitment strategy includes continued summer canvassing at community centers, pools, and community events; targeted outreach to current families, including probing the reasons behind hesitancy; resumed social media posting advertising open seats; and leveraging current families and students as referral sources.

Board Discussion: Trustee Colarusso questioned the projected loss of 18 rising tenth-grade students; the School Leader estimated roughly five to be firm departures, and was asked to track which families are converted from a no back to a yes so that the effectiveness of the retention approach can be measured in future years. Trustee Baly raised visible adult supervision at arrival and dismissal as a response to family safety concerns. The School Leader reported that the leadership team revised the dismissal system over the summer to increase staff presence, noted that most incidents occur in transit rather than on the school block, and agreed to communicate the staffing posts to families and to strengthen presence at arrival. Trustee Colarusso suggested branded Innovation apparel for staff posted outside so that adult presence is visibly identified with the school, and noted that the listed recruitment events begin on or after August 20, asking what is planned for the first days of school to capture and publicize student joy while DOE families are still weighing alternatives. The School Leader agreed to add a tabling and outreach component to the new-student orientation barbecue scheduled to follow orientation beginning September 2. Prospective trustees recommended putting students themselves forward in recruitment events and materials; the School Leader noted current use of student representatives at open houses and agreed to expand student and family voice in recruitment.

3.2 Summer School Update

- The five-week summer program concluded the day before the meeting. Overall attendance averaged 79 percent in week one and declined approximately 3 percent thereafter.
- Sixty-three students were expected to enroll; 16 were lost over the course of the program to family opt-outs, behavioral removals, and safety concerns. The push list of students at risk of failing was reduced from 20 to 14 following the August 6 progress report.
- An overall pass rate of 78.7 percent was reported, against a fail rate of approximately 23 percent. By cohort, 64 percent of the class of 2029, 77 percent of the class of 2028, and 100 percent of the class of 2027 passed one or more courses.
- Reported best practices included assigned summer advisors and caseloads of roughly 17 students per staff member, daily laptop check-in and check-out used as an attendance and progress checkpoint, weekly parent communication, and weekly conferences between advisors and summer school teachers.
- Fifty-eight students sat for the Algebra I Regents examination on the day of the meeting, a majority of whom had participated in summer school.

Board Discussion: Trustee Colarusso noted that the reported figures do not reconcile, as the pass and fail percentages total approximately 101 percent and the cohort-level counts total more students than the pass and fail counts imply. The Summer School Coordinator explained that the denominators differ because partially engaged students remain in the data set, and acknowledged the rounding error.

Trustee Colarusso further asked for the number of credits the program set out to recover measured against credits actually recovered, and for the average length of tardiness rather than a tardy count; the Summer School Coordinator reported an average tardy of approximately 30 minutes against two-hour periods and agreed to provide the credit recovery data to the School Leader for distribution to the Board. Prospective trustees asked that the school correlate summer school participation with August Regents attendance and outcomes and use that correlation in retention messaging to families whose students have had a difficult ninth-grade year, that the school review at cohort level the students identified as not returning in tenth grade, and that retention messaging address the student audience directly and not only families. The School Leader confirmed she would return to the Regents analysis once results are received, and described the shift toward earlier academic and attendance warning indicators, including intervening on attendance at 93 percent rather than waiting until a student falls below 90 percent.

3.3 Staffing Update

- Positions filled since the start of summer include instructional roles, Manager of Technology and Facilities, and Assistant Director of HR and Talent, whose incumbent began the week of the meeting. In addition to the existing NYU partnership, the school has secured a partnership with Teach For America and has hired one corps member. Late-summer resignations have left additional vacancies unfilled.
- Open and hard-to-staff positions include science, with physics and senior science in particular; Dean of Student Supports, covering special education compliance and coaching; Dean of Academic Operations, with an offer pending; school aide; and a permanent substitute.
- To accelerate hiring, the school has launched a staff referral bonus of \$1,000 for hard-to-staff positions in math, science, and special education, and \$500 for other positions, together with a LinkedIn campaign for the month of August. Trustees were asked to post the school's provided hiring language to their own accounts; the Chair placed the language in the meeting chat.

- In the event of a science vacancy at the start of the year, the instructional team will produce the curriculum and lesson materials, including simulation-based laboratory experiences, so that instruction and laboratory hours continue in the absence of a certified teacher.

Board Discussion: Trustee Colarusso asked whether the school has named metrics, deadlines, and contingency triggers for the open positions, and whether candidate funnel data is being captured by position. It was reported that no such tracking currently exists and that this capacity is expected to be built by the newly hired Assistant Director of HR and Talent. Asked what the school's plan is when it is outbid on a candidate, the School Leader reported the school holds approximately \$5,000 of salary flexibility for hard-to-staff roles and otherwise competes on coaching, development, and the character of a small school rather than on compensation. Prospective trustees raised staff retention. The School Leader reported that a number of the vacancies resulted from the school declining to renew staff who were not meeting the bar, that retention and adult development are standing priorities, and that restoring joy for adults and students is a focus for the coming year. Asked whether new teachers receive structured mid-year check-ins, the team reported that all teachers receive at least biweekly coaching check-ins in addition to formal beginning-, mid-, and end-of-year evaluations, and that teacher experience and comfort are surfaced in those conversations.

3.4 Graduation: Progress and Pathways

No report this month.

3.5 Attendance, At-Risk, and LTA Updates

No report this month.

3.6 SPED and ELL Updates

No report this month.

3.7 Restorative Update / SEL

No report this month.

4. Committee Reports

4.1 Finance Committee

Trustee Callie Hull, Treasurer and Finance Committee Chair, reported through the Chair that the school continues to work with the School Leader to close its TD Bank accounts and has moved its funds to a new banking institution. The annual audit is underway and is not yet complete.

4.2 Academic Excellence Committee (AEC)

Trustee Julia Baly reported no formal update. Trustee Baly separately shared with the School Leader an instructional platform providing baseline assessment and self-paced support in reading fluency, comprehension, mathematics, and writing, for consideration as a support for students with disabilities. The Board discussed whether such a platform could be embedded in an ELA course or offered as a standalone self-paced course, and noted the cost would need to be met from the curriculum budget.

4.3 People & Resources Committee (PRC)

The Committee is completing evaluations of the leadership team. Members of the School Management Team, along with the School Leader, will receive final evaluations accompanied by a note from the Board regarding expectations for September.

4.4 Executive Committee

No meetings of the Executive Committee were required between the July and August board meetings, as no emergency matters arose.

5. Other Business / Public Comment

- Board recruitment: Eight prospective trustees have completed screening conversations with the Chair and, in most cases, an initial conversation with Trustee Colarusso, and all eight attended this meeting. Formal interviews remain outstanding. The Chair asked Trustees Baly, Reyes, and Hull to convene the interviews, noting that a minimum of two trustees is required and that interview questions are already prepared. Candidate documentation received by the September board meeting would allow the required 45-day period to run in advance of a retreat in October.
- Trustee terms: Trustee Colarusso raised the question of whether sitting trustees' terms have expired, and the risk that board action taken in the interim could be challenged. The Chair confirmed that trustee votes have historically been held in November and agreed to place a slate vote of the sitting trustees on the September agenda as a precaution.
- Authorizer engagement: The Chair advised that she intends to invite the authorizer to attend future board meetings as part of the partnership the authorizer has offered.
- Executive session practice: Trustee Colarusso asked that the Board align on what properly qualifies for executive session before the authorizer attends board meetings, noting that some matters historically taken into executive session are sensitive but do not meet the statutory grounds. The Board discussed the distinction between matters that are uncomfortable to discuss publicly and matters that are legally permitted grounds for executive session, and discussed obtaining counsel, including on a pro bono basis, so that matters requiring candor can properly be taken up as advice of counsel. The Chair agreed to be more precise in stating the grounds for entering executive session going forward.
- Policy and handbook review: The Board noted that student and family handbooks, the employee handbook, the bylaws, the safety plan, the orientation handbook, and the succession planning document are subject to board review and adoption and have not yet been acted upon. Trustee Colarusso reported that a governance index and policy corpus have been established in the Board's shared drives, that a folder titled 09 Current Policy Documents for Review has been created for the School Leader to deposit current versions, and that he will run a gap analysis against those documents and return findings to the School Leader and then to the Board in advance of a vote.
- Google Drive and records: Trustee Colarusso reported on the shared drive restructure, including the creation of role-based group addresses for board officers. The Board discussed the need for the School Leader and operations staff to define the shared drive structure so that it can be built out before staff return.
- Website: The Board discussed the condition of the school website. Trustee Baly has a contact who may quote the work, and the Chair will ask the School Leader to identify what she wants

changed. Trustee Colarusso recommended building internal capacity with the operations team rather than creating a recurring dependency on outside vendors, and offered to train school staff. The Board noted that the board budget for the year is \$5,000.

- Board technology: The Board discussed procuring AI tooling for the school and the Board, noting that the outstanding question is the payment method and the number of licensed users, and that any purchase must be paired with training and accountability for actual use.

Public comment: The Chair invited comment and asked whether the staff community-building circle held earlier that day had been captured for use in school communications. The School Leader reported that circles are not recorded in order to preserve trust in the practice, and Trustee Colarusso suggested capturing participant reflections after the fact as an alternative. The Chair thanked the prospective trustees for their participation and advised them to expect follow-up communication. On a motion duly made and seconded by Trustee Baly, the public portion of the meeting closed at 7:23 PM.

6. Calendar of Upcoming Events

- New student orientation begins: September 2, 2026.
- September board meeting: slate vote of sitting trustees, and action on new trustees if candidate documentation is received in time.
- Board retreat: targeted for October 2026, with the Board considering alignment to the New York City Charter School Conference, October 21 to 23, in Manhattan.
- Trustee elections: historically held in November.

7. Executive Session

On a motion by the Chair, duly seconded, the Board convened in executive session at 7:25 PM and returned to open session at 8:04 PM to discuss charter authorization. No action was taken.

The Board again convened in executive session at 8:08 PM to discuss matters relating to particular persons in the employment of the school and related board matters. No action was taken.

8. Adjournment

Hearing no further business, the Chair adjourned the August 2026 meeting of the Board of Trustees at 9:00 PM, on a motion seconded by Trustee Baly.

9. Action Items & Follow-Ups

- School Leader: track families converted from a no back to a yes, so retention effectiveness can be measured in future years.
- School Leader: communicate arrival and dismissal staffing posts to families and strengthen adult presence at arrival.
- School Leader: add a tabling and outreach component to the new-student orientation barbecue following orientation beginning September 2.
- School Leader: expand student and family voice in recruitment events and materials.

- School Leader: conduct a cohort-level review of the 18 rising tenth-grade students identified as not returning.
- School Leader: correlate summer school participation with August Regents attendance and outcomes once results are received.
- Summer School Coordinator: provide credit recovery data, credits targeted against credits actually recovered, to the School Leader for distribution to the Board.
- Summer School Coordinator: correct the summer school pass and fail figures, which do not reconcile as reported.
- Trustees: post the school's provided hiring language to personal LinkedIn accounts.
- Trustees Baly, Reyes, and Hull: convene formal interviews of the eight prospective trustees.
- Chair: place a slate vote of the sitting trustees on the September agenda.
- Chair: ask the School Leader to identify desired website changes.
- Chair: state the grounds for entering executive session precisely going forward, and pursue counsel, including on a pro bono basis.
- Secretary: run a gap analysis of the policy and handbook corpus and return findings to the School Leader and then to the Board in advance of a vote.
- School Leader and operations staff: define the shared drive structure so it can be built out before staff return.

Minutes Respectfully Submitted

Submitted by Joseph Colarusso, Vice Chair and Secretary, Board of Trustees. Approved by the Board of Trustees at its regular meeting on September 15, 2026.

Public posting version. To protect privacy, the names of prospective trustees not yet acted on by the Board and one count of fewer than five students have been omitted. The approved record is otherwise unchanged.

Date Approved by Board: September 15, 2026

Board Chair Signature: _____