Innovation Charter High School

Board of Trustees, June 2026 Meeting Minutes

APPROVED by the Board of Trustees on July 21, 2026, as corrected

Date	June 16, 2026	**Time Called to Order**	6:03 PM
Meeting Type	Regular Board Meeting	**Time Adjourned**	8:43 PM
Location	Virtual (Zoom) and Room 309, 410 East 100th Street, held in accordance with Open Meetings Law		
Board Members Present	**Innovation Team / Staff Present**		
Latoya Massey (Chair) Joe Colarusso (Secretary) Eric Reyes Callie Hull Yani Peña Julia Baly	Kezena Brown (Principal/School Leader) Emily Bierwirth (Assoc. Director, Student Services) Tyree Jackson (11th-Grade Counselor) Portia Stanley Michelle Goodall		
Board Members Absent	**Also Present**		
None noted	North Star / instructional team members		

1. Call to Order

Latoya Massey, Board Chair, called the June 16, 2026 meeting of the Board of Trustees to order at 6:03 PM. 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 May 2026 Board Meeting Minutes, provided there are no adjustments.

Seconded by: Eric Reyes.

Outcome: Approved by voice vote without objection.

3. North Star & School Leader Report

3.1 Enrollment Update

The School Leader reported that recruitment for the 2026-27 school year is underway, framed around the message that recruitment is a shared, school-wide responsibility rather than the work of a single team.

- Active strategies: school tours, open houses, intensified community canvassing, and tabling at upcoming community events.
- An intent-to-return survey has been sent to current families; grade-team leads are following up with families who indicated they may not return.
- Among families choosing other schools, the most-cited factors are the location of the school and the colleges that those schools' graduates attend.
- Registration completions and verifications are trending upward week over week.
- Historical data shows a significant volume of new applications in July and August, so current totals are not static; recruitment continues through the summer.

Board Discussion

Trustee Colarusso asked whether operations are staffed to process an anticipated late-summer surge of applications without creating a September backlog. The School Leader expressed confidence that no backlog will occur.

3.2 Monthly Deep Dive: Attendance

Emily Bierwirth, Associate Director of Student Services, presented a five-year attendance analysis spanning the charter term.

Findings

- Attendance has grown slimly but consistently in every year of the charter term, with stronger gains in the last two years.
- The annual "small-O" enrichment week again produced a dip (this year the lowest enrichment-week attendance in five years), yet overall attendance still finished higher year over year.
- Students in their first four years are averaging approximately 82% attendance.
- The over-aged/under-credited (LTA) list is down to about 15 students, roughly half of prior years; additional students have signed out and are pending removal.
- Early-dismissal days (17 total, about 10% of the school year) carry roughly 6%+ lower attendance, including newly added half-days before breaks that provided no professional-development benefit.
- Students below 80% attendance by cohort: approximately 16 in the first-year class (of 52, about 40%), 17 in the Class of 2028, 27 in the Class of 2027, and 28 in the Class of 2026.
- Most-cited causes of absence: illness, travel, and parent-approved absences.
- Improvement factors: 114 students were seen by counselors specifically for attendance; there were fewer suspension days; and a new in-school suspension space keeps students connected to the community.

- Student survey: the leading barrier to attendance is sleep (consistent with last year), followed by transportation and lack of interest; the top reasons students do attend are graduation, friends, and classes.

Look-Ahead for 2026-27

- A tiered letter system: a first letter at 93% attendance as an early flag; a second letter triggering a family/counselor meeting; and a third triggering a grade-team-lead meeting, followed by home visits when families do not respond.
- Early-dismissal half-days before breaks will be eliminated; professional-development days will be retained.
- Increased intervention from grade-team leads, assistant principals, and the principal.

Board Discussion

Trustee Colarusso asked the team to gather deeper data on the sleep finding (for example, whether a parent is home in the mornings and students' sleep hygiene) and to correlate transportation complaints with student location to inform recruitment along strong transit lines (such as the M96 crosstown). Chair Massey suggested adding a distance/commute prompt to the enrollment process so families assess travel before enrolling; Trustee Colarusso suggested a Google Maps directions widget on the school website. Trustee Baly recommended a start-of-year survey focused on the three areas (transportation, interest, and sleep), paired with advisory sessions, prioritizing one or two high-leverage changes to raise student interest.

3.3 Class of 2026 Graduation Update

The School Leader provided a snapshot as of the last instructional day, noting that figures remain in flux pending the remaining Regents exams and Apex results.

- Approximately 13 students have already graduated; 61 June graduates are projected (14 with IEPs, 5 ELLs).
- 13 students owe at least one Regents exam, 7 of whom may be eligible for appeal; about 13 seniors owe credits.
- A small number of students are projected to graduate in August, with some in January; 25 are enrolled in Apex for credit recovery.
- Apex guardrails reaffirmed: no more than three core credits via Apex across a student's high-school career, recovered (not first-time) credit only, with unlimited electives.
- Supports include cohort case management, early Apex enrollment, mandated attendance on Regents days, and intensive family communication.
- Projected graduation rate is approximately 80 to 85%, pending final results.
- Families will be confirmed by June 24 if cleared to graduate; graduation is June 30.

Board Discussion

Trustee Colarusso asked how staff are helping students overcome the fear of failure at the finish line. The School Leader described graduation-in-doubt meetings co-led with counselors, framed around a success plan with short, frequent check-ins, and noted that the hardest cases arise when families disengage. Asked about staff morale, she reported that adults understand the charge and remain committed; the fatigue point is running out of fresh ideas, addressed through the staff value of "always finding the third way."

3.4 Counseling Corner

- Counseling referrals rose approximately 12% year over year; behavioral change remains the top referral reason.
- Counselors logged 257 direct-contact instances across a team of five.
- Attendance intervention runs on a separate system (advisors as Tier 1; counselors at Tiers 2 and 3) and is therefore not reflected in the counseling-referral totals.

3.5 Restorative Action & SEL

The RAD team's goal is to reduce disciplinary concerns and improve school-wide safety by encouraging earlier and more frequent reporting ("no incident is too small to report") via a quick Google-form referral.

- This year: 96 mediations (6 between staff and students); a new in-school suspension space; and 263 family outreaches, 75 of them positive and proactive.
- Pilot programs included "Breaking the Cycle" (girls), a boys' group, and a free Harlem snowboarding program.

Plans for Next Year

- Summer-built support plans for students identified as needing additional support.
- Staff training in restorative practices and de-escalation, so adults can intervene in the least invasive way possible.
- More opportunities for student voice and a more proactive school culture, organized around three themes: urgency, possibility (high expectations), and joy.

Trustee Connection / Ask

The team asked trustees to refer effective SEL-support partner organizations from their professional networks for students whose needs exceed what the school can address alone.

3.6 After-School Enrichment

Tyree Jackson, After-School Coordinator, presented three years of participation data.

- Participation: 43 students (2023-24), a modest dip in 2024-25, and 32 students in 2025-26 across 12+ clubs staffed by about 20 adults.
- Survey: 48 of a targeted 50 responses; 32 participated and 16 did not (sports, jobs, caretaking responsibilities).
- Most popular clubs: crochet and board games; most-requested new clubs: dance, volleyball, basketball, boxing, and robotics.
- New Beacon partnership (trial-run in spring): club funding, trips (e.g., an anime convention in New Jersey), and education/workforce workshops including culinary/hospitality certification, GED, and IT/cybersecurity pathways.
- A Union Settlement SYEP partnership is in place, with a Goddard Riverside SYEP option opening in January 2027.
- Sustainability: after-school costs approximately $45,000 to serve about 10% of students; leadership wants to reach 30%+ participation.

- Next year: Beacon push-ins to CCR and advisory, grade-wide introductions, a two-survey approach (participants and non-participants), and a shift to one club leader per 15 students for budget reasons.

Board Discussion

Chair Massey and Trustee Baly encouraged surveying non-participants to learn what would draw them in, and an earlier, stronger Beacon roll-out (push-ins, grade-wide introductions, and limited-seat urgency).

3.7 Summer School

Mr. Jackson reported on summer school, delivered through the long-standing Washington Irving campus partnership.

- Credit-recovery courses offered: all math (Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II), English, science (Biology, Earth & Space), history (Global I & II, US Government, Economics), PE, and Spanish. Not offered for credit recovery: Chemistry, Physics, and Health.
- Initial PID letters went to 167 projected students; a staff push reduced the list to 98 (69 removed).
- Via Parent Square opt-in/opt-out: 41 families opted in, 7 opted out (chiefly distance concerns), and 114 remain pending.
- Summer staffing: Tyree Jackson, Melissa Pagan (Geometry), and Sabreena (RAD team).

Board Discussion

Chair Massey raised whether opt-out should be permitted (particularly for juniors, to avoid compounding senior-year credit deficits) and whether the school should collect written acknowledgment from opt-out families that they understand the student will owe the credit.

3.8 Talent Acquisition Update

- Open high-need vacancies: Science, SPED Science, Math, SPED Math, and Math Interventionist (5 roles). ELA and Art have been secured.
- Hiring funnel: 119 applications to 25 phone screens to 9 interviews. Science alone: 58 applications to 15 screens to 1 offer.
- Challenges: a national shortage of certified teachers, late-cycle (“lemon season”) hiring dynamics, and highly specialized roles.
- Strategies: proactive sourcing (204 candidates contacted directly; a recruiter added), 12+ recruitment channels, conditional offers pending references, and modest flexibility on certification timelines without lowering the bar.
- NYU residency partnership will yield two certified residents within the year.

Board Discussion

Chair Massey cautioned, based on prior experience, against over-reliance on hires who pledge to complete certification but do not, stressing the need for genuine subject specialists in math and science.

3.9 Prom Report

64% of seniors attended prom, roughly twice last year's rate, supported by angel-funded, principal, and Dean's List tickets. Leadership is exploring a venue change to reduce cost while maintaining quality.

4. Committee Reports

4.1 Academic Excellence Committee (AEC)

Trustee Baly reported that her required notes have been submitted. Next steps: partner with school leadership to understand and support the streamlining of academics and to integrate enrichment and external services into the academic program, to proceed once the School Leader has bandwidth.

4.2 Finance Committee

Trustee Callie Hull, Finance Committee Chair, reported three items:

- The FY budget will be brought for approval in executive session; New York State's enacted budget (over $40 billion for schools) materially closed the school's gap. The committee credited the School Leader for the budget work.
- The staff PEO transition is on track for early-to-mid July, generating savings without reducing service levels.
- The majority of the school's cash has been moved from TD Bank to Metropolitan Commercial Bank; TD accounts will be closed at the end of June, with sufficient operating cash retained during the transition.

4.3 Executive Committee

Chair Massey reported that the Executive Committee met in June, following the Finance Committee meeting, to approve the Finance Committee's budget recommendation and to authorize the TD-to-MCB transition and the credentials needed to execute it in a timely manner.

4.4 People & Resources Committee (PRC)

The PRC has not needed to convene since the last session.

5. Other Business / Public Comment

No other business was raised. There was no public comment.

6. Calendar of Upcoming School Events

- Family confirmation of graduation clearance: by June 24, 2026.
- Graduation: June 30, 2026.

7. Executive Session

On a motion by Latoya Massey, seconded by Callie Hull, the Board voted to conclude the public portion of the meeting and convene in executive session at 7:54 PM. During the evening the Board entered and

exited executive session for the distinct purposes set out below, returning to open session to record formal action where required.

7.1 Finance: Board-Designated Reserve Funds

The Board discussed the treatment of its board-designated (restricted) reserve. Of the original $3.2 million board-designated fund, $1.65 million had already been transferred to Metropolitan Commercial Bank (MCB); the question was whether to retain, release, or relocate the remaining balance. The school's financial advisor identified a money-market account yielding 3.45% APY (versus 2% or less at TD Bank). The Finance Chair recommended retaining the remaining balance as board-designated while moving it into the higher-yield money-market account. The Board returned to open session to act.

Motion: To retain the remaining board-designated funds ($3.2 million less the $1.65 million already transferred) as a board-restricted allocation; to move that balance into a money-market account at 3.45% APY; and to transfer all remaining TD Bank accounts to MCB within a reasonable timeframe (target end of June / July). (Time: 8:09 PM)

Seconded by: Callie Hull.

Outcome: Approved unanimously (Latoya Massey, Yani Peña, Julia Baly). Returned to open session at 8:11 PM.

The Board also noted the need to obtain a new corporate credit card (the prior American Express account was closed because a former operations director remained the named account holder), to be handled by the incoming DSO.

7.2 FY 2026-27 Budget Approval

Motion: On the recommendation of the Finance Committee, to approve the balanced 2026-2027 school-year budget, which had been circulated to the Board the prior week. (Time: 8:13 PM)

Seconded by: Latoya Massey.

Outcome: Approved unanimously. Returned to open session at 8:13 PM.

7.3 Succession Planning & Board Membership

The Board convened in executive session at 8:28 PM to discuss succession planning and board membership, including the recruitment of additional trustees to protect quorum and distribute committee work, the board-project expectation for prospective members, and the development of an advisory board. Trustees agreed to identify and recruit candidates over the summer. No formal board action was taken. The Board returned to open session at 8:43 PM.

8. Adjournment

Hearing no further business, Chair Massey closed the executive session and formally adjourned the June 16, 2026 meeting of the Board of Trustees at 8:43 PM.

9. Action Items & Follow-Ups

- Finance / Operations: Execute the money-market transfer (3.45% APY) and complete migration of all remaining TD Bank accounts to MCB (target end of June / mid-July).

- Incoming DSO: Obtain a new corporate credit card; Trustee Hull to share Amex/Mastercard contacts.
- School Leader / Operations: Confirm staffing capacity to process the anticipated July to August application surge without a September backlog.
- Student Services: Develop deeper data collection on sleep and transportation drivers (e.g., morning parent-presence and sleep-hygiene survey; map transportation issues to student location).
- Operations / Enrollment: Add a distance/commute prompt to the enrollment process and explore a Google Maps directions widget on the website.
- Counseling / Advisory: Design a start-of-year student survey on transportation, interest, and sleep, with advisory follow-up focused on one to two high-leverage interventions.
- School Leader / Senior Team: Confirm Class of 2026 graduation clearances with families by June 24; graduation June 30.
- RAD Team / School Leader: Build summer support plans for identified students and deliver summer PD on restorative practices and de-escalation.
- Summer School Coordinator: Reach out to the 114 pending summer-school families; consider collecting written opt-out acknowledgments and revisiting the junior opt-out policy.
- Board / Chair: Recruit additional trustees over the summer and stand up an advisory board.
- After-School Coordinator: Advance the Beacon partnership roll-out (CCR/advisory push-ins, grade-wide introductions, two-survey approach) to grow participation toward 30%.

Minutes Respectfully Submitted

Submitted by Joseph Colarusso, Secretary, Board of Trustees. Approved by the Board of Trustees at its regular meeting on July 21, 2026, as corrected (lowercase t in the Chair's first name), which this text reflects. Figures and graduation-rate projections were in flux as of the meeting date and should be confirmed against final reports.

Public posting version. To protect privacy, counts of fewer than five students and details that could identify individual students or candidates have been omitted. The approved record is otherwise unchanged.

Date Approved by Board: July 21, 2026

Board Chair Signature: _____