

Board of Trustees

Gabrielle Apollon (Vice President)
Lord Crawford
Ankur Dalal
Katie Embree
Maureen Higgins (President)
Mirlande Joachim
Kristopher John (Treasurer)
Salone Kapur
Lindsey Moschet (Secretary)
Jennifer Ng
Elizabeth Pernick



St HOPE Leadership Academy Board of Trustees Board Meeting

MINUTES

April 24, 2025 from 6:30-8:00 pm
Meeting Conducted In-Person at 222 W. 134th Street

- **Welcome**

Call to Order

Gabrielle Apollon	Present
Lord Crawford	Present
Ankur Dalal	Present
Katie Embree	Present (Virtual – Address Provided)
Maureen Higgins	Absent (Excused)
Mirlande Joachim	Absent (Excused)
Kristopher John	Present
Salone Kapur	Present (Virtual - Address Provided)
Lindsey Moschet	Present
Jennifer Ng	Present (Virtual – Address Provided)
Elizabeth Pernick	Absent (Excused)

Also present at the meeting: Meghann Persenaire, Principal.

- **Public Comment**

No requests for public comment were received.

- **Consent Agenda**

Minutes from the March 28th Board meeting were unanimously approved by the Board.

- **Finance Committee**

- *March Finance Report* – Ms. Persenaire presented the March Finance Report, noting that the projected cash surplus increased from the prior month to approximately \$39,000 with the increase due primarily to a reconciliation of the scholarship account. Since the scholarship program inception, there have been recipients who completed their program early, took more than a semester's leave of absence or did not complete college, resulting in unused funds. These funds, which had been a liability on the balance sheet are now available for use this fiscal year. The Board asked if there were any additional changes likely before June 30. Ms. Persenaire stated that a review of medical benefit usage might bring the projected surplus back down, but she would know more next month. All other spending is at or below projections.
- *Investment Policy and Scholarship Account* – The Board continued the discussion from the prior month on the possibility of drafting a policy (or an addendum to the current investment policy) that would explain to authorizers and other outside entities that, should the school end a fiscal year with a cash deficit due to scholarship awards, this should not be viewed as impacting the actual bottom line of the operating budget. With current enrollment challenges, the school is currently managing a tighter budget and the \$50,000 in annual scholarship awards could result in the operating budget running a cash deficit. Given the substantial

balance in the investment account of over \$3 million, the school is in a very strong financial position and should feel comfortable awarding alumni scholarships each year. Board agreed that the Finance Committee should convene prior to the end of the year and draft this policy for Board review.

- *Recruitment and Enrollment* – Ms. Persenaire reported that she is meeting with Underdog next Tuesday and will have an update on their proposal at the May meeting. Ms. Persenaire also reported that the school had 112 applications by the April 4th lottery with 39 of these accepting their seat. While this does not mean that all will fully enroll, it is an encouraging number. Active recruitment continues with Underdog and school staff continuing to canvas. A few applications have come in from the Catholic school in the neighborhood that is closing, along with one as a result of Democracy Prep consolidating their Harlem middle schools.
- *Charter Enrollment* – Ms. Persenaire stated that, with charter renewal happening next year, the Board needs to determine what they believe is the right number for projected enrollment for the five years of the next charter term (2026-2031). The Board discussed that, given that the Board has closely monitored enrollment declines since the pandemic, analyzing data each year to try to forecast emerging trends, it seems likely that enrollment will be somewhere around 180 at the low end and 210 at the high end. The Board also discussed that, should the school-age population in Harlem and New York City rebound during the next charter term, they would need to do a material revision to increase charter enrollment. **The Board voted unanimously to project enrollment at 210 for the next charter term (2026-2031).**

- **Accountability Committee**

- *ELA State Exams* – Ms. Persenaire stated that the school completed the computer-based ELA state exams on April 8th and 9th. While the scholars were very well prepared, there was a significant glitch on Wednesday, April 9th when the entire testing system shut down. This was very stressful for the scholars, who had to patiently wait 45 minutes until the system came back up, checking every few minutes to see if it was working. While the 8th graders managed it well, the younger scholars had a harder time. Ms. Persenaire reported that it will most likely negatively impact scores. The Board expressed frustration that such a high-stakes exam would experience such a glitch.
- *Living Environment Regents* – Ms. Persenaire presented the rationale for changing the current 8th grade science capstone from the Earth Science Regents to the Living Environment Regents. While the Board of Regents recently voted to remove the requirement of passing Regents in order to graduate high school (starting in 2027-28), completing these exams is still required to demonstrate mastery and meet federal requirements. Regents also continue to be a draw for parents when deciding on a middle school. Ms. Persenaire explained that the school has struggled with Earth Science since first offering the course, with pass rates never reaching more than 25%. After much data analysis, leadership team determined that the very complex Earth Science vocabulary was continually holding scholars back and that switching to Living Environment would make sense. 8th graders already do very well on the U.S. History Regents, which, as an 11th grade exam, is technically tougher than Earth Science. But the strong ELA skills scholars learn at St HOPE translate well to U.S. History and will likely also translate well to Living Environment. **The Board voted unanimously to change to the Living Environment Regents beginning in the 2025/26 school year.**
- *April Dashboard* – Ms. Persenaire presented the April Dashboard, focusing on the steady enrollment and Achieve3000 growth. She also discussed the April suspension numbers, which were higher than last year. This was due to one incident that occurred outside of school but involved a relatively large number of students.
- *Financial Literacy Parent Meeting* – Ms. Persenaire reported that an alum offered a Financial Literacy meeting for parents but attendance was a challenge. They are trying to move it online to see if more parents would be interested

Meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

I, Lindsey Moschet, do hereby certify that I am Secretary of St HOPE Leadership Academy, a New York education corporation and that the above is a true and complete copy of the minutes of the meeting of the Board of Trustees of the said corporation held on April 24, 2025 at which quorum was present throughout. (April 25, 2025).