

MINUTES OF THE  
OCTOBER 24, 2024, MEETING  
OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF  
UNIVERSITY PREP CHARTER SCHOOL  
VIDEO CONFERENCE: ZOOM MEETING ID: 815 5002 2302      Passcode: BRONX

A meeting of the Board of Trustees (the “Board”) of the University Prep Charter Schools (the “Schools”) was held on Thursday, October 24, 2024, remotely via video conferencing. Trustees Steve Barr, Judy Bergtraum, Justin Pasternak, Burt Sacks and Miguel Suarez were in attendance. Also in attendance were executive director Andrea d’Amato; principals Andrew Ayers and David Patterson; assistant principals Nathaniel Bouie, Donial Rodriguez, and Denise Rodriguez, Svetlana Gnesia of CBSM, and Diane Peete of Future Is Now Schools.

Judy Bergtraum presided and called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm (Eastern Daylight Time).

The board meeting agenda was adopted with flexibility.

Board President, Judy Bergtraum introduced Steve Barr as Interim Executive Director.

### **Executive Director Report**

Interim Director, Steve Barr, provided the board with an update on school culture including listening sessions with staff. One focus area is to increase the collaboration between staff at the high school and middle school and increase teacher voice.

### **UP High School Update**

Principal Andrew Ayers provided the Board with an update on activities at the high school. Parent -Teacher Conferences are underway. Additional college credit opportunities are being made available to students, including working with Syracuse pre-college programs, CUNY College Now dual enrollment, and additional Advance Placement courses.

Students were able to attend a showing of the musical Hamilton. News 12 donated an expensive guitar and highlighted the school. News 12 is doing an additional broadcast on the school to highlight performance needs. Currently, the school is need of performance space.

### **Staff Attendance:**

- 48 days missed by **Staff** for September, our monthly average is 48.

<b>Month</b>	<b>CAR</b>	<b>COVID related</b>	<b>Vacation Days</b>	<b>FMLA</b>	<b>Other (religious/jury duty/bereavement)</b>	<b>Total:</b>
September 2024	27	5	6	7	3	<b>48</b>

### **Student Attendance:**

- **Student attendance** for September **98%**

- **Student lateness total** for September **240**.

### **Student Performance:**

- 446 Total students
- 263 failing at least 1
- 123 failing 3+

- This is not final for Q1; things will improve as the quarter closes. Neither are the rates of failure atypical. If anything, the number failing 3+ is low for this time of year.

### **Students with IEPs:**

- **85** Total
- **60** are failing at least 1 subject
- **40** are failing 3+

- This marks one of the better starts for students with IEPs. Typically, the number of students with IEPs failing 3+ is north of 50%

### **UP Middle School Update**

Principal David Patterson and Assistant Principal Donial Rodriguez provided the Board with an update.

It's our sixth year and we are educating 410 students, after sending 97 of 106 of last year's 8th graders to the high school this past June. We have four new staff members which consist of two TFA corps members who worked with our students this past summer. Ms. King graduated from Princeton University and is now our 5th grade science teacher. Ms. Menke graduated from the University of Arizona and is our 5th and 6th grade science learning specialist. We also have welcomed Ms. Salkey, who is an experienced learning specialist, joined our science department as the 7th and 8th grade learning specialist. We welcomed Shannon Ortega, as our 5th grade school counselor, who was also a 2017 graduate of the high school. The newest member of our Operations team is Ms. Martinez. She had been interning with us for about a year and recently graduated from Lehman College. She is also an alum from our high school and we are very happy to have here.

This year we have started out strong with a successful in person back to school night and parent teacher conferences. We held our first town hall in celebration of Latinx heritage month. The celebration consisted of student performances and a guest dance group performing the traditional dance from the Dominican Republic.

We also have started the year offering more than 30 Later Gator clubs in which about 300 students are participating. Our LaterGator clubs are run by our own staff and our teachers have the opportunity to share their talents and hobbies with our students. In addition, many clubs are supported by our high school Gator Club members and some of them are middle school alums.

Our sports programs have kicked off with flag football, led by Mr. Bouie their season ended with a 2-4 streak. We are very proud of their efforts. During the season they were supported by the cheerleaders who performed at several of their games. This year the cheerleaders will be returning to perform at the Cheez-It bowl in Orlando on New Year's Day. They have been

practicing and fundraising to prepare for their trip.

Our chess team has started out resilient this school year with the leadership of Ms. Jackson and Mr. Dupree. Our students have been impressive and we have participants ranging from 5th grade through 8th grade. We have an expert chess player in the 5th grade who is in the top rankings.

This school year our international trip will be to Japan. Ms. Pandza, Ms. Neto, Ms. Torres, and Mr. Dupree have been diligently working with students and parents to fundraise and learn about the culture to prepare for the trip. Their adventure to Japan will take place in March 2025.

This past June our students took their state tests for the third time since the opening of the school. This was also the first time that all students took all of their state tests on the computer. Our ELA passing rate increased by 7%, to 64%, and our math passing rate increased by 6%, to 61%. These numbers are more than double the passing rates for our school district, CSD 7, where the average passing rates are 32% in ELA and 31% in math. This is also 10 and 20% higher than the average city-wide passing rate, which is 52% in ELA and 51% in math.

But the passing rate of the students we have had for the past three and four years showed the most growth. Our current 8th graders' pass rate in ELA and math grew 21 and 25% respectively between taking the test in 2022 and taking the test in 2024.

These results align with our internal reading testing data. When they were in the 6th grade, our current 8th graders began the year reading at an average reading level of fifth grade, fourth month, a half-year under grade level. Based on our testing last month, the same students began their 8th grade year with an average reading level of 8.4, or eighth-grade, fourth-month, four months higher than their grade level. Over three years with us, our students have not only made up for being below grade level in reading, they have begun their 8th grade year reading higher than their grade average. And of the current 106 8th graders, over a quarter of them, or 31, are reading at a 10th grade reading level or higher.

### **Annual Audit**

Mark Newman, CPA of Weaver and Tidwell provided the board with the 2024 audit. The opinion was an unmodified opinion without any findings. No unusual transactions were identified. The cash position was improved by \$2,000,000 due to grants and collections. Prepaid expenses were made in June 2024. Expenses increased over the year before by . The detailed audit report is appended to these minutes.

The board approved the audit report as presented.

### **Budget and Finance**

Burt Sacks, provided an update that the schools' Budget Committee has been convened and meets monthly. The system is reviewing options for increasing interest revenues.

Svetlana Gnesina of Charter Business School Management provided the trustees with an update on the system's financial health. As of September 30, 2024, projected net operating revenues are \$25,281,514 million, projected expenses are \$24,993,219. The annual surplus is projected at \$288,296. Revenues are lower than originally forecasted due to the reduction in student enrollment. The current balance sheet shows \$7.2 million cash in the bank. The fiscal reports

include cash flow projections through year-end.

**Executive Session**

The board of trustees moved into executive session to discuss a personnel matter.

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon duly made, seconded, and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 6:15 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

---

Judy Bergtraum, Chairman of the Meeting